

An Exploration of Parenting Styles among Parents of Undergraduate Students in Selected Public Universities in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Parents can have an impact on their children's psychosocial development through established patterns of parental control known as parenting styles. This makes parenting styles an ongoing subject of empirical enquiry. Baumrind's Pillar Theory provides a useful theoretical lens for studying parenting styles. However, the original research was conducted in Western, middle-class, predominantly white families, which raises questions about the universality of its conclusions. Parenting styles must be culturally relevant. The present study sought to identify the parenting styles among parents of undergraduate students in selected universities in Kenya. Descriptive research design was used. The target population was 100,060 undergraduate students of three selected public universities in Nairobi County. These are: Nairobi University, Kenyatta University, and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. The sample size was 156 respondents. The Parental Authority Questionnaire was used to gather main data on parenting styles. Results showed that authoritative parenting was the most dominant parenting style ($M=4.21$), followed by permissive parenting style ($M=4.16$), while authoritarian parenting ($M=1.91$) and neglectful parenting ($M=1.89$) were the least practiced. The results demonstrate that authoritative parenting is the most manifest style among parents of undergraduate students in Kenyan universities, closely followed by permissive parenting. This reflects a parenting trend that balances structure with growing independence, which is developmentally appropriate given that university students are young adults. The study contributes to existing literature by localizing and contextualizing Western-developed theories of parenting and child development to an African university setting.

Key words: Parenting Styles, Undergraduate Students, Public Universities, Psychosocial Development

INTRODUCTION

Parenting styles have implications on the psychosocial development of offspring (Pan et al., 2021). By definition, parenting styles are a collection of parenting actions that manifest in a myriad of contexts and establish a stable environment for the growth of children (Akinawo, 2020). This is because they determine the emotional environment in which the child grows. Parents' actions shape their children's personalities in this emotional environment, which in turn affects how well they succeed academically in school (Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024). The three fundamental parenting philosophies include authoritarian; which places high expectations on children, authoritative; where the parents are nurturing, supportive and responsive, and permissive; where the parents regard their children as equals rather than as children of the parent. A fourth parenting style, known as uninvolved or neglectful parenting style, is a type of style where the parents do not meet the children's needs beyond food, shelter, and clothing (Rafiq et al., 2022).

The approaches and parenting styles used by parents in raising their children have a significant impact on how mentally healthy those children turn out to be (Feng et al, 2021). Research on behavioral disorders has frequently concluded that parental interactions with their children are more important in causing behavioral problems than genetic and biological variables (Cooke et al., 2022; Kay, 2022; Squillaci & Benoit, 2021). Studies have also noted that supporting parenting predicted positive behavioral outcomes and academic performance (Zhussipbek & Nagayeva, 2022). Researchers have also discovered a connection between students' behavioral issues and parental maltreatment (Zhussipbek & Nagayeva, 2023). This association is crucial because it demonstrates how

important parental behavior during childhood is in the development of behavioral disorders in children and adults.

Globally, in some parts of Europe and also in South America, there is evidence of the permissive parenting style being used more often by parents. A study conducted in Spain, Malaysia, Portugal, and Italy found that permissive parents promote the development of strong self-esteem (Bacchini et al., 2024; Louis et al., 2021; Mu et al., 2024; Nunes et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2021). These cultures in these countries seem to give more autonomy to the students, especially in decision-making. The adolescents in these cultures are independent thinkers, and they are expected to guide their behavior and choices mostly without parental guidance and involvement. Many studies have consistently depicted authoritative parenting as one that yields the best self-esteem outcomes in many cultures (Khan et al., 2025). Nevertheless, Yim (2022) reports that authoritarian practices in Asian Chinese culture tend to have a positive effect on self-esteem because it is thought that students with authoritarian parents benefit from the strict discipline and that this parenting style also brings harmony to the family.

In Indonesia, Abidin et al. (2022) noted that the social shifts in family dynamics and the internet have led to increased emotional pressure and mental problems, amplifying the need for the correct parenting style. The same is replicated in Turkey, where Çiçek (2021) noted that loneliness is a major risk factor for poor psychological and subjective well-being among university students. In Palestine, Agbaria and Mahamid (2023) noted that the multicultural dynamics and the minority status of Arab children's points have led to emotional challenges and problematic behavior that points to the crucial role of parents, who ideally should act as social models.

In Kenya, paternal autonomy can have a negative and insignificant effect on students, while maternal autonomy granting can have a positive but insignificant effect on adolescents' self-esteem (Kay, 2022). Parenting styles must be culturally relevant. Whereas permissive parenting style brings positive self-esteem in some regions of the world, it does not do so especially in Kenya (Hadulo, 2022). Permissive and authoritarian parenting did not favor the Kenyan adolescents. The Kenyan society, particularly the urban population, is continuing to experience an increase in the variety of family structures. Among the most remarkable changes include an increase in cohabitation, growth of pre-marital births and more people remaining single (Opiyo, 2022). The changing family setting, particularly single motherhood, has the ability to change parenting styles and practices, which in turn have an impact on the psychological well-being of children and adolescents (Chavda & Nisarga, 2023).

The Kenyan society, particularly the urban population, is continuing to experience an increase in the variety of family structures (Onyango et al., 2021). The most remarkable changes include an increase in cohabitation, growth in pre-marital births, and more people remaining single. The changing family structure, particularly the trend toward single parenthood, may have an impact on parenting practices and parenting philosophies, which in turn may have an impact on the psychosocial wellbeing of children and adolescents. Mandal et al. (2021) did a study on parenting style and adolescent psychological health in India. According to this study, authoritative parenting promotes several positive developmental outcomes in teens. Du et al. (2022) investigated the effect of parenting styles and self-esteem on subject wellbeing in Chinese medical students at the University of China. The results of this study demonstrated that parenting approaches can have an influence on the subjects' well-being, which is favorably connected with self-esteem. The findings revealed that parenting methods may impact subjects' well-being, and that subjects' well-being is positively associated with self-esteem. However, these studies were done outside Kenya. Studies conducted in Kenya such as Obare (2022) noted a concerning trend where university students either indulge in alcohol, sex, or other anti-social behaviors to get affirmation, love, and warmth from peers (Obare, 2022). Concerning levels of suicide have been noted among students, with ephedophilia and the accompanying social stigma and parental neglect being cited as the main cause (Kay, 2022). However, limited research attention has been accorded to parenting styles when the child reaches young adult stage and transitions to university. This provided the impetus for the present study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The raising of children by the parents, especially how they utilize punishment, is one of the most crucial aspects of psychosocial development (Farrington, 2021). Parenting refers to the various methods of raising a child and is crucial for instilling family values and discipline (Vertel et al., 2024). Parenting styles include permissive,

authoritarian, and authoritative, according to psychologists (Francis et al., 2021). Parental warmth is the degree to which a parent accepts, responds to, or is affectionate with their child (Fuentes et al., 2022). Parental affection comprises gestures like a smile, words of support, and an effort to understand the child's point of view (Mu et al., 2024). On the other hand, parents who do not love lack warmth, criticism, and discipline and frequently ignore their children while being insensitive to their needs (Lanjekar et al. 2022). In supervised situations, imposing high standards and expectations for children is referred to as parental control or demand (Leung et al. 2023). Parenting styles shape how children develop motivation, behavior, and well-being. There are three primary parenting styles which include authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive (Mu et al., 2024).

Baumrind's Pillar Theory provides a useful theoretical lens for studying parenting styles. The proponents of the theory are Diana Baumrind in 1966 and Maccoby and Martin in 1983 (Mugenyi et al. 2025). Diana Baumrind is a prominent researcher in the field of parenting. The idea aims to clarify the four primary parenting styles of permissive, authoritarian, authoritative, and neglectful (Candelanza, 2021). The four parenting styles are defined under this idea as follows: authoritarian parenting is characterized by high expectations placed on adolescents and a lack of warmth and affirmation. Further, she says that the permissive style depicts parenting behavior that is high on warmth and motivation of adolescents including lots of rewarding but very low on demands and expectations on the adolescent by the parent. The third style of parenting is the neglectful or uninvolved parenting (Mahomed, 2022). In this, there is no warmth given to an adolescent, and no expectations are placed on an adolescent; the parent is basically uninvolved in any parenting. Finally, she describes the authoritative parenting style in which the parent sets high expectations for the adolescent to follow and meet. In this style, the parent keeps affirming and encouraging the child to achieve these set expectations (Ware, 2024). This one is the most recommended parenting style.

The original research was conducted in Western, middle-class, predominantly white families, which raises questions about the universality of its conclusions (Fadlillah & Fauziah 2022). In some cultures, authoritarian parenting, often viewed negatively in Western contexts, may be associated with desirable outcomes, such as respect for authority and strong academic performance, particularly in collectivist societies. Thus, the theory may not fully account for the diversity in parenting practices across different cultural settings. Another critique concerns the theory's simplification of complex parenting dynamics (Mahomed et al., 2022). Real-life parenting is often fluid and situational rather than fitting neatly into fixed categories. Parents may exhibit different styles depending on the context, the child's temperament, or the stage of development. This suggests that the rigid classification in Pillar Theory might overlook the nuances and adaptability present in actual parenting behavior.

The theory also tends to focus more on parental behavior while underemphasizing the role of the child in shaping parent-child relationships (Ayub et al., 2025). Modern developmental psychology acknowledges that parenting is a bidirectional process, where children's traits and behaviors also influence parenting style, a dynamic not sufficiently addressed in Baumrind's Model (Jokhio & Soomro, 2022). While Baumrind's Pillar Theory remains a cornerstone in parenting research due to its clarity and empirical support, it requires contextual and cultural sensitivity and an appreciation of the dynamic nature of parent-child interactions (Mahomed et al., 2022).

Ongoing research has continued to build upon and refine the theory to better capture the complexities of parenting in diverse and changing societies. In the USA, Alexander and Harris (2022) conducted a comparative study to examine the influence of different parenting styles on students' career choices. The cross-sectional study design involved 97 college students who were interviewed. Findings were that authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles contribute positively to reinforcing the choice of a correct career among college students. Interestingly, Alexander and Harris (2022) also noted that authoritarian parenting showed mixed results, with some students benefiting from structured expectations, while others experienced increased anxiety, which partially supports the present study's positive association between authoritarian parenting and career choices. This finding contrasts with permissive parenting styles, which do not support the development of confidence in making career decisions. This was a cross-sectional study design, thus opening a methodological gap, which the present study sought to bridge by using a correlational research design.

Multiple studies affirm that parenting styles significantly influence students' academic, emotional, and social outcomes, particularly highlighting the positive effects of authoritative parenting and the adverse consequences

of authoritarian tendencies. Stavroulaki et al. (2021), using 432 students, found that authoritative parenting enhanced academic performance through intrinsic and identified extrinsic motivation, whereas authoritarian parenting produced mixed academic outcomes. Similarly, Tsela et al. (2022), through a phenomenological design involving 101 parents, identified a hybrid “protective parenting” style combining authoritarian and authoritative traits, where warmth coexisted with strict expectations, resulting in students feeling supported yet struggling with autonomy. In Romania, Şiţoiu and Pânişoară (2022), based on 178 parents, found that authoritative parenting promoted better emotional regulation among children aged 5–10 years, while authoritarian and permissive styles were associated with poorer emotional regulation. Likewise, Liu et al. (2024), using a mixed-methods approach with 520 surveyed students and 20 interviewees, reported that students from authoritative households demonstrated greater independence, social competence, and resilience, whereas those from authoritarian homes showed lower self-confidence and weaker social engagement. The key point of convergence across these studies is that authoritative parenting consistently fosters adaptive developmental outcomes, while authoritarian parenting often constrains emotional and social growth.

Focusing on Africa, Adeyemi (2020) explored the influence of parenting styles on the academic adjustment of undergraduate students in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, targeting a sample of 400 undergraduate students from three public universities in Southern Nigeria. Data was collected using structured questionnaires based on Baumrind’s parenting typology: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. The findings revealed that authoritative parenting was the most commonly reported style and was positively associated with students’ ability to adjust academically. Students with authoritative parents demonstrated better time management, goal setting, and stress management. Conversely, those from authoritarian or neglectful households faced greater academic and emotional challenges. The study identified a significant research gap in terms of cultural context. Specifically, it noted that the influence of traditional African values on parenting styles had not been deeply explored. The study dwelt on parental styles in academic programs.

In Kenya, Njenga's (2024) study focused on the psychological wellbeing of undergraduate students in Kenya and how this correlates with different parenting styles. Using a quantitative survey method, the researchers sampled 480 public secondary school students. The study used a combination of the Inventory of Parents and Peers Attachment (IPPA) and the Identity Styles Inventory (ISI-5). Findings indicated that authoritative parenting was significantly linked to higher self-esteem, emotional balance, and life satisfaction. Conversely, students raised by authoritarian or neglectful parents showed elevated levels of anxiety, depressive symptoms, and academic stress. The study pointed out a research gap in the lack of socioeconomic diversity in the sample. Most respondents came from middle- to upper-income households, which may not fully represent the parenting styles in rural or lower-income communities. Future studies were encouraged to include more representative samples and explore how economic challenges influence parenting approaches. The present study focused on undergraduate students from public universities in Kenya.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was used. The study population comprised undergraduate students from the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, and Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology. Together, the three universities have a total of 100,060 undergraduate students (Commission for University Education, 2024). A sample size of 156 students was selected. Stratified sampling was used. This is whereby the total population of undergraduate students was sampled first by the name of the university, and thereafter, simple random sampling was applied to recruit the students from each school in proportion to the population size in each university.

Data was collected using adapted items from the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) by Buri (1991). The questionnaire has 20 items distributed between neglectful parenting, permissive parenting, authoritarian parenting, and authoritative parenting, with each dimension having 5 items. The samples of questions in this inventory include “My parents set clear rules and explained the reasons behind them” and “My parents rarely explained their decisions; I was just expected to obey.” “My parents often gave in to my wishes to avoid conflict,” and “My parents often forgot to follow through on commitments made to me.” The items will be answered using a 5-point Likert scale with “strongly agree” scored as 1 and “strongly disagree” scored as 5. The questionnaire was validated in Pakistan and the USA. Hassan et al. (2022) validated the PAQ in Pakistan using a sample of

720 secondary school students. The authoritative parenting style posted a Cronbach alpha score of .92, and the permissive parenting style, while the authoritarian parenting style yielded a Cronbach alpha score of .88.

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from Pan Africa Christian University's Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (ISERC). Research permit was obtained from Kenya's National Commission of Science, Technology and Education (NACOSTI). Afterwards, research permission was obtained from the respective university administrations to collect the data from the institutions. Respondents were accessed on campus and the purpose of the research and the ethical considerations were explained to them. The confidentiality and identity of the subjects was safeguarded throughout the study, and transparent communication was maintained. The collected data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to compute the mean, standard deviation, and percentages, which was subsequently presented using tables, frequencies, and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Out of the 156 students contacted, 135 responded, yielding a high response rate of 86.5%, while 13.5% did not respond, indicating strong participation in the study. Among the respondents, the majority were male (60%), compared to female (40%). In terms of age, most respondents were aged 19–22 years (40%), followed by those aged 18 years and below (25.9%), 23–26 years (18.5%), and 27 years and above (15.6%), showing that the majority (84.4%) were below 25 years. Regarding religion, most respondents identified as Christians (85.9%), while 14.1% identified as Muslims, indicating a predominantly Christian sample. Concerning year of study, the largest proportion were second-year students (42.2%), followed by third-year students (25.2%), first-year students (19.3%), and fourth-year students (13.3%),

Descriptive Analysis of Authoritative Parenting style

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for items measuring the authoritative parenting style, ordered from the highest to the lowest mean score. Most of the respondents agreed that their parents encouraged them to express their thoughts and feelings, as this item had the highest mean score of 4.28 with a standard deviation of 0.991. The second highest mean score, 4.23 (SD = 0.719), was associated with the perception that parents set clear rules and explained the rationale behind them, indicating both structure and communication in parenting practices. Another item with a mean score of 4.23 but a slightly higher variability (SD = 0.907), showed that many respondents experienced praise from their parents for their efforts and accomplishments. The item on parents providing guidance while allowing independent decision-making followed closely with a mean of 4.18 (SD = 0.898), reflecting a balance between support and autonomy. The item that received the lowest mean score, though still relatively high (M=4.15, SD = 0.830), related to parents listening to their children's opinions during decision-making processes. The composite score for the authoritative parenting style was 4.21 (SD = 0.869), indicating that on aggregate, respondents generally experienced a high level of authoritative parenting.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Authoritative Parenting Style Items

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
My parents encouraged me to express my thoughts and feelings	4.28	.991
My parents set clear rules and explained the reasons behind them	4.23	.719
My parents praised my efforts and accomplishments	4.23	.907
My parents provided guidance while allowing me to make my own choices	4.18	.898
My parents listened to my opinions when making decisions that affected me	4.15	.830
Authoritative parenting composite score	4.21	.869

The findings agree with Goagoses et al. (2023), Şiţoiu and Pânişoară (2022), and Chandam and Yadava (2024), who highlight the positive association between authoritative parenting and emotional regulation. The high mean scores reported for parental behaviors such as encouraging expression of thoughts and feelings, setting clear rules with explanations, offering praise, and providing guidance while promoting autonomy aligning with Chavda and Nisarga (2023) notion of core characteristics of authoritative parenting namely, warmth, communication, and structured support. The findings are further consistent with Ozturk (2022), who emphasized the role of parental modeling in shaping emotional outcomes. Although regional variations exist, the Kenyan context in this study aligns more with global patterns that Hadulo (2022) and Kay (2022) observed as affirming the benefits of authoritative parenting on the emotional well-being of university students.

Descriptive Analysis of Authoritarian Parenting Style

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for items assessing the authoritarian parenting style, organized from the highest to the lowest mean score. The mean score for the item “My parents believed children should be seen and not heard” was 2.14 (SD = 1.10), indicating relatively low agreement. The item “My parents enforced strict rules that I was expected to follow without question” had a mean of 1.92 (SD = 0.91), while “My parents rarely explained their decisions and over nurturing my emotional needs” recorded a lower mean of 1.78 (SD = 0.75). The item “My parents often used punishment to control my behavior” had a mean of 1.87 (SD = 1.02), and “My parents prioritized discipline over nurturing my emotional needs” had a mean of 1.85 (SD = 0.76). Overall, the composite score for authoritarian parenting style was low, with a mean of 1.91 (SD = 0.91), suggesting that respondents generally did not perceive their parents as authoritarian. The finding contrasts with Opiyo (2022) study that recognizes authoritarian parenting marked by high control and low warmth as still prevalent in certain cultural contexts, including parts of East Africa such as Tanzania. However, the Kenyan context may be shifting, particularly among university students from urbanized or middle-class families who are more likely to experience less authoritarian parenting. The low endorsement of authoritarian traits in this sample agrees with Hadulo (2022) and Kay (2022), who found that authoritarian parenting style is counterproductive to the well-being of young people.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Authoritarian Parenting Style Items

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
My parents believed children should be seen and not heard	2.14	1.099
My parents enforced strict rules that I was expected to follow without question	1.92	.908
My parents rarely explained their decisions and over nurturing my emotional needs	1.78	.745
My parents often used punishment to control my behavior	1.87	1.024
My prioritized discipline over nurturing my emotional needs	1.85	.764
Authoritarian parenting style composite score	1.91	.908

Descriptive Analysis of Permissive Parenting style

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for items assessing the permissive parenting style, ranked from the highest to the lowest mean score. The item with the highest mean score was the tendency of parents to give in to their children’s wishes to avoid conflict, with a mean of 4.33 (SD = 0.746), indicating strong agreement among respondents and relatively low variability. The second highest item, with a mean of 4.21 (SD = 0.772), showed that many respondents experienced their parents more as friends than authority figures. Following closely was the perception that parents prioritized the child’s happiness over discipline or structure, with a mean of 4.20 (SD = 0.948), reflecting relatively high agreement but with slightly more variability. The item regarding the lack of strict rules or consequences had a mean score of 4.14 (SD = 0.767), suggesting that many respondents experienced lenient discipline. The lowest mean score in this category was 3.93 (SD = 1.121), indicating that

fewer respondents strongly agreed that their parents allowed them to make their own decisions even when they were very young, and the responses to this item were the most varied. The overall composite score for permissive parenting was 4.16 (SD = 0.871), suggesting a generally high but somewhat inconsistent presence of permissive parenting behaviors among respondents.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Permissive Parenting Style

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
My parents often gave in to my wishes to avoid conflict	4.33	.746
My parents considered themselves more as my friends than authority figures	4.21	.772
My parents prioritized my happiness over discipline or structure	4.20	.948
My parents rarely imposed strict rules or consequences for my actions	4.14	.767
My parents allowed me to make my own decisions, even when I was very young	3.93	1.121
Permissive parenting composite score	4.16	.871

The findings align with Alcaide et al. (2025) who reported that in some European and South American contexts, permissive parenting can foster strong self-esteem. However, the findings diverge from literature that associates permissive parenting with poorer emotional regulation outcomes, as shown by Şiţoiu and Pânişoară (2022) and Goagoses et al. (2023), who advocate for authoritative parenting as more beneficial for emotional development. Moreover, Hadulo (2022) and Kay (2022) noted that permissive parenting does not favor Kenyan adolescents, suggesting a cultural mismatch between permissive parenting and the emotional well-being needs of university students in Kenya. Therefore, while the findings reflect a common experience of permissive parenting, they raise concerns about its potential negative implications in the Kenyan context.

Descriptive Analysis of Neglectful Parenting style

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for items measuring the neglectful parenting style, arranged from the highest to the lowest mean score. The findings presented indicate generally low levels of perceived neglectful parenting among respondents. The highest-rated item was “My parents often seemed too busy to spend time with me” with a mean score of 2.27 (SD = 1.18), suggesting mild agreement. This was followed by “My parents did not pay much attention to my needs or interests” (M = 1.97, SD = 0.87) and “My parents allowed me to manage on my own without guidance” (M = 1.81, SD = 0.85). Lower mean scores were recorded for “My parents rarely checked in on my feelings or experiences” (M = 1.70, SD = 0.80) and “My parents often forgot to follow through on commitments made to me” (M = 1.69, SD = 0.84). The composite score for neglectful parenting was relatively low (M = 1.89, SD = 0.91), indicating that respondents generally did not perceive their parents as neglectful. The findings suggest that most respondents did not experience neglectful parental style consistent with the trend observed by Kay (2022) and Opiyo (2022) in urban Kenyan settings, where family structures are evolving but still uphold some degree of parental presence.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics of Neglectful Parenting Style Item

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
My parents often seemed too busy to spend time with me	2.27	1.179
My parents did not pay much attention to my needs or interests	1.97	.873
My parents allowed me to manage on my own without guidance	1.81	.854

My parents rarely checked in on my feelings or experiences	1.70	.795
My parents often forgot to follow through on commitments made to me	1.69	.844
Neglectful parenting composite score	1.89	0.909

Figure 1 provides a descriptive summary of the composite mean scores for the four parenting styles assessed in the study, ordered from the highest to the lowest.

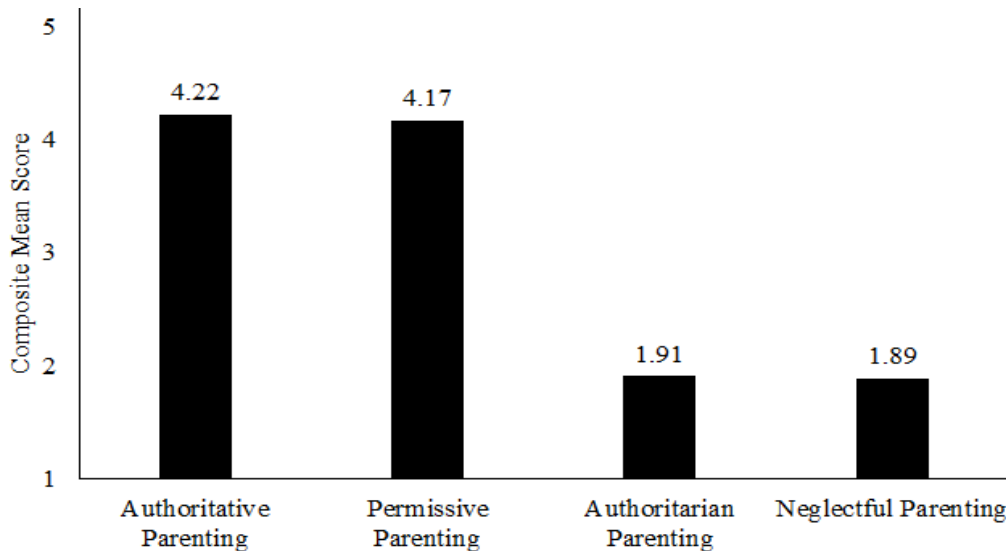


Figure 1 Descriptive Summary of Parenting Style Composite Scores

Figure 1 reveals that authoritative parenting was the dominant parenting style ($M=4.21$), followed by permissive parenting style ($M=4.16$), while authoritarian parenting ($M=1.91$) and neglectful parenting ($M=1.89$) were the least practiced. The finding that authoritative parenting was the most manifest style ($M = 4.21$) aligns with Goagoses et al. (2023) and Şiţoiu and Pânişoară (2022) and Chandam and Yadava (2024), who consistently highlight authoritative parenting as the most beneficial for children's emotional regulation and psychological well-being across cultures. The high presence of permissive parenting ($M = 4.16$) is also reflected in studies like Alcaide et al. (2025), which found permissive parenting to be linked with high self-esteem in specific cultural contexts, although this style has been shown to have mixed outcomes and less consistency compared to authoritative parenting. The comparatively much lower scores for neglectful and authoritarian parenting styles support Hadulo (2022) and Kay (2022) report that permissive and authoritarian styles are least preferred. The findings corroborate existing research emphasizing authoritative parenting as the most positively impactful style (Chavda & Nisarga, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Authoritative parenting is the most prevalent style among parents of undergraduate students in Kenyan universities, closely followed by permissive parenting. This reflects a parenting trend that balances structure with growing independence, which is developmentally appropriate given that university students are young adults. At this stage, parents may shift from direct control to more supportive and consultative roles, which explains the relatively high experiences of permissive parenting style. The low levels of authoritarian and neglectful parenting suggest that harsh discipline and emotional detachment are less common in this age group, possibly because parents recognize the need to respect their children's autonomy while maintaining emotional connection. This shift toward autonomy-supportive parenting mirrors broader societal changes in parenting practices during late adolescence and early adulthood. The study contributes to existing literature by localizing and contextualizing Western-developed theories of parenting and child development to an African university setting, providing evidence that Baumrind's Pillar Theory is broadly applicable but not without contextual nuance. However, the use of quantitative methodologies limited access to nuanced insights that qualitative

approaches would yield. A future study should adopt a mixed methods design to corroborate the quantitative findings with qualitative insights.

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