



## ROLE OF PARENTING STYLES IN DRUG ABUSE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EMBU COUNTY, KENYA



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### ABSTRACT

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#### Keywords

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Drug abuse among students is a worldwide problem; where none of the social institutions like such as the family, the schools the religious based organizations result to blaming each other over the menace without any of them taking responsibility. Yet before a child is released to the outside world the first socializing institution is the family. This study investigated the role of parenting styles on drug abuse among public secondary school. The study used a sample of 399 students, 15 guidance and counseling teachers and 15 focus group discussions were used to collect in-depth views of the respondents. The study was grounded on Bronfenbrenners' bioecological theory and parenting styles theory by Maccoby and Martins. Survey research design was adopted for the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students on parenting style and students' drug abuse, focus group discussion schedule was used to collect in-depth views of students on their relationship with their parents, while interview schedule was used to collect views of guidance and counseling teachers on students' drug related behavior. For the purpose of this paper parenting styles are limited to authoritative, authoritarian, permissive indulgence and permissive neglectful, while drug abuse is limited to use of alcohol, cigarette and bhang or marijuana. The paper discusses the role played by different parenting styles on secondary school students' suicidal behaviors.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This was the only study anchored on bio ecological theory and parenting style typology to provide in depth understanding of the role of parents in students' drug abuse in Embu, Kenya.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the Kenyan context, majority of the secondary school students are in their adolescence stage, a period of transition into adulthood, a period that exposes them to many risks (Wargo, 2007). Adolescence is marked by complex biosocial changes which occur within the individual as they navigate through the stage. These changes result to most of adolescents increasingly spending more time with their peers other than their parents (Beaver and Wright, 2005). As a result the young people are characterized by increased exploration and experimentation with various types of behaviours including drug abuse, Adams and Berzonsky (2006). Drug abuse among the adolescents is a challenge world over for example studies in America has found some students in 12<sup>th</sup> grade to be abusing cigarettes, alcohols and other drugs including marijuana (Johnston *et al.*, 2002). According to Stagman *et al.* (2011)

in 2009, 10 percent of youth aged 12 to 17 in the USA were illicit drug users. The preference of alcohol use among the Chinese high school students is 52.5% (Shijun *et al.*, 2015).

According to Kimanthi and Thinguri (2014) the challenge of drug abuse among students in Africa is of great concern to educational stake holders. For instance a study by Chauke *et al.* (2015) show that, in South Africa, 35.5% of male and 29.7% of female high school students use alcohol, the study also found that alcohol consumption increase with age, 32.2% by age 15-17years and 53.2% by the 18-20years of age. National Agency for the Campaign Against Drug Abuse (2012) identified alcohol, tobacco and bhang use among the major challenges of substance abuse facing students in Kenya. According to Siringi and Waihenya (2003) more than 22% of primary school children in Kenya take alcoholic products, by the time they are in secondary school the figures increase to 57% and to 68% at university Wakhisi and Wesangula (2014). According to Nyaga (2015) and Mutumi (2013) secondary school students in Embu County are increasingly abusing drugs.

### 1.1. Parenting Styles

The parenting style theory by Macobby and Martins (2003) broadly describes four main styles of parenting: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive indulgent and permissive neglectful which are based on two dimensions i.e. demandingness (control) and responsiveness (warmth). Demandingness refers to the parental requirement that, the child comply with norms and standards set by the parent. On the other hand responsiveness refers to the parental responsiveness towards the Childs' feelings and needs. Authoritative parenting style is high on both demandingness and responsiveness. On the other hand authoritarian parents are characterized by high on demandingness to a point of bullying and low in responsiveness. Permissive indulgent parenting style is characterized with low demandingness but high in responsiveness. The parent does not set behavioural standards for the child to follow and does not require responsibility from the child. The parent responds to all the demands of the child. Neglectful parenting style is low in both child control and responsiveness. The parent is uninvolved in the child's activities. The parent does not demand obedience from the child, and does not respond to the Childs' needs. Each of the parenting style provides a unique psychological microclimate in the child develops. The effects of these unique microclimates are well articulated by Bronfenbrenner (2005).

### 1.2. The Bioecological Model

Bronfenbrenner (2005) bioecological theory divides a child's social environment into five subsystems the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, exosystem and chronosystem. Each sub-system contributes uniquely to the social and psychological developmental outcomes and social competencies of a developing child. The focus of the study was microsystem subsystem, with special reference to parent-child relationship. Bioecological model basically postulates that, child development takes place through a process of complex interactions over a period of time. These interactions involve an active child, the people, objects and symbols in the child's immediate environment. The microsystem in the model, which was the focus of the study, emphasizes that, child's psychological outcomes depends on the social context and quality of relationships the developing Childs' has with others including family members around him and such as parents.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) contend that, the Bioecological Model consists of four important underlying components: process, person, context, and time (PPCT). Process is basically the foundation of the model; it refers to the relationships between the developing person and the environment the child experiences over a period of time, and has significant influence on the development of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Since the study focused on the microsystem, the family interactions mainly parent-adolescent relationships represents the process in the model. Context in the model is viewed as a pattern of events, social role and parent-child relations experienced by the developing person. These activities occurs in a given face to face setting with the home environment, social and

symbolic features that invite, permit or inhibit engagement in sustained interactions with the immediate environment.

### 1.3. Literature Review

World over, one of major health concerns as a result of drug abuse is cigarette smoking because the health complications and the resultant loss of life associated with it are enormous yet they can be prevented (Bindah and Othman, 2011). Kenya has its own share of drug abuse among the youth (Chesang, 2013). Drug abuse among adolescents occurs as part of a cluster of challenges facing the youth, and some of the predisposing factors include inadequate social competencies, parenting styles and peer influence (Feldstein and Miller, 2006). According to Chesang (2013) up to 30% to 40% of students in primary have taken one form of drug or another not to mention those in secondary schools. Since many drug addicts start drug abuse at adolescence stage it is important to understand role played by parents in child development that could protect the adolescents from early initiation into drugs.

According to Ross *et al.* (2008) In Tanzania, 56% of children starts smoking cigarettes as early as 10 years of age. A study by Kapito-Tembo *et al.* (2011) found that, 13.3% of students aged 13-15 years age group, reported to have ever tried or experimented with cigarette. In Kenya, tobacco smoking is widespread among students a study by Maina *et al.* (2013) found that, one out of every four students aged 13-15 years had ever smoked, 1 out of 10 students was a current smoker, and slightly over a tenth (12.8%) of all students used other forms of tobacco other than cigarettes. Boys were twice likely to be current smokers than girls (12.7% versus 6.5%). Further, research has also shown that children's developmental outcomes are influenced by parenting styles (Muchiri, 2012).

Bhang/marijuana/cannabis among adolescents is a major challenge world over. In the United States cannabis is among the commonly abused drug by adolescents. By their senior year in high school 54% of American adolescents report having used cannabis (Johnston *et al.*, 2002). In sub Sahara Africa studies shows that cannabis use is prevalent among young people (Gabriel *et al.*, 2016). According to a report by child welfare Association (2010) as cited by Onjoro (2014) one out of every 15 Kenyan teenage learners is a *bhang* or hashish abusers. In Kenya *bhang* or *marijuana* (*cannabis sativa*) is among drugs mostly abused by school students, it is widespread and on the rise (NACADA, 2012). The studies conducted by NACADA found that, for instance, in coastal region of Kenya, *bhang* was the most abused illicit drug among school students, with those initiated to drug abuse making 53.80% of young people of average age of 18.99 years.

According to McCabe *et al.* (2009) alcohol is classified as a major epidemic among others such as HIV and AIDS. The negative effects of alcohol specifically on adolescents are overwhelming. These effects include: addiction, health complications, educational decline and social exclusiveness among others (Tumuti *et al.*, 2014). A study by Oteyo and Kariuki (2009) in Nakuru County, Kenya on alcohol and cigarette smoking among secondary school students showed that, family factors were among the greatest contributors to consumption of the drugs. Research shows that, parenting styles influence adolescent behavioural outcome such as alcohol use (Devore and Ginsburg, 2005). Parental communication on substance use within parental warmth has been found to be protective against adolescent alcohol use (Pasch *et al.*, 2010). According to Malik (2005) disengaged parents are most likely to have children smoking and consuming alcohol and authoritative parents are least likely to have children smoking and consuming alcohol.

### 1.4. Methodology

The study targeted secondary school students in Embu County. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study, which enabled the research to collect information on respondents' habits, thoughts and opinions from a representative sample by use of questionnaires, interview schedule and focused group discussion schedules. Stratified random sampling was used to select participating schools, to ensure representation of all the

categories of the schools. From each category of school simple random sampling was used to select participating respondents. 1 focus group made of 8 members was selected on voluntary basis from each school, making 15 groups. From each school one guidance and counseling teacher was purposively selected. Data was collected by use of a four-point likert scale questionnaires, focus group discussion schedule and interview schedule. The questionnaires were administered to ongoing students. Data from guidance and counseling teachers were collected by use of interview schedule. Analyzed of data was done thematically and represented inform of frequency tables.

1.5. Study Findings

Responses on parenting styles were scored and summarized in table 1.0

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

(Source: Authors)

Table 1.0 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. This was an indication that the four parenting styles are all practiced within the target population. Since parents use varying parenting styles within it imply that secondary school students in the study area experience varying microsystem consisting of relationships with their parents. Most students relate with their parents in a way dominated by high control.

Table-2. Response of Students on Drug Usage

Number of time respondents has taken drugs	Never		Once		Twice		Several times		Whenever an opportunity arise		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Average	118	29.5	106	26.6	24	5.9	76	19.0	76	19.0	399	100.0

(Source; Authors :)

Table 2.0 shows that on average, 19% of the respondents are serious to drugs abusers since they engaged in drug abuse whenever they get an opportunity to do so, while another 19.6% had engaged in drug abuse for several times. This makes an average of 38% of respondents who are regular drug abusers. The findings show that the drug abuse problem in secondary schools in Embu County is widespread. The findings confirm the findings by Johnston et al. (2002) that drug abuse among students is a global challenge. Results also revealed that another 5.9% of respondents hand taken drugs at least twice in the past and those who had taken drugs once was 26.6% which makes a total of 70.5 % of those who had at least taken drugs. On the other hand, average 29.5% of respondents had not engaged in drug abuse at any time. The results show that by the time students are in secondary school majority (70.5%) of them will have involved themselves in drugs abuse. The findings concur with (NACADA, 2012) that drug abuse is widespread in majority of students.

**Table-3.** Ease of Students Discussing Drug related issues with Parents

	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
Not easy	5	33
Easy	10	67
Total	15	100

(Source; authors)

Table 3.0 shows that majority of respondents (67%) indicated that they found discussing drug related issues with parents easy while 33% found it difficult to discuss such issues with their parents. However these discussions were limited by either parent's perception that the children seek the information on drugs in order to experiment with the vices, or the parents' busy schedule and absence from home in time to be with their children. This supports a study by Nundwe (2012) which found that parental occupation, economic activities in which parents were engaged were blamed for keeping the parents too busy to take time to talk with their children, this is the barrier to communication as parents have little time to be with their children.

**Tabl-4.** Students' Expectation of Their Parents

<b>Students' Expectations</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
Understanding and respect	9	60
Being listened to and advice	2	13
Honesty and role modeling	4	27
Total	15	100

Table 4.0 shows responses from the focus group discussion on what students expects their parents to deal with drug related issues. The study revealed that majority of respondents (60%) expects their parents to be understanding and respectful of their challenges. This findings concur with Rosenthal (2011) contend that adolescents feel they deserve respect from their parents. Respondents said that, they felt that their expectations of their parents were not met since many parents were very harsh towards them. The study also reveals that 27% expect their parents to be honest and good role models. These expectations were also frustrated, since some parents were alcoholics and others were involved in other vices. The students agreed that their expectations of their parents were more often not met resulting in frustrations. To deal with the frustrations some students engaged in drug abuse. According to Cumsille *et al.* (2010) if parents are not honest they play a major role in influencing their adolescents' lying since their children dispute the sincerity and the moral authority of their parent.

The tables also show that 13% of the respondents look upon their parents to be listened to and advice; they felt many parents are not physically and emotionally available for them. Some parents are rarely at home for consultation by their children. When such parents finally get home, they result to quarreling their children for being errant, which made the children to feel misunderstood. The findings concur with Amour *et al.* (2007) who found that, effects of fatigue and stress experienced at work place by parents can affect family life at home thus affecting parent child relationship. The study also show that the respondents look upon their parents as role models of social norms including honesty. This implies that, adolescents are more likely to adopt the behaviors of their parents concerning handling social challenges. The findings agree with a study carried out by Wiese and Alexandra (2011) which reported that young people learn a lot from their parents as role models, although they may reflect and modify these models according to their beliefs and social relations. This is supported by the study by Karen (2007) who argues that,

**Table-5.** Drug related cases Dealt with by Guidance and Counseling Teachers

<b>None</b>		<b>1-10</b>		<b>11-30</b>		<b>above 30</b>		<b>Total</b>	
Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
0	0	10	67	3	20	2	13	15	100

Table 5.0 shows responses from guidance and counseling teachers on drug related cases, majority (67%) of the schools recording up to 10 cases per school term of three months and others (13%) recording up to over 30 cases per term. The findings show that many schools are grappling with drug related issues that interfere with the smooth delivery of the school academic programs. The findings suggest that a lot of time is wasted by students and teachers in secondary schools sorting out drug related disciplinary cases with the school administration instead of concentrating in their academic work. This has a bearing on their preparations for the examination, and when they feel they are not well prepared they result to taking more drugs and even school strikes (Kiplagat and Oruko, 2015).

## 1.6. Discussion

Authoritative parenting style is the most practiced parenting practiced within the studied population. The parenting style is characterized by parents demanding strict adherence to set rules and regulations from their children, at the same time parents are responsive to the children concerns. The psychological climate provided by such parents represents presumably, the ideal microsystem for the child's psychological and emotional development. Since the process component of the microsystem, consisting of the relationships between the developing person (the child) and the environment (parenting styles) experienced by the child over a period of time provides the conducive environment (context) for the parent-child communication on the dangers of drug abuse. However the study found that there was complain by the respondents that their parents are rarely at home for meaningful conversations and other joint activities, and even when parents are physically at home they are exhausted from work while others could even be drunk. This undermined the attempts by children to talk to them about their concerns, moreover, many parents kept on postponing family talks to a later date. Drunkard parents failed to provide good role modeling as expected by their children. These undermined the benefits of authoritative parenting in child rearing.

Authoritarian parenting is the second most practiced within the studied population. The parenting style is characterized by a strong demand for the child to strictly adhere to set family rules and regulations. The parent uses threats and punishment to enforce these demands, while paying little or no attention to the opinions and feelings of the child. The process component of the family microsystem which is represented by the parent-child relationships is that of the parent bullying the child. The context component of the microsystem is represented by the joint activities between the parents and the children. These activities are reduced to parents giving orders and supervision of the children without the concern of children's feelings. Children look upon the parents as mentors and role models; they also expect their parents to listen to their concerns and offer advice and guidance to them from a vintage point of understanding. Authoritarian parenting style succeeds in creating an intimidating parenting-child relationship which does not meet most of the child's expectation of parents who the child can comfortably discuss and clarify issues of concern to them. The context, in which a child of an authoritarian parent finds himself in, is one which inhibits a friendly engagement between the parent and the child because of fear of being punished. The end result is that, the child experiences stress and develops resentment of authority figures most often even withdraw from consultation with the parent. Since the processes component of the microsystem are themselves influenced by the characteristics of the developing person, who is the adolescent child, withdrawal from communication with the parent, is perceived by the parent as rebellion, and attracts more strictness while to the adolescent child it is a step towards freedom and autonomy.

Permissive indulgent parenting style was third most practiced parenting style among the parents in the study area. The parenting style is characterized by high responsiveness and excessive material support to the child's demands. The parent does not provide set standards and regulations to be followed by the child. Children from permissive indulgence parents are left to control their own behaviour. The process component of the microsystem is represented by parent child relationship where parents are ready to provide any support the child demands. The

context component of the microsystem represented by the parent-child activities consist of parent-child communication, where the child gives demands and the parents meets the demands. Unregulated freedom, combined with material support provides an environment where the child can do anything without fear of being reprimanded by the parent. Permissive indulgent parents also tend to use money to compensate for the time not spent with their child. The parent-child relationship is such a way that the parent is perceived as a resource to be used. Availability of unregulated material and time resources time are used in activities perceived to be exciting, these includes drug abuse. Children expect parents to provide advice and guidelines, since this is not a component of permissive indulgent parent the child fails to develop self regulation.

Permissive neglectful parents adopt an uninvolved parenting. The parent is withdrawn from the child's needs. The parents neither provide family regulations and guideline to the children, nor provide responsiveness to the child's demands. Neglectful parents are physically and emotionally absent to the child's life. The process component of the family microsystem consists of an uninvolved parent with the child's welfare while the context component of the microsystem consisting of joint parent-child activities is absent. Children look upon their parents to be listened to and advice. Since neglectful parents are uninvolved, they do not meet their children's expectations as advisers and role models. Neglectful parents do not meet the children's material needs for achieving their goals. Unfulfilled children goals results to frustration and stress. When children are frustrated, stressed and exposed to unchecked freedom they are more likely to be influenced negatively by others. This is made worse by the fact that, neglectful parents are poor role model of handling personal challenges, give children. The children seek consolation and support from the peers who introduce them to drugs. At school many of them do not concentrate on their academic activities.

### 1.7. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore the role played by the parenting style in drug abuse of secondary school students in Embu County Kenya. From the findings it can be concluded that parents play a crucial role in either protecting or driving their children into drug abuse. The parenting styles provide family environment (microsystem) where children learn the social skills needed to navigate through their challenge encountered within the course of their growing up. Parenting styles combine with other parental characteristics, child characteristics and expectations. It can also be concluded that while some parenting styles predispose children to drug abuse tendencies others are better in protecting the children from such tendencies.

### 1.8. Recommendations

The study established that parenting styles have big role to play in protecting children against drugs or driving the children towards drug abuse. The study also established that all the four parenting styles are common within the study population. The study therefore, recommends that the government through the ministry of education in corroboration of community based organizations draw elaborate programmes to enforce child protection strategies enshrined in the child rights bill. This should be aimed at helping children from authoritarian parents some of who even run away from home due to harsh conditions and those from neglectful parents who are left on their own. The study also recommends that the school board of management in corroboration with parents' teachers association organize regular capacity building seminars for the parents to enable them to adjust to the changing needs of their growing adolescent children. The study further recommends that the guidance and counseling in schools should be strengthened in order to handle children with drug related problems in schools and more importantly emphasize on preventive measures. The study also recommends that schools in conjunction with religious organizations to mount regular mentorship programs for both parents and students separately in order to help each group to address their challenges.

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