Effect of Perceived Authoritative Parenting Style on Adolescents' Identity Styles: A Case of Selected Public Secondary Schools in Westlands Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

Adolescence is a crucial period marked by significant psychological and social development, particularly in identity formation. Berzonsky's identity model suggests each individual employs different identity styles and each style can have implications on psychological well-being and adjustment. One influential factor in this process is parenting style, which encompasses parental behaviors, attitudes, and strategies in child-rearing. The objective of this study was to assess the effect of authoritative parenting style on adolescents' identity styles. Baumarind's theory of parenting styles and Berzonsky's identity styles model anchored the study. The data collection instruments used were questionnaires; Perceived Parenting Styles Scale used to measure parenting styles, the Inventory of Parents and Peers Attachment (IPPA) used to measure parental attachment and Identity Styles Inventory (ISI-5) used to measure Identity styles. The research was a quantitative study with descriptive data acquired via survey methodology. The study had a sample size of 408 participants, 209 males and 199 females, all aged between 15 and 19. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to measure association between variables, and assumptions of regression analysis was done prior to regression analysis to check for its suitability. Regression analysis was used to establish the relationship between variables. IBM SPSS Version 28 was used to analyse the data. The results indicated that normative (β = 0.220, p = 0.000) and informative (β = 0.096, p = 0.048) identity styles and authoritative parenting styles were positively correlated. The study implications are that adolescents who grow up under authoritative parents have a high chance of developing an informative identity style and a normative identity style. They are also not likely to develop a diffuse avoidant identity style.

Key Words: Adolescents, Authoritative Parenting Style, Identity Styles

Introduction and Background

Erik Erikson founded the psychosocial development theory, which was the first and, probably, most important lifespan theory, emphasizing the social element of our development (Syed &

McLean, 2017). Individuals go through eight stages of development throughout their lives, according to psychosocial theory, from birth to late adulthood. Each phase has a task to be accomplished and contains a conflict that must be addressed. The stages that form the key concepts of Erikson's ideas on identity are 'trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair' (Syed & McLean, 2017). The most challenging and important task an adolescent faces is resolving the identity vs. role confusion task that allows them to develop their own unique sense of identity, find a social context in which they may belong, and form meaningful relationships with others (Erikson 1985). Conversely, should an adolescent fail to fulfil this task, they remain confused, unable to make their own decisions, lack a meaningful identity and ultimately lack a clear sense of direction (Crocetti, 2017; Erikson, 1985).

Roman et al. (2021) linked the poor decisions made by adolescents to their identity styles, which consequently impeded their social and physical assimilation. Sufficient parental involvement is essential for facilitating adolescents in attaining their developmental objectives (Hasanah, 2019). Consequently, parents play a pivotal role in fostering the emergence of adolescents' drive for autonomy by providing a foundation of stability, thereby encouraging the pursuit of independence and self-reliance (Ahadi et al., 2014; Giri, 2020; Laboviti et al., 2015). The current study aims to examine how the authoritative parenting style specifically influences adolescent identity styles-normative, diffuse-avoidant, and informational. While previous research has linked authoritative parenting to positive psychosocial development, this study seeks to explore these effects through the lens of identity style formation among adolescents aged 15 to 19 in a Kenyan context.

Berzonsky (1989) defined identity styles as the strategies individuals use to build knowledge about themselves and use the knowledge to make life decisions. Adolescents use the three identity styles he developed; informational, normative, and diffuse avoidant identity styles, to make decisions and address identity related challenges (Soenens et al., 2016). Adolescents with an informational identity style thoroughly research and assess pertinent information, when making decisions or navigating identity crises (Luyckx, et al., 2016). According to Žukauskienė et al. (2018), adolescents who have a normative identity style are more inclined to conform to the expectations of significant figures in their lives than to consider other possibilities. Adolescents that exhibit a diffused avoidant identity style lack clarity about their

identity, values, and future goals (Berzonsky & Kinney., 2019). The crucial decisions and choices made throughout the adolescent years may foretell an adolescent's success or failure in their subsequent transition into adulthood, as well as their future (Luyckx et al., 2016).

Baumrind (1966) describes authoritative parenting style as being characterized by highly responsive parents who are also highly demanding. Parents that are authoritative are emotionally warm to children and their ways of disciplining tends to be more moderate and supportive as opposed to punitive (Laboviti, 2015). Extensive verbal exchanges are allowed in authoritative parenting style, and this leads to adolescents who are socially competent and responsible (Santrock, 2016). As such, together with the child, clear norms, guidelines, and boundaries are established. Additionally, verbal communication is encouraged, and the parent takes time to explain the reasoning behind the set rules. In case of non-compliance, the parent is willing to understand the child's feelings and considers their opinions and views with respect. Subsequently, set rules are monitored and enforced while applying consistent discipline with an aim to teach and help the child learn. In this regard, the parent enforces their perspective but takes into consideration the child's interests and individuality. Incidentally, standards are set for future conduct and the child's current qualities are acknowledged.

To gain a deeper insight into the relationship between authoritative parenting and adolescent development, studies have linked authoritative parenting style to positively influencing adolescent psychosocial development in; cohesive relationships with their parents, optimizing adolescent identity, excellent academic performance, self-esteem, effective in establishing personal values and social roles (Bi et al., 2018; Hasanah et al., 2018; Laboviti., 2015; Checa & Abundis., 2018; Pandoyi & Jain, 2021; Garcia & Santiago, 2017; Pinquart & Gerke., 2019; Yeung et al., 2016). This research contributes new insights by examining the nuanced relationship between authoritative parenting and the development of distinct identity styles among adolescents in Kenya. Unlike prior studies, which have primarily focused on broad psychosocial outcomes, this study delves into how specific parenting practices influence the formation of identity styles, offering a deeper understanding of the role of authoritative parenting in identity style development.

In a cross-sectional investigation spanning three nations—Spain, Portugal, and Brazil— Martinez et al. (2020) embarked on a study aimed at elucidating the influence of parenting styles on adolescents' self-esteem and the internalization of social values within these cultural

contexts. The study meticulously examined four distinct parenting styles: authoritative, indulgent, authoritarian, and neglectful while assessing dimensions of warmth and strictness as indicators of parental socialization. Results revealed that both authoritative and indulgent parenting styles exhibited positive associations with heightened internalization of societal values and adolescents' self-esteem. Notably, these countries are characterized as possessing horizontal collectivist cultures, wherein the self is integrated within the collective, while interpersonal relationships among members tend toward egalitarianism.

In a qualitative study done in Malaysia aimed at investigating the influence of parenting styles on adolescents' self-esteem, Lynn and Ting (2019) discovered that parents who adopted an authoritative parenting style gave rise to adolescents with high self-esteem. Their study targeted mothers only and selected six students aged between 13 and 17. Similarly, Aziz et al. (2021) found there was a positive and strong influence between authoritative parenting style and self-esteem in their research conducted in India on the influence of parenting styles and peer attachment on life satisfaction; mediated by self-esteem among adolescents. The average age of the respondents was 18.3 years and data was collected from 412 students. Soenens et al. (2016) in their study on attending to the role of identity exploration and self-esteem reported that a low level of self-esteem was a predictor of a diffuse avoidant identity style while high self-esteem predicted an informational and a normative identity style.

Hussain et al. (2023) conducted a study in India that sought to establish the long-term effects of authoritative parenting on the development of adolescents' emotional maturity and self-esteem. The study employed a mixed method approach, selecting 500 parents, with a focus exclusively on fathers, and 500 adolescents, aged 13 to 18. Random sampling was the method utilized for selecting the adolescents. The study reported that adolescents reared by authoritative parents will likely benefit from their moral competence, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving abilities well into old age. Additionally, this parenting style enhanced their capacity to manage stress, deal with life's challenges, and make well-informed choices. Still in India, a study by Giri (2020) that sought to investigate the influence of different parenting styles on adolescents' identity construction found that the practice of authoritative parenting, was positively linked to the formation of adolescents' identities and promoted acceptable behaviour in adolescents. Additionally, adolescents raised by authoritative parents were found to experience fewer difficulties adjusting to life transitions.

Jimoh et al. (2020) conducted a study aimed at assessing the influence of parenting styles on identity style development among students in public senior secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study employed a multistage sampling technique to select 396 adolescents aged between 12 and 20 years. The study found there was a significant positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and informative identity style.

In Kenya, a study done in Uasin Gishu County by Nyabuto (2014) found that formation of aspects such as autonomy, openness, self-esteem and independence in an adolescent were heavily dependent on the parenting style practiced. The study noted that the authoritarian parenting style produced adolescents who were anxious and unhappy. A study done in Mombasa County on the impact of Parenting styles and personality development revealed that permissive parenting styles contributed to 28.2% of positive personality while authoritative parenting styles contributed to 41% of positive personality (Kilonzo, 2017). In yet another study that looked at parenting styles as a predictor of public secondary school dropout rates in Embu County, Kenya, Njagi and Mwania (2017) found that only 40% of school dropouts were associated with authoritative parenting, while authoritarian and permissive parenting styles scored higher at 69.4% and 70% respectively.

The studies conducted in various counties in Kenya offer valuable insights into how parenting styles influence key aspects of adolescent development. Nyabuto (2014) highlighted that autonomy, self-esteem, and independence are closely linked to the type of parenting style practiced, while Kilonzo (2017) demonstrated that authoritative parenting contributed significantly to positive personality development. Additionally, Njagi and Mwania's (2017) findings show that authoritative parenting was associated with lower dropout rates compared to more negative outcomes from authoritarian and permissive styles. These findings underscore the relevance of authoritative parenting in shaping critical developmental outcomes, laying the groundwork for exploring its specific impact on adolescent identity styles in the current study.

Processing identity styles is critical to adolescent development given that it lays the foundation for adult psychosocial development as well as relationships with others. Being the primary socializers for their children, parents have the power to support or undermine this crucial process. Adolescents are more likely to struggle with issues related to problem behaviour if

they are unable to complete the primary task in adolescent development, which is determining their identities and roles (Crocetti, 2017).

Despite the fact that numerous researches have been conducted on parenting methods and how they affect various aspects of adolescents development such as academics, self-esteem, juvenile delinquency and behavior problems, attachment and identity styles, peer relationships, among others (Delgado et al. 2022; Gachenia et al. 2021; Kago 2018; Masud, 2015; Okunlola, 2020), few particularly in Africa, have focused on the effect of different parenting styles on adolescent identity styles, compared to other regions of the world and notably in the researcher's chosen area of study. This study therefore sought to add to the body of knowledge on how authoritative parenting styles have an effect on adolescent identity styles in Westlands Sub-County.

The theories that anchored the study were Baumrind's theory of parenting styles and Berzonsky's Identity styles model. Baumrind's theory provides a well-established theoretical framework for understanding the different ways parents interact with their children. Her classification of parenting styles into authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive has been widely influential in developmental psychology. As noted, Baumrind's theory is supported by extensive empirical research that demonstrates the impact of parenting styles on various aspects of adolescents' development including social, cognitive and emotional outcomes thus corroborating the associations between different parenting styles and adolescents' outcomes.

Baumrind's theory offers insights into how different parenting styles may shape adolescents' sense of self, autonomy, and values which are central to identity styles development. For the study of adolescent identity styles, Berzonsky (1989), strengthens Erikson's theory by his view that considers forming an identity as a difficult process in which adolescents have to assess the advantages and disadvantages of several possibilities before making a choice (Ergün, 2020). Within this framework, individuals may adopt different identity styles based on their levels of exploration and commitment.

Methodology

This quantitative study utilized descriptive data collected through a survey methodology from a small group of participants, providing statistical results, analysis, and interpretation. A total

of six public schools were selected through purposive sampling. A sample of 408 students, 199 females and 209 males were further selected using stratified sampling method. The mean, standard deviation, and range of scores for independent and dependent variables were calculated using descriptive statistics. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to measure association between variables, and assumptions of regression analysis was done prior to regression analysis to check for its suitability. Regression analysis was used to establish the relationship between variables. IBM SPSS Version 28 was used to analyse the data.

Parenting style was assessed using the Perceived Parenting Styles Scale (PPSS) by Divya and Manikandan (2013). It assessed adolescents' perceptions of their parents in terms of the three parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. It had a total of 24 question items structured on a five-point Likert scale, 8 questions assessing each parenting style. Identity styles were assessed using Berzonsky et al. (2013), Identity Styles Inventory (ISI), which included items that would reflect current identity style.

Results

Correlation Analysis

Table 1.1 Correlation Matrix for the Study

		Identity matrix combined	Informative identity	Normative identity	Diffuse avoidant identity
Authoritative parenting styles	r	.094	.126*	.220**	-.174**
	Sig.	.061	.012	.000	.000
	N	399	400	399	399

Source: Author's own computation

As shown in Table 1.1 above. Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Authoritative parenting styles was correlated to the identity styles; informative, normative and diffuse avoidant styles.

It is evident that the authoritative parenting styles does not correlate with identity styles when combined (r= 0.094, $p = 0.061$). This indicates that, when looking at identity styles collectively, there isn't a strong or consistent association with authoritative parenting because

the correlation between authoritative parenting styles and identity styles is generally weak and not statistically significant (p > 0.05).

However, authoritative parenting styles correlates positively with informative identity styles (r= .126, p =0.012) meaning, authoritative parenting methods and informative identity styles have a weak but statistically significant positive association (p < 0.05). This suggests that those who grow up with authoritative parenting have a somewhat higher chance of developing informative identity styles, which entail actively searching for and analysing information to help shape one's identity.

Authoritative parenting styles also positively correlates with the normative identity style (r=.220, p = 0.000). The results indicate that normative identity style and authoritative parenting styles have a moderately favourable association (p < 0.01). This implies that normative identity styles, which entail shaping one's identity through compliance to society norms and values are more closely linked to authoritative parenting. A negative correlation was reported in relation to the diffuse avoidant identity style (r=-0.174, p =0.000). Diffuse-avoidant identity styles, which involve avoiding commitment and lacking a clear direction in identity formation, were found to have a moderately negative correlation (p < 0.01) with authoritative parenting. This suggests that people who experience authoritative parenting are less likely to have these identity style.

Regression Analysis

Table 1.2: Regression Model for Authoritative Parenting Styles Against the Combined Identity Styles

Model Summary[b]

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | | Durbin-Watson |
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.094[a]	.009	.006	.99149	.009	3.534	1	397	.061	1.927

Source: Author's own computation

Table 1.2 represents a regression table of the relationship between authoritative parenting style and identity styles. Regression analysis showed that there was no significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and identity styles combined when the three were

combined as one ($R^2 = 0.009$, $p = 0.061$). With an R2 of 0.009, authoritative parenting style can only account for 0.9% of the variance in identity styles. This is an extremely low score, indicating that when taken as a single combined component, authoritative parenting style has virtually no explanatory capacity to predict identity styles.

A p-value of 0.061 is slightly above the common significance threshold of 0.05. This implies that, at the 5% level, the outcome is not statistically significant. Stated differently, there is insufficient data to draw the conclusion that, when taken into account jointly, authoritative parenting style and identity styles have a meaningful association. This finding does not imply that identity styles are completely unaffected by authoritative parenting. Given the strong associations with informative, normative, and diffuse-avoidant identity styles, it is possible that the link is more complex and best understood when examining individual identity styles.

Table 1.3 ANOVA table

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	38.395	3	12.798	14.239	.000[b]
1	Residual	355.039	395	.899		
	Total	393.434	398			

Source: Author's own computation

Table 1.3 presents the ANOVA table for the comparison of the relationship between authoritative parenting styles against the different adolescent identity styles. The significant relationship in this study is derived from ANOVA statistics which tests whether the model is significantly better at predicting the outcome than using the mean as a 'best guess'. Specifically, the F-ratio represents the ratio of the improvement in prediction that results from fitting the model, relative to the inaccuracy that still exists in the model. In computing the F-statistic (ANOVA table), the study is testing the hypothesis that none of the explanatory variables help explain variation in Y (authoritative parenting style) about its mean.

Regression Coefficients

Table 1.4 Table of Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.259	.265		12.305	.000		
	Informative identity	.096	.048	.096	1.986	.048	.988	1.012
	Normative identity	.220	.046	.233	4.824	.000	.977	1.024
	Diffuse avoidant identity	-.170	.042	-.197	-4.082	.000	.984	1.017

Source: Author's own computation

Table 1.4 shows the coefficient table. It shows the effects of authoritative parenting styles on the individual identity styles; informative, normative, and diffuse avoidant identity styles. In the analysis, it was observed that there was a positive association between authoritative parenting styles to informative and normative identity styles ($\beta = 0.096$, $p = 0.048$; $\beta=0.220$, $p = 0.000$) respectively while diffuse avoidant style was negatively associated with the authoritative parenting styles ($\beta = -170$, $p = 0.000$) suggesting that they had opposite effects to each other. These study findings showed that authoritative parenting styles positively influenced the informative and normative identity styles in adolescents. However, it reduced the diffuse avoidant tendencies among the adolescents as an identity style.

Discussion

The study confirmed findings by Jimoh et al. (2020) found a significant positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and informative identity style. Jimoh et al. (2020) however did not find a significant relationship between the authoritative parenting style and the normative identity style.

While studies based on Baumrind's typologies have praised the effectiveness of authoritative parenting style in producing consistent results in bringing up adolescents and in child development (Kilonzo, 2017; Pandovi & Jain., 2021), these study findings did not make a similar observation. Correlation analysis reported a non-significant association between identity styles when combined to authoritative parenting style ($p > 0.05$). However,

authoritative parenting style was positively correlated to informative identity style (r = 0.126, p =0.012), and Normative identity styles (r = 0.220, p = 0.000). It was negatively correlated to the diffuse avoidant style (r = -0.174, p = 0.000), suggesting that the authoritative parenting styles vary in their effects on the adolescent identity styles.

These research findings align with Smetana's (2017) assertions about how parenting styles vary depending on context. However, they raise unresolved questions about whether the impact of these variations remains consistently significant across different demographic groups. Additionally, the results of this study can be juxtaposed with those of Soenens et al. (2016), who observed that normative and informative adolescents exhibited elevated levels of self-esteem. This comparison is important because it suggests that the influence of authoritative parenting on identity formation, as observed in my study, may similarly foster positive self-esteem, supporting the idea that certain identity styles are associated with better psychosocial outcomes. In a complementary manner, this investigation reaffirms the findings of Roman et al. (2021), indicating that mothers who adopt a more authoritative parenting style are significantly associated with fostering an informational identity style in their children.

Conclusion

This research reveals a negative correlation between authoritative parenting and diffuse avoidant identity styles among adolescents, while a positive and significant correlation exists with informative and normative identity styles. Moreover, adolescents with normative identity styles and informative identity styles exhibit traits such as discipline, attention to detail, adherence to structure, and aversion to indecisiveness. Conversely, the study highlights a negative association between authoritative parenting and diffuse avoidant identity styles, implying that adolescents raised by authoritative parents are less likely to exhibit procrastination and indecisiveness, demonstrating a stronger sense of commitment and self-control.

Considering the positive correlation observed between authoritative parenting style and normative and informative adolescent identity styles, coupled with its negative correlation with avoidant identity style, it is suggested that schools incorporate family therapy services. Additionally, schools should periodically engage parents, offering them psychoeducational sessions to emphasize the benefits of adopting an authoritative parenting approach with their

adolescents. This approach aims to cultivate greater autonomy and analytical skills in adolescents when making decisions that affect their lives.

In summary, this study provides a culturally specific exploration of the relationship between authoritative parenting and adolescent identity development in Kenya. By focusing on identity styles, it extends the current literature beyond general psychosocial outcomes, offering fresh insights into the developmental effects of authoritative parenting within this unique cultural context.

This study used self-reported surveys to measure parenting styles and identity styles which could introduce response biases as participants may have given socially desirable answers or lacked full awareness of their own experiences. Future studies may benefit from incorporating observational data or reports from multiple sources such as parents or teachers to provide a more comprehensive view. The study also employed a cross-sectional design which limits the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationship between authoritative parenting and adolescent identity style. Longitudinal studies may be needed to track changes in identity styles over time to better understand the long-term impact of authoritative parenting on adolescent identity style development. While this study focused on authoritative parenting, future research could investigate the impact of other parenting styles (e.g., authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful) on adolescent identity styles. Understanding how different styles affect identity styles may provide a more holistic view of the role of parenting in adolescence.

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