

Relationship between Parenting Styles and Spiritual Wellbeing among Catholic Emerging Adults in Western Deanery, Archdioceses of Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Parenting style greatly influences many areas of emerging adults' lives, especially their spiritual well-being. This study investigated the relationship between parenting styles and spiritual well-being among Catholic emerging adults of the Western Deanery Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. The study adopted correlational research design. The total population was 840 and through proportionate stratified sampling technique a sample size of 290 emerging adults aged 18 to 29 were selected to participate in the study. The study was grounded on Family System Theory and Bowlby Attachment Theory. The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) were used for data collection. The results showed that the authoritarian parenting style was ($M = 35.48, 70.96\%$) the dominant parenting style in this study. The descriptive analysis revealed that the majority of the emerging adults have a moderate level of spiritual well-being (98.5%). The results obtained from the inferential statistics analysis, specifically the Pearson correlation relationship between parenting styles and spiritual well-being indicated a weak negative relationship ($r = -0.014, p = 0.813$). The study recommended that emerging adults should prioritize spiritual well-being and remain proactive in the spiritual growth activities in the church which promote their spiritual well-being.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Spiritual Wellbeing, Catholic Emerging Adults.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Emerging adults are looked at as people who will shape society positively soon. This can only be done if they grow up in families that offer care and religious support. However, not all emerging adults come from families where parents provide them with the necessary support and share spiritual values that can help them be productive as adults. There are also modern challenges such as technology use that might intersect with parenting and spiritual well-being. Several researchers have thus recognised the significant contribution of Baumrind's parenting styles which serves as a concrete guide for many parents (Coste, 2015). Effective communication and healthy relationships between parents and emerging adults are areas of great concern and parents need to reflect on these demanding areas to the highest degree (Piko & Balazs, 2012). In essence, caregiving cannot be viewed differently from attachment between emerging adults and parents (Doinita & Maria, 2015). Besides the emotional, psychological and social support which should come from parents, various studies indicated as well that consistent evidence of spirituality is another, equally important, aspect of well-being for youths (Bufford et al., 1991; Panzini et al., (2017). Thus, it is an undeniable fact that to see emerging adults contribute positively to society, the kind of parenting styles that are offered and the spiritual support offered to them by their parents become cardinal areas of evaluation.

Parenting is perceived differently and can be viewed from different angles according to different disciplines. For instance, parenting can be conceived of as the process of educating and raising a child to prepare him or her to achieve full potential as a human being (Habecker, 2016). Another definition of parenting practices is the use of immediately noticeable, particular behaviours by parents to socialize their children (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019). Parenting that offers caregiving manifests itself in talking, teaching, and concrete actions (Dollahite & Marks, 2019). Mendez (2021) identified four distinct parenting styles: authoritative, permissive, uninvolved, and

authoritarian. Bassett (2013) explained that parenting style refers to a method, a paradigm, a framework, or a way of operating. In essence, parenting can either be positive and manifest itself in a supportive leading, training, and nurturing role or the opposite. Therefore, one wonders about the kind of parenting style that emerging adults receive nowadays.

Spiritual well-being can be described as a personal journey of discovering the meaning and purpose of existence that goes beyond the individual self, as well as the emotions that arise from this journey or the fulfilment one experiences from faith in a higher power, often referred to as "God." (Agli et al., 2015; Moberg, 2008; Senreich, 2013; Soleimani et al., 2016). Spiritual well-being encompasses the need to have access to socio-psychological resources to overcome difficult life situations (Bangcola & Pangandaman, 2022; Charzyńska, 2015). A sense of purpose, meaning, and belonging can be obtained through spiritual well-being, which is a basic human need (Egel & Fry, 2017; Hunsaker, 2020). According to Oracion and Madrigal (2019), faithful adherence to Church teachings and practices, membership in Church organizations, and participation in the Masses contribute to higher spiritual well-being. Therefore, the sublime question was if emerging adults received spiritual values from parents that could help them one day become responsible adults.

Different studies have endeavoured to investigate parenting styles and the levels of spiritual well-being and how the two relate to each other. The studies done are clear evidence that the study variables were implicitly handled by other researchers in broader religious and different cultural contexts. A study done in Portugal and Spain revealed different parenting styles exercised among youths: authoritarian (15.2% and 14.2%), permissive style (13.2% and 13.2%), and authoritative (7.1% and 6.5%) respectively (Parra et al., 2019). While a study done in Iran showed that 37.9% of parents used a permissive parenting style, 21.3% used an authoritarian and 40.8% used an authoritative parenting style (Shirafkan et al., 2022). Results of a study done in the Philippines among emerging adults revealed that 25.7% received an authoritarian parenting style, 50% authoritative and 24.3% permissive parenting style (Embalsado et al., 2021).

The findings of research done in India showed that 99 had authoritative parents, 24 had authoritarian and 27 had permissive parenting styles (Vora, 2015). In a study done in a secondary school in Kenya, in Kaplamai Division, Trans Nzoia County, among 214 participants the results revealed the following parenting styles: 36.9% were authoritative parents, approximately 30.4% were authoritarian parents, 19.1% were permissive parents, and 13.6% were neglecting parents (Chonge et al., 2016). Therefore, each area surveyed had its parenting styles and certainly there contributing factors that led to varying parenting styles.

Some studies have been done to see how emerging adults fare in spiritual well-being. A study done among college students from five countries (Malaysia, Philippines, China, Kenya and Indonesia) showed the mean score was between 2.73 to 3.17 with standard deviations between 0.88 and 0.99 which meant that these students had moderate levels of religious beliefs (Wider et al., 2023). A study carried out in South Africa at South African University revealed a high level of spiritual well with a score of 52.97 out of 60 (Khumalo & Schutte, 2014). According to a study by Centin kanya (2020), there existed no statistical relationship between parenting styles and the spiritual well-being of emerging adults ($X^2 = 5.065$, $p > 0.168$). Likewise, the study done in the Midwest, USA showed results that identified two parenting styles (maternal autonomy and support maternal involvement) which were negatively correlated with religious and spiritual struggles of students, $r = -.27$ and $r = -.29$ respectively (Williams et al., 2019).

In Kenya, there is an increase in the expression of dissatisfaction with religion, especially among youth (Nation, 2020). Yeung and Chan (2014) stated that parental involvement through socialization has a positive effect on the religiosity of youths. There exists among youths a big challenge concerning the place of religion in their lives around the world in the Catholic Church. Emerging adults do not participate in Church activities and do not follow the Church's teachings on issues related to sexuality, such as contraception or homosexuality (Kielb and Mąkosza 2021). According to Miana (2015), a considerable number of Kenyan youths left the Church. Therefore, this was clear evidence that there was a need that called for a study between parenting styles and spiritual well-being because there was a lack of studies done explicitly to find out the relationship that parental styles have on the spiritual well-being of youths in Nairobi, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a positivist epistemological framework, guiding this study's direction. The researcher chose to use positivism because it provided clear and reliable data, which can be used to make informed decisions, despite the limitations, the researcher planned to use positivism because it insisted on objectivity as a source of knowledge. Finally, this positivist approach helped the study to systematically generate knowledge through the quantification of variables. This study used a quantitative and the study adopted a correlational survey design. A correlation design reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two variables. The design was relevant to the study because it sought to evaluate and test the significance of the relationship between parenting styles and spiritual well-being among Catholic emerging adults in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

The study was conducted in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. In Western Deanery, there are seven Parishes. The current study focused on Catholic emerging adults between the ages of 18 to 29 years from Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya as the study population. In terms of gender, the study targeted both males and females. The total population was 840 emerging adults from seven Parishes who live in Western Deanery. This population was chosen because it had different youths from various families of varying economic and social backgrounds. After providing for attrition, the sample size was 290 participants and probability sampling was used in this study. This study used multistage sampling to draw a sample from a population using smaller and smaller groups (units) at each stage. The first stage involved picking all the seven parishes in the Western Deanery of the Arch Diocese of Nairobi which has a total number of 840 emerging adults. Hence to ensure the fair representation of the whole population, proportionate sampling was used to determine how to choose participants from the parishes chosen. This was done by using the Morgan formula and calculating the percentage of the total population of each parish with the total number of all emerging adults from seven parishes and through this the size sample was obtained. Lastly, a systematic sampling technique was used to identify the participants for this study from the selected parishes.

Two standardized instruments were used in this study: The Parental Authority Questionnaire and spiritual well-being scales. The parental authority scale was to assess prototypes of parental authority and consists of 30 questions it was developed by John Buri in 1991. It utilized a 5-point Likert scale for responses, with scores ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The PAQ evaluated three styles of parenting: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. The spiritual well-being scale was created by Bufford, Paloutzian, and Ellison in 1991. This measurement tool consisted of two subscales: the first focuses on religious well-being, while the second addresses existential well-being. However, this current study's interest was the instrument only for spiritual well-being therefore it concentrated only items on religious well-being.

The researcher obtained a permit from the Tangaza University Research Ethics Committee (TUREC), and approval from the the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI). The participants were aware that the study's findings would be held with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed. The researcher made sure that the consent of every respondent was solicited with respect and dignity. Moreover, participation was voluntary and freedom to pull out was observed on the part of the involved students. The researcher ensured safety on the part of the respondents so that any harm was avoided physically, psychologically, or legally. The researcher adhered to academic etiquette concerning citations or references.

RESULTS

The current study investigated the relationship between parenting styles on spiritual well-being among Catholic emerging adults in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi in Kenya. To evaluate the four demographic variables derived from the respondents' demographic profiles, the researcher employed the descriptive approach by looking at the frequencies. The four variables—age, education level, gender, and marital status—were analyzed. Table 1 thus summarizes and presents the social demographic characteristics in Table 1.

Table 1: Social demographics of respondents

Variables	Items	Frequency	Percentage
	Age		
17 - 22		141	50.0
23 - 25		108	38.3
26 - 29		33	11.7
	level of education		
Secondary Certificate		122	43.3
Diploma		97	34.4
BA		61	21.5
MA		1	0.4
PhD		1	0.4
	Gender		
Male		123	43.6
Female		159	56.4
	Marital Status		
Married		56	19.8
Single		224	79.4
Divorced		1	0.4
Widowed		1	0.4

As indicated in Table 1 concerning the age distribution, data showed that the frequency of the respondents aged 18-22 years was higher (50%) as opposed to 23-25 years (38.3%) and 26 – 29 years (11.7%). Regarding classification of the level of education, the emerging adults who hold secondary school certificates contained the highest number of participants, (43.3%) followed by diploma holders, (34.4%), and degree (BA) holders, (21.5%). Concerning gender affiliation, the data showed, (43.6) were male and (56.4%) were female emerging youths. Concerning marital status, two main strata made up the large population, the married (19.8%) and the single (79.4%).

The Parenting Styles among Catholic Emerging Adults

This study endeavoured to identify different parenting styles used among the Catholic emerging adults of Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. After transforming and computing this variable (Parenting styles), the descriptive analysis, specifically frequencies, revealed that the emerging adults admitted to having received the following identified parenting styles presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Parenting styles

Parenting Style	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage of Mean
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Permissiveness	10 -50	25.75	6.78	51.50%
Authoritarian	10 -50	35.48	7.07	70.96%
Authoritative	10 - 50	34.49	6.59	68.98%

Table 2 presents the parenting styles that were used in the upbringing of the emerging adults of the Western Deanery of the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. Table 8 answered the first objective by looking at the Mean and finding the percentage of the Mean. Following the criteria of the ranges of the instrument, the descriptive statistics showed the dominant parenting style among participants was authoritarian (70.96 %, M =35.48, SD = 7.07), followed by Authoritative (68.98%, M = 34.49, SD = 6.59) and then permissiveness (51.50%, M =25.75, SD = 6.78). Therefore, it can be deduced that according to this study, the majority of respondents received an authoritarian parenting style represented by an average of 70.96% which meant these emerging adults received a dictatorial kind of parental care. Further more, to show visually the percentages of the different parenting styles the results were presented in the form of a bar chart in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Parenting Styles of Emerging Adults

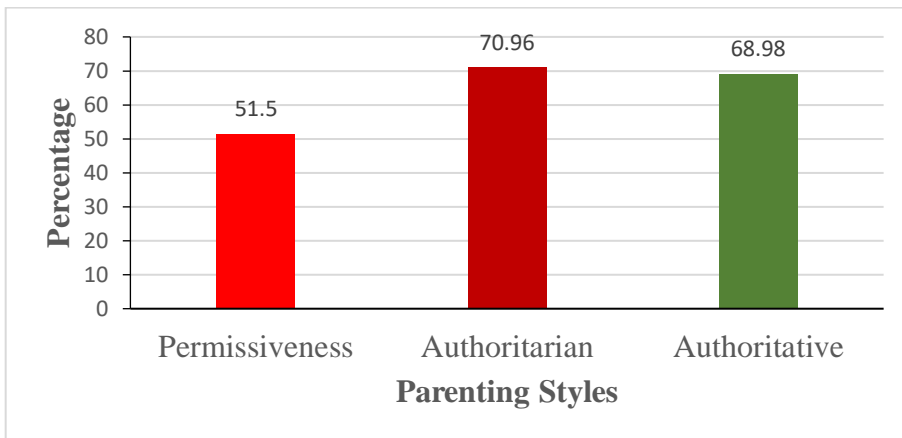


Figure 1 showed vividly the distribution of parenting styles among the emerging adults of Western Deanery, Nairobi Arch Diocese, Kenya. The findings showed indeed the prevailing parenting style among the emerging adults selected for this study was the authoritarian parenting style represented by 70.96%.

Levels of Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) of Catholic Emerging Adults

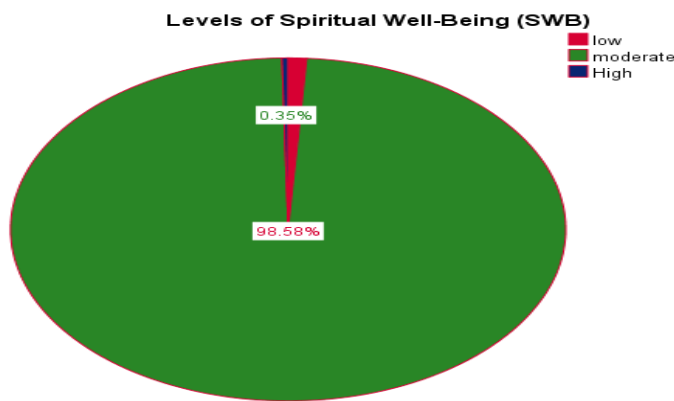
The study saw the importance of measuring the levels of spiritual well-being before diving into looking at the relationship between the two study variables. Thus, the scoring system of the scale was followed as designed by the creator of the instrument. The results of the levels of Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) of Catholic emerging adults in the Western Deanery Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya were calculated and presented accordingly in Table 3.

Table 3: Levels of the spiritual well-being of emerging adults

Level	Range	Frequency	Percentile
Low	10 - 20	3	1.1
Moderate	21 - 49	278	98.5
High	50 - 60	1	0.4
Total		282	100

Table 3 presented the levels of spiritual well-being of emerging adults of the Western Deanery of the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. Following the criteria of scoring of the creators of the scale, the data interpretation showed that from the total population of participants (1.1%) respondents scored between 10 to 20 and these were in the category of low level of spiritual well-being which reflected a sense of unsatisfactory relationship with God. There were (98.5%) of respondents who scored between 21 to 49 and this reflected a moderate sense of religious well-being. There were only (0.4%) of respondents who scored between 50 and 60 and this one was in the category of high level of spiritual well-being which reflected a positive view of one’s relationship with God. According to this current study, the majority of the emerging adults expressed a moderate level of spiritual well-being (n = 278) which meant that their sense of religious well-being was average, neither low nor high. Additionally, the visual representation of the levels of Spiritual Well-Being is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Levels of Spiritual Well-Being of Emerging Adults



The pie chart didn’t even show a high level because it was nearly (0.01 %), while it showed a low level which was 0.35% therefore the majority of emerging adults in Western Deanery of Nairobi Arch Diocese, Kenya were moderate in the level of Spiritual Well-Being with the percentage of 98.58%.

Relationship between Parenting Styles and Spiritual Well-Being

Pearson’s Bivariate Correlation was performed on total parenting style and total spiritual well-being. The outcome of Pearson’s correlation coefficients of total parenting style with total spiritual well-being was summarized and presented in a Scatter plot in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Relationship between total parenting styles and total spiritual well-being

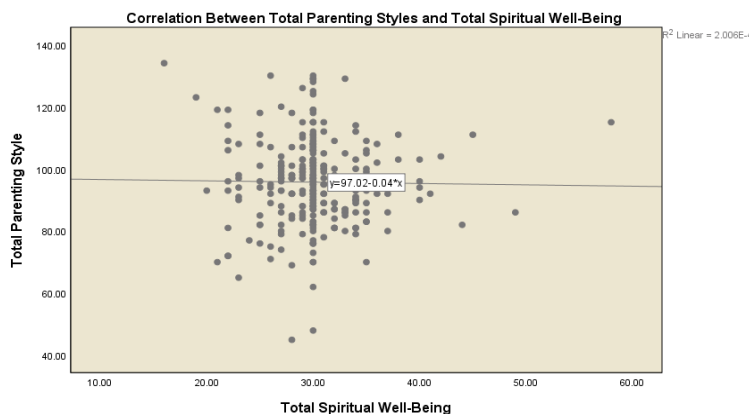


Figure 3 showed that the data was scattered and posed a low degree of relationship between parenting styles and spiritual well-being. The scatter plot alone was able to show vaguely that there was a weak relationship between the two variables. However, the scatter plot was not able to establish the strength of the significance of that relationship. Therefore, Pearson’s correlation coefficient was computed and statistical data generated by that test was presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Relationship between parenting styles and spiritual well-being

		Total Parenting Style	Total Spiritual Well-Being
Total Parenting Style	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.014**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.813
	N	282	282
Total Spiritual Well-Being	Pearson Correlation	-0.014**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.813	
	N	282	282
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 4 showed that there was a weak relationship between parenting styles and spiritual well-being ($r = -0.014$, $p = 0.813$) of emerging adults of Western Deanery. In terms of strength, there existed a weak relationship between parenting styles and the spiritual well-being of emerging adults ($r = -0.014$). These results showed that any change in parenting styles that the emerging adults received from their parents did not bring about any change in the spiritual well-being of emerging adults of Western Deanery. Likewise, any change in the spiritual well-being of emerging adults did not change anything in the parenting styles that were given to emerging adults by their parents.

DISCUSSION

The section discusses the findings from the investigation of the relationship between parenting styles and spiritual well-being among Catholic emerging adults in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi in Kenya. The study outcome showed that the dominant parenting style among participants was authoritarian: at 70.96 %, followed by Authoritative at 68.98%, and then permissiveness at 51.50%. Therefore, the majority of respondents received an authoritarian parenting style which was similar to the study done in Spain and Portugal: authoritarian 15.2% and 14.2%, permissive style 13.2% and 13.2%, and authoritative 7.1% and 6.5% respectively (Parra, et al., 2019). A study done in Kiambu County, Kenya was also in line with the findings of the current study because the Kiambu study showed 49.8% authoritarian, 8.1% authoritative, and 40.9% permissiveness (Gatune, 2020). Therefore, the emerging adults from Kenya (Nairobi County and Kiambu County), together with the studies from Spain and Portugal indicate the possibility of parents who are instructed to begin without offering support. The possible explanation for the similarity was that Nairobi County and Kiambu County, Kenya are big developed and populated cities and parents in these cities were at fast rate embracing the European lifestyle and thus becoming demanding and putting much pressure on their children concerning success in careers. In developed cities normally parents have little to spend with their children thus depriving children of opportunities for more bonding that can lead to healthy attachments.

Other studies whose results were not similar to the findings of this study were: a study done at the Angeles University Foundation in the Philippines that showed that authoritative 50%, authoritarian 25.7% and permissive 24.3% (Embalsado et al., 2021). Similarly, the study done at St Xavier's College Mapusa Goa, India followed suit because 99 students admitted to having received authoritative parenting styles as opposed to 24 who received authoritarian and 27 who received permissive (Vora, 2015).

The study also established the levels of Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) of Catholic emerging adults in Western Deanery, Archdiocese, Nairobi, Kenya. The results showed that participants who scored low levels were 1.1%, moderate levels 98.5% and high levels were 0.4%. According to this current study, the majority of the emerging adults expressed a moderate level of spiritual well-being at 98.5% which meant that their sense of religious well-being was average.

The results of this study about the level of spiritual well-being which showed 0.4% high, moderate, 98.5% and low 1.1% were not similar to the study done at Midsize Southern University, USA where the levels of spiritual well-being polled high (64.2%), moderate (35.8%) and (0.0) low (Anye et al., 2013). The reason behind this difference is possibly the large number of Latino students at Midsize Universities in the USA, especially the Catholic Church. Additionally, the current study's results were different from the study done at South African University where the Mean score was 52.97 which was higher (Khumalo & Schutte, 2014). This is a puzzling discovery because the public university in South Africa had higher levels of spirituality compared to church-going youths in catholic parishes in the Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi.

Incidentally, the findings about the moderate levels of spiritual well-being of emerging adults in the current study which was 98.5% were higher than the study in the Philippines emerging adults where the students at the Catholic College of Africans polled 74.91% in the moderate category (Calamba & Magallanes, 2023). This similarity was expected because both studies targeted catholic students whose characteristics were similar. There was a possibility of even finding Kenyan Catholics in the sample of the study done in the Philippines since the study targeted Africans and not Filipinos.

The moderate result of the spiritual well-being of emerging adults which was 98.5% disagreed with the findings of the study done in Brazil where 56% of students were at lower levels while 43.7% were at higher levels (Vitorino et al., 2018). The difference could have been due to the size of the population and the region. The Brazilian study was done at the national level while this current study targeted only a small of the county, Kenya. Moreover, the current study had only Catholic students for the sample while the study done at the national level would certainly have different religions and different denominations.

The current results showed a weak negative relationship between parenting styles and spiritual well-being ($r = -0.014$, $p = 0.813$). This outcome of the current study about the correlation did not agree with the obtained results of the study done at Yildirim University in Turkey where there was no association between parenting style and spiritual well-being, $X^2 = 5.065$, $p > 0.168$ (Centinkanya, 2020). The possible explanation of a weak negative relationship between parenting styles and spiritual well-being could be that the perception of some emerging adults was influenced by being by different parents.

The study analysis of this current study as stated before had a weak negative relationship, $r = -0.014$, $p = 0.813$ which disagreed with the results of the study done at two Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) universities in the USA, $r = .13$, $p < 0.01$ (Ashley, 2022). The obvious explanation for the difference was the radical differences that existed between the mindset of SDA families and Catholic families when it came to faith and family life. If there was any Christian denomination that differed a lot from the Catholic Church in many aspects of faith it was the SDA though there existed mutual respect between the two denominations in many places. However, it has been born in mind that SDA universities in the USA also accommodated students from other faith denominations but in this study, only SDA students participated which validated the argument put forward.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the strengths of contextual relevance, robust methodology, quantitative rigour, actionable recommendation and specified sample, several limitations of the present study were noted. First, in terms of generalizability, this study focussed only single religious group and a single region, and future research might explore other demographics and consider more religious groups as well as widen the circumscribed area of study. This will enable the results of this study to be replicated in other populations through the new investigation. Second, this study was cross-sectional and relied solely on first-hand information given through questionnaires which rendered the applicability of the study to the present moment depriving it of future predictability. Future research could address the limitations associated with a cross-sectional design by introducing longitudinal and experimental designs needed to more fully examine the causal associations between parenting styles and spiritual well-being. Thirdly, this quantitative study produced clear figures resulting from manifold explanations of computed figures limiting the obtaining of meaning only through interpreted figures. Future research could consider using a mixed method to solicit views directly from the mouths of participants. Additionally, mixed methods will bring out experiences and perceptions as to why emerging adults underwent such parenting styles and had such levels of spiritual well-being.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study examined the relationship between parenting styles and spiritual well-being among the Catholic emerging adults of Western Deanery in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. The current study showed that 70% and above of emerging adults experience authoritarian parenting styles. This outcome was an indication that most of the emerging adults in question came from parents whose role of parenting was directive leaving no decisions on the part of their children. The study called for concrete steps to be taken to overcome this parenting style so that the negative effects of this parenting style on the youths are curtailed. Furthermore, this study showed that a considerable number of emerging adults manifested moderate levels of spiritual well-being 98.5%. These results were an indication that the emerging adults maximized to the certain degree the opportunities given at the church to foster their spiritual well-being though this could be boosted by constant evaluation of spiritual programs. Additionally, this research clearly illustrated that there was a weak relationship between parenting styles and spiritual well-being among Catholic emerging adults in Western Deanery, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. This entailed that any change in parenting styles that the emerging adults received from their parents did not bring about any change in the spiritual well-being of emerging adults of Western Deanery. Thus, by understanding the role of parenting style in the spiritual life of emerging adults, researchers will better understand why and how spiritually caring parenthood can lead to fruitful, constructive and acceptable behaviours of emerging adults.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion for the future spiritual well-being of emerging adults, this study recommended that emerging adults continue to prioritize spiritual well-being and remain proactive in the spiritual growth activities in the church that promote this well-being. Parents can make sure that when spiritual activities are organized at their churches children are checked on to make sure that they are in attendance. This entails even paying for attendance and if possible, dropping them at the place of sessions, but this should be done after amicable consent is obtained from the youths. This study recommended that church leaders continue to vigorously help emerging adults in their spiritual well-being by providing the existing Parochial Behavioral Change programs. Parish Priests should work to identify and address the gaps in spiritual well-being systems among youth through thorough annual evaluations of the youth programs with youth animators. This can be achieved by facilitating regular feedback meetings to understand youth's specific needs, enhancing peer support networks, and providing consistent and equitable access to support resources for spiritual growth in the Western Deanery. Parents should consider continuing to provide opportunities for excursions or picnics with emerging adults to enhance the attachment and at the same time solicit views about the life plans. And during such moments. Parents should be flexible and more concerned about giving freedom to their children and allowing them to take initiative in their lives. The study recommended more psychological and spiritual accompaniment done by inviting psychologists and religious personnel for seminars with emerging adults to boost low and moderate levels of spiritual well-being in Western Deanery.

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