

# Relationship Between Parenting Styles And Generalized Anxiety Disorder Among Teenagers At Langata High School Nairobi County, Kenya

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## **Abstract:**

Parenting style adopted by a parent in raising a child plays a major role in shaping the holistic development of a child. This study examined the relationship between parenting styles and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers in Langata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study utilized the following objectives: to determine the prevalence of generalized anxiety disorders, to establish the types of parenting styles employed by parents of teenagers, and to examine the relationship between parenting styles and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers in Langata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya.

**Materials and Methods:** The study was informed by the Baumrind pillar theory. The study applied a correlational research design. The target population was 756 teenagers aged between 13 to 19 years who attend Langata High School. The study adopted stratified sampling technique and simple random sampling in selecting the participants at different stages. A sample size of 87 respondents were obtained after applying the Cochran's formula. Data were collected using Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) and Parenting Authority Questionnaire. The data collected were coded and entered into SPSS version 25 for analysis. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (Pearson product moment). Ethical considerations were adhered to.

**Results:** The findings revealed that 21.3% (n = 20) of the participants were at low prevalence of generalized anxiety disorder, while 78.7% (n = 74) were at high prevalence of generalized anxiety disorder among teenagers of Lang'ata High School, Nairobi Count, Kenya. It was also found that 62.6% of the students were raised by authoritative parents, 23.5% of the students came under the authoritarian parents, while 13.9% of the students were at the permissive parenting style.

**Conclusion:** The study established that there was a positive relationship ( $r = .016, p = .021 \leq 0.05$ ) between authoritarian parenting style and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers. There was significant positive relationship ( $r = .050, p = .032 \geq 0.05$ ) between permissive parenting style and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers in Lang'ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study recommended that the school administration should work in collaboration with counseling psychologists to develop program in reaching out to the students to inform them of some coping strategies with regards to generalized anxiety disorder.

**Keyword;** Parenting Styles, Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive, Neglectful, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Teenagers.

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## **I. Introduction**

Parenting style adopted by a parent in raising a child plays a major role in shaping the holistic development of a child. Romero et al. (2021) maintain that parenting style is a parent-child interaction with focus on proper and overall child development. Parenting style helps in creating an emotional climate in the process of upbringing of the child. The adopted parenting styles influence the general well-being of children and the emotional and environmental context dictates the exhibited behavior of the children even as they grow into teenagers and young adults. Francis et al. (2021) argue that harmful systems and high level of anxiety in parents are likely reflected and imitated by teenagers who observe their parents.

According to Kılıçkaya et al. (2023), whose assessment of parenting styles was based on the perspective of Baumrind (1968), who is one of the pioneers of 4 parenting styles. These styles include the authoritative style, which is responsive, demanding and has been noted to exerting consistent behavioral control, at the same time granting autonomy and using reasoning. The authoritarian style has been noted to be low in responsiveness, yet highly demanding while exerting strict. This style has been observed to be insensitive to the child's needs, unsupportive and often cold and demanding in their control. The permissive style is low in demandingness and

high in acceptance, has been observed to be that which is practicing lax control, maintaining an emotional closeness while avoiding punishing. With this style, parents have high acceptance on children. The fourth characteristic is the uninvolved parenting style or neglectful. Keen interest has been raised by psychologists regarding the relationship between parenting styles and generalized anxiety disorder, owing to the possibility that parenting styles may be related to generalized anxiety disorder (Afen et al., 2022).

Abwao et al. (2024) submit that anxiety is human emotional reaction to danger, possibly for self-preservation. It becomes a disorder when it interferes with the holistic functioning of a person, and one is not able to function optimally. Stein and Sareen (2015) further hold that generalized anxiety disorder is a mental state characterized by ongoing sustained worrying, associated with various people, events, or situations. This psychological condition is often accompanied by constant nervousness, muscle tension, sweating, physical pain, insomnia, restlessness and irritability, and other physiological signs of experiencing fear. Based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) states that GAD is identified when a patient's symptoms persist for six months or longer and they are too severe for them to be managed. Additionally, it is specified that the symptoms must interfere with functioning and must not be caused by external sources like drugs, prescriptions, or different physical or mental health issues. Showraki et al. (2020) hold that constant fear and worries can cause mental imbalance that can be assessed and categorized as generalized anxiety disorder (GAD).

The developmentalists have categorically validated the relevance of parenting styles for various child and adolescents' outcomes. Garcia et al. (2020) amplify this by asserting that parenting styles at childhood stage has been known to predict ( $p = 0.02$ ) psychological self-worth, well-being and personal control in teenagers. Support and encouragement offered by parents, various friends, members of family and other important people in one's life play an important role on the teenagers' general wellbeing and growth. Ayano and Alati (2021) observe that globally, parenting styles and their underlying child raising behaviors may be related to their upbringing while establishing the environment and proper ideal conditions for their developmental wellbeing. According to Bosman et al. (2018), anxiety and mental disorders are influence by relationship between parental styles adopted when raising teenagers. In this, Malonda et al. (2019) contends that there is supporting evidence associating parental control with anxiety behavior and teenager's upbringing to a great extent.

In India, Tandon and Bhatnagar (2021) examined the role of maternal parenting styles on the predictor of anxiety levels among youth. The youth in the sample ( $N=60$ ) ranged in age between 15 years to 24 years old. The outcome of the study revealed that youths perceiving their parenting style as authoritarian scored the highest significance level of anxiety (Mean=25.5, SD=9.83,  $p \leq 0.005$ ), whereas youths perceiving the parenting style of their mothers as authoritative scored the lowest anxiety, and there was no statistical relationship between authoritative parenting style and generalized anxiety disorder (Mean=9.65, SD=7.07,  $p \geq 0.005$ ), while permissive parenting style (Mean=17.95, SD=9.89,  $p \leq 0.005$ ) revealed positive significance relationship with generalized anxiety disorder.

In Iran, Soroush (2021) investigated the relationship between parenting styles and social anxiety and mental health of first-grade female high school learners. This was a cross-sectional study that focused on 245 female high school students in the academic year 2020-2021. The results of the study demonstrated that permissive parenting style, more than other parenting styles, causes behavioral functional anxiety among teenagers. There was a significance relationship between all the parenting styles; authoritarian style ( $p = 0.001$ ), authoritative parenting style ( $p = 0.02$ ) and permissive parenting style ( $p = 0.034$ ) and generalized anxiety disorder. The study was very specific on first-grade "female" high school learners, while this present study focused on female and male students, and it investigated the relationship between parenting styles and generalized anxiety disorder among teenagers in Langata high school in Nairobi County, Kenya.

In Nigeria, Onyekachi et al. (2022) examined parenting styles, social interaction anxiety, and problematic internet use among undergraduate students ( $n = 300$ ; female = 63.3%; mean age = 19.66 years, SD = 2.64 years). Following regression analysis, results indicated that authoritative parenting was related to lower problematic ( $p = .001 \leq 0.05$ ) internet use among the students, while permissive parenting was related to higher ( $p = .000 \leq 0.05$ ) problematic internet use among the students. The study suggested a need for gender sensitive problematic internet use interventions in Nigerian patriarchal culture. The study specifically targeted the undergraduate students which were only females, and it failed to link parenting styles to generalized anxiety disorder. This further gave more credence and justification to the current study, and it investigated the relationship between parenting styles and generalized anxiety disorder among teenagers in Langata high school in Nairobi County, Kenya.

In Uganda, Umeh and Bangirana (2017) study was on predictors of generalized anxiety disorder in fresh undergraduate students. The study was informed by commonality of GAD, where one in every four students suffers from anxiety but at different levels of severity. From the collected data from students in 8 colleges, the findings of the study revealed that prevalence of GAD was 28.9% and the intolerance of uncertainty and parental attachment connected to the onset of GAD. The study created contextual gap since it focuses was fresh undergraduate students, but the current study was focused on high school students. There was no direct linking

of parenting styles and generalized anxiety disorder in the study. This present study investigated the relationship between parenting styles and generalized anxiety among teenagers in Kenya.

In Kenya, Kagoya (2014) in his study looked at the association between perceived parenting styles and emotional and behavioral problems among adolescent students in Nairobi County. The sample size was 305 adolescents between the ages of 15 to 18 years. It was established that there was a positive relationship between authoritarian, authoritative parenting styles and emotional and behavioral problems among adolescents ( $p = 0.044$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This study focuses on the association between perceived parenting styles and emotional and behavioral problems among adolescent, whereas, the current study specifically focused on the relationship between parenting styles and generalized anxiety among teenagers in Kenya.

## **II. Theoretical Framework – Baumrind’s Pillar Theory**

This theory was developed by Baumrind (1966). The theory argues that parents have been recognized to be the primary, ultimate and the first teachers a child will associate with and always have (Mahomed, 2019). They are a great influence and are very important in a child’s life. Baumrind (1966) presented three parenting styles which are the authoritative parenting, which is a combination of responsiveness and demandingness. He further added the authoritarian parenting style, which is unresponsive and demanding and finally we have the permissive parenting style that comprises of parent predictability with few clear rules whereby there is neutrality and misconduct is ignored. These parental lifestyles have notably been observed to have great influence over children’s psychological wellbeing and education. Darling and Steinberg (2017) further assert that Baumrind’s pillar theory shows parenting styles as the overall interaction and gives a general climate between children and their parents. This system is a set of mentalities that shows attributes of the child and parents’ relationship. This is an essential determining and a very important factor playing a role in a child’s growth both socially and academically.

Rivers et al. (2012) observe that academic performance of teenagers is highly motivated and dependent on the parenting styles of their parents. However, parents’ using the parenting styles have been observed to be quite influential to the point that it is known to affect the academic performance of their teenagers. Baumrind (1966) further asserts that children develop behavior patterns and conduct that stem from what they observe in their parents. Spock (2016) approved moderate disciplinary parenting style and observed that parenting lifestyle that was poor was not working well and was extremely detrimental and very hard to aid the teenager later on in life. The author further advocated for autonomy and freedom of expression and choice.

Baumrind (1968) study further revealed that this parenting style theoretical model includes control dimensions, rearing and nurturance. Additionally, the author further asserts that the key element of parental role is to guide the teenager to maintain personal integrity and socialize the teenagers. Thus, it is important that parents should be willing to separate their child from parental restrictiveness and conceptually socialize them.

Based on the weakness of this theory, it is criticized as being too broad in its categorization in describing the authoritative parenting style, while noted that the theory is limiting since it cannot give a definitive cause and effect relationship. The behavior of a child cannot be wholly influenced by the parenting styles, as there are other factors such as the temperament of the child that impact the relationship, and which the Baumrind failed to consider (Candelanza et al., 2021). This theory was relevant in the present study as it explained the different parenting styles, how they impact on a child. As such, the theory was adopted in explaining the four parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful) and their influence on generalized anxiety disorder in adolescents.

## **III. Methodology**

Processing, presentation, and interpretation while providing some insight into the overall issue as it aids in discovering the association of two variables. The research was carried out at Langata High School. Langata Constituency is located in the southern part of Nairobi County. Kibera sub-county borders Langata sub-county on the south, Karen sub-county on the northern part, Nairobi west Sub-County is bordering on the west of Langata, and on the eastern side is the Westlands Sub-County. The target population was 756 teenagers aged between 13 to 19 years who attend Langata High School in Nairobi Kenya, and were male and female students. The study adopted stratified sampling technique and simple random sampling in selecting the participants at different stages. A sample size of 87 respondents were obtained after applying the Cochran’s formula. Data were collected using Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) and Parenting Authority Questionnaire. The data collected were coded and entered into SPSS version 25 for analysis. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (Pearson product moment correlation analysis and the Chi-Square test). The researcher served as the principal investigator. In this regard, protocols included getting research letter of authorization from the Tangaza University Institutional Scientific Ethics Committee (TU-ISERC). The researcher sought research permit form National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Nairobi, Kenya. After getting approvals and permissions also from the school administration, and

consent from the participants of the research, the researcher administered the questionnaire to the students of Langata high school. Ethical considerations were adhered to and strictly followed.

#### IV. Findings

##### Demographic Characteristics of Teenagers in Langata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the participants of this study. This includes; gender, age, level of education, religion, father occupation, mother occupation, and living with. The findings are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	50	53.2
Female	44	46.8
Total	94	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
13-14	12	12.8
15-16	42	44.7
17-18	33	35.1
19 and above	7	7.4
Total	94	100.0
<b>Level Of Education</b>		
Form 1	9	9.6
Form 2	23	24.5
Form 3	19	20.2
Form 4	43	45.7
Total	94	100.0
<b>Religion</b>		
Catholic	40	42.6
Protestant	50	53.2
Islam	2	2.1
Hindu	2	2.1
Total	94	100.0
<b>Father Occupation,</b>		
Employed	34	36.2
Not employed	13	13.8
Self-employed	47	50.0
Total	94	100.0
<b>Mother Occupation</b>		
Employed	24	25.5
Not employed	31	33.0
Self-employed	39	41.5
Total	94	100.0
<b>Living With</b>		
Nuclear family members	68	72.3
Friends	7	7.4
Relatives	14	14.9
Others	5	5.3
Total	94	100.0

As seen in Table 1, findings demonstrated that the male students were the highest participants in this study, being at 53.2% (n = 50) and followed by the female students, at 46.8% (n = 44). Also, 44.7 % (n = 42) of the students were between the ages 15-16 years, while 7.4% (n = 7) of the students were 19 years and above. Regarding class, it was found that the Form 4 students were the highest participants, being at 45.7% (n = 43), while the lowest was the Form one students, being at 9.6% (n = 9). In addition, half of the students who participated in this study were the Protestants (53.2%, n = 50), while the lowest were Islam and Hindu students, at 2.1% (n = 2) respectively. Students' father occupation showed that 50.0% (n = 47) were self-employed, while 13.8% (n= 13) were not employed. Students' mother occupation pointed that 41.5% (n = 39) were self-employed, and 33.0% (n = 31) were not employed. Also, most of the students (72.3%, n = 68) were living with their nuclear family members, while a very few of the students (5.3%, n = 5) were living with others.

##### Establishing Relationship between Parenting Styles and General Anxiety Disorders among Teenagers in Lang'ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya

The Pearson product moment was used to conduct analysis on relationship between parenting styles and

general anxiety disorders among teenagers in Lang’ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya. The outcomes are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Relationship between Parenting Styles and Generalized Anxiety Disorders among Teenagers*

		Authoritarian Parenting Style	Generalized Anxiety Disorders
Authoritarian Parenting Style	Pearson Correlation	1	.016
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.021
	N	94	94
Generalized Anxiety Disorders	Pearson Correlation	.016	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	
	N	94	94

		Authoritative Parenting Style	Generalized Anxiety Disorder
Authoritative Parenting Style	Pearson Correlation	1	.093
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.370
	N	94	94
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	Pearson Correlation	.093	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.370	
	N	94	94

		Permissive Parenting Style	Generalized Anxiety Disorders
Permissive Parenting Style	Pearson Correlation	1	.050
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.032
	N	94	94
Generalized Anxiety Disorders	Pearson Correlation	.050	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	
	N	94	94

As shown in Table 2, the Pearson correlation coefficient analysis indicated that there was significant relationship ( $r = .016, p = .021 \leq 0.05$ ) between authoritarian parenting style and anxiety disorders among teenagers in Lang’ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya. There was no significant relationship ( $r = .093, p = .370 \geq 0.05$ ) between authoritative parenting style and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers in Lang’ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya. Analysis further pointed that there was significant positive relationship ( $r = .050, p = .032 \leq 0.05$ ) between permissive parenting style and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers in Lang’ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya.

## V. Discussion

### Relationship between Parenting Styles and General Anxiety Disorders among Teenagers in Lang’ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya

This study was to examine the relationship between parenting styles and general anxiety disorders among teenagers in Lang’ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya. There was a weak significant relationship ( $r = .016, p = .021 \leq 0.05$ ) between authoritarian parenting style and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers in Lang’ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya. This implies that the more a parent is authoritarian on the teenagers, the more chance of teenagers experiencing generalized anxiety disorder. There was no significant relationship ( $r = .093, p = .370 \geq 0.05$ ) between authoritative parenting style and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers in Lang’ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya. This may suggest that authoritative parenting style has no relationship with generalized anxiety disorder. Analysis further pointed that there was significant relationship ( $r = .050, p = .032 \geq 0.05$ ) between permissive parenting style and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers in Lang’ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya.

These findings are similar with the findings of Tandon and Bhatnagar (2021) in India, and the study was focused on parenting styles as predictor of anxiety levels among Youth. Results revealed that youths perceiving their parenting style as authoritarian scored the highest significance level of anxiety (Mean=25.5, SD=9.83,  $p \leq 0.005$ ). Also, the participants perceiving the parenting style of their mothers as authoritative scored the lowest anxiety, and there was no statistical relationship between authoritative parenting style and generalized anxiety disorder (Mean=9.65, SD=7.07,  $p \geq 0.005$ ), while permissive parenting style (Mean=17.95, SD=9.89,  $p \leq 0.005$ ) revealed positive significance relationship with generalized anxiety disorder. Bunga (2023) further stated that authoritarian parenting style enable anxiety disorder among young people.

Soroush (2021) in Iran found significance relationship between all the parenting styles; authoritarian style ( $p = 0.001$ ), authoritative parenting style ( $p = 0.02$ ) and permissive parenting style ( $p = 0.034$ ) and generalized anxiety disorder. However, an aspect of his findings on the relationship between authoritative

parenting style and generalized anxiety disorder contradict the current finding of this study, which found no relationship between authoritative parenting style and generalized anxiety disorder.

The findings of this study are similar to that of Kagoya (2014) in Kenya. It was established that there was a positive relationship between authoritarian, authoritative parenting styles and emotional and behavioural problems among adolescents ( $p = 0.044$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). However, some aspects of the findings of the study are dissimilar with the current study finding. It was reported that there was a positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and emotional and behavioural problems among adolescents, and that there was a negative relationship ( $-0.060$ ) between permissive parenting style and emotional behavioural problems among adolescents.

The finding of the current study on permissiveness implies that permissive parenting style and generalized anxiety disorder move in one direction. The more the utilization of permissiveness, the more possibility of generalized anxiety disorder among teenagers. Parents serve as important role models for children. A child's behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs and mental health are possibly influenced by what their parents say to their children in the now. Parenting styles are practices of parents that help to determine how children face the demands of the environment. Parenting styles are crucial because with them, parents set limits and rules as well as an affective exchange with their children. The limits and restrictions employed by some parents may facilitate mental health problem like generalized anxiety disorder among some teenagers (Smetana, 2017).

## **VI. Conclusion**

The study established that there was positive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers. There was no relationship between authoritative parenting style and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers. There was positive relationship between permissive parenting style and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers in Lang'ata High School, Nairobi County, Kenya. Parenting styles play a significant part in child's growth and development. While some of the styles could affect a child negatively, some have positive effect. Parenting styles may facilitate psychological self-worth, psychological well-being and personal control in teenagers, or they may exert negative impact on teenager that could lead to psychological disorders like generalized anxiety disorder. Therefore, parents are encouraged to pay keen attention on how they raise their children. This study achieved its specific objectives. In line with the study outcomes, the researcher set to make some recommendations.

## **VII. Recommendation**

Based on the above conclusion, the study suggests the following recommendations:

**The school administration:** The school administration may work in collaboration with counselling psychologists to develop programs in reaching out to the students in order to inform them of some possible coping strategies with regards to generalized anxiety disorder.

**The Management of Lang'ata High School:** Management of Lang'ata High School may collaborate with Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) so as to organize seminars in order to educate parents on the better parenting skills of the various parenting styles on their children. In so doing, parents may pay keen attention on how they are raising their children.

**Parents of teenagers:** The parents of teenagers may be psychoeducated on the implication of the various parenting styles, and how some of the parenting styles are associated with generalized anxiety disorder. A deeper awareness of the various parenting styles may help in effective parenting.

**Counselling psychologists:** Counselling psychologists; practitioners may be called upon to render effective counselling services to students who may be struggling with generalized anxiety disorder.

Based on future research recommendations, the study recommended that a comparative study may be carried out on the relationship between parenting styles and generalized anxiety disorders among teenagers in public secondary schools and teenagers in private secondary schools. In addition, a qualitative study may be conducted exploring factors contributing to parenting styles used by parents of teenagers in secondary schools.

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