



Full Length Research Paper

The Impact of Parenting Styles on Acquisition of Deviant Behaviour Among Children Aged 8-18 Years in Western Kenya

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Accepted 11 September 2013

in the last 50 years, juvenile delinquency has become a major concern to psychologists, criminologists and the society at large. High increase in juvenile delinquencies, high rate of early school dropouts in both girls and boys, increase in street children and high rate of crime, both in towns and rural settings, can be linked to poor parental guidance in the early child development. The objective of the study was to find out if parenting styles influence acquisition of deviant behavior of children aged between 8 and 18 years. Purposive and systematic random sampling methods were used to select the study area and the sample size respectively. One hundred and eighty five (185) children aged between 8-18 years were interviewed using structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics and Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) were used to analyze the data. The result of the study indicated that majority (70.27%) of the respondents have parents comprising of restrictive, authoritarian and permissive styles while 29.73% of the respondents had good and democratic parenting style. Further results revealed that 38.38 percent of the respondents were respectful to authority, 24.32 percent were ordinarily obedient, whereas 16.76 percent were critical of authority and 7.03 percent were deviant. The study recommends democratic style of parenting, upholding the virtue for purity and faithfulness before marriage to curb deviant behavior and the society to extend love to children from single and broken homes.

Keywords: Deviant behavior, juvenile delinquency, parental guidance, parenting style

INTRODUCTION

In the last 50 years juvenile delinquency has become a

major concern to psychologists, criminologists and the society at large. Juvenile delinquency has been on the increase since the World War II among the industrialized and developed countries as well as developing countries of the world. In Minnesota U.S.A a teen shot dead 9 students at Red Lake High School while in Kenya 67

students died at Kyanguli High School as a result of arson from fellow students. Cases like the above occur in many parts of the world. Loeber, et.al. (2003), commenting on child delinquency in the United States indicates that the number of child delinquents brought before American courts increased by a third between 1990 and 2000. This pattern is a cause for concern as these children are likely to grow to become adult offenders. In 1960 the 2nd United Nations Congress on the prevention of crime and treatment of juvenile offenders was held in London, England. After profitable discussions, most of the participants agreed substantially, on the seriousness and problems posed by juvenile delinquency. In a special report explaining why teachers want caning back in schools, authors point out that, "cases of indiscipline has increased so much in schools and as a result one teacher went to court seeking to have caning reintroduced (Mwandoto, 2006: 11). . Another report contents "that because of the growing number of children in conflict with the law, a model juvenile court should to be set up"(Mathenge, 2006: 17). This is an indication that juvenile delinquency is an issue in Kenya and especially in western Kenya.

In any society, adolescents are the single most valuable human resource because they ensure the continuity of that particular society. Children are closer to their peers than to their parents. As a result, they adapt queer and deviant behaviour due to intense psychological tortures, which range from: alcoholism, drug abuse, premarital sex, pornography, crimes, and some even opt to go to the streets. Therefore, without proper parental guidance and intervention, the future of the children is not certain (Chuki, 1996). Given the prevailing circumstances in our major towns, it is common knowledge that something is wrong. The Government authorities' blame parents, and the fact that they have asked them to monitor the movement of their children not just during the day, but also, when they go to sleep, is a message loud enough that something urgent needs to be done. Juvenile delinquency means the deviation of children from the right path, and their succumbing to wrongdoing vice. Delinquency, therefore, is not only deviation, but is also a form of loss and desolation, combining all manifestations of depravity and moral decay.

It is the zeal of every reasonable parent to address the changing behaviour of their children. High increase in juvenile delinquencies, high rate of early school dropouts in both girls and boys, increase in street children and high rate of crime, both in towns and rural settings, can be linked to poor parental guidance in the early child development (White, 1980). It was also established that majority of the children involved in deviant behaviour, seem to be either staying alone or may be staying far from their families, with their peers. Additionally, they also opt to engage in detrimental lifestyles of drugs, alcoholism, and sexual crimes. The argument that the family factors increase the risk of anti social behaviour

was supported by Melgosa (2002), who said that alcoholic parents, parents with criminal behaviour and parents with discipline systems which are strict, too lax or inconsistent, broken homes or those with problematic relationships also tend to favor delinquent behaviour in children.

Few attempts have been made to clearly outline the major causal factors. Current studies in Kenya tend to focus on general underlying reasons for this behaviour particularly in urban settings. "Head Teachers from Rift Valley Province during their meeting in Kisumu called for a legal framework to substitute the ban on corporal punishment as the problem of indiscipline among students is getting out of hand"(Kweyu, 2006:16.). Little however, has been done to identify the most significant factors, which would enable advocates to arrive at more comprehensive measures to address the problem. Additionally, little research has been done on parenting styles as a factor in juvenile behaviour in the western region of Kenya. Since children's behaviour is greatly influenced by their significant others (parents, teachers and peers) the research contents that, parenting styles, have direct influence on the acquisition of deviant behaviour.

Like other parts of Kenya, western Kenya is experiencing high rates of juvenile delinquency. As a result there was urgent need to find out, how deviant behaviour of children in western Kenya relates to parenting. The findings will help parents to understand why it is crucial to train and moderate children behaviour so as to prevent them from being involved in deviant behaviour when they grow up. Looking at the crime statistics, it appears to be on the upward trend and this would be worrying both to the parents and Government authorities. From the available research already done, the studies on parenting have been carried out either in U.S.A and Britain or elsewhere in Africa for example in Nigeria as reported in Ekpo (1995) but not so much in Kenya and none in western Kenya. Therefore, this study will be an advantage to the Kenyan parent because it addresses Kenyan problems. The study would therefore help in equipping and provide knowledge and skills to parents in order to assist them in effective parenting. It would also provide parents with theoretical framework on issues related to behaviour development and acquisition of deviant behaviour of children. Zigler and Matia (1987) pointed out that, the most common parenting style and parental authority are: authoritarian, permissive and democratic (authoritative). All these have different effects on the child's development. Generally, the authoritative parenting style has been found to be the most effective. Several studies conducted worldwide show some indirect relationship between parenting style and the initiation and facilitation of deviant behaviour. It is out of these concerns that the research intends to investigate how parenting styles influence juvenile delinquency and the role of parents who are children's immediate role models.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of respondents according to parenting style

Parenting Styles	No. of Students	Percentage
Democratic	55	29.73
Restrictive	62	33.51
Authoritarian	48	25.95
Permissive	20	10.81
Total	185	100

The objective of the study therefore was to find out if parenting styles influence acquisition of deviant behavior of children aged between 8 and 18 years.

METHODOLOGY

The research design of the study assumed a causal comparative research that was used to explore the relationship between the two variables. The research used this design to investigate how parenting styles influence delinquent behaviour development among children.

The study was carried out among children and teachers in six selected special schools in western Kenya, - Eldoret, Kakamega and Kericho towns. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the research mainly targeted a cross-section of the children aged between 8 – 18 years and teachers in special schools in Kakamega, Kericho and Eldoret. The six special schools selected have a total population of 370 students. Also Deputy Headmasters, Guidance and counseling teachers and class teachers were involved as key informants in the study. The study adopted a purposive and systematic sampling techniques to select the study area and 185 children respectively, in Kakamega, Kericho and Eldoret correction schools. Students were selected based on their admission numbers. Students whose admission numbers end with 1, 3, 5 and 7 were selected to participate in the study. They were chosen to ensure a selection of at least 50% of the student population. In this case therefore, the selection of a student had no influence on the selection of any other within the same school.

The students' Questionnaires and teachers' interview schedules were used in collecting data from members of the sample population. The questionnaires contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The Questionnaire contained details of opinions, perceptions and attitude of behaviours elicited by those children with both parents against those who had single or no parents. Observation of characters was done in the school setting. Judgment was based on evaluation instrument developed by the researcher. Interview was carried out to both teachers and children for the purpose of verification of

information and characters observed from the children in the study group.

An interview schedule was prepared for the teachers consisting of seven items. The teachers were required to state how long they had been in the school. It was assumed that a longer stay in that particular school was of help in that the teacher would have a good picture of the school and the students. This was important as far as the objectivity of the information given was concerned. The interview schedule also required teachers to divulge information regarding parenting styles that influence delinquent behaviour among children.

In terms of data analysis, descriptive as well as inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics such as the mean, percentages and frequencies were used to summarize the data and to describe the sample. Inferential statistics mainly Chi-Square was used to infer the sample results to the population. The chi-square test showed whether a relationship existed between parenting style and deviant behaviour. The chi-square distribution is a continuous distribution with a value zero as its lower limit and extends to positive infinity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Parenting Styles and Deviant Behaviour

Parenting style influences the general behaviour of growing children. The study investigated specifically the role of parenting style in acquisition of deviant behaviour in children. The purpose of collecting information on the type of parenting styles, therefore, established how parenting style influence delinquent behaviour development in children.

Parenting Styles

The study established that the majority 62 (33.51%) of the respondents had restrictive parents, 48 (25.95%) had authoritarian parenting styles and 20 (10.81%) had permissive parenting styles. The rest of the distribution 55 (29.73%) had democratic parenting styles as shown in Table 1.

Table 2. Analysis of responses concerning how children accept parental authority

Children's Acceptance of Authority	No. of Students	Percentage
Deviant	13	7.03
Critical of Authority	31	16.76
Ordinarily Obedient	45	24.32
Respectful	71	38.38
Respect Authority	25	13.51
Total	185	100

Table 3. Analysis of responses concerning who the children consult when in problems

Who is Consulted when in problems	No. of Students	Percentage
Parents	66	35.68
Teachers	63	43.05
Relatives	18	9.73
Friends	16	8.65
Peers	7	3.78
Any Other	15	8.11
Total	185	100

The researcher established that parents who used democratic type of parenting style were less likely to raise children with deviant behaviour. This type of parenting style gives the child choices and is open for discussion, thereby giving the child an opportunity to decide what is best for him or her. In such a case, with the guidance of the parent/guardian, the child is more likely to adopt desirable behaviours given the leadership and autonomy the parent has exposed to the child.

On the other hand, parents who use authoritarian type of parenting style are more likely to raise up children who adopt deviant behaviour because they display aggressiveness and arrogance to the child. According to social learning theory, advanced by Albert Bandura, children are more likely to imitate behaviours from parents whom they consider as role models. As such, parents who display arrogance and aggressiveness are more likely to raise up children who adopt deviant behaviour than parents who give room for their children to discuss what is best for them rather than act as dictators. This is supported by Steel (1968) who argued that a child is naturally dependent upon the adults around him for his image of the world. Therefore, the type of image matters. Melgosa (2002) commending on young people and their friends, avers that adolescents do not abandon the family, but keep both reference points. The group of friends' however, gains prominence and may have more influence than parents. The harsh and unhappy home environments depict restrictive and authoritarian parenting styles at play. The cool and boring

environment is associated with permissive type of parenting styles. The child under this parenting style does not respect parents, others or the property of others. They exhibit emotional problems.

Deviant Behaviour

There was need to establish the behaviour of children whether deviant or normal so that we can establish what factors result to such behaviours. The study established that about half 96 (51.89%) of the respondents were obedient. The rest of the distribution according to acceptance of parental authority is shown in Table 2.

In Table 2, it was revealed that majority of the respondents (51.89 percent) were respectful to authority, 24.32 percent were ordinarily obedient, whereas 16.76 percent were critical of authority and 7.03 percent were deviant. This might indicate that these children are not deviant. However, from the research, it might be that, these children having stayed in these schools, seem to have realized that they needed to be obedient and respectful to their parents hence the response. Otherwise, those who indicated deviant and critical of authority were very bitter about their parents.

The results from Table 3 indicate that 35.68 percent consulted their parents when in problems, 43.05 percent consulted teachers, 9.73 consulted relatives, 8.65 percent consulted friends, 8.11 percent consulted other people while only 3.78 percent consulted peers.

Table 4. Analysis of responses concerning what Parents value in their children's behavior

Behaviour valued by Parents	No. of Students	Percentage
Obedience	50	27.02
Respect	85	45.95
Self control	28	15.14
Faithfulness	21	11.35
Autonomy (Management of own Affair)	1	0.54
Total	185	100

Table 5. Chi- square Analysis of Students response regarding Parenting Styles and deviant behaviour
Deviant Behaviour

		Normal	Deviant	Total
Parenting Style	Good	24	50	74
	Bad	32	79	111
	Total	56(30.3)	129(69.7)	185(100)

$$\chi_a^2 = 37.652$$

$$d.f = 1$$

$$\alpha < 0.05 \quad \chi_c^2 = 0.27$$

These results indicate that parents play a major role in the lives of the children followed by teachers who stay with children most of the time when children are in school. In the absence of the parents and teachers, then relatives and friends play a big role. The study established that most parents demanded respect from their children as shown in Table 4. From the sample population (Table 4), 45.95 percent reported that their parents valued respect, 27.02 percent valued obedience, 15.14 percent valued self-control, and 11.35 percent valued faithfulness whereas only 0.54 percentages valued autonomy.

The research findings in the sample population that was studied as indicated in Table 5 show that the Chi-square calculated value (37.652) is greater than the critical value (0.27) at 1 degree of freedom at ($\alpha = 0.05$ level of confidence). Since χ_c^2 is less than χ_a^2 , we conclude that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that at the 5% level of significance, parenting style does influence acquisition of deviant behaviour in children. This implies that the type of parenting style, whether good or bad, can either enhance or hinder adoption of deviant behaviour.

CONCLUSION

It has been established that parenting styles has an influence on the type of behaviour a child acquires in the process of growing up. Based on these research findings,

the following is established about parenting style and delinquency: A healthy home environment is one in which parents and children share affection, cohesion, and involvement, which reduce the risk of delinquency. Not only does parental attachment to children influence the likelihood of delinquency, but apparently so does the attachment of the child to the parent. This dual relationship implies an interaction between characteristics of both the parent and the child.

Research on causes of delinquency makes a major contribution to the understanding of the interaction of the family and delinquency. A child's predisposition toward impulsive, aggressive, and delinquent behaviour may initiate a process within the family that ultimately leads to delinquency. Parents of a difficult child may stop parenting to gain peace within the home and may come to reject the child. Antisocial patterns established within the family maybe exacerbated and reinforced as the child enters school. As the child enters adolescence, delinquent acts may further weaken the youth's attachment to family, school, and conventional ties.

A variety of family circumstances have been identified as contributing to the delinquent behaviour of children. Children who are rejected by their parents, are inadequately supervised, and grow up in homes with considerable conflict and are at greatest risk of becoming delinquents. The presence of any one of the above factors in the family increases the chances of raising a delinquent child. A healthy home environment is the

single most important factor necessary to keep children from becoming delinquent. Children who are inadequately supervised by parents who fail to teach them right and wrong, their whereabouts, friends, or activities are not monitored, and who are disciplined erratically and harshly are more likely to become delinquent. Marital discord is a more powerful predictor of delinquency than divorce or single parent family structure. Family relations, not just the separation, influence delinquency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Youth and Sports to offer necessary support in establishing rehabilitation centers to cater for children and ensuring that modalities are put in place for helping children with deviant behaviour.
2. Relevant policy makers to come up with strategies of equipping parents, and the society at large, with basic skills and knowledge on children's behaviour modification strategies. This will lead to reduced rates of juvenile delinquencies and criminology among the children.
3. Parents should exercise either democratic or permissive style of leadership to create positive parental control around the social activities of their children.
4. The society should uphold the virtue for purity before marriage and the need of staying together once people get married. This is because children who are reared by both the mother and the father are unlikely to be swayed away to deviancy compared to children who grow up in the presence of one parent.
5. In the case of orphaned children the society should learn to extend love to such children to minimize the risk of acquiring deviant behaviour as an escapist route from the 'insensitive' society.

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