

Parenting Styles as Predictors of Selected Behaviours among Public Secondary School Students in Embu County, Kenya.

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Abstract

Secondary school students face challenges of safely wading through their adolescence in a world where the culture of drug use and sexual immorality is fast becoming the norm other than exception. As adolescents transit this turbulent stage they increasingly engage in risky behaviours despite the efforts made by schools, government and the society at large to address the challenges. The role parents in helping their children face the adolescent challenges cannot be underestimated, however, the extent to which parenting styles determine secondary school students' behaviours is not well understood. This study examined parenting styles, as predictors of selected behaviours among public secondary school students in Embu County, Kenya. Five objectives guided the study: to investigate the extent to which parenting styles predict secondary school students' risky sexual behaviours, to find out the extent to which parenting styles predict secondary school students' drug use, to establish the extent to which parenting styles predict secondary school students' violent behaviours, to investigate extent to which parenting styles predict secondary school students suicidal behaviours and to establish extent to which parenting styles predict dropping out of school by students in secondary school. The study was anchored on Bronfenbrenners' bioecological theory and parenting styles theory by Maccoby and Martins. Cross sectional survey research design was adopted for the study. Data on parenting style and students' risky behaviours, were collected by use of questionnaires, focus group discussion guide was used to collect in-depth views of students while interview guide was used to collect views of guidance and counseling teachers on students' behaviours. The study targeted population of 8820. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 15 schools. A sample of 399 students was selected using systematic random sampling. The study also used a sample of 15 Guidance and counseling teachers and 70 secondary school dropouts, purposively selected. Reliability for the parenting styles questionnaires and students' behaviour were calculated, an average cronbach alpha (α) of $\alpha = 0.82$ for parenting styles questionnaires was reported and $\alpha = 0.78$ for risky behaviour. Data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics such as: frequency tables, means percentages and inferential statistics. All the study hypotheses were tested by use of multiple linear regressions. The major findings of the study based on the study objectives showed that parenting styles significantly predict secondary school students' behaviours studied, specifically parenting styles predicting students risky sexual behaviours ($R^2 = 0.483$, $P < 0.05$), parenting styles predicting drug use ($R^2 = 0.644$, $P < 0.05$), Parenting styles predicting students' violence ($R^2 = 0.627$, $P < 0.05$), parenting styles predicting suicidal behaviour ($R^2 = 0.721$, $P < 0.05$) and parenting styles predicting students school dropout ($R^2 = 0.862$, $P < 0.05$). The study also established that authoritative parenting style is the most protective of students against behaviours of students which are undesirable. The study recommends that, students' behaviours be addressed through combined efforts of the government; school BOM, PTA. Each agent should be involved in intervention measures which target educating and empowering parents on good parenting.

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