

Influence of Permissive Parenting on Delinquent Behaviour among Children from Selected Public Primary Schools in Eldoret Town, Kenya

Margaret Makale Chepgimis¹, Florence K'Okul²

^{1,2}*Department of Psychology, Mount Kenya University, Kenya*

Abstract: Parents play significant role as primary agents of socialization to their children whom they are expected to teach and control unacceptable behavior, to respect the rights of others as well as delay gratification. Parents to some extent indirectly influence their children's antisocial, aggressive and violent behavior. The purpose of the study therefore was to establish how permissive parenting styles influence delinquent behaviour of children from selected public primary schools in Eldoret town. The research adopted descriptive survey design. The target population of the study was 8403 participants with an accessible population of 2415 pupils from class seven and eight out of which a sample size of 242 pupils was selected. A questionnaire and an interview schedule were used to collect data. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively with the assistance of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. Data was presented in form of frequency tables, mean tables and figures. The study found that in permissive parenting style: sometimes children forget to do their homework; children decided not to go to school without permission while parents remain silent due to low control.

Key Words: Influence, permissive parenting, delinquent behaviour

I. INTRODUCTION

Parenting involves providing physical care, support, love and guidance for healthy development of children. This includes creating a nurturing environment of attention, encouragement and love. From the time children are born, they learn and acquire traits and behaviours that they exhibit throughout their life time. Parents therefore are expected to play this important role in their children emotionally, socially and cognitively [1].

Studies in the United States of America (USA) by Baumrind [2] found that permissive parents are high in warmth but low in control. These parents are generally non-controlling and non-threatening and therefore allow children to regulate their own behavior. They are nurturing but avoid making demand on the child. Tetteh [3] concludes that the problem of having too much freedom results to children developing inappropriately for due to the fact that it encourages aggressive and impulsive behaviours. Furthermore, he points out that such parents provide nothing than negligent or inconsistent direction.

In addition, Underwood, Beron, & Rosen [4] found that permissive parenting correlates positively with antisocial behavior. This therefore implies that most children who register antisocial behaviours had permissive parents. Akin to authoritarian parenting, Schaffer, Clark & Jeglic [5] found that permissive parenting may cause antisocial behavior such as rebelliousness and disruption among children. One might say that permissive parents seem to have no discipline, are too laissez-faire and allow their children to do whatever the children want. In this category, parents are less concerned with their children exhibiting problematic behaviours that are condemned in the society.

In Nigeria Utti [6] in a study on relationship between parenting styles and behaviour development found that adolescents from permissive parenting are more exposed to antisocial and delinquent behaviours than those from authoritative and authoritarian parenting. In addition, the study observed that permissive parenting had more negative effects on the students' academic achievement. Furthermore, Okorodudu [7] in a study on the influence of parenting styles on adolescent delinquency in Delta Central Senatorial District (DCSD) found a positive relationship between permissive parenting style and delinquency in adolescent. In support, Utti[6] reported that indulgent parenting dimension is without well-defined or clear-cut goals and such parents play passive role in the rearing of children.

Consequently, Ang, & Goh, Dion [8] claim that permissive parents are those who impose few restrictions, rules or limits on their children. The findings were therefore consistently in support of some researches carried out previously. Kring, Dvaison, Neale, & Johnson [9] reported a clinical case of 19 year adolescent from typical dysfunction parenting background who prolonged into delinquent activities because of poor parenting dimension. Okorodudu [7] concluded that a growing child with loose hands is the worst offence parents can engage in. Such a child from that kind of background becomes wild, delinquent and maladjusted to self, family and society at large. Permissive parenting enhances the exhibition of delinquent behaviours among adolescents.

A study by Changalwa, Ndurumo, Barasa & Poipoi [10] on the influence of permissive parenting style on delinquent behaviours among college students in Kenya and specifically

alcohol abuse found a significant relationship. It established a significant relationship between permissive parenting style and alcohol abuse among college students as 25% students abusing alcohol had permissive parents.

In Kenya, according to the Department of Children’s Database 2018, there are 12 children remand homes under the department of children’s services. The number of children in conflict with the law has risen significantly since 2013 to date. The database shows that between 2013 and 2017, 5,147 children were arrested, around the same period, 3,082 children were placed in remand homes. According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [11] there was an increase in the number of imprisoned juveniles from 2222 in 2008 to 2582 in 2012.

A. Statement of the Problem

In Kenya children’s delinquent behaviour has been on the rise especially among school going children leading to disruptions of the education process. It is estimated that 40% of Kenyan primary schools have experienced education disruptions as a result of children’s delinquent behaviour and other factors. The delinquent acts range from truancy, alcohol and drug use, aggression, rape, stealing and arson. These behaviour problems negatively influence children’s academic achievement and overall performance. Changes in family trends, structures and systems in the study area have drastically shifted parenting and general upbringing of children making the children more vulnerable to urban influence resulting in unruly behaviour. Furthermore in Eldoret town, there is low school completion rate, frequent aggression of children towards teachers and an increase of street children. Studies on children’s delinquent behaviour in Eldoret town have focused on the general population of adolescents, street children and how delinquency contributes to poor academic performance. These studies have however not specifically focused on the influence of permissive parenting styles on children’s delinquent behaviour. A gap the current study sought to fill.

B. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework indicates the relationship between permissive parenting and children’s delinquent behaviour. While permissive parenting is treated as independent variable, children’s delinquent behaviour is the dependent variable. The relationship between the independent and dependent variable give the extent or contribution of a parenting style on the delinquent behavior.

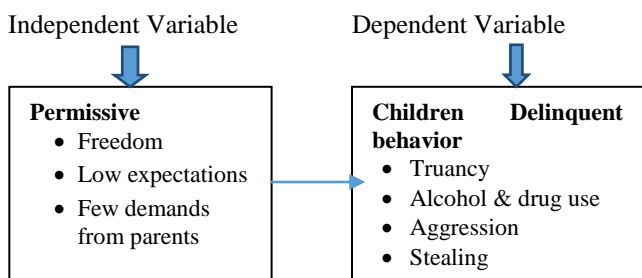


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey design in examining the influence of permissive parenting styles on children’s delinquent behaviour in Eldoret. The design was considered appropriate due to its flexibility nature of allowing both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The study was conducted in 27 mixed public primary schools within Eldoret town, Uasin Gishu County; Kenya. Eldoret town is a fast growing agricultural town with diverse communities. The town has several factories and industries. This former municipality has six educational zones within Eldoret town, (the study area) which is also the headquarters of Uasin-Gishu County.

The study targeted all the children of classes 7 and 8, their parents and class teachers from the 27 public primary schools of the former municipality. This included a total population of 8403 respondents composed of children parents and class teachers. The study adopted multistage sampling where stratified, simple random, proportionate and purposive sampling techniques were used. First, schools were grouped and selected from their respective zones. Then, thirty percent (30%) of the schools from each zone were selected. Borg & Gal [12] asserted that 10-30% of a population which is less than 10000 is representative. Based on this assertion, 9 schools were sampled for the study using simple random sampling. This process ensured equal chance for each school being included in the sample while at the same time minimizing biases. The nine schools selected include: Kimumu, Eldoret Chebarus, Kapsoya, Uasin-Gishu, Huruma, Township, Kamukunji, Langas, and Race Course. Using Borg & Gal [12] idea of 10-30%, the study chose 10% of the accessible 2415 class seven and eight children. This gave a sample size of 242. Consequently, using class register as a sampling frame; simple random sampling was used to select 10% of children of class seven and eight from the nine selected schools. In addition, purposive sampling was used to select one class teacher and one class parent representative from the selected nine schools. A total of 18 teachers and 18 parents were selected and interviewed.

The study adopted both questionnaires and interview schedules as major tools of data collection. The questionnaire was administered to children while teachers and parents were interviewed in order to obtain detailed information on parenting styles and delinquent behavior. This was guided by an interview schedule which was constructed based on the objectives.

Quantitative data from the children’s questionnaires was sorted and numbered. The data was then cleaned, coded and entered into the computer for analysis, examined for completeness, consistency and reliability using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 22. Likert data was analyzed through means and standard deviations and presented in form of Likert Tables. Qualitative data on the other hand was categorized according to the themes from the

research questions and all the responses were analyzed in a narrative form. The information was then presented in form of direct and indirect quotations.

III. PRESENTATION OF STUDY FINDINGS

A. Delinquent Behaviours

From the findings, majority of both teachers (85%) and parents (91%) agreed that there are children who are delinquent either in school or within the community. As a result, the study sought to understand the various types of delinquent behaviours that exist.

According to teachers, children show deviant behaviours in many forms which include: stealing from others; the use of abusive language; arrogance; bullying; fighting; truancy/absenteeism; rudeness; disobedience particularly not following school rules; cheating as well as noisemaking and shouting in class in the presence of a teacher. They also said that some are using illegal drugs such as bhang.

Consequently, parents also stated various forms of delinquency including: abusing and harassing other children; stealing from others; immorality; lack of respect; drug abuse; dropping out of school; truancy as well as disobeying their parents. It is clear that both teachers and parents had indicated similar forms of delinquency among children.

Finally, when parents were asked to state the causes of delinquent behaviours among children, the following were their responses: single parenthood where children are raised by one parent; poor parenting; peer pressure; lack of guiding and counseling; negative influence from mass media; poverty; poor communication between children and their parents as well as child neglect.

In trying to determine how permissive parenting style influence delinquent behaviour among children from selected public primary schools in Eldoret town, Likert scale format was adopted in answering where 1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=not sure (neither agreed nor disagreed), 4=agree and 5=strongly agree. Table 1 has a summary of the findings.

TABLE 1 PERMISSIVE PARENTING AND DELINQUENT BEHAVIOUR

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
Sometimes I forget to do my homework	3.57	1.44	1
Sometimes I am absent from school without permission	3.51	1.47	2
In my family parents do not ask me what I want to do	3.20	1.31	3
In my family I always have my way without question from parent	2.17	1.39	4
Sometimes I take things from other children and take home	2.13	1.28	5
In family children make decisions without consulting their parents	2.09	1.29	6
I always do what I want and my parent does not ask	2.07	1.19	7

In my family parents do not direct activities, behaviour and desires of their children	1.97	1.24	8
In my family children make their own decisions	1.93	1.17	9
My parents feel that I should be given freedom to behave the way I want	1.76	1.07	10

N=242

According to findings from Table 8, children forgetting to do their homework was ranked first (3.57); children being absent from school without permission occasionally was ranked second (3.51); parents not asking their children what they want to do was ranked third (3.20); children’s having their way without question from parents was ranked fourth (2.17); children taking things from other children and taking them home occasionally was ranked fifth (2.13) while children making decisions without consulting their parents was ranked sixth (2.09). Furthermore, children doing whatever they like without their parents intervention was ranked seventh (2.07); parents having not directed activities, behaviour and desires of their children within families was ranked eighth (1.97); children making their own decisions at family level was ranked ninth (1.93) while parents feeling that their children should be given freedom to behave the way they wanted was least ranked with a mean of 1.76 from the Likert scale.

Findings indicate that pupils were in agreement with statements ranked one and two which is attested by their means having values of 3.5 and more (≥ 3.5). They were however not sure with statement ranked third which had a mean of 3.20 which lies on the middle of the Likert scale ($\leq 3.5 \geq 2.5$). This implies that respondents were not at easy providing accurate response and thus, preferred to be neutral. Finally, respondents were not in agreement with statements ranked four to ten with means of 2.17-1.76 respectively.

Respondents admitted that sometimes they forget to do their homework (3.57). This is an indication that parents do not regularly supervise and monitor how their children are performing in school. Homework provides a platform where parents need to engage their children and understand their weaknesses as this will enable them to provide the needed assistance and support. Therefore, by the pupils admitting that sometimes they forget to do their school assignments given to them as homework, then this may be a pointer that some parents are not putting more emphasis on their children’s education. This may also suggest that pupils sometimes are left unsupervised by their parents when they come home in the evening.

The above findings were also confirmed by teachers who participated in the study through interviews. They said that whenever children are given homework to accomplish at home, the next day will find less than half of the class with complete assignments while the rest will do it that morning or will never do it. They attributed this to various reasons: parents not having time with their children because they are too busy, illiterate parents, irresponsible parents;

One teacher from Kapsoya primary school had this to say:

‘Parents have forgotten their responsibilities and instead passed them to us teachers. They no longer check their children’s books and therefore they cannot understand how they are performing. I even send one pupil from class seven who used to be steadfast in handling both home and class work but later on declined, to call his parent. The parent blatantly refused my calling saying that we teachers have failed in our responsibilities’

The above findings are consistent with that of Chevalier & Riegle [13] who found that some children were cunning such that they either intentionally or unintentionally evaded to do their homework. The study further linked these to parents being busy and lacking time to assist their children in handling assignments as well as weak parental controls.

Consequently, the study found that sometimes children may be absent from school without permission (3.51). The issue of children not going to school without valid reason is a serious form of delinquent. Children cannot be absent from school without the knowledge of their parents or guardian. This therefore implies that despite parents being aware of their children failing to go to school, they cannot take charge and order them to go to school. Thus, children may spend school time on other activities where some of them may deviate and engage in delinquent behaviours.

In an interview with teachers over truancy, they said that some parents do not encourage their children to go to school because they do not find anything good from their children. One teacher had this to say: *‘some parents are hopeless as they don’t see anything good from their children. As a result, these parents care less whether children attend schools or not’*.

Teachers also said that due to poor economic status of some parents, they are too busy looking for money and thus, have no time to attend to their children. In such case, children are left to make certain important decisions such as whether to go to school or not.

‘Some parents are too preoccupied with their work hence they don’t have time to be with their children. They are not aware whether their children have attended school or not. In the same way, they cannot tell the behaviours of their children’ said another teacher.

Some parents also agreed to have failed in their responsibilities. A parent from Langas Primary for instance said that he did not have a stable income and due to struggle in providing basic needs, he did not have adequate time to spend with his children.

‘My sister, I work from Monday to Monday trying to put food on the table. I come home in the evening very tired thinking of how I should wake up very

early in the morning the next day. Most of the times I arrive home late when my kids are already asleep. I don’t spend quality time with them. He said.

The above findings are in tandem with those of Areepattamannil [14] during a study on ‘Parenting practices, parenting style, and children’s school achievement’ found that parents who are permissive had weak control over their children to an extent that some children refused to go to school without valid reasons. The study found a link between permissive parenting and poor academic achievement of children due to truancy and inconsistency of children in attending classes.

Respondents were however not sure whether their parents do not ask them what they wanted (3.20). This implies that respondents did not want to express openly their opinion on this statement and as a result, they decided to be neutral/silent. This may imply that they either agreed or disagreed to the statement. However, if parents fail to ask what their children want to do, they will not be able to understand their children’s behaviour and thus, it will be difficult for them to correct and control them. One of the major characteristics of permissive parenting is that parents show high warmth to their children but low in control [2]. By parents not interested in knowing what their children want to do is an indicator of weak control and exercise of authority.

Respondents on the other hand denied that they always have their way without question from parents (2.17). This indicates that parents sometimes exercise authority and caution to whatever their children were doing, though not always. This may create a loophole through which children might capitalize and engage in delinquent behaviours. In addition, respondents also denied the statement that sometimes they take things from other children and take home (2.13). Instilling discipline in children is the best practice that every parent should strive to achieve. However, allowing children to steal from others without stopping them is a breeding ground to delinquent and criminal activities. Parents should all the time teach their children good morals but not only at particular times.

The above findings is inconsistent with those of Stace & Roker [15] who found that in permissive parenting, in most cases children are allowed to make decisions and rarely do parents intervene due to weak control exhibited by most parents under this style. They noted however that parental supervision and control is key to deterring delinquent behaviour among children.

Respondents also disagreed to the statement that they make decisions without consulting their parents (2.09). Children are perceived to be still developing and thus can sometimes make irrational decisions. Parents are therefore supposed to guide their children in making reasonable decisions. Despite pupils denial that they do not make decisions on their own, a teacher from Langas Primary during an interview said that some parents have allowed their children to make decisions without being involved.

‘Some of our parents are illiterate and they think that if a child is in class seven or eight, he/she can make sound decision but they are wrong. Last year we had a boy in this school called Alex who decided that it was the right time for him to get married. He dropped out of class seven in third term and got married. His parents supported that decision but do you think it was the right decision? I don’t think’ he said.

Respondents also denied that statement that parents do not direct their activities, behaviour and desires (1.97). Just like it is with decision making, parents are required to direct the activities of their children which will then be easier to control their behaviours as well as what they desire. Having control in all these as parents will enable them to understand and bring their children according to the societal expectations. On the other hand, allowing them to behave the way they want or do whatever they wish and desire is very dangerous as children can easily deviate and engage in deviant behaviours. The study also established that respondents had been denied freedom to behave the way they wanted (1.76).

In summary, it can be deduced that sometimes children forgetting to do their homework (3.57) as well as being absent from school without permission (3.51) were the major delinquent behaviours exhibited through permissive parenting.

Apart from descriptive statistics regarding permissive parenting and delinquent behaviours among children, a multiple regression was done to ascertain whether there is a relationship between permissive parenting and delinquent behaviour. Table 2 presents a summarized version of the inferential statistics.

TABLE 2
ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3.098	7	.443	20.975	.007 ^a

Findings from Table 2 indicates a statistical significance between the various variables of permissive parenting and delinquent behaviours among children. This is attested by the significance figure 0.007 which is <0.05. the findings concurs with several studies conducted to understand the influence of permissive parenting on children’s delinquent behaviours have indicated a positive relationship. For instance, Chan & Koo [16] found that permissive parenting is associated with and juvenile delinquency.

IV. CONCLUSION

It can be insinuated from the findings that poor monitoring and supervision of children by parents has contributed to delinquent behaviours among children. Children take advantage of the loopholes created by their parents to deviate from the required set standards of behaviour.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the need for parents to be responsible, take charge of their families by ensuring that children are brought up in a way that is accepted by the society. This may be reinforced through rewards and punishments in order to promote good behaviours while at the same time discouraging deviant behaviours.

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