

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

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Abstract

Secondary school students are faced with challenges of navigating safely through their adolescence in a world full of depressive challenges. As adolescents' transit this stage they increasingly face a myriad of challenges which are depressive and at times lead to suicidal behaviors. Parents play a primary role in socializing their children on dealing with life challenges; however, the extent to which parenting styles predetermine students' suicidal behaviors remains obscure. The study investigated parenting styles, (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive indulgent and permissive neglectful) as predictors of suicidal behaviors among students in Embu county. The study was guided by the objective; to investigate the extent to which parenting styles significantly predict secondary school students' suicidal behaviors. The study was informed by Bronfenbrenners' bioecological theory and parenting styles theory by Maccoby and Martins. Survey research design was adopted for the study. Stratified random sampling method was used to select a sample of 15 schools. Stratified random sampling and systematic random sampling were used to select 399 participants (221 girls and 178 boys). Purposive sampling was used to select 15 Guidance and counseling teachers and 70 secondary school drop outs. A reliability of cronbach alpha (α) of $\alpha = 0.82$ for parenting styles questionnaires was reported and for risky behaviors $\alpha = 0.78$. The major findings of the study based on the objective of the study showed that parenting styles have a positive and significant prediction of risky sexual behaviors among secondary school students, and that parenting styles accounts for; 57.2% ($R^2=0.572$, $p < 0.05$) of secondary school students risky sexual behaviors, The study recommended that, the government through the ministry of education (MOE) and the school boards of management maintain a trained resident school counselors or psychologists in schools, who do not have teaching duties, in order to enable them have enough time to identify students with depressive signs which are precursors of suicidal behavior. Such counselors would be available to help students and make follow-ups with parents.

Keywords: Parenting styles, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive indulgence permissive neglectful, students, suicidal behaviors.

1. Background to the Study

Suicide occurs all over the world and can take place at almost any age; however suicide ideation is most common in adolescents (Yterdal, 2016). According to WHO (2014) around the world, suicide contributes 50% of all violent deaths among men and 71% among women most of who are in their youth. According to the report, in every successful suicide case there are many more individual people with suicidal behaviors every year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2014), suicide among adolescents age 13-18, contributed 20.4% of deaths for the year 2014 in USA. WHO (2014), ranks Kenya in 29th position globally in suicide death rate, with a suicide rate of 15.58% with Some of those suicide victims being as young as 12 years of age (Kalua, 2014). Cases of students committing suicide at times on account of poor performance in national examinations have been on the increase (Mugambi, 2016).

A study by Munene (2016), show that, suicidal behaviors among adolescent students in Kenya are common phenomena. Other than complete suicide suicidal behaviors such as suicidal ideation gestures and attempts are rarely reported many of which happen in schools (Macharia, 2013). Suicidal thoughts are rare in children under the age of 10, but suicidal ideation increase slowly as the child grows older from 10 years to 12 years as abstract thought process increases it then may increase rapidly after age 12 years (Rubin, 2013). Some school students in Kenya have been reported to have committed suicide on the basis of failure in exams or social relationships (Macharia, 2013). For example a report by Hussein (2012) show that a girl named Mercy Chebet, aged 14 years committed suicide for failure to "pass" her KCPE exam in 2012. Suicide prevention resource center (2011) identifies familial factors as risk factors for suicidal behaviors among adolescents. Research suggests that parenting styles and parental bonding styles are strongly associated with adolescent suicidality both directly and indirectly (Yterdal, 2016).

Authoritative parenting style is characterized by high: monitoring, supervision and moderate control of the

child. At the same time the authoritative parent provides warmth to the child (Macobby & Martins, 2003). The authoritative parent also provides a two way communication, by giving strict rules as well as explaining why the rules must be followed, while at the same time listening to the concerns of the child (Devore & Ginsburg, 2005). Permissive indulgent parent provides little control to the child with a lot of warmth. The parent-child communication is child centered, with parent not giving rules to be followed but listens to the demands of the child. There is little or no monitoring or supervision, the child is allowed to regulate his/her own behavior (Baumrind, Larzelere, & Owens, 2010). Permissive neglecting parent are uninvolved with children's activities and do not offer control or warmth to the child. Neglectful parents do not provide rules, monitoring or supervision to children and provide little or no communication. The child is left to determine his behaviors with no parental involvement (Yusefi, Idelu, Saravani & Rezeghi, 2016). Research findings on influence of parenting styles on adolescents differ from one culture to another which makes it difficult to use such findings from one cultural background as "normative" thus such findings are difficult to generalize. Thus, parenting outcomes need to be considered in their cultural settings. According to Bornstein (2012), each culture is different from the other based on deeply rooted practices, beliefs and attitudes which guide how a person feels, thinks and acts in order to be a fully functional entity of that culture. This study therefore sought to fill the gap by investigating how parenting styles predetermine adolescent risky behaviors and school dropout rate in Embu County, Kenya.

2. Study Objective

The study was guided by the objective; to investigate whether parenting styles predict suicidal behaviors among secondary school students in Embu County.

3. Hypothesis

This study was guided by the following hypothesis.

Ho: Parenting styles do not have a statistically significant prediction of suicidal behaviors among secondary school students.

4. Review of Related Literature

Suicide occurs all over the world and can take place at almost any age. According to WHO report (2014) globally, suicides contribute 50% of all violent deaths among males and 71% in females most of who are youth. The report also contends that in each successful suicide there are many more people who have suicidal behaviors. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report (CDC, 2014), 20.4% of deaths for the year 2014 in the USA among adolescents age 13-18, is accounted for by suicide. In Malaysia, in year 2011 there was an average of 60 suicide cases per month (National Suicide Registry Malaysia, 2011). Among risk factors associated with suicide are parenting styles. Ying (2013) studied possible partial correlation between perceived parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) and youth suicidality (negative life ideation, and suicidal behaviour). In addition, parental effects on youth perception towards positive ideation towards life were also investigated to identify the protective factor to suicidality. The study recruited a sample of 255 participants via non probability purposive sampling across various university campuses and secondary schools from different regions in Malaysia. Pearson (Bivariate) partial correlation show that authoritative parenting style was positively partial correlated with positive ideation in general and for males only, while permissive parenting style was negatively partial correlated with negative suicide ideation. Multiple Regressions show that negative suicide ideation was the main predictor to suicidal behaviour, regardless of parenting style and positive ideation. Authoritative theme was a major positive influence viewed by young people whereas authoritarian theme and permissive theme are classified as major negative influence towards suicide. The research was carried out in Malaysia, where cultural settings are different making it difficult to generalize the results in Kenyan context.

In Kenya depression contributes to 84% of suicidal cases (Ndeti, Khasakhala, Mutiso & Mwayo, 2010). Ndeti, Khasakhala, Mathai and Harder (2008) had examined depression among adolescents. The study show that, in Kenya, 4% of 12 to 17 years old and 9% of 18 to 24 years' old adolescents suffer from major depressive disorder. The study also found that out of a sample of 250 secondary school students, 43.7% had depression symptoms. Khasakhala, Ndeti and Mathai (2013) carried out another study on suicidal behavior among the youth with psychopathology in youth going for outpatient psychiatric clinic in Kenya; a sample of 250 youths was used. The study investigated relationship between suicidal behaviour and co-existing psychiatric or substance disorders students. The findings show that there is a significant statistical relationship between depressive and suicidal behaviour among adolescents. It was also found that more teenagers aged between 16-18 years had more suicidal behaviour than those below age 16 years or above 18 years. The study focused on youth psychiatric clinics, which means only those youths with diagnosed psychopathology issues were considered yet there are many more adolescents in their nascent stages of suicidal ideation who have not been identified. This study sought to collect and analyze data from secondary school students in order to shed more light and understanding role of parenting style in predetermining student's suicidal behavior.

When teenagers disagree with their parents' behaviors towards them, the teenagers are more likely to display psychosocial challenges such as depression (Smith & Moore, 2012). This concurs with a study done by Sharma, Sharma and Yadava (2011) on relationship between parenting styles and depression among teenagers in India. A sample of 100 teenagers aged 14 to 16 year and their parents were used in the study. Data were collected using questionnaires. Data were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and t-test. The study found that permissive style was significantly negatively correlated with depression, while authoritarian style was positively correlated with depression. Munene (2016) carried out a study on what causes suicide among secondary school students in Murang'a Kenya. The findings show suicide among students is on the increase and among the causes is desperation. The study done in India used a small sample of 100 students which may not be very representative, in addition to the fact that parenting practices Indian are different from those in Kenyan, thus the results are not generalizable in Kenya. The study done in Kenya by Munene focused on the rate of increase. This study used a sample of 399 students in addition to collecting data from guidance and counseling teachers.

In a study by Donath, Graessel, Baier, Bleich, and Hillemacher (2014) studied parenting styles as a predictor of suicide attempts among German adolescents. The study used 44,610 students in the 9th grade of different school types in Germany. A three-step statistical analysis was carried out. In step one the association between parenting style and suicide attempts was explored via binary logistic regression controlled for age and sex. In step two, the predictive values of 13 additional risk/protective factors were analyzed with single binary logistic regression analysis for each predictor alone. In step three, a multivariate binary logistic regression analysis, all significant predictor variables from step two and parenting styles were included after testing for multicollinearity. The findings show that authoritative parenting had a protective factor of OR=0.79 while neglectful parenting had a risk factor of OR=1.63, significant at $P < 0.001$. The study concluded that parenting style does matter and while children of authoritative parents profit, children of Rejecting-Neglecting parents are put at risk.

According to Dishion and Patterson (2006) as cited in Hoskins (2014) family environments are important basic ecology in which children's behaviors are developed, learned, encouraged or suppressed. Muiru, Thinguri and Macharia (2014) carried out a study on contribution of family history to suicide ideation and suicide attempts among students in public secondary schools in Kenya. The study sampled 300 respondents. Among the respondents were 260 students, 8 sub-county educational officers, 28 class teachers and 4 heads of guidance and counseling. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and interviews schedules. Regression analysis yielded the value of $R=0.848$ which means family history contributes significantly to the explanation of increased cases of suicidal behavior. While the study was important in supporting the role of family in contributing to suicide ideations and attempts it did not address role of parenting styles in suicidal ideations. This study sought to bridge the gap by focusing on the parenting styles and their role in predicting suicidal tendencies.

Sylvia, Lai and Daniel (2010) studied hopelessness, parent-adolescent communication and suicidal ideation among Chinese adolescents in Hong-Kong. The study used a sample of 5,557 Chinese secondary school students from Hong-Kong. Results show that suicidal ideation is positively related to hopelessness, but negatively related to parent-adolescent communication. Compared with father-adolescent communication, mother-adolescent communication generally had a stronger association with adolescent suicidal ideation. It was further found that the linkage between hopelessness and adolescent suicidal ideation is stronger under a low parent-adolescent communication condition

Adolescents' awareness about suicidal risk factors are may act as protective against suicidal ideation. Mugambi and Gitonga (2015) studied secondary school students' knowledge of psychosocial risk factors causing depression among secondary school students in Nairobi-Kenya. The study sampled 5 urban private secondary schools. A sample of 130 respondents randomly selected. The findings of the show that, adolescents are aware of depression causing psychosocial risk factors, which include, exposure to the conflicting relationship with parents, broken family relationships. Depression is a precursor of suicidal behaviors. In another study, Macharia (2013) studied teachers' knowledge of suicidal behavior risk factors among teenage students Secondary Schools in Nyandarua South District, Kenya. Probability and non probability sampling methods were used to sample 73 teachers and 11 teacher counselors respectively. The findings established that teachers are aware of depression, as one of the suicidal risk factor. They identified dysfunctional families, irresponsible parenting, and as risk factors. The study by Mugambi and Gitonga focused on awareness suicidal risk factors in an urban population where information for the students may be more available both in school and from parents unlike rural schools. On the other hand, the study by Macharia did not identify the contribution of specific parenting styles on suicidal thoughts. This study aimed at addressing these gaps by drawing its sample from mainly rural setting with representation of urban setting.

5. Methodology

The target population for this study all the form 2 and form three students in public secondary schools in Embu

County. The study adopted survey research design. Stratified random was used to select 15 schools. This was done in order to ensure all the categories of schools were represented. From each category of schools simple random sampling was used to get 399 students proportionately from form 2 and form 3. Simple random sampling was used to select 8 participants for the focus group discussion from the sampled students. Focus group discussion was used in order to get students feelings on the subject of the study. Purposive sampling was used to select 15 guidance and counseling teacher school dropouts from the selected schools and 70 school dropouts. Data were collected by use of a four-point likert scale questionnaires, focus group discussion schedule and interview schedule. The questionnaires were administered to ongoing students and school dropouts. Data from guidance and counseling teachers were collected by use of interview schedule.

6. Study Findings

The study findings were represented by use of descriptive and inferential statistics.

6.1 Results on Scoring of Parenting Style Questionnaires

Questionnaires on parenting style were rated on a five point Likert scale. There were 15 items for each of the four parenting styles measured on a 5 point likert scale. The lowest score for each style was 15 while the highest score was 75 and the average for each parenting style was 45 (that is, $15+75=90/2=45$). For each of the parenting styles the defining score was 45. A score of 45-90 on the authoritative questionnaire was considered high on authoritative while a score of 15-44 was considered low on authoritative. A score of 45-90 on the authoritarian questionnaire was considered high on authoritarian style; while a score of 15-44 was considered low on authoritarian style. A score of 45-90 on the permissive indulgent questionnaire was considered to be high on permissive indulgent while a score of 15-44 was considered to be low on permissive indulgence. A score of 45-90 on permissive neglectful questionnaire was considered to be high on permissive neglectful while a score of 15-44 was considered low on permissive neglectful. The results for the scoring were presented in Table 1.0 below.

Table 1. Results on Scoring of Parenting Style Questionnaires

Parenting styles	Low		High		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Authoritative	116	29.1	283	70.9	399	100
Authoritarian	162	40.6	237	59.4	399	100
Permissive Indulgence	194	48.6	205	51.4	399	100
Permissive neglectful	199	48.9	200	50.1	399	100
Average	168	42.1	231	57.9	399	100

N=399

Table 1 shows that, majority (70.9%) of the responses score very high on Authoritative style, followed by Authoritarian parenting style. This means that authoritative parenting is the commonest among the parents of the target population. This is followed by authoritarian (59.4%). The least common parenting style is permissive neglectful with 50.1% of the responses. It was further revealed that on average all the factors scored relatively high (57.9%). This was an indication that the four parenting styles are common within the target population.

Table 2. Results on Scoring of School Dropouts Rate

Parenting Styles	Low		High		Total	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Authoritative	31	60	21	40	52	100
Authoritarian	17	30.3	35	69.7	52	100
Permissive Indulgence	26	50.0	26	50.0	52	100
Permissive neglectful	16	30	36	70.0	52	100
Average	22	36.7	30	57.4	52	100

N= 52

Table 2 shows that, majority (70 %) of the responses scored high on permissive neglectful style, followed by Authoritarian parenting style (69.4%), permissive indulgence with 50 % responses and the lowest score for high scoring was authoritative (40%). It was further revealed that on average all the factors scored relatively high (57.4%). This was an indication that the four parenting styles influenced the children dropout rate. Bledsoe (2002) argues that the irony of school dropout is that the problem is shared by both richest and poorest countries in equal measure. The findings concur with a study by Chirteş (2010) which found that family factors such as parenting styles are among the factors that lead to school dropout. The findings also concur with a study by Kato (2015) which linked school dropout especially of girls to lack of strict parental supervision as well as monitoring.

6.2 Descriptive Statistics for Focus Group discussion

The study collected views from 15 focus groups, one group from each selected school; each group was made up of 8 students selected randomly from those students who participated in answering the questionnaires. Responses from the focused group discussion were analyzed under three broad themes; ease of students discussing risky behaviors with parents, people students prefer to discuss risky behaviors with and students expectations of their parents in handling risky behavior. The responses are given in tables, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4

Table 3. Ease of Students Discussing Risky Behaviors with Parents

Suicidal behaviors		
N=15		
	Freq	%
Not easy	11	73
Easy	4	27
Total	15	100

Table 3 shows that, most (100%) of the groups, agreed that sex issues are not easy to discuss with parents because they considered the topic shameful. This was followed by suicidal issues (73%), students felt that the subject is personal and at times parents are the cause since some parents are too strict and they do not allow dialogue. The third most difficult behavior to discuss is dropping out of school. Majority (60%) felt that their parents neither listens to them nor understand their feelings. Respondents found most of the issues under investigation; risky sex, suicidal behavior and dropping out of school not easy to discuss mainly because of fear of their parents. This concurs with Lavin (2012) who argue that some parenting styles such as authoritarian may be unresponsive and creates fear and anger in the child who is likely to become resentful and disrespectful to authority figures. The unfriendly nature of authoritarian may easily result to depressive feelings in adolescents, such feelings are precursors to suicide ideation (Yterdal, 2016).

Table 4. People Students Prefer to Discuss Suicidal tendencies with

N= 15									
Parents		Relatives		Peers		counselors		Totals	
Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
4	27	1	7	3	20	7	46	15	100

Table 4 shows that, majority of students (46%) prefers to discuss suicidal issues with counselors while only 26% preferred to talk to their parents on such matters. The findings concur with Smith and Moore (2012) contend that adolescent's agreement with parenting style of parenting moderate the association between authoritarian parenting and psychological distress. This implies such teenagers are more likely to display psychosocial challenges such as depression which may lead to suicide attempts.

Table 5. Students' Expectation from Parents

N= 15		
Students' Expectations	Freq	%
Understanding and respect	9	60
Advice giving and being listened to	2	13
Honesty and role modeling	4	27
Total	15	100

Table 5 shows responses from the focus group discussion on how students expect their parents to deal with risky behaviors. The students' expectations were analyzed under three broad themes; understanding and respect, advice giving and being listened to, honesty and role modeling. The study found that majority (60%) expected their parents to understand and respect their feelings. This findings concur with Rosenthal (2011) contend that adolescents feel they deserve respect from their parents. They said that they felt that their expectations were not met. The study also found that 27% expected their parents to be honest and be good role models, since some parents were alcoholics and were also involved in other vices; the students agreed that their expectations of their

parents were more often not met. As a result the students engaged in suicidal behaviors and easily lie to their parents and teachers that they are okay. According to Cumsille, Darling and Martinez, (2010) if parents are not honest they play a major role in influencing their adolescents' lying. For example, adolescents who believe that parental authority is legitimate are less likely to lie to their parents.

The tables also show that 13% expected parents to give them advice and also listen to their views and feeling; they felt many parents were not available for them. The findings concur with Tyzack (2015), who contend that parents who are there physically and emotionally for teenagers are able to meet their children's expectations, a factor which is associated with less adolescent depressive disorders during the hormonally-turbulent years. The findings also concur with Amour, Laverdure, Devault, & Manseau, (2007) who contend that effects of fatigue and stress experienced at work can affect family life at home thus affecting parent child relationship. This means while the adolescent children at home expect the parent to be available in order to provide advice on various challenges they face, the parent is either not physically or emotionally available at home and even when they are physically available they are tired from their busy schedule. Such parents are unable to meet their children's emotional needs.

6.3 Responses from Guidance and Counseling Teachers

The study collected responses from 15 guidance and counseling teachers from the 15 selected schools. The teachers were to report on the incidences of suicide related behaviors they commonly deal with on a term period of three months. The responses are given in tables 1.5

Table 6. Suicide Related Behaviors Dealt with by Guidance and Counseling Teachers
 N=15

N=15									
Number of suicidal cases huddled by guidance and counseling teachers									
None		1-10		11-30		above 30		Total	
Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
10	67	5	33	0	0	0	0	15	100

Table 6 shows responses from guidance and counseling teachers on the suicidal behaviors dealt with in the schools within a period of three months. The table shows that 33% of schools deal with up to 10 cases of suicidal related. The findings concur with a study done by Ndeti, Khasakhala, Mutiso and Mbwanyo, (2010). The study also found that out of a sample of 250 secondary school students 43.7% had depression symptoms.

6.4 Multiple Linear Regressions for Parenting style and Suicidal Behavior

The researcher further performed a multiple regression to establish whether parenting styles had a statistically significant prediction of the suicidal risky behaviors (H_{01}). The model summary results were presented in Table 1.10

Table 7. Model Summary Parenting Styles and Suicidal Behavior

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.878(a)	.771	.721	3.340

Note: a Predictors: (Constant), Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive indulgent and permissive neglectful.

Table 7 shows that 72.1% of variation in the suicidal behaviors is explained by the parenting styles (Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive indulgent and permissive neglectful). The remaining 27.1% is determined by other factors not related to parenting styles. The test of the fitness of the model ANOVA was used. The results were presented in Table 8.

Table 8. ANOVA (b) Parenting Style; (b) Suicidal Behaviors

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	120.029	4	17.18	5.397	.000(a)
	Residual	55.223	395	11.2		
	Total	175.252	399			

Note: a Predictors: (Constant), Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive indulgence, and Permissive neglectful
 b Dependent Variable: Suicidal behaviour

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done to establish the fitness of the model used. The ANOVA table: 1.11 shows that the $F_{(4,395)}$ statistic was 5.397 with a p-value of 0.000 indicating that the model was statistically significant in explaining the effect of parenting styles on suicidal behaviors. This means that the model used was appropriate and the relationship of the variables shown could not have occurred by chance. Regression coefficients were presented in table 9.

Table 9. Multiple Regression Coefficients (a) for Suicidal Behaviors

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
1	(Constant)	1.161	.408		2.842	.000
	Authoritative (X ₁)	.027	.139	.061	.193	.001
	Authoritarian (X ₂)	1.136	.339	1.655	3.346	.002
	Permissive indulgence(X ₃)	.623	.391	.218	1.593	.000
	Permissive neglectful (X ₄)	.513	.284	.894	1.808	.000

Note: a Dependent Variable: suicidal behaviours

Table 9 shows that all the independent variables (Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive indulgence, and Permissive neglectful) significantly ($P < 0.05$) predict the change in the suicidal behaviors hence hypothesis H₀₄ is rejected.

The regression model is;

$$Y = 1.161 + 0.027X_1 + 1.136X_2 + 0.623X_3 + 0.513 X_4$$

This model shows that the authoritarian parenting style has the greatest contribution to the model (1.136, $p < 0.05$). This means that a unit positive change in authoritarian parenting style will cause a change in suicidal behavior by a factor of 1.36 at 5% significant level, this is followed by permissive indulgence (0.623, $p < 0.05$), permissive neglectful (0.513, $p < 0.05$) and authoritative parenting style (0.027, $p < 0.05$). The findings concur with a study done by Muiru, Thinguri and Macharia (2014) which found that family history contributes significantly to the explanation of increased cases of suicidal behaviors. High contribution of authoritarian parenting style to adolescence suicidality concurs with Smith and Moore, (2012) who contend that, when teenagers disagree with their parents' behaviors towards them, the teenagers are more likely to display psychosocial challenges such as depression which may lead to suicide attempts.

The study also agrees with Ying (2013) who studied possible partial correlation between perceived parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) and youth suicidality (negative life ideation, and suicidal behaviour) among students in university campuses and secondary schools from different regions in Malaysia. According to Ying (2013), Authoritative theme was the major positive influence on positive ideation as viewed by young people, whereas authoritarian theme and permissive theme were classified as major negative influence towards suicidal behaviors. The findings of this study also concurs with a study done by Donath, Graessel, Baier., Bleich and Hillemacher (2014), who found that parenting style does matter and while children of Authoritative parents profit, children of Rejecting-Neglecting parents are put at risk.

However the study disagrees with a study done by Sharma, Sharma and Yadava (2011) who found a significant negative relationship between permissive parenting and adolescent suicidal behaviors. This study found neglectful parenting characterized with low communication to predict less suicidal behaviors. This is contrary to a study done by Silvia, Lai and Daniel (2010) which found that suicidal ideation was positively related to hopelessness which characterizes neglectful parenting, but negatively related to parent-adolescent communication. It was further found that the linkage between hopelessness and adolescent suicidal ideation was stronger under a low parent-adolescent communication which is associated with neglectful parenting.

7. Conclusion

The study concludes that suicidal behaviors among secondary school students are phenomena common within the secondary schools though few are officially reported. Parenting styles are important in predetermining suicidal behavior of secondary school students. Different parenting styles influence secondary school students' suicidal ideation differently. The various psychological microclimates provided by each parenting style may enhance or help reduce suicidal tendencies among secondary school students. Thus different styles account for different levels of suicidal behaviors among secondary school students. This occurs as the students try to negotiate the biosocial changes taking place to and around them. The punitive attitude within authoritarian parenting styles accounts for the highest suicidal behavior among students making it the worst parenting style. Parenting styles which do not practice some control on their also increase chances of suicidal behavior. On the other hand, authoritative style accounts for the least suicidal behaviors, which makes it the best parenting style.

8. Recommendations

The study found that parenting styles significantly predict suicidal behaviors of secondary school students. It also found that authoritarian style accounts for the highest variance in suicidal behaviors followed by permissive parenting. On the basis of these findings the study recommends that the government through the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the school boards of management maintain trained resident school counselors or psychologists in schools, who do not have teaching duties in order to enable them have enough time to identify students with depressive signs which are precursors of suicidal behaviors. Such counselors would be available to

help students and making follow-ups with the parents.

Secondary school students are faced with many challenges from the expectations of their parents. Such challenges include making career choices acceptable to the parents, academic performance and social relations acceptable by parents and their teachers. The demands exert pressure on the students with subsequent resultant anxiety and stress. These lead to depression and at times suicidal ideation due to perceived misunderstanding. The study therefore recommends that, through school programs, parents be trained on the need to recognize individual talents and abilities of each child. There is need for parents to listen to their children in order to understand their concerns and reassure them in times when pressure is overwhelming.

Suicidal behaviors are always secretive and many of them go unnoticed by a second party whether teachers or parents. This could be either because the parents or teachers could be the cause of such behaviors. This may make the student fear to disclose what could be going in their minds. The study therefore recommends that schools put in place intervention measures to help students develop life skills of self awareness and self-esteem. These will help students identify early onset of anxiety and stress and be able to express them to a third party in search of assistance.

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