



Shaping Student's Career Aspirations through Parenting: A Study of Parenting Styles for Public Secondary School Students in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract

Parenting styles is the manner in which the parents instill discipline in their children with an aim of influencing their behaviour. Different types of parenting styles have varied characteristics with relative effects on the general behaviour of children. The style of parenting adopted in different homes affect the children's disposition. This can facilitate the development of a child or be detriment of his or her academic career. This paper is drawn on a study that sought to explore the relationship between students' career aspirations and different parenting styles among students in public secondary schools in Nairobi City County. The study was informed by the Family Systems Theory. Descriptive survey research design approach was used for quantitative data analysis where a sample of 60 public secondary schools drawn from Nairobi City County was used. Students and guiding and counseling teachers formed the target respondents. The findings of the study show that the discipline and academic achievement of the students largely depend on the parenting style adopted by their parents. While some parenting styles such as authoritative promote good behavior in children, others like authoritarian promote dysfunctional behaviour negatively impacting on the students' career aspirations. The study recommends parents/guardian not to have very high expectations of students. The findings of this study are significant to school Principals in that they will be in a position to provide vital background knowledge to apply in the context of family therapy. In this case, they will be able to pass similar knowledge to parents/guardians about the crucial role that they play consciously or unconsciously in shaping the behavior of their children, relating either to children's socialization or scholastic performance.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Public Secondary, Student's Career Aspirations & Nairobi City County

INTRODUCTION

In the African context and Kenyan in particular, family has always been considered vital and plays a great role in the growth life of a child; be it socially, economically, academic wise or just in the child's general behavior. Consequently, the type of parenting that a child receives is key since it may influence their future career aspirations. Based on the Kenyan context, the authors argue that family factor is fundamental in shaping students' career aspirations. However, studies have also indicated that other factors including student peers, teachers, school environment, classrooms social students' experience and cognitive ability as well as social values and socio-economic status tend to influence students' career aspirations and their academic achievement in totality (Thanita, Ravinder & Chuchai, 2010).

According to Kihombo and Machumu (2011), successful completion of secondary education equips students with knowledge and skills with which to access tertiary

education. Besides, tertiary education whether vocational or through universities enables students to become productive and useful citizens (Kihombo & Machumu, 2011). Their study argued that schools provide as social tools for instilling discipline and hence are mediums through which learners mingle and realize academic together with other related goals. Therefore, successful teaching partly depends on learners advocating discipline at the same time put off whichever factors working against learning.

Anderman, Winne, and Alexander (2012) explain that there are four types of parenting approaches that profoundly influence the behaviour of adolescents. First, warm but controlling parents who restrict the behavior of an adolescent will be protective or indulgent. Secondly, a cold or unemotional parent who is controlling towards the adolescent will be dictatorial and antagonistic. Thirdly, a liberal or permissive parent who is highly nurturing will be democratic and co-operative. Fourthly, a parent who is cold or hostile and permissive will be indifferent and detached from the child (Anderman, Winne, & Alexander, 2012). Understanding the factors that affect the discipline and performance of a child is therefore important (Benson & Haith, 2010).

A study conducted in United States of America recorded by Thomas, Leitch, Hughes, Midhigan and Dowell (2009) showed that specific behavioural and personality traits in children or adolescents would emerge from the aforementioned parenting approaches. This implies that children who grow up in a hostile but controlling parents are likely to become withdrawn, neurotic, and quarrelsome (Thomas et al., 2009). In adolescence, these children are likely to become non-compliant and highly aggressive.

Of crucial importance in parenting styles is that they can help or hinder certain educational processes. Clauss-Ehlers (2010) observes that a child's upbringing is more important than the school environment in predicting scholastic performance. Therefore, unravelling the role played by parents in influencing student career choice and aspirations is important. Based on the fore mentioned studies, it is indicative that students' behavior in school does not depend so much on what is happening in the school environment but on the interactions with parents and the kind of upbringing students have experienced. It is on this premise that the authors seek to unveil the association between parenting ways and the career aspirations of the students in public secondary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Underpinning Literature Review

A student's orientation towards an aspired or desirable goal or career is referred to as their career ambitions. The career ambitions of learners are often linked to their liking for particular subjects and engagements in such subjects as engineering, mathematics, social studies, sciences and Humanities among other related professions. More simply stated, it has been observed that 'career aspirations provide information about an individual's interests and hopes, unfettered by reality' (Hellenga, Aber and Rhodes, 2002, p. 200). A recommendable time for studying student career aspirations and helping them to develop the same is at their adolescence stage, a time when majority are in secondary schools in the Kenyan context (Watson, Quatman & Edler, 2002 cited in Bigner & Garhardt, 2011).

According to Benson and Haith (2010) parenting characteristics are determined by dimensions of parental responsiveness and demandingness on their children. Baumrind (1966) as recently cited in Benson and Haith (2010) developed a theory on parenting style proposing that parents can be categorized into one out of three classes: authoritarian; informing their children strictly what they should do; indulgent (allowing

their children to do what they desire to do); or giving rules as well as guidance without being overbearing (Benson & Haith, 2010). The theory was afterwards expanded to incorporate neglectful parents, ignoring their children, and focusing on other things of concern.

Benson and Haith (2010) elaborate that parents should be neither corrective nor unfriendly. Relatively, they should come up with rules for their children at the same time affectionate with them. These parenting approaches are important in describing normal differences in parenting, not unusual parenting, for instance those that might be detected in obnoxious homes. Benson and Haith (2010) add that majority of parents do not fall purely in one class, but fall anywhere in the middle, showing qualities of more than one approach.

Family Systems Theory

Bigner and Garhardt (2011) explain that this theory proposes that the family is an organization, or a multifaceted whole in which no person can be observed independently. Every family member can be seen only in his or her relationships with other people inside the organization (Vangelisti, 2012). Bigner and Garhardt (2011) argue that parenting is not a linear process, where parents influence children, but it is a multidimensional course of action where parents manipulate children, children manipulate parents, parents manipulate each other, and children manipulate each other. According to Vangelisti (2012), there are many characteristics of a family system that are applicable to parenting. For example, family systems exhibit mutual influence hence it is difficult to determine the causes of behaviour within a system when each person's behavior is a stimulus for another person's behavior. Subsequently, family systems may also exhibit adaptability.

Bigner and Garhardt (2011) further add that family systems are capable of change and reorganization is required to deal with developmental stress points such as childbirth, adolescent's quest for independence, or death of a family member. Adaptability however can be relative to situations, and some family systems have more capacity to change than others. Adaptability does not imply that change is smooth; families often have trouble when undergoing transitions (Bigner & Garhardt, 2011). Vangelisti (2012) maintains that family systems theory provides a outline for understanding the difficulty of relationships within the family. This may help parent's view the inner workings of their family in a broader context. Failure to show adaptability may lead to stress and tension within the family. Mutual influence can lead to learning of maladaptive behaviors from one another either directly or indirectly (Vangelisti, 2012). Family systems theory supports this study, showing that individuals cannot be viewed independently but in terms of the complex whole. This implies that what an individual or individuals within a family do affects the other members.

METHODOLOGY

Methods and Materials

Creswell (2013) defines a research design as a detailed outline of how an investigation was conducted including the instruments that have been employed, how they have been used as well as the means for analyzing the collected data. This paper adopted a descriptive research design as was deemed appropriate by the authors. Descriptive research studies are aimed at expressing the characteristics of an individual or group (Kothari, 2008). Gratton and Jone (2010) argued that descriptive designs focus on the current status of occurrences rather than the causes of the current occurrences. In this paper, descriptive research survey design approach therefore enabled the description of

the influence of parenting styles on student career aspirations in public secondary schools in Nairobi City County. The target population comprised the entire 60 public secondary schools in Nairobi City County. It was further estimated that each school has an average of 200 students who were purposively sampled. From each public secondary school, therefore, guidance together with counseling teachers and students were targeted as respondents. The distribution of the target population is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Target Population

Category	Target Population
Teacher counselors	60
Students	1200
Total	1320

The Sample Size

A sample size is a choice of components, members or entities from a population (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2010). The sample is utilized to formulate a conclusion concerning the entire population. An ideal sample is one which gives a wonderful representation of a population (Blaikie, 2009). The authors used a sample size of 132 respondents which was 10% of the entire population through stratified random sampling as per the categories. This was arrived at by the following: categorizing schools into six types; sampling 20 students from each of the six schools and one guidance and counselling teacher from each school. This was suitable because the schools were assumed to be homogenous since they were all situated in a city environment.

Table 2: Sample size in relation to the population

Respondent Category School	Number of schools	No of students sampled	Sample of schools
Boys Boarding	07	20	1
Girls Boarding	10	20	1
Boys Day	08	20	1
Girls Day	05	20	1
Mixed Day	24	20	1
Mixed boarding	06	20	1
Teacher counselors	60	6	-
Guidance and counselling teachers	60	6	-
Total Schools	60	132	06

Data Collection

Data was gathered by the use of structured questionnaires. A pilot study was undertaken with a small sample of the targeted schools which consisted of 22 respondents from Pangani girls' boarding secondary school. This is a 15% of the sampled population. This assisted in determining the accuracy, clarity and sustainability of the instruments. The responses of each area were analyzed and discussed aimed at improving the reliability of the questionnaires. The authors ensured validity by consulting several authorized lecturers from Kenya Methodist University and university of Nairobi who helped in ascertaining that the research instruments were consistent with the set objectives. After collection of data, coding and data entry was done accordingly into the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis.

The results were then presented in charts in form of frequencies, percentages, mean and modes representing descriptive data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this paper, the authors investigated how parenting styles influence the career aspirations of students in public secondary schools in Nairobi City County. In order to accomplish this objective, the authors sought to find out if the school arranged for parents/ teachers and students meetings. The results are presented in Figure 1 below.

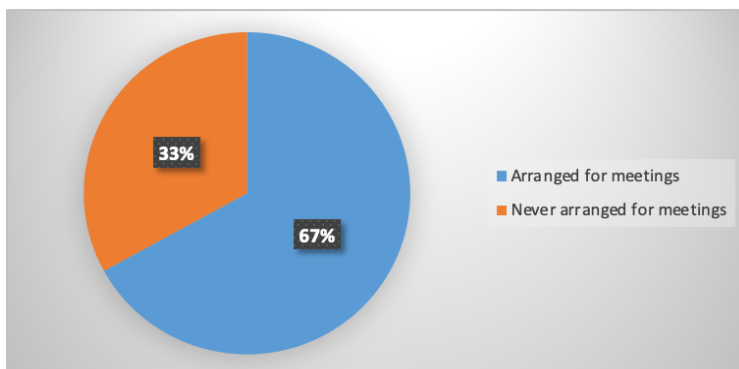


Figure 1: The school arranges for parents/teachers and students meetings

On whether the school arranged for meetings between parents/teachers and students, 67% of the guidance and counseling teachers indicated that the school arranged for the meetings while 33% had not arranged for the meetings. It is agreeable from the previous studies outlined in the literature review that parents play a significant role in the career ambitions of their children. To this end, it is important that parents meet the teachers and their children in various fields to discuss on their performance and how the same can be improved. As much as individual perception depicts that one's choice of career is based on an individual decision, the findings in this study show that their parents influence the career ambitions of the children in school. This is shown by the fact that parents are required at school and by the results presented majority of the parents turn up for the meetings with the teachers and students. This is done with an aim of discussing the performance and career development of their children.

In a study carried out by Jungen (2008) as cited in Vangelisti (2012), Parents have great role to play in the career development of their children. They were found to have a large impact in the choice of their children's career. However, some parents were not aware of the many ways through which they might influence their children's career choice unless they are guided by the teachers in charge. Among the identified ways, ethics, values held by the family and gender stereotyping played a significant part in affecting students' career ambitions.

In addition, the authors also sought the extent to which the parents attended and participated in the organized meetings to discuss their children's career aspirations. As depicted in the findings presented in Figure 2, the guiding and counseling teachers were asked on whether more than half of the parents attended the meetings.

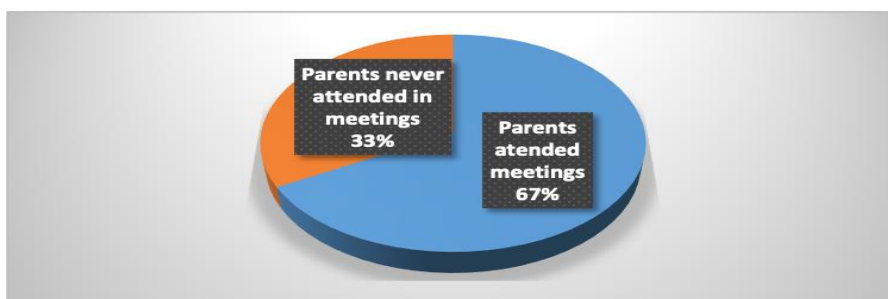


Figure 2: If more than half of the parents attend school meetings

Figure 2 presents the findings which indicate that 67% of the guidance and counselling teachers indicated that more than half of the parents did not attend school meetings while 33% of the guidance and counselling teachers indicated that more than half of the parents attended school meetings. According to Pomerantz, Grolnick and Price (2007) as cited in Vangelisti (2012) despite playing a vital role in the career paths of their children, parents depict a strong impact on their children and have the potential to shape their orientation toward achievement. It is therefore paramount that they engage in the development of their children's career aspirations through attending meetings called for by the school.

The authors were concerned of how the parents affected the career ambitions of their children and based on the findings presented in Table 3, students were asked to describe their level of agreement with the statements that depict influence of family values and parental participation in their discipline. This was thought to have an effect on their career aspirations.

Table 3: Students' agreement level with parent's influence on their career

Students' opinions	Mean	Standard deviation
I spend at least 2 hours with one of my parents/guardian every day while at home.	2.378	1.15
My parents/guardian have very high expectations of me	4.682	1.14
My parents / guardian allows me to make my own decisions	3.465	0.96
My parents/guardian appreciate me	3.391	1.09
My parents/guardian respond immediately to my requests	2.904	1.05
My parents/guardian notice and reward good behavior	2.863	1.14
My parents/guardian punish bad behaviour immediately	3.602	1.10
My parents/guardian give me responsibilities to do at home	3.271	1.14
My school fee is always paid before or on 1st day of every new term	3.981	1.20
My parents pay for co-curricular activities at school	4.183	1.06
One of my parents/guardians is a manager at work place	3.869	1.19
At least one of my parents/guardian does not work over the weekend	2.174	1.19
At least one of my parents/ guardian attends all school functions	3.503	1.08
At least one of my parents/guardian always sleep at home after job every day	3.91	1.17
My family attends church/ mosque/ temple every week	3.761	0.50
My family prays together every day	1.942	0.72

Based on the findings presented on Table 3, the students strongly agreed that parents/guardian have very high expectations of them as shown by a mean of 4.682. In addition, the students agreed that parents pay for co-curricular activities at school, school fee is always paid before or on the first day of every new term, at least one of the parents/guardian always sleep at home after job every day and one of the parents/guardian is a manager at work place as shown by a mean of 4.183, 3.981, 3.91 and 3.869 respectively. More so, the students agreed that their family attends church/mosque/ temple every week, parents/guardian punish bad behavior immediately and at least one of the parents /guardian attends all school functions as shown by a mean of 3.761, 3.602 and 3.503 respectively.

Moreover, the students agreed that parents / guardian allow students to make their own decisions, parents/guardian appreciate students, parents/guardian give responsibilities to the students to do at home, parents/guardian respond immediately to their requests and parents/guardian notice and reward good behavior as shown by a mean of 3.465, 3.391, 3.271, 2.904 and 2.863 respectively. Also, the students agreed that they spend at least 2 hours with one of the parents/guardian every day while at home, at least one of the parents/guardian does not work over the weekend and the family prays together every day as shown by a mean of 2.378, 2.174 and 1.942 respectively. From the findings presented, these are positive aspects that parents make a significant contribution in their children's careers through involvement in their discipline and promoting family values as shown in Table 3. The finding on parental expectation are in agreement with the results of Clutter (2010) who found out that the understanding of parental expectation by the young adult students had a positive impact on their career decisions. However, this influence is dependent on parent-child relationships comprising the attachment of parents on their children and the time spent together in daily interactions (Vangelisti, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Following the study findings and discussion presented in this paper, we can conclude that the career achievement of students will largely depend on the style of parenting adopted by the parents and their involvement in the child's career development. Some parenting styles promote good behavior among the children like authoritative style while others like authoritarian promote dysfunctional behaviors. Parents may contribute much emotional support but exhibit little control. In essence, student career aspirations are influenced by how parents bring them up as well as through their interaction with their children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study therefore recommends that parents should get involved in the academic performance of their children and follow up in the selection of their careers through participating in organized meetings by the schools. It is however advised that parents/guardian should not develop very high expectations of the students as each individual student performs to their level best capacity.

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