



Influence of Adolescent Gender on Parenting Styles, Autonomy and Self- Esteem among Kenyan Secondary School Students in Wareng Sub-County; Uasin Gishu County

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ABSTRACT

Parenting style refers to techniques and standards that parents utilize in child rearing. These have been cited to have brought conflict between young people and their parents on values, ethical principles, and issues of morality. This has been reported in almost all cultures, and hence justification for this study. The study was done in Wareng district, Uasin Gishu county. The specific objective is the influence of gender on parenting, autonomy and self- esteem. Population target was 23027 adolescents. A sample of 394 was taken from 10 secondary schools through stratified random sampling, followed by Cochran's formula. The researcher employed a correlational research design with a positivism paradigm. This research was based on Carl Rogers' Self Theory and Adult Attachment Theory by Bowlby, where both theories were used to enrich the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data and scored on a five-point Likert scale and a three-point scale. To validate the research instruments, the researcher used expert judgment and for the reliability, a pilot study carried out which gave a correlation coefficient of 0.84. Null hypotheses used were tested at 95% confidence level. Data analysis was done effectively using SPSS, focusing on the mean, standard deviation, a correlation analysis and ANOVA. The study revealed female adolescents being autonomous and male adolescents had good self-esteem. The study information might benefit society, and specifically parents who have a direct influence on adolescent autonomy and self-esteem. The study recommended that parents should adopt parenting styles involving adolescents in decision making and problem solving to enhance their autonomy and self-esteem.

Key Words: Parenting styles, Gender, Autonomy, Self-esteem

INTRODUCTION

Human life starts from conception, through childhood, adolescence, adulthood and ends up in old age. Possibly no stage in life is more complex and troublesome than the teenage years (13-19 years) of adolescence. It is a period of change where all the human doubts, hesitations and uncertainties appear. If these doubts are not correctly addressed, signs of immaturity in the adult person will remain (Thompson, 2010). Adolescence is both the age of idealism and hope, where the young person's energy opens up all the bright paths of life and he/she is ready to commit self to great and noble projects. All adults have had to go through adolescence. However, often it is difficult for parents and older people to understand the adolescents (Melgosa, 2003).

Adolescence is a period of "storm and stress". Melgosa describes adolescence period as an upheaval, and a disruption of peaceful growth, so did Anna Freud a prominent theorist, who argued that those adolescents who maintain their psychological balance during adolescence period may be abnormal. According to Kabiru & Njenga (2009), the adolescents are in a



stage of formal operational stage – which involves thinking abstractly. At this time thinking becomes quite adult like where most adult capabilities are thought to be in place by about the age of 16 years. Harter (1999) asserts that several other interlocking capabilities are revealed during this stage. Both male and female adolescent thinking allows them to judge the “reasonableness” of a purely hypothetical line of reasoning.

The adolescent child has a quest for autonomy and a good self-esteem. According to Steinberg (1999), the growth of independency is a sure part of becoming autonomous during adolescence stage; but autonomy means more than behaving independently. It means thinking, feeling and making moral decisions that are truly one’s own, rather than following along with what others believe (Steinberg, 1999). Development of autonomy helps prepare adolescents for decision making and be in charge of themselves. However, attempts at autonomy are sometimes blamed for fights that go on between parents and adolescents, depending on the style of parenting adopted: that is authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved (Resnick, Bearma, Blum, Bauman, & Harris, 1997). This study was carried out to help in identifying the most appropriate parenting styles which will enable both male and female adolescents in developing autonomy and self-esteem. Therefore the purpose of the study was to examine the influence of gender on parenting styles, adolescents’ autonomy and self-esteem, and how they influence adolescents’ independence and the main objective was to establish the influence of adolescent gender on parenting styles, autonomy and self-esteem.

METHODOLOGY

The study focused on the influence of gender on parenting styles, adolescents’ autonomy and self-esteem among Kenyan secondary school students. It was carried out in Wareng sub-county, Uasin Gishu County. Through numerous school programs and indiscipline cases, the region reported adolescent involvement in drug and substance abuse, parent-adolescent communication problems and teenage pregnancies among others. The researcher opted to use Wareng sub-county because adolescents come from varied cultural backgrounds. Thus research variables; adolescent autonomy, adolescent self-esteem and parenting styles could be well catered for, since Wareng sub-county is cosmopolitan. Administratively the sub-county is divided into two divisions; namely Kapseret and Kesses.

A correlational research design was used to study the level of adolescents’ autonomy and self-esteem based on different parenting styles and adolescent gender. This design was found relevant because it is a quantitative method of research in which the researcher was able to examine two or more quantitative variables from the same respondents. These helped the researcher to determine if there was a relationship or co-variation between the variables under study. Besides these, the researcher had no room to manipulate the independent variables and was able to score on the variables from the same participants. The design was found to be flexible, appropriate, efficient and economical to use (Kothari, 2005).

The target population was 23027 students in 33 secondary schools. The actual sample was drawn using stratified random sampling, followed by Cochran’s formula of 1977, which advocates use of 10% to 30% of the population. A population ranging between 14 to 18 years was used because the sub-county, through school programs revealed that most adolescents within these age bracket had outstanding conflicts with their parents/guardians.



Piloting was carried out in one of the schools in a neighboring district (Eldoret East sub-county) using a sample of 10 students and a correlation coefficient obtained was 0.84. These rendered the research instruments reliable for data collection. Table 1 below shows adolescent population according to gender.

Table 1: Population Distribution According to Gender

Age-group in Secondary schools	Gender	Population
14-18 years	Male	11,684
14-18 years	Female	11,343
Total		23,027

Source: Wareng District Development Plan, 2008-2012

The researcher used 30% (Kothari, 2005) of the 33 schools (10 schools) which were selected by stratified random sampling; there after the researcher used Cochran's formula of 1977 to obtain the sample size. The formula involves two key factors as follows:

$$n_0 = \frac{(t)^2 \times (s)^2}{(d)^2}$$

t = value for selected alpha where significance level of 0.025 in each tail = 1.96.

s = estimate of the standard deviation in the population. Estimate of variance deviation for 5-point scale calculated by using 5 of the standard deviations that include almost all the possible values in the range.

d = acceptable margin of error for mean being estimated = 0.15 that is (5x 0.03). Number of points on primary scale acceptable margin of error; point = 5; acceptable margin of error = 0.03 (error researcher is willing to accept). For a population of 23027 the required sample size is 394.

$$\begin{aligned} n_0 &= \frac{t^2 \times s^2}{d^2} \\ &= \frac{1.96^2 \times 1.25^2}{0.15^2} \\ &= \frac{3842 \times 1563}{25200} \quad n_0 = 394 \end{aligned}$$

This is further defined as follows:

$$n_1 = \frac{n_0}{(1 + \frac{n_0}{\text{population}})}$$

n_0 = required return sample size according to Cochran's formula

n_1 = required return sample size because sample > 5% of population

From research population 394 adolescents were selected and these constituted the sample which participated in the study.

Adolescent questionnaires measuring parenting styles, self esteem and adolescents' autonomy in relation to adolescent gender were used. The items were scored on a Likert five-point scale, and on a three-point scale. Reliability of the research instruments was estimated by using the split half method of correlation and correlation coefficient of 0.84 and 0.83 obtained in both the five-point and three-point scales respectively. Pre-testing research instrument on a small sample of respondents was done. Thus the researcher carried out a pilot study with at least ten (10) respondents, who were not part of the representative sample and reliability coefficients was obtained as; 0.84 which provided a measure of stability of the research instruments (Kothari, 2005).

Self-esteem questionnaire was also used for data collection, where items were scored on a three-point scale, and scores ranged between 16 and 48 as follows:



27 and below was rated as low,
28-37 was rated as optimum, and
38– 48 was rated as high

Also, adolescent questionnaire on autonomy was used and items were scored on a five-point scale.

The score ranged between 24 and 120 as follows:

62 and below was rated as low,
63-82 was rated as semi-autonomous
83-120 was rated as high.

The researcher used SPSS package in analysis where, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. With descriptive statistics, the mean and standard deviation were used. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also used since variables required comparison. The findings were presented in form of tables for easier interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section addresses the objective which was meant to establish the influence of gender on parenting styles, adolescent autonomy and adolescent self-esteem. The results were as follows.

Adolescents' Gender, Parenting Styles, Autonomy and Self-esteem

This section addresses the objective, which was to establish the influence of adolescents' gender on parenting styles, autonomy and adolescents' self-esteem. Data was collected using a questionnaire measuring parenting styles, and 394 adolescents responded to the items in the questionnaire. Four types of parenting styles were revealed as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Parenting Styles and Adolescents' Gender

Count		Parenting Style				
		Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive	Uninvolved	Total
Gender;	Female	1	126	78	1	206
	Male	3	118	66	1	188
Total		4	244	144	2	394

Table 2 shows gender count per parenting style. The table also shows that most of the adolescents in Wareng Sub-county come from authoritarian parenting style. This is a parenting style where there is too much demand on the adolescents and is unresponsive. Normally parents resort to force and punishment (Melgosa, 2003). Children brought up through this parenting style are full of anxiety and are unhappy. According to Chao (2001), adolescents raised in authoritarian households find it impossible to adjust, especially the female adolescents.

Parenting mean scores were also calculated using descriptive statistics (mean) as given in table 3.

Table 3: Parenting Styles Mean Scores with Adolescent Gender

Gender	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive	Uninvolved	Totals
Female	31.621	22.854	12.709	18.141	21.331
Male	30.968	21.240	19.947	18.255	22.603
Total	31.295	22.047	16.328	18.198	21.967



From table 3, the mean scores reveal that most students in Wareng Sub-county come from authoritative families with parents being more authoritative on female students ($\bar{x}=31.621$) than male students ($\bar{x}=30.968$).

The same data obtained on parenting and gender was subjected to analysis using inferential statistics: the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results were obtained as shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: ANOVA Source Table for the Influence of Gender on Parenting Styles

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	284.074	1	284.074	1.844	.175
Within Groups	60374.943	392	154.018		
Total	60659.018	393			

From table 4, Analysis Of Variance results indicate that parenting style is not significantly influenced by gender $F(1,392) = 1.844$, $P>.05$. This shows that parents are either, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive or uninvolved. Data collected through adolescents' autonomy questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics: that is the mean and the standard deviation and results presented as in table 5 below.

Table 5: Influence of Gender on Adolescent Autonomy

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Female	79.34	206	9.29
Male	76.65	188	10.56
Total	78.06	394	9.10

Table 5 shows that both male and female students in Wareng Sub-county were autonomous. To test whether the two mean scores (79.34 and 76.65) were significantly different, independent sample t-test was conducted. The results indicated that there was a statistical significant difference between male and female secondary school students' autonomy, $t(392) = 2.680$, $p < .05$. The implication is that female students in Wareng Sub-county were found to be more autonomous as compared to their male counterparts. Gender differences in autonomy may be due to parenting styles used, or the distinction between agency and communion. Agency refers to self-assertive and independent behaviors, which reflect an orientation towards self; while communion refers to an interpersonal concern, caring and co-operation and it reflects an orientation towards others (Lipka & Brinthaup, 2006). Agency is considered more characteristic of males than females, whereas communion is considered more typical of females than males. Research findings, show that females are more likely to report personality characteristics of communion and relatedness to others, and thus qualifies them to be of higher autonomy than the male adolescents (Hartars, 1999).

Data on gender versus self-esteem was collected using self-esteem questionnaire. A sample of 394 students was used and it was analyzed using inferential statistics (ANOVA) and results were presented in table 6 as shown below.



Table 6: ANOVA Source Table for Influence of Gender on adolescent Self-esteem

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	234.155	1	234.155	10.495	.001
Within Groups	8745.716	392	22.310		
Total	8979.871	393			

From table 6, Analysis of variance revealed that gender has significant effect on the self-esteem of students in secondary schools in Wareng Sub-county, $F(1,392) = 10.495$, $P < .05$. This further shows that self-esteem of male and female differ depending on the parenting style. Gender differences in self-esteem during the teenage years are widely featured in popular stereotypes; and sometimes accepted without actual support from empirical evidence. The most common stereotype is that male adolescents have a higher self-esteem than female adolescents (Thompson, 2010). The main feature is how adolescents view themselves and girls believe they are weak. Self-esteem include evaluations that are both positive and negative, and it can also incorporate specific aspects of the self as well as a global sense of self (Martinez, Garcia & Yubero, 2007). This is true of adolescents in Wareng' sub-county, since they are also subjected to normal developmental stages.

CONCLUSION

In parenting, there are two broad classifications. As per this study parenting can be classified as either demandingness or responsiveness. This study shows that parenting do influence the development of both adolescent autonomy and self-esteem in both male and female adolescents. Further, it is true that no parenting style can effectively bring about autonomy and self-esteem development in adolescents. Also, gender has no influence on parenting style, but influences autonomy and self-esteem of adolescents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is need to improve parent-adolescent communication to enable the adolescents develop their self-esteem and autonomy. With adolescents' autonomy, certain parenting practices should be embraced to enhance healthy development of autonomy and self-esteem.
2. The researcher affirms that, parenting requires firm boundaries with plenty of age-appropriate discussions between the adolescents and the parents to promote autonomy and self-esteem for both male and female adolescents.
3. Also adolescents should be given motivation techniques to help them see the advantages of cooperating with parents for better autonomy and self-esteem development.
4. The society or learning institutions should establish programs where program administration should be adolescent based, so that the motivation, direction and goals comes from the adolescents.

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