EDUCATION

THE INFLUENCE OF AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING ON THE PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

[1]*Rhoda Waithera Mwangi, [2] Dr. Zipporah Kaaria & [3] Rev. Dr. Gitiye Kiambarua

[1] Master's Student, Kenya Methodist University, Nairobi-Kenya

[2] lecturer, School of Education and Social Sciences, Kenya Methodist University, Nairobi-Kenya

[3] lecturer, School of Education and Social Sciences, Kenya Methodist University, Nairobi-Kenya

*E-mail of corresponding author: **r.waithera2020@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Purpose of Study: This study sought to assess the influence of authoritative parenting on the psychosocial wellbeing of students in secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. Specifically, the study examined the influence of authoritative and uninvolved parenting on the psychosocial wellbeing of secondary school students in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Problem Statement: Research indicates that neglectful parenting can contribute to psychosocial crises and mental health challenges among adolescents. In Kenya, students facing poor psychosocial well-being often exhibit low academic performance, stress, anxiety, and behavioral issues. Despite interventions such as counseling services and teacher training, these challenges persist. Moreover, there is limited research on how specific parenting styles affect students' psychosocial well-being, particularly in Nairobi County.

Methodology: This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design with a blend of qualitative and quantitative paradigms. The target population for the study was 235 secondary schools, 30550 form three students, and 235 PTA chair persons. Questionnaires and focus group discussion guide were used to collect data. Interview guides were used to collect data from Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) Chairpersons.

Result: The study revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between authoritative parenting and learners' psychosocial well-being ($r = .603$, $p < .001$). Balanced parental control, warmth, and involvement emerged as key factors in fostering students' emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment.

Recommendation: Policymakers and education authorities should integrate parenting education programs into schools and enhance psychosocial support services to promote responsive and communicative parenting. Such initiatives will strengthen students' self-esteem, emotional resilience, and academic performance, thereby contributing to their overall well-being and success.

Keywords: *Kenya, Authoritative parenting, Psychosocial Wellbeing, Students, Secondary Schools.*

INTRODUCTION

Promoting positive psychosocial wellbeing in students is crucial for their overall development, academic success, and mental health. As noted by Herman, et al. (2018), when students feel supported and confident, they are more likely to engage actively in learning, build healthy relationships, and develop resilience to stress. Haidar and Mohdad (2024) argue that a positive environment fosters self-esteem, emotional regulation, and social skills. Haidar and Mohdad further contended that, poor psychosocial wellbeing can lead to anxiety, depression, low academic performance, and difficulty in forming positive relationships. It may also contribute to behavioral issues, withdrawal, and a lack of motivation, thus hindering personal and academic growth.

At the University of Kerala in India, Zebukumar and Pattamathu (2024) conducted a study to explore the relationship between gratitude, helping behavior, and psychosocial well-being among adolescent students. The study revealed that gratitude significantly predicted the psychosocial well-being of students, while helping behavior did not. The study further highlighted the importance of enhancing psychosocial well-being among adolescent students. The authors recommended further exploration of psychosocial well-being among students to uncover additional predictors of psychosocial well-being that were not addressed in their study, which revealed the need for the current study that examined how parenting styles influence the psychosocial well-being of students.

UNICEF's State of the World's Children 2021 highlights a growing global mental health crisis among adolescents, estimating that over one in seven adolescents aged 10–19 years live with a diagnosed mental disorder. Alarmingly, suicide ranks among the top five causes of death for this age group, with nearly 46,000 adolescent suicides annually worldwide (UNICEF, 2021). In sub-Saharan Africa, at least one in seven children and adolescents experience significant psychological distress (UNICEF, 2022), with many unable to access adequate care due to stigma, lack of services, and limited resources. A meta-analysis of studies across the region reported pooled prevalence rates of 15.3% for depression, 11.8% for anxiety, 12.5% for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 9.8% for conduct disorder, and 6.6% for ADHD among those under 19 years (Cortina et al., 2023). These realities point to the need to strengthen mental health services in schools, increase psychosocial support, and address systemic barriers to care as essential steps to safeguard young people's well-being and educational outcomes.

The parenting style adopted by parents has a significant influence on an individual's well-being. Mendaz (2022) defined parenting style as the techniques and standards that parents use in raising their children. Kuppens and Ceulemans (2019) argued that understanding the influence of parenting styles on the psychosocial well-being of children is crucial for grasping how they navigate their social and emotional worlds. Kuppens and Ceulemans further noted that parenting styles encompass broad approaches and attitudes, characterized by fundamental dimensions of

control and warmth. Mukola (2022) emphasized that many psychosocial problems, such as depression and anxiety, can be traced to parental failures, particularly when parents do not provide adequate warmth and guidance, thereby negatively affecting children's psychosocial well-being.

Psychosocial well-being in students refers to their emotional, social, and psychological health, including how they handle emotions, form relationships, and interact with their environment (Eiroa, 2024). It encompasses their ability to cope with stress, their self-esteem, and their capacity for empathy and resilience. Positive psychosocial well-being enables children to navigate challenges, build healthy relationships, and achieve their potential, influencing academic performance, social skills, and mental health (Eiroa, 2024). Conversely, poor psychosocial well-being can lead to anxiety, depression, and difficulties in forming relationships. Dudija (2023) argued that parents can support psychosocial well-being by creating nurturing environments, providing emotional support, and promoting social skills.

Aikaterini and Wassilis (2023) revealed that parenting styles significantly influence children's well-being, finding that authoritative parenting accounted for 42% of the variance in resilience scores and was strongly correlated with higher self-esteem ($r = .58$, $p < .001$). In contrast, authoritarian parenting was linked to a 35% increase in reported emotional instability and 28% lower social skills scores, while permissive parenting was associated with 25% higher levels of behavioral problems. Supportive parenting practices that balanced guidance with emotional warmth were shown to predict 30% better psychosocial outcomes, helping children develop effective coping mechanisms and healthier peer relationships. While global discussions extensively link parenting styles to psychosocial well-being, there is limited research examining how these dynamics specifically influence the psychosocial well-being of secondary school students in Nairobi County. This gap highlighted the need for this study to investigate these relationships within the Kenyan context.

Kuppens (2018) contended that there are four parenting styles, including authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful. The authoritarian parent does not allow children to have much freedom to develop their choices. Authoritative parenting is also known as balanced parenting and shows the right balance between displaying authority and showing responsiveness to the children. The authoritative parent gives encouragement and thorough reasoning behind any rules that are set and other preferred methods of discipline that are implemented. This helps the children to understand that they are loved, but they must be punished if they violate any rules. The permissive parent does not impart a sense of discipline on a child but rather places emphasis on allowing the children to do whatever they want, regardless of the consequences. The neglectful or uninvolved parent simply fulfills a child's physical needs and is completely removed from any emotional or disciplinary guidance. While the study by Kuppens looked at different parenting styles, it did not look at how these parenting styles are related to psychosocial wellbeing of students particularly in secondary schools, which prompted this study to fill the gaps.

Grusec (2019) argued that authoritative parenting, characterized by a balanced approach, involves setting clear and reasonable expectations while maintaining open communication with the child. This type of control fosters a supportive environment where children understand the guidelines but also feel comfortable expressing themselves. Authoritarian parenting represents high levels of control with an emphasis on strict adherence to rules and authority. Parents adopting this style often expect unquestioning obedience from their children. While this approach may instill

discipline, it can lead to potential negative outcomes, such as increased anxiety and a diminished sense of autonomy in the child.

As asserted by Aikaterini and Wassilis (2023) understanding parenting styles is crucial for comprehending their profound impact on the psychosocial wellbeing of students. While authoritative parenting emerges as a positive influence, the contrasting effects of authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting underscore the need for further exploration. This study sought to unravel the intricate connections between these parenting styles and the psychosocial well-being of students, shedding light on ways to foster a nurturing environment conducive to healthy emotional and social growth.

During high school, adolescents undergo crucial psychosocial development, as proposed by Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial stages. The primary focus during this stage is on the conflict between "Identity vs. Role Confusion." Secondary school students grapple with the task of forming a coherent sense of self, encompassing their values, beliefs, and aspirations for the future. Parenting styles play a pivotal role in influencing the psychosocial wellbeing at this stage. Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and reasonable expectations, fosters a supportive environment that encourages the exploration of identity. Adolescents raised in authoritative households are more likely to develop a secure sense of self and autonomy (Yan & Changa, 2024). Conversely, authoritarian or overly permissive parenting may contribute to identity confusion, as strict control or lack of guidance may hinder the development of independent decision-making.

Research in United States of America highlights the impact of parenting practices on children's psychosocial development. A study by Felton (2022) titled "Exposure to maternal depressive symptoms and growth in adolescent substance use: the role of delay discounting" found that maternal depressive symptoms can lead to increased delay discounting in adolescents, which in turn predicts higher substance use over time. This suggests that parenting influenced by depressive symptoms may affect children's ability to delay gratification, leading to negative outcomes such as substance misuse. Additionally, the study indicates that the ability to delay gratification is associated with better academic performance and lower tendencies toward violent behavior and substance abuse among adolescents. The study further found that students who reported a high propensity to delay gratification and low tendencies toward violent behavior and substance abuse obtained higher math scores on standardized tests. These findings underscore the importance of parenting practices that promote the ability to delay gratification, as they are linked to positive psychosocial outcomes and may help prevent behaviors such as substance misuse and aggression.

In a related study, Rameen (2022) investigated in Lahore, Pakistan, whether emotional intelligence predicts psychosocial well-being in young adults better than perceived parenting styles. The study found that while both maternal and paternal authoritarianism and maternal authoritativeness were significantly correlated with psychological well-being, emotional intelligence was the only significant predictor, accounting for 10.5% of the unique variance in psychosocial well-being. However, these studies, although related to the current study, did not directly address the psychosocial well-being of students.

A study by Liang (2024) in Iran explored the relationship between parents' anxiety, stress, and depression and their children's health-related quality of life and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed significant positive correlations between parents' anxiety, stress, depression, and children's externalized behavioral disorders. Anxiety, stress, and depression were significantly linked to worse health outcomes in children. Specifically, depression

and anxiety predicted 22% of the variance, while anxiety, stress, and age predicted 19% of the variance in externalized behavioral disorders. The study concluded that the mental health challenges faced by parents during the pandemic were closely associated with negative psychosocial effects on children, including behavioral issues and poor health-related quality of life. This study however lacked a discussion on how different parenting styles influence psychosocial wellbeing which was the focus of the current study.

A study by Pillay (2017) in Ethiopia examined the relationship between perceived parental academic socialization and children's well-being in four domains: depression, self-esteem, school adjustment, and substance use. The results revealed that adolescents with higher levels of parental academic socialization reported 32% fewer depressive symptoms, 28% fewer school adjustment problems, and a 25% reduction in substance use compared to peers with lower levels of parental involvement. Additionally, these adolescents demonstrated a 30% increase in self-esteem scores, underscoring the positive influence of parental engagement on adolescent well-being. However, this study revealed a knowledge gap, as it offered limited discussion on the role of specific parenting styles. Addressing this gap, the current study seeks to examine how parenting styles, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful, shape students' psychosocial well-being, particularly in the Kenyan context.

A related study by Okon and Ngozi (2018) in Nigeria investigated the influence of parenting style on the psychosocial well-being of children, testing two hypotheses. The findings indicated a significant impact of domestic violence on psychosocial well-being (F(1,198) = 15.62, p < .001), with children exposed to high levels of domestic violence scoring 35% lower on psychosocial well-being measures than their peers. However, parenting style itself did not show a statistically significant effect (F(3,198) = 1.47, p > .05), and no interaction effect was found between domestic violence and parenting style in predicting well-being (F(3,198) = 0.98, p > .05). These results suggest that, in this context, domestic violence is a more critical factor influencing children's psychosocial health than parenting style, underscoring the urgent need for domestic violence prevention initiatives to safeguard children's mental health.

Olajide (2020) conducted a study on the perceived parenting styles and psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents in Osun State, southwestern Nigeria. The findings revealed a low level of psychosocial wellbeing among the adolescents, with reported prevalence rates of very low emotional wellbeing (16.9%), social wellbeing (22%), and psychological wellbeing (19.3%). The study identified patterns of parenting styles as follows: authoritative parenting style was associated with low (45.5%), high (41.6%), and very high (12.9%) levels; authoritarian parenting style with low (53%), high (30.7%), and very high (16.3%) levels; and permissive parenting style with low (64.2%), high (20.7%), and very high (15.1%) levels. No significant gender differences were observed in the psychosocial wellbeing scores of the adolescents, but a significant difference was found based on religious affiliation in relation to social wellbeing. Adolescents from public schools exhibited higher levels of social wellbeing compared to their counterparts from private schools. Parenting styles were found to significantly predict the level of psychosocial wellbeing among the adolescents. Neither family type nor family size had a significant influence on the level of psychosocial wellbeing. While Olajide's study highlighted the relationship between parenting styles and psychosocial wellbeing in Nigeria, the current study aims to determine if similar findings can be observed in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Mokoena and Lefa (2023) conducted a study to examine the interplay of gender, parenting styles, risk-taking, and self-harm behavior. Results indicated a significant impact of parenting styles on risk-taking behavior and highlighted a notable interaction effect between gender and parenting styles. The findings revealed that parenting styles substantially influence adolescents' risk-taking and self-harm behaviors. However, while the study focused on university students, the present research sought to examine the influence of parenting styles on psychosocial well-being among secondary school students in Nairobi County, Kenya.

In Tanzania, the psychosocial wellbeing of students has been a cause for concern among scholars. One of the concerns has been the occurrence of psychosocial distress among students, which has emerged as a significant public health problem, particularly among adolescents in both low- and middle-income countries. In response, Seidu (2020) analyzed risk and protective factors for psychosocial distress among in-school adolescents in Tanzania. The findings revealed that psychosocial distress affected 16.9% of the students, with similar rates observed for both males and females. The risk factors associated with psychosocial distress included hunger (OR = 1.57, p < 0.001), being bullied (OR = 1.92, p < 0.001), being attacked (OR = 1.31, p < 0.05), engaging in physical activity (OR = 1.33, p < 0.05), truancy (OR = 1.28, p < 0.05), and tobacco use (OR = 2.40, p < 0.01). These findings suggest that psychosocial distress is relatively prevalent among adolescents in Tanzania and affects both sexes similarly. However, the study did not address how psychosocial wellbeing is linked to parenting styles. The current study aimed to address this gap by exploring the relationship between parenting styles and psychosocial wellbeing among students.

A related study was conducted in Uganda by Lanyero (2021) to determine the influence of parenting style on the social behaviors of students in public secondary schools in Makindye Division. The results revealed a weak but positive relationship between parenting style and students' social behavior, which was not significant at the 0.05 level (r = 0.175, p > 0.05). However, a different analysis found a weak but positive relationship that was significant at the 0.01 level (r = 0.337**, p < 0.01). This study highlighted that parenting style has a significant effect on students' social behavior and provided a basis for the current study that sought to explore how parenting styles affect the psychosocial wellbeing of students.

In Kenya, student violence is manifested in various forms, including bullying, physical fights, gender violence, and damage to school property during strikes. This violence has been attributed to poor psychosocial wellbeing among students. In this context, Njogu (2018) explored the role of parenting styles in student violence in secondary schools in Embu County, Kenya. The study, which surveyed 412 students and 56 teachers, found that 68% of students involved in violent incidents reported coming from homes with authoritarian or neglectful parenting styles. Additionally, 72% of teachers identified poor parental role modeling and inadequate guidance as key contributors to violent behavior. A chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between parenting style and student violence (χ^2 = 18.47, p < .001), indicating that students from authoritarian and neglectful households were nearly twice as likely to engage in violence compared to peers from authoritative homes. Njogu concluded that parental behavior and engagement strongly influence student conduct and recommended that parents adopt positive role modeling and supportive parenting practices to promote their children's emotional well-being and reduce school violence.

NACADA's (2019) national survey on substance use among Kenyan secondary school students revealed that 23.4% (508,132 students) had experimented with alcohol or drugs during their lifetime. Specifically, 17% had used khat/miraa, 16.1% had used prescription drugs, 14.5% tobacco, 7.5% cannabis, 2.3% inhalants (glue, thinner, petrol), 1.2% heroin, and 1.1% cocaine Among primary school pupils in 2018, 20.2% had used at least one substance, with current use rates of 10.4% for prescription drugs, 7.2% alcohol, 6% tobacco, 3.7% miraa, and under 1% for cannabis and inhalants. These high prevalence rates suggest a pressing need to explore underlying psychosocial contributors such as parenting style to better understand and address these challenges.

Rono (2018) examined the link between the home environment and the psychosocial wellbeing of preschool children in the Mois-Bridge Zone, Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya. The study found that children in this area exhibited high levels of cognitive, social, and emotional development. It also highlighted a significant connection between the home environment and these developmental outcomes. Factors such as household conditions, family size, type of housing, parental education, income, and the availability of space and play materials were found to contribute to the children's psychosocial well-being.

A study by Ndetei et al. (2016) on upper primary students in Kenya reported that 37.7% had at least one DSM-IV mental disorder, with somatic complaints (29.6%), affective disorders (14.1%), and conduct disorders (12.5%) being most common. Similarly, Macharia et al. (2023) found that during COVID-19, 20.6% of in-school adolescents screened positive for depression and 19.1% for anxiety, while out-of-school peers reported higher rates, 36.0% for depression and 27.7% for anxiety, with 12.5% experiencing both. These findings highlight the high prevalence of psychosocial issues among Kenyan adolescents, yet it remains unclear whether parenting styles contribute to these challenges, underscoring the need for this study.

Mburu, Maina, and Mukolwe (2022) examined the relationship between awareness of behavioral risk and psychosocial wellness among students in public secondary schools in Nairobi. Their findings revealed that 32.4% of students reported alcohol consumption, 18.7% admitted to smoking, and 21.5% engaged in drug abuse, despite being aware of the associated risks. Statistical analysis showed a strong negative correlation between drug abuse and psychosocial wellness ($r = -.46$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of substance use were linked to significantly lower well-being scores. Smoking also demonstrated a significant relationship with psychosocial challenges ($r = -.33$, $p < .01$), while alcohol use correlated with increased emotional distress ($r = -.29$, $p < .05$).

These results underscore that although students may be aware of behavioral risks, substance misuse remains a critical factor undermining psychosocial wellness, highlighting the need for targeted prevention and intervention programs in Nairobi schools. The study noted that drug use is widespread among secondary school students in Nairobi County, encompassing various types, quantities, and frequencies of use. Given the psychosocial challenges faced by students in Nairobi, it remains unclear how parenting styles influence their psychosocial well-being, highlighting the need for the current study. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that, despite the reviewed studies, no specific research has explored the relationship between authoritative parenting styles and the psychosocial well-being of students in secondary schools, particularly in Nairobi County, Kenya. Therefore, this study aimed to bridge the research gap.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Scholars around the world have recognized that an individual's psychosocial well-being is closely linked to the parenting styles their parents adopted during their upbringing. Researchers, including Kuppens and Ceulemans (2019), Mukola (2022), and Eiroa (2024), contend that the psychosocial well-being of students, characterized by a healthy balance between emotional, social, and psychological aspects of life, is significantly influenced by how they were raised by their parents. Horowitz (2023) argued that self-esteem, effective stress management, resilience, and satisfying relationships which are key aspects of psychosocial well-being are closely associated with various parenting styles. Horowitz noted that authoritarian parenting, for example, can increase the risk of psychosocial crises in adolescents by damaging their self-esteem, which may lead to poor mental health.

A study by Njogu (2018) in Kenya revealed that in schools where students' psychosocial well-being is ineffective, students exhibit diminished academic performance due to decreased concentration, motivation, and engagement. Mburu, Maina, and Mukolwe (2022) noted that many Kenyan students experience heightened stress, anxiety, and depression, leading to behavioral issues and social withdrawal. The researchers associated various misbehaviors among students in Nairobi secondary schools, such as drug abuse, smoking, and alcohol consumption, with their psychosocial well-being.

Despite the government's efforts to address these challenges by employing school counselors and training teachers in behavioral management, this troubling trend persists in schools. If not addressed, it could result in escalating academic difficulties, including reduced concentration and motivation, as well as more serious mental health issues and limited future opportunities. A report from the Nairobi County Director of Education (2024) revealed that students in many schools face psychosocial issues such as impaired relationships with peers and teachers, feelings of isolation, and low self-esteem, alongside emotional distress. However, it remains unclear whether these challenges are linked to parenting styles. Although previous studies have examined academic performance, few have assessed psychosocial wellbeing in relation to parenting styles particularly authoritative parenting in Nairobi secondary schools. It is from this perspective, therefore, that this study aimed to assess the influence of authoritative parenting styles on the psychosocial well-being of secondary school students in Nairobi County, Kenya.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To examine the influence of authoritative parenting on the psychosocial wellbeing of secondary school students in Nairobi County, Kenya.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the influence of authoritative parenting on the psychosocial wellbeing of secondary school students in Nairobi County, Kenya?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on Baumrind's Model. Diana Baumrind, a developmental psychologist, introduced a framework of parenting styles in the early 1960s, categorizing parenting into four main styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. Each is defined by different levels of responsiveness and demandingness, shaping children's psychosocial well-being (Pandoyi & Samiksha, 2021).Authoritative parenting combines high responsiveness with high demandingness. Such parents set clear expectations while offering support and encouragement. Research by Kuppens and Ceulemans (2019) shows that children of authoritative parents often

display stronger self-esteem, social skills, and emotional regulation. Within Nairobi County, where students face societal pressures and academic demands, this style may promote resilience and adaptability.

Authoritarian parenting involves strict rule enforcement with little emotional support. While it can encourage compliance, it often undermines self-esteem and social competence. In Nairobi, where academic pressure is intense, this approach may heighten stress and anxiety among students. Permissive parenting, characterized by high responsiveness but minimal demands, can encourage creativity yet lead to poor self-discipline. Neglectful parenting, marked by low responsiveness and low demandingness, often results in serious emotional and behavioral difficulties. Although Baumrind's model provides a valuable framework for understanding parenting styles, it does not fully capture other variables, such as social support. Therefore, social learning theory was also employed to strengthen this study's explanatory power.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Authoritative parenting is a parenting style characterized by a balance of high responsiveness and high demands (Tiwari, 2022). Parents who practice authoritative parenting are nurturing, supportive, and warm, while also setting clear expectations and rules for their children's behavior. They encourage open communication, offer reasoning behind rules, and are willing to listen to their children's perspectives. This parenting style tends to foster a positive parent-child relationship, promoting independence, self-discipline, and high self-esteem in children. On the other hand, psychosocial well-being as defined by Marie (2024) is the overall state of an individual's mental, emotional, social, and psychological health. It encompasses how well a person is able to cope with the challenges of life, manage relationships, and maintain a positive sense of self.

A study by Rachmawati (2024) investigated how the implementation of parenting styles is significantly influenced by the cultural context of society among Asian, European, and American countries. The study highlights that individualist and collectivist cultural values shape differing understandings of parenting, resulting in varied parenting styles. For instance, the perception of authoritative parenting can vary significantly between cultures. To gather information, the author reviewed literature on parenting practices in Asian, European, and American countries. The study underscored the importance of understanding how authoritative parenting, considered optimal in one culture, may be interpreted differently in others. While the aforementioned study focused on Asian, European, and American countries, the current study concentrated on how various parenting styles, affect the psychosocial well-being of students specifically in Nairobi County, Kenya. This focus aimed to bridge the geographical gaps by providing insights into the impact of parenting styles within this particular context.

Bonsaksen et al. (2022) conducted a study on students' psychosocial well-being, mental health, and loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic across the UK, Norway, and the USA. The study aimed to assess whether higher education students experienced poorer mental health compared to the general population and to examine factors associated with students' mental health. A cross-national sample of students (n = 354) and non-students (n = 3,120) participated. Outcomes of mental health (a key aspect of psychosocial well-being) were compared using independent t-tests. Multiple linear regression analysis and general linear estimation assessed the impact of student status on mental health outcomes while controlling for socio-demographic factors. Findings revealed that students reported poorer mental health than non-students, with the gap more

pronounced among participants aged 30 years or older. Increased social media use was associated with poorer outcomes, including extreme anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, alcohol and drug use, isolation, withdrawal, and difficulty maintaining relationships. Students also reported lower well-being and greater loneliness, especially in the UK, where mental health outcomes were worse than in Norway and the USA. Unlike this study, which focused on COVID-19 and Western countries, the current research addressed the influence of parenting styles on psychosocial well-being in Nairobi, Kenya.

Pereira (2024) investigated the effects of perceived parenting styles, causal attributions for academic success/failure, and perceived school performance (PSP) on adolescents' psychosocial well-being (PWB). The participants were 200 Brazilian adolescents who completed the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire and the Rating Scale of Causal Attributions for Academic Success/Failure. The results indicated that adolescents' PWB was predicted by an authoritative parenting style, internal and controllable attributions (appropriate motivations for coping with academic success/failure), and perceived school performance. Additionally, the study tested a mediation model, demonstrating that internal and controllable attributions mediated the relationship between authoritative parenting and perceived school performance, which in turn contributed to better psychosocial well-being (PWB). These findings underscored the importance of parenting styles and school-based causal attributions in understanding adolescents' psychosocial well-being. The study also emphasized the need for interventions that enhance teaching and learning processes, which are linked to higher levels of adolescents' psychosocial well-being. Although the cited study was conducted with Brazilian adolescents, the current study focused on Kenyan adolescents in secondary schools, which allowed for a comparison of the findings.

In Canada, Piyumi (2023) conducted a study on the role of parenting practices in parent and child mental health over time. The aim was to investigate associations between structured and shared parenting and parent depression symptoms. The study also explored the relationship between structured and shared parenting and depression, hyperactivity and irritability symptoms in children. A total of 1,027 parents in two-parent households (4,797 observations in total; 85.1% mothers) completed online surveys about themselves and their children (aged 2–18 years) from April 2020 to July 2022. Structured parenting and shared parenting responsibilities were assessed from April 2020 to November 2021. Symptoms of poor psychosocial well-being, including parent depression, child depression, child hyperactivity, inattention, irritability, and child emotional and conduct problems, were assessed repeatedly.

The results revealed that parents who reported higher levels of shared parenting responsibilities had lower depression symptoms ($\beta = -0.09$ to -0.32, all $P < 0.01$) longitudinally. These parents also had children with fewer emotional problems (ages 2–5 years; $\beta = -0.07$, $P < 0.05$), fewer conduct problems (ages 2–5 years; $\beta = -0.09$, $P < 0.01$), and less irritability (ages 13–18 years; $\beta = -0.27$, $P < 0.001$) over time. Structured parenting was associated with fewer conduct problems in children (ages 2–5 years; $\beta = -0.05$, $P < 0.05$).

The study concluded that shared parenting is beneficial for both parents and children. However, while this study examined aspects of psychosocial well-being, it did not focus on parenting styles and their influence on the psychosocial well-being of students. Thus, this study sought to fill the gaps by examining how different parenting styles influence on the psychosocial well-being of students.

In Uganda, Kyomugisha (2018) examined the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem in Katabi Town Council, Entebbe, Wakiso District. The study aimed to assess levels of self-esteem among students and analyze the factors influencing them. It adopted a cross-sectional design to describe the prevalence of self-esteem at a specific point in time. Data were collected from 80 residents of Katabi Town Council through simple random sampling. Questionnaires, observations, and documentary reviews were used for data collection. Findings revealed that students generally perceived themselves as valuable, often viewing themselves as equal to others. This suggested that most students in Katabi Town Council had high self-esteem according to Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Inventory. The researcher recommended that students focus on positive self-belief and avoid comparing themselves to others. In addition, parents were encouraged to adopt an authoritative parenting style, associated with raising happy, capable, and successful children. While Kyomugisha's (2018) study focused on self-esteem, the current research differed by examining how parenting styles influence students' psychosocial well-being. Unlike the cited study, which used observations and documentaries, the present study relied on questionnaires, focus group discussions, and interview guides.

Mutua (2017) investigated the impact of parenting styles on the personality dimensions of adolescents in public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study aimed to determine how authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful parenting styles influence adolescent personality. A descriptive research design was adopted. Findings revealed that all four parenting styles significantly influenced personality dimensions. Authoritative parenting accounted for 41% of positive personality traits, while indulgent parenting explained 28.2%. The study concluded that parents play a critical role in shaping their children's self-efficacy, self-esteem, and identity development, which are central to personality formation. It emphasized that authoritative parenting fosters positive traits by providing rules, guidelines, discipline, and supportive engagement. The research highlighted the importance of parenting in adolescent development and provided a foundation for the current study, which extends this focus by examining the influence of different parenting styles on the psychosocial well-being of secondary school students in Nairobi County, Kenya.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design with a blend of qualitative and quantitative paradigms. The target population for the study was 235 secondary schools, 30550 form three students, and 235 PTA chair persons. Questionnaires and focus group discussion guide were used to collect data. Interview guides were used to collect data from Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) Chairpersons. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis and presented in a verbatim form.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

The first research question of this study sought to examine the influence of authoritative parenting on the psychosocial well-being of secondary school students in Nairobi County, Kenya. To address this, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements using a five-point Likert scale.

Table 1: Authoritative Parenting on the Psycho-social Well-being of Students

Statements	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
My parents encourage me to express my opinions and feelings.	44	12.8	62	18.0	3	0.9	227	65.8	9	2.6
I feel supported by my parents when I face challenges at school.	34	9.9	52	15.1	23	7.6	93	27.0	145	41.1
My parents set clear expectations for my behavior.	42	12.2	246	71.3	6	1.7	17	4.9	34	9.9
I believe that my parents' feedback helps me grow as a person.	51	14.8	271	78.6	12	3.5	5	1.4	6	1.7
I feel comfortable discussing my problems with my parents without fear of judgment	45	13.0	80	23.2	35	10.1	185	53.6	00	00

The findings indicate that a majority of students (65.8%) disagreed with the statement that their parents encourage them to express their opinions and feelings, while only 18% agreed and 0.9% were undecided. This suggests that many students experience limited opportunities for open communication and emotional expression within their families. From a psychosocial perspective, such limitations may negatively impact students' self-esteem, emotional regulation, and social relationships. The lack of parental support for free expression may be associated with authoritarian or neglectful parenting styles, which have been linked to higher levels of anxiety, low confidence, and strained peer interactions among adolescents.

Interviews with PTA chairpersons supported these findings, with many acknowledging that cultural and generational factors often discourage open dialogue between parents and children. Some PTA leaders noted that parents tend to emphasize obedience and respect for authority rather than encouraging free expression, viewing strictness as a form of guidance and protection. However, a few PTA members highlighted the benefits of promoting open communication, noting its positive influence on trust and emotional bonding within families. These perspectives demonstrate that while authoritative parenting, which emphasizes warmth and open communication, is ideal, many households still lean toward more restrictive approaches that can affect psychosocial well-being.

Most students (41.1%) strongly disagreed with the idea that they feel supported by their parents when facing challenges at school, while another 27% disagreed. This indicates that nearly seven in ten adolescents perceive insufficient parental support during academic or personal difficulties. A small minority likely felt supported. In interviews, PTA chairpersons acknowledged this gap: many attributed the lack of parental support to traditional expectations emphasizing academic performance over emotional engagement. Some noted that parents often view setback discussions as taboo or signs of weakness, thus discouraging open conversation. A few PTA members, however, advocated for greater parent-child dialogue, emphasizing that support during challenges fosters resilience and trust.

Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and appropriate behavioral control, consistently predicts better adolescent psychosocial adjustment across global studies. In a South Asian sample, a study by Francis, Pai et al (2021) noted that adolescents who perceived

parents as authoritative reported significantly higher psychological well-being than those reporting authoritarian or neglectful styles. Similarly, a Lebanese by Hayek et al. (2022) found that authoritative parenting boosted academic achievement, partly through enhancing self-efficacy and intention to succeed. When adolescents feel unsupported, especially when facing school challenges, it likely reflects an absence of the warm responsiveness component of authoritative parenting. This void may undermine self-esteem, hinder coping strategies, and reduce problem-solving confidence.

In Nairobi secondary schools, the lack of perceived parental support suggests many households lean toward authoritarian or uninvolved styles, which research links to higher internalizing problems, academic disengagement, and low resilience. PTA chair feedback underscores a need for cultural shifts toward authoritative parenting, encouraging emotional expression, involvement, and consistent support. Such shifts could significantly improve students' psychosocial well-being, helping them navigate academic and social stressors with greater resilience and confidence.

The findings indicate that 71.3% of the students agreed that their parents set clear expectations for their behavior, while only 0.7% were undecided. This reflects a strong presence of authoritative parenting among the sampled families. Authoritative parenting is characterized by high responsiveness and high demandingness, where parents provide clear behavioral expectations while maintaining warmth and support (Baumrind, 1991). Such clarity is linked to positive psychosocial outcomes, including self-discipline, confidence, and social competence (Steinberg, 2020). The minimal undecided proportion suggests that most students experience consistency in parental guidance, reducing confusion and behavioral uncertainty.

During interviews, one PTA chairperson emphasized, "When parents set clear rules and communicate them, children know their boundaries, and this reduces conflict both at home and in school." Another added, "We see fewer cases of misconduct among students whose parents are firm yet supportive; these children are more focused and respectful." This aligns with Darling and Steinberg (1993), who found that authoritative parenting fosters intrinsic motivation and emotional well-being among adolescents.

Clear behavioral expectations are also linked to better peer relationships and academic engagement (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Students from authoritative homes often report higher emotional security and resilience, enabling them to cope better with psychosocial challenges. In contrast, ambiguous or inconsistent expectations, common in permissive or neglectful parenting, can lead to anxiety and behavioral problems. Therefore, the high percentage of students reporting clear expectations highlights the positive role of authoritative parenting in promoting the psychosocial well-being of students.

Based on the findings, most of the students (78.6%) report that parental feedback helps them grow, and merely 1.7% disagreed. This points strongly toward the effectiveness of authoritative parenting, which combines high responsiveness with high expectations. In this style, parents engage in respectful, supportive communication that supports development and self-growth. PTA chairpersons echoed this sentiment. One remarked:

> When parents give balanced feedback, celebrating strengths while guiding improvement, students learn to view challenges as opportunities, fostering resilience and self-confidence. This nurturing approach helps them grow emotionally and academically, preparing them to handle life's obstacles with a positive mindset (PTA chair 2, 26/07/2025).

Another shared: "We have observed that children whose parents give constructive, caring feedback, not just praise, are more resilient, engaged, and emotionally mature. A meta-analysis of parenting styles found that authoritative parenting is positively associated with adolescents' conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and agreeableness, while being negatively associated with neuroticism (Sembiring et al., 2023). The study further highlights that adolescents raised under authoritative parenting with warmth and constructive guidance experience emotional resilience and strong self-perception. Similarly, Rao and Wang (2023) found that authoritative feedback enhances self-efficacy and personal growth. These studies note that children whose parents offer growth-oriented feedback show better emotional regulation, self-esteem, and peer relationships, while authoritarian or permissive styles correlate with anxiety and social difficulties. Thus, the overwhelming majority of students perceiving their parents' feedback as growth-promoting reflect a nurturing, authoritative approach, one that robustly supports psychosocial well-being. Only 1.7% dissent suggests minimal exposure to unclear, inconsistent, or non-supportive feedback. In sum, when parents communicate expectations and areas for improvement with warmth and clarity, students are more likely to thrive socially, academically, and emotionally.

The results show that the majority (53.6%) of students feel unable to discuss personal problems with their parents without judgment, while a minority (23.2%) feel safe doing so. This gap indicates a limitation in effective authoritative parenting, where open communication is critical for psychosocial well-being.

One PTA chair commented: "Too many students see their parents more as judges than allies; they hesitate to share fears or issues." Another shared: "We notice the children who do open up at home perform better socially and emotionally, they feel heard and understood."

The study by Sembiring et al. (2024) found that when communication feels threatening or judgmental, trust erodes and mental health suffers. For psycho-social well-being, parent-child relationships require not just rules but most importantly, trust-based communication. The finding signals a need for strengthening emotional openness in parenting practices to support students' emotional health and resilience.

Correlation Analysis

This section presents the results of the correlation analysis, conducted to examine the relationships and patterns among the study variables and to provide deeper insights beyond the descriptive statistics. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to assess the relationship between parenting styles and the psychosocial well-being of students. This method enabled the determination of both the direction and strength of the association between the dependent variable (psychosocial well-being of students) and the independent variable (parenting styles). The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Relating Parenting Styles and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Students

Parenting styles	Students psychosocial well being
Authoritative parenting	Pearson Correlation =. 603 Sig. (2-tailed) = .000

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).***

As shown in Table 2, the findings indicate a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between authoritative parenting and learners' psychosocial well-being (r = .603, p < .001). This suggests that students with authoritative parents, who balance warmth, responsiveness, and clear expectations, tend to experience markedly better psychosocial outcomes. Such parenting likely fosters emotional security, self-esteem, and effective coping skills, enabling learners to navigate social and academic challenges more successfully (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg, 2001). The results show that family dynamics influence students' emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment, and they highlight the importance of promoting parenting approaches that provide both guidance and support to enhance students' holistic development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a strong and significant positive relationship between authoritative parenting and learners' psychosocial well-being (r = .603, p < .001). Balanced parental control, warmth, and involvement emerged as key factors in fostering students' emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment. The study recommends that policymakers and education authorities integrate parenting education programs into schools and enhance psychosocial support services to promote and improve responsive and communicative parenting. Such initiatives will strengthen students' self-esteem, emotional resilience, and academic performance, thereby contributing to their overall well-being and success.

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