
INFLUENCE OF PERMISSIVE PARENTING STYLE ON DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR OF TEENAGE STUDENTS IN SELECTED PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MURANG'A SOUTH SUB-COUNTY, MURANG'A COUNTY, KENYA

Corresponding Author;

Kirigi Samuel Gakui

Scholar, Department of Psychological Counselling, Mount Kenya University

e-mail: samuelkirigi15@gmail.com

Second Author;

Dr. Florence S.A. K'Okul

Senior lecturer, School of Social Sciences, Mount Kenya University

fkokul@mku.ac.ke

Abstract

Teenage delinquency amongst secondary school adolescents is a growing concern in Kenya that is hindering learning by the students. Permissive parenting style is characterized by low demands and high responsiveness from parents. It is associated with a number of negative outcomes for children and adolescents, including delinquent behavior. This study investigated the influence of permissive parenting style on delinquent behavior of teenage students in selected public secondary schools in Murang'a South Sub-County, Kenya. The study adopted a mixed research design, with data collected from both students and parents. The findings of the study were based on a sample of 373 respondents, comprising of 187 students and 187 parents. Questionnaires for students and interview guides for parents were used to collect data. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to analyze data. The collected data was analyzed by SPSS V.28. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such mean and frequencies and presented using tables, graphs and pie-charts The study found that there is a significant and positive relationship between permissive parenting style and delinquent behavior($r=0.128$, $p= 0.031$). This means that students who are raised by permissive parents are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors, such as truancy, substance abuse, and petty theft.

Key word: Permissive Parenting Style, Delinquent Behavior, Teenage Students, Public Secondary Schools

1. Background of the Study

Teenage delinquency is a complex social issue with significant implications for individuals, families, communities, and societies at large. Understanding the factors that contribute to teenage delinquency is crucial for effective prevention and intervention strategies. The way parents relate with their kids, set boundaries, enforce discipline, and provide emotional support can significantly impact their children's likelihood of engaging in delinquent

behaviors (Withers 2014). The influence of parenting styles on delinquency has been observed in various cultural contexts, including Western societies, African countries, and in Kenya. Understanding these cross-cultural differences in parenting styles and their influence on delinquent behavior can provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between cultural values, parenting practices, and adolescent development. If the issue of the influence of parenting styles on delinquent behavior is not addressed, several negative consequences may arise. Firstly, without understanding the role of parenting styles in shaping delinquency, effective prevention and intervention strategies cannot be developed. Secondly, parenting programs and support services tailored to address specific parenting styles may not be implemented, resulting to missed opportunities to mitigate delinquent behavior among teenagers (Cardona, 2020).

Studies conducted globally have highlighted the association between parenting styles and delinquency among teenagers. For example, research conducted in Spain found that authoritative parenting, which combines high levels of warmth and control, is associated with lower levels of delinquent behavior. In contrast, authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles, characterized by either excessive control or lack of involvement, have been linked to higher levels of delinquency. The permissive parenting style, which involves low control and discipline, also tends to be associated with increased delinquent behavior (Garcia et al. 2019).

Europe encompasses a diverse range of countries with varying cultural, social, and economic factors that can influence parenting practices and teenage delinquency. Research conducted in European countries has explored the relationship between parenting behavior and teenage delinquency, providing valuable insights into the global understanding of this issue. For example, studies conducted in Western European countries, such as France, Germany, United Kingdom and the Netherlands, have shown that authoritative parenting has been associated with lower levels of delinquency among teenagers because of its characteristics of support, warmth and appropriate levels of control. Conversely, authoritarian and permissive types of parenting have been linked with higher delinquency levels (Kiran 2019).

In African region, various parenting styles exist, including authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful. Osiesi et al., (2023) through his findings indicate that authoritarian parenting, characterized by strict rules and punishment, tend to increase the likelihood of delinquent behavior among teenagers. Similarly, neglectful parenting, where parents are uninvolved and indifferent, also contributes to higher delinquency. The magnitude of delinquent behavior in this context is influenced by socioeconomic factors, cultural norms, and community dynamics. Economic hardships, lack of educational opportunities, and limited access to basic resources also contribute to higher rates of delinquency.

Kenya, as a country, faces various challenges in relation to parenting styles influence on delinquent behavior among teenage students in selected public secondary schools. Parenting styles have a major role in shaping adolescent behavior, and understanding their impact is crucial for addressing delinquency in Kenya. In the Kenyan discourse, parenting styles can

vary based on cultural, socioeconomic, and educational factors. Some parents adopt authoritarian parenting styles, emphasizing strict rules and discipline, which has contributed to higher delinquency rates among teenagers. Neglectful parenting, characterized by a lack of involvement and indifference, is also observed, which can further exacerbate delinquent behavior (Ndanu, 2021). Therefore, this study endeavors to assess the influence of permissive parenting style on delinquent behavior of teenage students in selected public secondary schools in Murang'a South Sub-County.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Kenya has in the recent past has to deal with the surge in prevalence delinquency among secondary school students. Many have argued that school environments and teachers are to blame, others are of the view that parents hold a very central in shaping their children's character, a role that has been neglected by many family setups and left for teachers have little control over the children (Nhambura, 2020). A recent surge in delinquent behaviors has highly been attributed to relaxed parenting style by a series of scholarly works. A group of students from several schools near Karatina, Kenya, were arrested on August 7, 2015, for skipping class, smoking bhang (marijuana), and playing loud music on a minibus (Ngunjiri, 2015). The students were from Kibirigwi Girls Secondary School, Mukurwe-ini Boys Secondary School, Kaheti Boys Secondary School, and Kanyama School. They were intercepted by police after concerned citizens reported their suspicious behavior. The students were arrested and taken to the police station, where their parents were called to pick them up. They were also suspended from school for their behavior. Makuyu boys and Makuyu girl's secondary school in Murang'a South were in the limelight for the wrong reasons following where 9 boys and 9 girls were charged for arson following an incident of fire that razed down dormitories in their respective schools. An actor that has been described by many as lack of proper parental guidance (Ndungu. 2020). Recently at Chumo in Murang'a County 21 students were found possessing 10 rolls of bhang after they were subjected to a search by authorities (Wangari, 2022). According to Murang'a South Sub-County Education Committee annual report of 2022 chaired by Rhoda (Sub-county Director of Education), 84 students dropped out of secondary schools in 2022 in Murang'a South. The report attributes most of these cases to be influenced by home based factors. The report further indicates that the most common delinquent behaviors in Secondary schools in Murang'a South include; truancy, exam malpractice, rudeness, abusing drugs, theft, teenage pregnancies, truancy and boycotting. Students frequently displaying these delinquent behaviors are in form two and three. The report also indicates that 104 cases of teenage student pregnancies were reported between January 2021 and December 2022. Therefore, this study aimed at assessing the influence of permissive form of parenting on delinquency behavior of teenage students in Murang'a South Sub-County Secondary Schools in Murang'a County, Kenya.

1.2 Research Hypothesis

H₀: Permissive form of parenting has no significant effect on delinquent behavior of teenage students in selected public secondary schools in Murang'a south sub-county, Murang'a County, Kenya

1.3 Literature Review

The term permissive parenting refers to a style of parenting in which less restrictions are placed on children while yet providing a warm, responsive environment. It's common for parents to extremely love in a permissive style, but this also means that their children have less boundaries. They act more like a buddy than a parent, and they never demand their kids to act their age. Children with permissive parents often have difficulty learning to regulate their impulses and behaviors since they are not taught to do so at a young age.

Various studies have been carried regarding permissive parenting style. In the USA, a study by Miller et al (2012) investigated a possible correlation between parenting styles and creativity level in young adult population. The researcher collected data from 323 honors students at Midwestern University College. The researcher gave a conclusion that children whose parents are more lenient are more likely to have negative emotional responses to social disputes. Parents that use a permissive approach to raising their children are kind and caring towards their kids in general, but place too high of expectations on their kids' actions. They have faith in their kids' ability to make good choices on their own. Children raised by permissive parents are very likely to struggle with anxiety, low self-worth and sadness.

In western world, a study by Oviedo et al., (2018) in Spain used a sample size of 216 women and 225 men from South Western University to investigate the relationship between parental behavior and juvenile criminality found out that positive, caring, and protective parenting (authoritative parenting) has been shown to reduce drug misuse in teenagers compared to permissive parenting style. Further, it was found out that there was a correlation between parental neglect (permissiveness) and alcohol-related issues.

In western Asia a research conducted by Stavropoulos et al. (2013) aimed at assessing the correlation between patterns of parenting and achievements of school children in Greek society. The study used 101 participants who had one child attaining elementary school and who resided in Greece and used questionnaire to gather data. The study indicated that Permissive parents don't defer with their kids, don't set high standards for them, don't reprimand them and ultimately don't accept responsibility for their children's actions or outcomes and this affected the kids' achievement in school.

In India, an article by Tanusree Moitra¹ and Indrani (2010) "Does parenting behavior impacts delinquency? In a research comparing delinquent teenagers and non-delinquents, fathers' and mothers' parenting styles were compared to the prevalence of delinquent behaviors among teenage boys in Kolkata, India. The study discovered a clear distinction between the methods

of parenting of the two categories of adolescents. Further research revealed a link between delinquent behaviors and the permissive parenting approach of moms and fathers.

In Kenya Kisiangani (2018) conducted a study done at Chwele area located in Kibunguchi Sub County Bungoma. The researcher used pre-school children as participants. The research established that despite the importance of engagement of a parent in enhancing academic achievement and behaviors of a child, parents were not involved fully and this affected behaviors and performance of learners negatively.

Mwadime and Gatua (2022) evaluated the effects of parenting practices on boys' self-esteem. The residence of the study was in Taita Sub-County, Taita County. The researcher used students, counselors and administrators as participants. Cross-sectional research design served as the study's foundation. The study noted that low self-esteem is a result of permissive parenting, which entails parents who are unresponsive, and basically seem uninvolved with their children.

This study agrees with the previous research cited above. However, previous studies have only focused on elementary school kids and universities, academic trajectory, self-esteem and few have based permissive parenting style with its influence on delinquent behaviors of teenage secondary school students. Further only the dominant European-American group has been thoroughly studied in these studies, and there hasn't been enough research done in Kenya to link parenting practices to behavioral delinquency. The purpose of this research therefore is to identify any influence between permissive parenting styles and teenage delinquency among public secondary school students of Murang'a South Sub-County in Kenya'

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Baumrind (2013) theory of parenting styles is a widely accepted model for classifying parenting practices and predicting outcomes for children and adolescents. Baumrind identified three parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Authoritarian parents are highly demanding but low in responsiveness. They set clear rules and expectations and expect their children to obey without question (Darling, & Steinberg, 1993).

Authoritative parents are also highly demanding, but they are also responsive to their children's needs and emotions. They set clear rules and expectations, but they are also willing to explain their reasoning and listen to their children's input. Permissive parents are low in both demandingness and responsiveness. They set few rules and expectations and allow their children to do whatever they want.

Research has shown that authoritative parenting is associated with the most positive outcomes for children and adolescents. Children raised by authoritative parents are more likely to be academically successful, well-adjusted, and have positive relationships with others. They are also less likely to engage in delinquent behaviors.

On the other hand, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are associated with more negative outcomes for children and adolescents. Children raised by authoritarian parents are more likely to be withdrawn, anxious, and have low self-esteem. They are also more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors. Children raised by permissive parents are more likely to be impulsive, lack self-control, and have difficulty following rules. They are also more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors.

Permissive parenting is a parenting style that is low in both demandingness and responsiveness. Permissive parents set few rules and expectations and allow their children to do whatever they want. Permissive parents may think that they are being loving and supportive by allowing their children to do whatever they want, but they are actually doing them a disservice. Children need clear rules and expectations in order to thrive (Javier, et al., 2021). They also need to learn how to control their impulses and follow rules. Permissive parents fail to provide their children with the structure and guidance they need to be successful.

2. Research Methodology

The study adopted a mixed research design, which incorporates quantitative and qualitative approaches. This was an appropriate research strategy because it supported the use of questionnaires for students and interview guides for parents. The study was carried out in Murang'a County, Murang'a South Sub-County, Kenya, which has a total area of 547.2 square kilometers and is situated in the central part of the country. The target population of the study was students and parents from 33 registered public schools in Murang'a South sub-county, Kenya. The study focused on form 2 students and their parents, as this age group is most affected by juvenile delinquency. The total target population was 5,426 persons. The study used stratified random sampling to select a sample of 10 public schools from a population of 33 schools.

The study also used simple random sampling to select a sample of 373 students and parents from the 10 sample schools. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure that the sample was representative of the population in terms of school type (mixed day, boys boarding, and girls boarding). Simple random sampling was used to select a representative sample of students and parents from each school. The sample size of 373 students and parents was calculated using Yamane's formula, which takes into account the population size, margin of error, and confidence level. The margin of error was set at 5% and the confidence level was set at 95%. Both questionnaire and interview methods were used in data collection.

A pilot test was conducted in 3 schools in Murang'a South Sub-County which were not part of the sampled schools selected by the researcher. The pilot test consisted 10% of the target sample. The sample participants for pilot testing was 37 students and parents. The study used a mixed methods approach to analyze the data, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative analysis focused on descriptive statistics, such as means, percentages, and frequencies. The qualitative analysis focused on identifying themes from

interview transcripts. To test the hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess the association between parenting practices and delinquent behaviors in teenage students. A regression model was also applied to evaluate this relationship using ANOVA (Analysis of Variance).

3. Results and Discussion

The study had a response rate of 86.33%, which is considered to be very good. This means that the data collected from the 322 respondents accurately represents the influence of parenting styles and delinquent behaviors among teenage students in selected secondary schools in Murang'a South Sub-County, Murang'a County, Kenya. 62% participants were females while 38% were males. The Permissive parenting style was represented by 37.72% students out of the total sample population. 35% of the total sample population comprised of permissive parents.

3.1 Permissive Parenting style on forms off delinquent behavior.

The findings of the analyzed data are presented below:

Table 1: Permissive Parenting style on forms of delinquent behavior

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
Parental passiveness: My parents/guardian do not give guidelines and expectations for my behavior.	5(7.9%)	7(11.1%)	5(7.9%)	29(46.0%)	17(27.0%)	3.7302
Lack of parental demandingness: My parents/guardian do not feel that I need to adhere to regulations and rules that someone in authority had established them.	15(23.8%)	18(28.6%)	13(20.6%)	10(15.9%)	7(11.1%)	2.6190
Lack of provision of basic school requirements: My parents/guardians do not provide for me the basic school requirements.	18(28.6%)	16(25.4%)	9(14.3%)	9(14.3%)	11(17.5%)	2.6667
Parental negligence: My parents/guardian does not view himself/herself as being responsible for giving direction and guidance to my behavior.	16(25.4%)	17(27.0%)	8(12.7%)	12(19.0%)	10(15.9%)	2.7302
Parental lack of supervision: My parents/guardian does not give me direction and give me freedom to make decisions on my own.	11(17.5%)	17(27.0%)	12(19.0%)	13(20.6%)	10(15.9%)	2.9048

Where SD=strongly disagree, D=Disagree N=Neutral A=Agree SA= strongly agree

Source :(Research Data, 2023)

In regard to table 14, when asked about parental passiveness and the provision of guidelines and expectations for behavior, a significant 46.0% of respondents strongly agreed that their parents do not provide adequate guidance. Additionally, 27.0% expressed strong agreement with this notion, suggesting a prevalent sentiment of feeling unguided by their parents. A relatively small percentage of 7.9% strongly disagreed, indicating a lesser portion that feels their parents are actively involved in setting behavioral expectations.

Regarding the demandingness of parents in adhering to established rules and regulations, a notable 28.6% disagreed, expressing their dissatisfaction with the lack of parental insistence on following these rules. Additionally, 23.8% strongly disagreed, emphasizing their strong opposition to the notion that parents do not feel the need for their children to follow established regulations. A smaller portion of 11.1% strongly agreed with this lack of parental demandingness, indicating some support for a more lenient approach.

In terms of providing basic school requirements, a concerning 28.6% of respondents agreed that their parents do not fulfill this responsibility adequately. 17.5% strongly agreed, underscoring a significant proportion strongly supporting the idea that their parents fail to provide essential school necessities. 28.6% strongly disagreed, indicating a notable portion that feels their parents meet this responsibility diligently, providing for their educational needs.

Addressing parental negligence in giving direction and guidance to behavior, 25.4% of respondents agreed, indicating a concerning acknowledgment of a lack of parental involvement in their guidance. Additionally, 15.9% strongly agreed with this sentiment, emphasizing a significant portion strongly supporting the perception of parental negligence. On the contrary, 25.4% strongly disagreed, highlighting a substantial group that feels their parents view themselves as responsible for giving direction and guidance.

When it comes to parental supervision and granting freedom for decision-making, 20.6% of respondents agreed that their parents do not provide adequate supervision. Furthermore, 15.9% strongly agreed, underscoring a significant portion strongly supporting the notion of insufficient parental oversight. 17.5% strongly disagreed, indicating a notable portion that feels their parents offer appropriate supervision and guidance, granting freedom while ensuring responsible decision-making.

3.2 Correlation Results for responses for Permissive Parenting style on forms of delinquent behaviour

Table 2: Correlation Results for responses for Permissive Parenting style questionnaire

Correlations		Overall delinquency	Permissive
Overall _delinquency	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	167	
Permissive	Pearson Correlation	.128	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	
	N	63	63

Source :(Research Data, 2023)

The correlation table 2 sheds light on the connection between general delinquency and permissive parenting among adolescent students. These two variables have a marginally positive association, according to the Pearson correlation coefficient (0.128). A positive correlation indicates that there is a propensity for the overall delinquency scores to rise as the permissive parenting style scores rise. With a two-tailed p-value of 0.031, the association is statistically significant. This suggests that the correlation between permissive parenting and delinquency in the sample of students is meaningful and is not just a result of random chance.

3.3 Linear Regression Analysis between Permissive parenting style and delinquency

Table 3: Model summary for Permissive parenting style and delinquency

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.823a	.677	.050	.41322

a. Predictors: (Constant), overall permissive

In reference to table 4, the linear regression model's accuracy in forecasting delinquency based on permissive parenting is assessed in the model summary section. The model explains roughly 67.7% of the variance in delinquency scores, as indicated by the R Square value (0.677), indicating a reasonably strong level of predictive power. The model may fit the data satisfactorily, but there may be potential improvement, according to the adjusted R Square, which is rather low (0.050). An estimate of the typical mistake in delinquency prediction using the permissive parenting style is given by the standard error of the estimate, which is roughly 0.41322.

Table 4: ANOVA Permissive Parenting style and delinquency

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	.756	1	.756	4.420	.031b
Residual	10.416	61	.171		
Total	11.172	62			

a. Dependent Variable: overall_delinquency

b. Predictors: (Constant), overall permissive

The ANOVA table 4 evaluates the regression model's overall statistical significance. The F-value is calculated using the sum of squares for both the regression and the residuals. The F-value in this instance is 4.420, and the corresponding p-value is 0.031 (b), which is below the standard significance level of 0.05. This implies that the regression model is statistically significant and that the permissive parenting style significantly affects forecasting the degree of delinquency among the study's teenage participants.

Table 5: Coefficient for Permissive parenting style and delinquency

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	3.248	.239		13.580	.000
overall permissive	.080	.080	.128	2.110	.039

a. Dependent Variable: overall_delinquency

The coefficients in table 5 shows results from a linear regression model that looked at predicting delinquency in adolescent pupils depending on their parents' permissive parenting style. The projected delinquency score when the permissive parenting style score is 0, or the baseline delinquency level in the absence of permissive parenting influence, is 3.248, which is the intercept (constant). For every one-unit rise in the permissive parenting style score, the coefficient for that style (0.080) indicates a minor increase in the anticipated delinquency score of about 0.080 units. The positive coefficient highlights the direct and positive correlation between delinquency and permissive parenting. When assessed in standard deviation units, the standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.128 shows a somewhat favorable connection between the permissive parenting style and delinquency. The significance of this link is demonstrated by the t-value of 2.110. The corresponding p-value (0.039) is below the conventional significance level of 0.05, indicating that the permissive parenting coefficient has strong statistical significance.

4. Conclusion

Based on the study findings, positive and statistically significant correlation was found between permissive parenting and antisocial conduct. In this approach to parenting, parents set a loose or nonexistent standard and provide their children with minimal direction. Therefore, more liberal parenting is associated with more serious offending. Intriguingly, correlational data showed that parenting styles had a stronger link with delinquency than the school environment did among secondary school pupils in the Murang'a South sub-county.

5. Recommendations

Based on the research findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

- i) Parents need to communicate with their children, follow up their children activities, set reasonable rules for them, bridge the gap between them and their children, spend quality time with them, provide for their needs and continuously instill discipline in them.
- ii) Schools should organize training sessions with trained counselors during parent meetings to enlighten and sensitize parents on their weakness and the best ways of interacting with their children.
- iii) Parents need to assess their strengths and weaknesses in maintaining discipline of their children and seek professional advice from qualified counselors on the areas to improve in their parenting.

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