Does Marital Status Influence the Parenting Styles Employed by Parents?

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Abstract
The current study sought to establish whether parents' marital status, influence their use of specific parenting styles in Kisauni District, Kenya. A correlational research design was employed to carry out this study. Stratified sampling technique was used to select preschools while purposive sampling technique was used to select preschool children to participate in the study. A sample size of 160 pre-school children together with their parents was purposively selected based on their performance level in curricular activities from 20 pre-schools. A questionnaire and an interview were used to collect data on parents' demographics and their parenting styles. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to prepare and organize data for analysis to test significance levels between variables at 0.05. Data were analyzed statistically using descriptive and inferential statistics. One way ANOVA techniques were utilized to establish whether there exist any significant relationships or differences in the means between parents' marital status and their parenting styles. The findings indicated that parents' marital status does not influence their parenting styles. The study therefore concluded that there is no significant relationship between parents' marital status and the parenting styles they employ in bringing up their children.
Keywords: marital status and parenting styles, parenting styles and preschool children

1.   Introduction
Research confirms that authoritative parenting style predicts favorable development of children and adolescents of diverse family backgrounds including single-parent, two-parent, and step-parent families (Crouter & Head, 2002; Slicker & Thornberry, 2002; as cited in Berk, 2006). Gutman, Brown and Akerman (2010) conducted a study in United Kingdom (UK) to examine how mother and child characteristics and contextual sources of stress and support predict the mother-child interaction observed at five years. They found that marital status does not have a significant measurable direct effect on parenting behavior of parents. Therefore, marital status is not related to parenting styles.

Roman (2011) investigated parenting styles of single and married mothers in South Africa. He found that there were no significant differences between parenting styles of single and married mothers. Likewise, Avison, Ali and Walters (2007) and Greitemeyer (2009) found no significant differences parenting practices between single and married mothers in South Africa. However, Aronson and Huston (2004) point out that compared with married mothers, single mothers are more likely to engage in inconsistent, harsh, and unsupportive parenting behaviours. They state that single mothers are less likely to interact with their children in a more stimulating and nurturing manner. Literature reviewed show that most of the studies done to investigate the influence of marital status on parenting styles mainly involved mothers. The current study therefore sought to establish whether marital status of parents significantly influenced their parenting styles.

2.0 Methodology
2.1 Location of Study
This study was carried out in Kisauni District of Mombasa County. 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^2. 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 in 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.

The district has approximately 195 pre-schools with an approximate number of 16,813 pre-school children. There are approximately 26 public preschools and 169 private preschools spread across two divisions; Kisauni Division and Bamburi Division. Kisauni District was selected for the current study by use of multi-stage sampling technique. First, Mombasa County was randomly selected out of the 5 counties in Coast Province. Then Kisauni District was randomly selected out of the three districts in the county including; Mombasa, Kisauni and Kilindini.

2.2 Target Population

This study targeted all pre-school children aged 5-6 years together with their parents in Kisauni District, from both public and private pre-schools. According to the DICECE officer, there were approximately 16,813 preschool children and 15,000 parents in 195 preschools in the District; by September, 2011. Preschool children were selected for this study because Early Childhood Development and Education is the foundation of whole education. Oso & Onen (2009) assert that success or failure at ECDE level may be carried to other levels of education.

2.3 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.

2.4 Research Instruments

A questionnaire, interview schedule, and document analysis techniques were used to collect data for 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.

2.5 Data Collection Procedures

First, the researcher sought a permit to conduct research from the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Education. The researcher then visited the D.E.O's office in Kisauni and sought further permission by giving him a copy of the letter from the Ministry of Education. Data was collected in three stages as follows:

1st Stage – The researcher selected 10 public and 10 private pre-schools using stratified random sampling technique. He then sought appointment with head teachers of the selected pre-schools in order to seek permission to conduct the study in their schools and at the same time briefed them about the research.

2nd Stage – The researcher met head teachers and pre-school teachers from different preschools selected in the month of October, 2012 to seek access to children's activity progress reports for analysis. First, the researcher sought for permission from parents to access their children's progress reports through a letter. The researcher then checked and analyzed children's curriculum activity progress reports. The researcher then corroborated the information from this report by checking and analyzing children's exercise books and progress checklists. Using the results, the researcher with the help of preschool teachers selected four top performers and four low performers from each pre-school to participate in the study.

3rd Stage – Once the children for the study were selected, the researcher met the head teachers of the selected pre-schools and requested them to invite the parents of the selected children to come to pre-school to fill the questionnaires. When the parents came to the preschools of their children, they were briefed by the researcher with the help of the head teachers about the purpose of the study. Their consent to participate in the study was sought. The questionnaires were then filled and collected the same day. Those who could not be able to read and write were given assistance. The questionnaire was read to them and their responses recorded. The researcher also interviewed each parent on their parenting styles in order corroborate the data generated from the questionnaire. The interview was conducted on the preschool premises immediately the parents completed filling the questionnaires in the preschools.

In order to ensure that each child was matched with the correct parent, a number was assigned to each participating child. The questionnaires were labeled with the numbers assigned to the children. The data collected from all the participating preschools was then coded, scored and analyzed. The data was also subjected to statistical tests to establish the relationship between study variables.

2.6 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.

3.   Findings
3.1 Parents' Marital Status
Parents of the preschool children were asked to indicate whether they were married, never married, divorced, widowed, or separated. Table 1 presents the results to that effect.

Table 1: Parents' Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent
Married	111	77.1
Never Married	17	11.8
Divorced	1	.7
Widowed	8	5.6
Separated	7	4.9
Total	144	100.0

Table 1 indicates that majority of the parents (77.1%) were married, 11.8% were single (never married), 5.6% were widowed, 7% were separated, and 0.7% (1) was divorced. This finding implies majority of the parents were married (77%) and only 23% of the parents were raising their preschool children as single parents.

3.2 Parenting Styles Used by Parents of Preschool Children in Kisauni
The first objective of this study sought to establish the parenting styles used by parents of preschool children in Kisauni District, Kenya. Table 2 presents results on parenting styles used by the parents.

Table 2: Parenting Styles Used by Parents in Kisauni

	Frequency	Percent
Authoritative style	95	66.8
Authoritarian style	30	20.1
Permissive style	19	13.1
Total	144	100.0

Table 2 indicates that majority (66.8%) of the parents used authoritative parenting style, 20.1% used authoritarian parenting style, and 13.1% used permissive parenting style. This finding reveals that majority (67%) of parents of preschool children Kisauni District use authoritative parenting style to bring up their children, followed by authoritarian style (20%) and finally permissive style (13%).

3.2.1 Authoritative Parenting Style
In measuring authoritative parenting style, a questionnaire and an interview was used to collect data from parents on their parenting behavior. Tables 3 present results of descriptive statistics on authoritative parenting style.

Table 3: Authoritative Parenting Behavior

	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Mostly (%)	Always (%)
Being sensitive to the child's needs and feelings	.7	2.1	21.5	21.5	54.2
Considering the child's thoughts and feelings	9.0	7.9	36.4	23.8	22.9
Explaining to the child my feelings about his/her good/bad behavior	3.5	2.1	18.8	25.0	50.7
Encouraging the child to talk about his/her feelings & problems	.7	4.9	17.4	17.4	59.7
Encouraging the child to freely speak his/her mind even when I disagree	3.5	10.4	22.9	19.4	43.8
Explaining to the child why he/she is expected to behave in a certain manner	1.4	5.6	15.3	22.2	55.6
Having enjoyable and happy moments with the child e.g. playing together	2.1	9.7	26.4	20.8	41.0
Considering the child's preferences when making family plans e.g. meals	17.4	17.4	30.6	11.8	22.9
Respecting the child's feelings and encouraging him/her to express them	6.2	8.3	27.8	19.4	38.2
Monitoring the child's whereabouts and activities e.g. playing, watching TV	6.2	4.2	21.5	20.8	47.2
Total	95		100%		

Table 3 shows that the most common practice among authoritative parents was, "encouraging the child to talk about his/her feelings and problems." In this practice, out of the 144 participants only 1% indicated never, 5% rarely, 17% sometimes, 17% mostly while 59% indicated that they always engage in this practice. The second most common practice was, "explaining to the child why he/she is expected to behave in a certain manner." Fifty-six percent (56%) of the parents rated always while only 1% indicated that they had never engaged in the behavior. Six percent (6%) indicated rarely, 15% indicated sometimes and 22% indicated mostly. The third commonest authoritative parenting practice was, "being sensitive to the child's needs and feelings." Fifty-four percent (54%) of the parents stated that they always engaged this behavior while 1% stated that they had never. Two (2%) indicated that they rarely, while 22% indicated that they sometimes and mostly engaged in the practice.

The least common authoritative parenting practice among the parents was; "considering the child's thoughts and feelings." Twenty-three percent (23%) of the parents indicated that they always did it while 9% had never engaged in the practice. Eight (8%) of the parents indicated that they rarely, 36% sometimes and 24% mostly engaged in the practice. The second least common authoritative parenting practice was, "considering the child's preferences when making family plans e.g. meals." Twenty-three percent (23%) indicated that they always engaged in the practice, 17% rarely, 31% sometimes, and 12% mostly while 17% indicated never. The third least common authoritative practice was, "Respecting the child's feelings and encouraging him/her to express them." Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the parents indicated that they always engaged in this practice while 6% indicated never, 8% rarely, 28% sometimes, and 19% indicated mostly.

3.2.2 Authoritarian Parenting Style
Authoritarian parenting style was measured using parents' responses on the items of the questionnaire and also the interview. Tables 4 presents the results of the questionnaire.

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Table 4: Authoritarian Parenting Behavior

	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Mostly (%)	Always (%)
Using force and punishment when the child disobeys.	9.7	22.9	43.8	12.5	11.1
When the child asks why he/she should do something; the parent says it's because he/she is the parent and he/she has said so.	23.6	15.3	23.6	14.6	22.9
Punishing the child by taking away privileges from him/her e.g. watching TV.	32.6	24.3	29.2	10.4	3.5
Yelling when disapproving of the child's behavior.	22.9	12.5	34.0	10.4	20.1
Exploding in anger when the child misbehaves.	25.0	22.9	35.4	9.0	7.6
Hitting the child when disapproving his/her behavior.	18.1	18.8	43.8	12.5	6.9
Using criticism to make the child improve his/her behavior.	27.1	18.1	22.9	10.4	21.5
Using threats on the child as a form of punishment.	33.3	17.4	25.0	10.4	13.9
Punishing the child by withholding emotional expressions e.g. withdrawing holding or hugging.	31.2	21.5	20.1	8.3	18.8
Openly criticizing the child when he/she does not meet the parent's expectations.	25.7	11.8	27.8	11.8	22.9
Total	30	100%			

Table 4 indicates that the most common practice of the authoritarian parents was, "openly criticizing the child when he/she does not meet the parent's expectations." Twenty-three percent (23%) of the parents indicated that they always engaged in this behavior while 26% stated that they never engaged in this practice. Fifty-one percent (51%) rated that they rarely, sometimes and mostly engaged in that practice. It was followed by, "when the child asks why he/she should do something; the parent says it's because he/she is the parent and he/she has said so." Twenty-three percent (23%) of the parents indicated that they always engaged in the practice while 24% had never. Findings also show that 15% indicated rarely, 24% sometimes and 15% indicated mostly. The third common authoritarian parenting practice was, "yelling when disapproving of the child's behavior." Twenty percent (20%) of the parents indicated that they always engaged in this practice while 23% never, 13% indicated rarely, 34% sometimes, and 10% mostly.

The least common authoritarian parenting practice was, "punishing the child by taking away privileges from him/her e.g. watching TV." Only 3.5% indicated that they engaged in this behavior while 33% indicated never. Twenty-four (24%) indicated rarely, 29% sometimes, and 10% mostly. The second least common authoritarian practice was, "hitting the child when disapproving his/her behavior." Only 7% of the parents indicated that always engaged in this practice while 18% indicated never. The third least common authoritarian parenting practice was, "exploding in anger when the child misbehaves." Only 8% of the parents indicated that they always engaged in the behavior while 25% stated they had never.

3.2.3 Permissive Parenting Style
Permissive parenting style was measured using parents' responses on items on the questionnaire and interview. Table 4.9(a) and 4.9(b) presents results of descriptive statistics from the questionnaire and interview respectively.

Table 5: Permissive Parenting Behavior

	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Mostly (%)	Always (%)
Showing a lot of patience even when the child misbehaves	27.1	9.7	24.3	14.6	24.3
Easy going and relaxed with the child	25.0	11.8	29.9	12.5	20.8
Not disciplining the child even when he/she misbehaves	53.5	9.7	25.0	4.2	7.6
Giving into the child when he/she causes a commotion about something	45.1	17.4	19.4	6.9	11.1
Not saying no or disappointing the child	46.5	11.1	26.4	8.3	7.6
Ignoring the child's bad behavior	62.5	10.4	13.9	3.5	9.7
Allowing the child to do whatever he/she wants e.g. watching TV	67.4	7.6	14.6	5.6	4.9
Not setting rules for the child to follow	63.2	9.0	9.7	6.2	11.8
Not caring whether the child gets a good or bad grade in school	66.7	5.6	9.0	7.6	11.1
Not demanding the child to behave maturely	54.2	8.3	18.1	7.6	11.8
Total	19		100%		

Table 5 indicates that, 'showing a lot of patience even when the child misbehaves' was commonly practiced among permissive parents. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the parents indicated that they always engaged in this behavior while 27% stated they had never engaged in it. The second commonest permissive parenting behavior was, "easy going and relaxed with the child." Twenty percent (20%) of the parents indicated that they always engaged in this behavior while 25% had never.

The least common practice among permissive parents was, "allowing the child to do whatever he/she wants e.g. watching TV." Only 5% of the parents indicated that they always engaged in this practice while 67% stated that they had never. The second least common permissive parenting practice was, "ignoring the child's bad behavior. Ten percent (10%) of the parents indicated that they always engaged in this behavior while 63% stated that they had never engaged in the behavior. The third least common permissive parenting practice was, "not saying no or disappointing the child." Eight percent (8%) of the parents revealed that they always engaged in this practice while 47% indicated that they had never.

3.3 Relationship between Parents' Marital Status and Parenting Styles

The study sought to establish whether parents' marital status influence their parenting styles. Table 6 presents the summary of the results.

Table 6: Means of Parenting Styles Based on Marital Status

Marital status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Married	111	88.22	12.46
Single	17	86.65	16.24
Widowed	8	90.13	12.13
Separated	8	89.63	11.88
Total	144	88.22	12.79

The results in table 6 indicate that means in parenting styles of widowed and separated parents were higher than of married and single parents (those who had never married). One way ANOVA was then computed to establish whether the differences were significant in the means of parenting styles among parents of different marital status. The hypothesis that was tested stated:

$H_0 1$: There is no significant difference in means on parenting styles among parents of different marital status.

Table 7: ANOVA Computations on Parents' Marital Status and Parenting Styles

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	86.883	3	28.961	.174	.914
Within Groups	23309.443	140	166.496		
Total	23396.326	143			

One way ANOVA was computed to explore the influence of marital status on parenting styles as measured by the questionnaire for the parents. The results of table 7 indicate that there was no significant difference in means of parenting styles among married, single, widowed, and separated parents at $p = 0.914 > 0.05$. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted on the basis of this test ($F = 0.174$; $p > 0.05$; $df = 3$). This finding suggests that marital status of parents does not influence their parenting styles. This finding implies that single and married parents raise their preschool children in the same way.

4. Discussions

This finding is in agreement with the findings of Gutman, et al. (2010) who found that marital status does not have a significant measurable direct effect on parenting behavior of parents in the United Kingdom. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Avison et al. (2007), Greitemeger (2009), and Roman (2011) who established that there was no significant difference between parenting styles of single and married mothers in South Africa. They concluded that parenting styles of single mothers were not significantly different from those of married mothers. The finding of the current study is in disagreement with the Aronson and Huston's (2004) finding that single mothers were more likely to engage in inconsistent, harsh, and unsupportive parenting behaviours than married mothers in USA. They posit that married mothers were more likely to interact with their children in a more stimulating and nurturing manner. This is because married mothers were more educated and financially secure than single mothers. This disagreement between the two studies could be as a result of socio-cultural differences that exist between the study locations for two studies.

5. Conclusion

Parents' marital status does not significantly influence parenting styles employed by parents of preschool children.

6. Recommendation

The current study relied on self - reports of parents' parenting practices by use in a questionnaire to measure their parenting styles. There is need for future studies on parenting styles to observe parent-child interactions at their homes to establish their parenting styles

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