

## The Role of Parenting Styles in Enhancing or Hindering Children's performance in preschool Activities

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### Abstract

Extensive studies have been conducted on the relationship between parenting styles and adolescents' academic performance. However, limited studies have focused on the relationship between these styles and preschool children's performance. The current study sought to establish the relationship between parenting styles and pre-school children's performance in curricular activities in Kisauni District, Kenya. A correlational research design was employed to carry out the study. A sample size of 160 pre-school children together with their parents was purposively selected based on their performance levels in curricular activities from 20 pre-schools. A questionnaire and an interview schedule were utilized to collect data on parenting styles. Further, data on pre-school children's performance in preschool activities were collected through document analysis of children's progress reports. Findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between parenting styles and children's performance in preschool activities. There was a significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and children's performance where  $r = 0.882$  and  $p = 0.00 < 0.01$ . Authoritarian parenting style was negatively correlated to children's performance in curriculum activities where  $r = -0.261$  and  $p = 0.002 < 0.01$ . There was no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and children's performance. It was therefore concluded that parenting styles significantly influence children's performance in preschool curriculum activities.

**Keywords:** Parenting styles and children, Pre-school education, Parents and parenting styles

### Background information

The family has the greatest socializing influence on children (Ngwiri, 2008). This is because through words and deeds of parents, children's personality is shaped and their ways of doing things become habitual. Moreover, it is the prime responsibility of the parents to socialize their children in order to conform to societal standards and be able to function successfully in the community. Consequently, parents shepherd their children from dependent infants into competent and independent individuals who interact effectively in their environment. Parents influence their children's behavior through established patterns of parental authority called parenting styles. Berk (2006) defines parenting styles as a combination of parenting behaviors that occur over a wide range of situations, creating an enduring child-rearing climate. Furthermore, Darling and Steinberg (1993) define parenting styles as emotional climate in which the parents' behavior toward their children is expressed. It is in the context of this emotional climate that parents' behavior influence children's personality consequently affecting their academic performance in school. Baumrind (1971) identified three basic parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles. Further research by Maccoby and Martin (1983) identified a fourth parenting style called uninvolved or neglectful parenting style.

In Kenya, limited research has been documented on the relationship between parenting styles and children's performance in preschool activities. Ogwari (2011) conducted a study in Mount Elgon district to establish the influence of parenting styles on secondary school girls' self-concept and academic performance. The study found that girls of authoritative parents performed better academically than those of other parents. Girls of authoritarian parents had poor performance and low self-concept. This study revealed that secondary school girls' academic performance and self-concept are significantly correlated with parenting styles used by their parents. But the extent to which these findings relate to preschool children's performance has not been established. The current study therefore sought to establish the relationship between parenting styles and preschool children's performance in curriculum activities.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between parenting styles and pre-school children's performance in curriculum activities in Kisauni District, Mombasa County Kenya.

## Methodology

A correlational design was employed to carry out this study. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) asserts that correlational research involves collecting data in order to determine whether and to what degree a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables. The current study aimed at investigating parenting styles used by parents and establishing whether these styles relate to preschool children's performance in curriculum activities. A correlation coefficient was computed to show the direction and strength of the relationship. This design was used in order to provide a rigorous and replicable procedure for establishing and understanding the relationship between parenting styles and children's performance in curriculum activities.

## Location of the Study

This study was carried out in Kisauni District of Mombasa County Kenya. The district is located on the Northern part of Mombasa Island and it can be accessed through the Nyali Bridge and Mombasa-Malindi Road from Mombasa town. It covers an area of approximately 109.7 km<sup>2</sup>. According to the 1999 Population and Housing Census (GOK, 1999) the population of Kisauni stood at 249, 861 increasing from 153, 324 in year 1989. This represents 63% population increase in a period of ten years. The district is estimated to having more than 143, 037 poor people (Kisauni CDF, 2011). According to Kisauni CDF (2011) 38.3% of people Kisauni live below poverty line. The high population in this area has proved to be a serious challenge in the provision of essential services such as water, housing, sanitation, education and health care.

## Sample Size

A sample size of 160 pre-school children aged between 5 and 6 years were selected from 20 pre-schools for the study. Eight (8) children were purposively selected from each pre-school consisting of top four (4) and bottom four (4). The four top and four bottom performing children were purposively sampled to establish whether their parents' parenting styles influenced their performance in curricular activities. Further, a sample size of 160 parents; one per each preschool child selected were invited to the preschools to fill a questionnaire and be interviewed on their parenting styles. The sample size for the current study was chosen considering prevailing financial and time constraints. Kothari (2004) states that financial and time resources available among other factors determine the sample size selected for a study. According to Mcneill (1990) data in a large scale study intended for statistical analysis should be collected from at least a sample of 10% of the population. This view was taken into consideration in the selection of the sample for this study. The preschools selected represented 10% of total number preschools in Kisauni, while the children selected represented 12% of total number of children in preschools selected. Table 1 presents the sample size for the study.

Table 1: Sampling Frame for Preschools, Children and Parents

Description	Total Number	Sample for Schools	Sample for Children	Sample for Parents
Public pre-schools	26	10	80	80
Private pre-schools	169	10	80	80
Pre-school children	16,813	20	160	
Parents	15,000	20		160

Table 1 shows that out of the 26 public preschools found in the district, 10 preschools were selected to participate in the study. Likewise, out of the 169 private preschool found in the district, 10 were selected. Eight (8) preschool children were selected from each preschool basing on their performance in curriculum activities. Their parents were then invited in the preschool to fill the questionnaire and be interviewed. Appendix IV shows the schools which participated in the study.

## Research Instruments

The questionnaire, interview schedule, and document analysis techniques were used to collect data in this study. The main tools for the study were questionnaire and document analysis. Questionnaire was used to collect information from parents and an interview session was used to corroborate the data collected. Document analysis was used to collect data on preschool children's performance in curriculum activities. The selection of these tools was guided by the nature of data collected, the time available as well as the objectives of the study.

## Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to prepare and organize data for analysis. Data was analyzed statistically using descriptive and inferential statistics. It was analyzed descriptively using means, standard deviations, and percentages. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and one way ANOVA techniques were utilized to test the hypotheses at  $\alpha = 0.05$  significance level. Data from interview was analyzed descriptively while that from the questionnaire was analyzed both descriptively and inferentially. The results of this study have been reported on the basis of objectives and hypotheses.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was utilized to test hypothesis  $H_{01}$ , which was used to show the direction and magnitude of the relationship between parenting styles and pre-school children's performance in pre-school activities. Kothari (2004) states that Pearson's coefficient of correlation is the most widely used method of measuring the degree of relationship between two variables.

One way ANOVA was used to test hypotheses  $H_{02}$ ,  $H_{03}$ ,  $H_{04}$ , and  $H_{05}$  in order to explore whether there are differences in means of children of parents with different monthly income levels. Oso and Onen (2009) state that ANOVA is an analysis technique that compares individual or group differences of subjects exposed to different treatments. Treatments in this study were the different monthly income levels, employment status, marital status, and education levels of parents of preschool children in Kisauni. Kothari (2004) states that ANOVA technique is an extremely useful tool in examining significant differences that exist in more than two sample means simultaneously. The essence of ANOVA is to detect whether variation in samples can be attributed to chance or specific causes.

## Research Findings

### Demographic Data of Parents

In this study 160 parents whose preschool children had been selected based on their performance in preschool activities were sampled to participate. Of the 160 parents sampled, 144 (90%) accepted to participate in the study while 16 (10%) declined to participate. The demographic information that was required of the parents included; the parents' sex, marital status, education level, employment status, and monthly income.

### Parents' Sex

Parents who participated in the study were asked to indicate whether they were male or female. Table 2 presents the results on sex of the parents who participated in this study.

Table 2: Parents' Sex

	Frequency	Percent
Male	38	26.4
Female	106	73.6
Total	144	100.0

Table 2 indicates that there were 26.4% male and 73.6% female parents. This finding suggests that mothers of preschool children in Kisauni District are more involved in their children school matters than the fathers. The finding also suggests that majority of mothers of preschool children in Kisauni remain at home while fathers work, therefore most of the mothers were available for the study while fathers were not. This finding is consistent with that of Ndani (2008) in which more women turned up for the study than men. Ndani attributed this finding to the fact that more men were engaged in employed labour than women. This finding can also be attributed to the fact that child care in the African society is mainly a woman's agenda.

### Relationship between Parenting Styles and Children's Performance

The objective of this study sought to establish whether there was a relationship between parenting styles and preschool children's performance in curriculum activities. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3: Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Children's Performance in Curriculum Activities

Parenting Style	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean Score
Authoritative Style	95	83.0	100.0	93.7
Permissive Style	19	57.0	91.0	77.9
Authoritarian style	30	43.0	87.0	74.1
Total	144			81.9

The results in table 3 indicate that children whose parents used authoritative style attained higher mean score (94%) in preschool curriculum activities than those of permissive (77%) and authoritarian parenting style (74%). Children raised by authoritarian and permissive parenting styles attained mean scores below the group's average score of 81.9. Children raised by authoritative parenting style attained the highest mean score while those raised by authoritarian attained the lowest. These finding is consistent with Lamborn et al (1991) who found that adolescents of authoritative parents scored higher levels of competence than those raised by permissive and authoritarian parents. This implies that parenting styles used by parents relate to children's performance in curriculum activities. The strength and direction of this relationship was sought by testing the following

hypothesis:

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between parenting styles and preschool children's performance in curriculum activities.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was utilized to test this hypothesis. Tables 4, 5 and 6 present the results for this test;

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on Authoritative Parenting Style and Children's Performance

		Authoritative	Children's performance
Authoritative	Pearson Correlation	1	.882**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	144	144
Children's Performance	Pearson Correlation	.882**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	144	144

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 indicates that the relationship between authoritative parenting style and children's performance was significant where  $r = 0.882$  and  $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ . The  $p$  value 0.00 was found to be less than the critical value of 0.05. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected on the basis of this finding. The findings of the study indicate that there was a strong positive correlation between authoritative parenting and preschool children's performance in curriculum activities. This finding implies that higher scores on authoritative parenting style relates to higher preschool children's performance in curriculum activities. The coefficient of determination was computed to determine the effect of authoritative parenting style on preschool children's performance. This was done by squaring the  $r = 0.882$  to get percentage of variance; which indicated 0.778. This suggests that authoritative parenting style accounts for up to 78% variance in preschool children's performance in curriculum activities. This implies that parents can improve preschool children's performance in curriculum activities by up to 78% by resorting to authoritative parenting style and related practices.

These findings were consistent with the findings of Ogwari (2011) who found that parenting styles influenced academic performance of secondary school girls in Mount Elgon District, Kenya. She found that girls of authoritative parents performed better than those of other parents. The findings also agree with findings of Baumrind (1989), Lamborn et al. (1991) and Steinberg et al. (1991) done in the United States of America; they found that parenting styles were significantly associated with adolescents' academic performance in school. They found a positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and adolescents academic performance.

The findings of the current study were in agreement with the findings of Baumrind (1967) who found that preschool children of authoritative parents were more achievement – oriented than those of authoritarian and permissive parents. Baumrind (1991) also found that children of authoritative parents scored highly in self – esteem and academic performance at the middle – school level in United States of America. The findings of the current study were also in agreement with the findings of Baumrind et al. (2010) who found that adolescents whose parents were authoritative during their preschool years were more competent than adolescents whose parent were authoritarian and permissive during their preschool years.

In the light of these findings, Durkin (1995) cites three reasons why authoritative parenting style is positively associated with children's academic performance in school. First, he suggests that authoritative parents provide a high level of emotional security that provides their children with a sense of comfort and independence and helps them succeed in school. Second, he suggests that authoritative parents provide their children with explanations for their actions which provide children with a sense of awareness and understanding of their parents' values, morals, and goals. The transmission of these goals and values equips these children with the tools needed to perform well in school. Third, he suggests that authoritative parents engage in give-and-take communication with their children which nurtures skills in interpersonal relations that consequently help them to excel in school, both socially and academically.

The current study found authoritative parenting style to be sensitive to children's needs and feelings as well as encouraging children to express their desires and feelings. It was also found to practice firm and reasonable control on children's behavior without being punitive. Parents who practiced this style were found to be willing to accommodate their children's view points and at the same time providing explanations for their expectations of their children.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on Authoritarian Parenting Style and Children's Performance

		Authoritarian	Children's Performance
Authoritarian	Pearson Correlation	1	-.261**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	144	144
Children's Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.261**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	144	144

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 indicates that the relationship between authoritarian parenting style and children's performance was significant where  $r = -0.261$  and  $p = 0.002 < 0.05$ . The  $p$  value 0.002 was found to be less than the critical value of 0.01. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected on the basis of this finding. The study found a negative correlation between authoritarian parenting style and preschool children's performance in curriculum activities. This implies that high measures on authoritarian parenting style relates to lower preschool children's performance in curriculum activities and vice versa. The researcher further computed the coefficient of determination to determine the effect of authoritarian parenting style on preschool children's performance. This was done by squaring the  $r = -0.261$  to get percentage of variance; which indicated 0.068. This suggests that authoritarian parenting style accounts for 6.8% variance in preschool children's performance. This finding implies that parents can improve preschool children's performance in curriculum activities by up 7% by discarding authoritarian parenting style and related practices. These finding is in agreement with the findings of Ogwari (2011) that found authoritarian parenting style associated with poor academic performance of secondary school girls in Mount Elgon District, Kenya. The findings of the current study were also consistent with the findings of Baumrind (1989), Lamborn et al. (1991) and Steinberg et al. (1991) in the North American who found that authoritarian parenting style was associated with low academic performance among adolescents in school.

The findings of the current study were in agreement with the findings of Baumrind (1967) who found that preschool children of authoritarian parents were less achievement – oriented than those of authoritative parents. Baumrind (1991) also found that children of authoritarian parents scored very low in self-esteem and academic performance at the middle-school level in United States of America. The findings also agree with the findings of Baumrind et al. (2010) who found that adolescents whose parents used authoritarian parenting style during preschool years were incompetent and maladjusted in class.

The findings of the study were also consistent with findings of Dornbusch et al. (1987) who found authoritarian parenting style was negatively associated with adolescents' school grades. However, the present study focused on preschool children's performance in curriculum activities. It found authoritarian parenting style associated with lower performance in children's performance in these activities.

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on Permissive Parenting Style and Children's Performance

		Permissive	Children's Performance
Permissive	Pearson Correlation	1	-.076
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.362
	N	144	144
Children's Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.076	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.362	
	N	144	144

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 indicates that the relationship between permissive parenting style and children's performance was not significant where  $r = -0.076$  and  $p = 0.362 > 0.05$ . The  $p$  value 0.362 was found to be more than the critical value of 0.05. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted on the basis of this finding. The study found no significant correlation between permissive parenting style and preschool children's performance in curriculum activities. These finding suggests that there is no significant relationship between permissive parenting style and children's performance in curriculum activities.

This finding is inconsistent with the findings of Baumrind (1967), Dornbusch et al. (1987), Lamborn et al. (1991), and Baumrind et al. (2010). Baumrind (1967) found that preschool children of permissive parents were less competent with low self-esteem. Furthermore, Dornbusch et al. (1987) found permissive parenting style negatively associated with adolescents' school grades. They found that adolescents of permissive and authoritarian parents scored lower grades than adolescents of authoritative parents. However, the current study found no significant relationship between permissive parenting styles. The inconsistency between the current study and studies mentioned above could be attributed to cultural and economic differences that exist in the areas under study. The inconsistency could also be as a result of the very small sample of permissive parents (19) who participated in the study. Pallant (2005) states that the size of a sample may affect the statistical significance of a correlation coefficient computed.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

#### **Recommendations for the School Managers and Administrators**

The study sought to establish the relationship between parenting styles and children's performance in preschool activities. It found that authoritative parenting style was associated with higher performance of children in preschool activities while authoritarian parenting style was associated with lower performance. Therefore, there is need for school managers and administrators to device programmes aimed at sensitizing parents on their parenting styles. The programmes should help parents be aware and understand their parenting styles and their implications on children's performance. They should then be sensitized to adopt styles and practices of authoritative parents that were found to help children do well in preschool curriculum activities.

#### **Recommendations for the Policy Makers in the Ministry of Education**

Policy makers at the Ministry of Education should develop policies that would encourage parents to adopt appropriate parenting styles. This can be done by use of seminars, workshops and focus group discussions at grass root levels. This can also be done by developing a handbook or manual on effective parenting styles for parents of preschool children.

Policy makers at the Ministry of Education should also provide comprehensive guidelines on community capacity building through training and sensitization on parenting styles. They should device programmes that should target local community leaders such as chiefs, assistant chiefs, county representatives, local religious leaders who would in turn sensitize parents and community members on optimal parenting styles and related practices. This can be done by use forums such as public meetings, religious congregations, chiefs' barazas and so forth.

#### **Recommendations for the Curriculum Developer**

There is need for the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and the National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) to develop a curriculum and a training manual aimed at educating parents and communities on parenting styles and their implications on children's performance in school. The curriculum should aim at facilitating training of parents on parenting skills and styles that enhance child development.

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