



Paternal Involvement Practices in relation to Male Adolescents in the Catholic Archdiocese of Kisumu, Kenya

Susan Maua, Elijah Macharia (Ph.D) , and Maria Ntarangwe (Ph.D)

Department of Counseling Psychology,
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa
Kenya

ABSTRACT

Adolescents in Kenya has increasingly exhibited more problematic behaviour with males accounting for the majority of cases. Consequently, there has been hue and cry from church leaders, teachers and parents alike about the increasingly male adolescent problematic behaviour. This public discourse points to a society seeking to find answers and possible solutions to maladaptive behaviour. However, paternal role has been kept out of this discussion yet they could be the missing link in addressing maladaptive behaviour. The objective of the study was to determine paternal involvement practices in relation to the male adolescents in the Catholic Archdiocese of Kisumu, Kenya. The study was anchored on three theoretical frameworks namely Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological systems, Bowenian Family systems and Bandura's Social Learning theories and adopted a parallel concurrent mixed methods approach. The target population were fathers who are members of the Catholic Men's Association with male adolescents aged 13-15 years old. Simple random sampling was used to identify parishes to draw respondents from while purposive sampling was used to sample fathers with 13-15-year-old sons. Quantitative data was collected from 325 fathers using standardized questionnaires while qualitative data was collected from fathers using a semi structured focus group guide in 4 discussions. Using SPSS version 29, quantitative data was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis while thematic content analysis was used for qualitative data. Interpretation combined quantitative and qualitative data. The study established that the fathers had a moderate level of parental consistency, coercive parenting, positive encouragement and parent-child relationship. In addition, fathers were moderately adjusted to their parenting role, family relationships and parental teamwork. Most fathers focused on the economic aspect of their paternal roles at the expense of emotional and mental aspects. The major recommendation from the study is the need for enhancement of paternal education to improve effective involvement with male adolescents to prevent maladaptive behaviours.

Key Words: Accessibility, Direct engagement, Male adolescent, paternal involvement, Responsibility.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Fathers play a crucial role in breadwinning, upbringing and nurturing their children through the developmental life stages. As children transit into adolescence the role of fathers gets more critical in shaping their view about themselves and the world around them. Paternal involvement in male adolescents' lives can take many forms: financial provision, monitoring, communication, emotional and mental support. According to Lamb et al. (1987) paternal involvement can be categorized as accessibility, responsibility and direct engagement. Paternal accessibility refers to the extent to which fathers are available for their adolescents like attending parent-teacher conferences to discuss academic performance. Paternal responsibility covers provision for basic necessities while paternal engagement involves personal bonding through activities (Lamb et al., 1987). For effective father-son interaction, engagement and accessibility are necessary. On the other hand, male adolescents are prone to maladaptive behaviours such as substance use, bullying, fighting and violence. Consequently, they require support to navigate the challenges in this developmental stage. In Kenya, there is a lot of controversy around poor adolescent behaviour (Munyiri, 2021; Nyamai, 2021). In addition, parents have been blamed for shirking their responsibility on discipline. The absence of fathers even when they live in the same household with the adolescents poses major behavioural consequences. As the

society seeks answers to adolescent problematic behavior, fathers may just be the missing link. This study sought to determine paternal involvement practices in relation to the male adolescents in the Catholic Archdiocese of Kisumu, Kenya.

1.1 Paternal Accessibility

Kara and Sümer (2022) examined how the parenting strategies employed by Turkish fathers affected the academic self-efficacy of boys in literature and mathematics classes in a sample of 1,931 teenagers. It appears that father warmth had an additional influence because it was a predictor of the boys' literature self-efficacy levels. In contrast, Kapetanovic et al. (2020) discovered that if parent-driven communication was not adequately handled, it could operate as a barrier to teenagers sharing information. Adolescents, for example, were sensitive to the tone of communication when a parent started a conversation about issues related to problematic behaviour. According to Usonwu et al. (2021), who conducted a thorough analysis of parent-adolescent reproductive health communication in Sub-Saharan Africa, teenagers stated that their parents stressed the value of abstinence by using confrontational language, implicit threats, false information, and scare tactics. In addition to describing their fathers' sex communication as non-existent, infrequent, challenging, and uncomfortable, the teenagers also described their relationship with their fathers as generally distant. Parents, on the other hand, reported issues related to traditional boundaries, a lack of confidence in their ability to relate to teenagers, and ignorance of adolescents' experiences and comprehension. Adolescent disclosure was limited by inadequate parent-driven communication, particularly when they were struggling with psychological issues. Furthermore, Buliva (2019) did a correlational study to investigate the impact of permissive parenting techniques on forms of delinquent behaviour among teenagers in the Butere subcounty. Home situations were found to be responsible for 70% of teenagers' absenteeism, which resulted in poor academic performance and eventual dropout. Adolescent behaviour was shown to be most positively impacted by parents who exercised control, monitored their activities, and encouraged their independence.

1.2 Paternal Responsibility

Responsibility is more than just provision of basic needs. It demands presence and active engagement without which the male adolescents are likely to be influenced negatively by other socialization agents. For instance, Moradi et al. (2019) discovered that, despite their presence, Iranian fathers performed a passive role in the parenting process and had no tangible presence in disciplining of their sons. Furthermore, some fathers not only contributed to the initiation of substance use, but also reinforced long-term usage. In contrast, Sub-Saharan Africa fathers still play the customary role of providing financial assistance for basic requirements (Gumede, 2020; Trivedi & Bose, 2020; AfriChild Center, 2021). Fathers were presumably following Botswana's traditional culture, which emphasized that their main responsibility was to go outside the home and find food for the family. Indeed, 79% of the respondents thought that if they had greater financial stability and education, they would make better fathers. Similarly, Owino and Yigezu (2023) found fathers in Ethiopia and Kenya played a significant role in childcare through regular financial support for necessities. In contrast, Karimi (2019) in a study to determine the connection between deviant behaviour and paternal non-involvement found fathers to be more involved with girls than with boys, which suggested that they had a more tolerant attitude towards boy's deviance. Consistently, fathers have been depicted to be more involved in responsibility aspects of their role.

1.3 Paternal Direct Engagement

Direct engagement with the adolescent refers to regulating teenagers' behaviours and activities in an attempt to manage their behaviour as well as offering advice for socially appropriate behaviour and conduct (Rothenberg et al., 2020). On the other hand, parents also engage in psychological control through intrusive and manipulative behaviours aimed at adolescents' thoughts and feelings (León-del-Barco et al., 2019). For instance, Baig et al. (2021) investigated the potential link between parental involvement and adolescent psychological and physical well-being among 3,486 students in Oman and discovered that teenagers with more involved parents were much more likely to be physically healthy and had lower rates of substance abuse, bullying, and poor mental health. Yet in Sub-Saharan Africa, Omary et al. (2021) found that just 6.6% to 15% of parents reported attending parent-teacher conferences and monitoring their

teenagers' academic progress in the regions of Kagera, Dar es Salaam, and Morogoro. Similar findings resonated with Ngangi et al. (2023) in a study conducted in Kangundo sub-county. These reviews show that fathers are still more traditionally oriented in their approach to paternal involvement particularly for male adolescents. This study therefore sought to determine paternal involvement practices in relation to male adolescents in the Catholic Archdiocese of Kisumu, Kenya.

2.0 METHODS

2.1 Research Design

The study adopted the concurrent parallel mixed methods approach. Creswell (2018) noted that this method allows the researcher to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data separately but simultaneously. The results are then triangulated for interpretation. Fathers provided quantitative data on parenting and family adjustment. On qualitative data, fathers addressed their in-depth thoughts and experiences with fatherhood and relationships with their sons.

2.2 Target Population

The target population in this study were fathers who are members of the Catholic Men's Association and have male adolescents 13-15 years. These were drawn from four parishes in the Catholic Archdiocese of Kisumu.

2.3 Study Sample

Selecting a subset of a whole in order to make an evaluation of the whole is known as sampling (Kothari, 2014). This study included both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Simple random sampling was used to ensure that every parish, both rural and urban, had an equal chance of being included in the sampling frame. Fathers were purposively sampled using the following selection criteria: male parents who were members of the Catholic Men's Association and had son(s) aged 13 to 15. After obtaining the sample frame, simple random sampling was utilized to determine the proportion of participants in the focus group discussions. The study adopted the infinite population size formula to establish the population size as shown below:

$$n = \frac{z^2 (p) (1-p)}{c^2}$$

Where, at a 95% confidence level,

z = standard normal deviation (standard value 1.96).

Preferred response percentage (p) is 0.5; confidence interval at 0.05 is represented by

$c = (1.96)^2 \times 0.5(0.5) / (0.05) = 384$ responders from which both quantitative and qualitative interviews would be drawn.

2.4 Research Instruments

The study utilized questionnaires and focus group discussion guides. The father's questionnaire was adopted from the Parenting and Family Adjustment Scales (PAFAS) developed by Sanders & Morawska, (2010). PAFAS is a short 30-item questionnaire that assesses parenting techniques and family dynamics which are recognised risk or protective factors for emotional or behavioural issues in children. It is divided into two scales: parenting, which measure parenting practices and the quality of the parent-child interaction (items 301-318), and family adjustment, which measure parental emotional adjustment and healthy family ties (items 319-330). The PAFAS items were assessed on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 to 3 (not at all, a little, quite a lot, very much), with a mixture of positive and negative phrased items (Sanders & Morawska, 2010). These subscales measured paternal involvement indicators of accessibility (parent-child relationship and parental adjustment); responsibility (family relationships and parental teamwork); and direct engagement with the adolescent (parental consistency, coercive parenting and positive encouragement). The focus group guide was researcher developed.

2.5 Data Analyses

Quantitative data was computed using SPSS version 29 for Windows and descriptive analysis performed and presented in form of tables. All 30 items are rated from 0 to 3. The bold items in the scoring key below were reverse scored (i.e. 0=3, 1=2, 2=1, 3=0) before summing the Total Score for each subscale. PAFAS consist of two scales Parenting and Family Adjustment. PAFAS Parenting consisted of four subscales and PAFAS Family Adjustment consisted of 3 subscales which were interpreted using the table 1 below.

TABLE I Scoring PAFAs values

Scale	Items	Interpretation	Possible range
<i>Parenting</i>			
Parental consistency	301, 303, 304, 311, 312	Higher scores indicate lower level of consistency	0-15
Coercive parenting	305, 307, 309, 310, 313	Higher scores indicate more coercive parenting	0-15
Positive encouragement	302, 306, 308	Higher scores indicate lower level of positive encouragement	0-9
Parent-child relationship	314, 315, 316, 317, 318	Higher scores indicate worse parent-child relationship	0-15
<i>Family adjustment</i>			
Parental adjustment	319, 320, 321, 322, 323	Higher scores indicate worse parent adjustment	0-15
Family relationships	324, 325, 326, 327	Higher scores indicate worse family relationships	0-12
Parental teamwork	328, 329, 330	Higher scores indicate worse parental teamwork	0-9

Source: Sanders and Morawska (2010)

Thematic content analysis was applied to qualitative data.

2.6 Ethical Consideration

This study obtained ethical approval from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation and assigned license NACOSTI/P/24/37102. In addition, father respondents voluntarily consented to participate in the study.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Paternal Demographic Characteristics

The response rate from fathers was (325) 96.7% for quantitative interviews and 38 fathers took part in four focus group discussions. Nearly half of the fathers were aged below 40 years. This suggests a relatively young population of fathers with male adolescent children. These are likely to be less settled economically hence spend a lot of time away from home. On the other hand, 24.9% of the fathers were above 50 years. Majority of fathers had attained secondary school level and above. Less than 10% of the fathers had no formal education or not completed basic primary education. Fathers who complete formal education are more likely to support their own children's education. Majority of fathers were in informal employment with 21.2% in salaried employment. These findings suggest that fathers spend a lot of time away from the home environment to provide for the basic needs of the children.

3.2 Paternal Involvement Practices

The results from PAFAS are presented below:

TABLE II Levels of Parenting Sub-Scales

Parental consistency	Freq.	%	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Low Level	4	1.2	2	15	9.20	1.855
Moderate Level	212	65.2				
High Level	109	33.5				
Total	325	100.0				
Coercive Parenting	Freq.	%	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Low Level	131	40.3	0	15	5.37	2.057
Moderate Level	146	44.9				
High Level	48	14.8				
Total	325	100.0				
Positive encouragement	Freq.	%	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Low Level	90	27.7	0	9	4.54	3.110
Moderate Level	97	29.8				
High Level	138	42.5				
Total	325	100.0				
Parent-child relationship	Freq.	%	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Negative relationship	72	22.2	0	15	8.68	5.227
Moderate relationship	85	26.2				
Positive relationship	168	51.7				
Total	325	100.0				

Based on the findings above majority of fathers had a moderate level of parental consistency. This implies that either the fathers set standards on behaviour and not follow through with consequences or there are no set standards. On coercive parenting, majority of fathers ranged between moderate (44.9%) to low (40.3%) while a significant proportion indicated high level (14.8%). This implies that the fathers exhibited more negative emotions like anger, raised voice or spanking while dealing with misbehavior in the male adolescents. On average (4.54 (SD = 3.110), the fathers had a moderate level of positive encouragement. Fundamentally, some of the fathers rewarded good behaviour when it happened while others were not consistent in doing the same. Regarding positive parent-child relation, half of the father respondents (51.7%) had a positive relationship with the male adolescents meaning that fathers not only enjoyed spending time with them but also demonstrated open communication. On the other hand, there was also a mixed group of moderate (26.2%) and negative father-son relationships (22.2%). This implies that nearly half of the respondents potentially did not spend as much time with their male adolescents to enable opportunities to talk to each other.

Findings from the FGD's further supported the descriptive findings on paternal involvement. One father (Urban Parent Code 03) noted that:

On the part of monitoring homework, you find when a child is now in adolescence let's say class 6, you find in the schools there are lockers, he does not bring his books at home so every day the books are in the locker and if he brings the book is over; so you find we as fathers when we get home and you are told the books are in the locker, you find looking at homework is not easy again as fathers we do not go to the schools, it is the mothers we send.

Similarly, another father (Urban Parent Code 02) indicated that:

I will be lying if I say I have done monitoring. Number 1 is the issue of economy. As for me the last time I checked my children's homework sincerely speaking is a long time. What contributes to this is I rise very early and get back home very late. The biggest issue is to put food on the table for your people to eat. We have not fallen back because we want but the situation does not allow, sometimes you go to hustle but come back empty handed, the maths does not add up, so you do not have time to look at their books, finding out what they were taught, personally, if I look at what my parents did, mum was the one looking at books, dad was ever busy.

In contrast, another father (Urban Parent Code 08) reiterated:

On my side I go once in a while but I am in liaison with the teacher I have the teacher's number so that if there is an issue at school, I am called so that I can leave work and get to school, so that is what I do.

TABLE III Levels of Family Adjustment Sub-Scales

Parental adjustment	Freq.	%	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Negative adjustment	10	3.1	0	15	8.85	2.997
Moderate adjustment	182	56.0				
Positive adjustment	133	40.9				
Total	325	100.0				
Family relationships	Freq.	%	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Negative relationship	6	1.8	0	12	7.76	2.459
Moderate relationship	160	49.2				
Positive relationship	159	48.9				
Total	325	100.0				
Parental teamwork	Freq.	%	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Low Level	77	23.7	0	9	5.79	2.189
Moderate Level	157	48.3				
High Level	91	28.0				
Total	325	100.0				

Majority of fathers ranged from moderate (56.0%) to positive (40.9%) paternal adjustment. This means that most fathers are relatively prepared to parent male adolescents. The results suggest that the family relationships ranged from moderately good (49.2%) to positive (48.9%), implying that there is less conflict in the family and that assistance is readily available. On the other hand, parental cooperation is essential for male adolescent's character development. Parents must agree on how to handle their adolescent's problems despite the fact that their methods may differ. The results showed that while 28.0% and 23.7% of the fathers had high and low levels of parental teamwork, respectively, nearly half of them (48.3%) reported a moderate level of teamwork.

Qualitative findings report mixed outcomes on paternal adjustment and teamwork. One father (Rural Parent Code 06) reiterated:

The one with both parents mostly run to the mother and this is where they make the kitchen parliament. They can make at primary school level so that when the boy joins form 1, the desires of the son and mother are very different from those of the father. For example, this boy has not done well enough and needs to go to high school but the mother insists this is your first-born child and needs to go to Alliance with his 170 marks. The mother stands her ground on this and this is where the son will also put his mind (chorus from other participants). As the father you look at it and wonder how you will even convince the teacher to give him a chance at the nearby school, this is war that he brought in the house.

Yet another (Urban Parent Code 03) lamented: “The challenge we have as he has said are the mothers, once the child gets into adolescence you find way the mother handles the boy you will get into conflict in discipline issues.”

Similarly, another father participant (Rural Parent Code 04) revealed:

I think to some extent we can address these challenges by inculcating some friendship between the children and us, we bring them close to us in as much as there are forces that attempt to drive them away from me as a father I should try my level best against those odds to be closer to him if I have an issue, I would like to discuss with him we should be able to discuss it freely in a free atmosphere.

4.0 DISCUSSION

From Table II above, paternal consistency requires direct engagement with the male adolescent including listening to, advising and follow through with repercussions of inappropriate behaviour as espoused by the findings above. Father participation is contingent on availability and accessibility and this study found a moderate engagement. On coercive parenting, this study found that paternal discipline practices were mainly punishment by caning or spanking hence the moderate level of coercive parenting although some fathers also exercised correction and nurture. This position is in concurrence with Gahungu (2023) and Mbungu et al. (2019) that found corporal punishment a preferred form of discipline to deter deviance and believed moderate punishment had no negative implications for children. The findings do not take cognizance of the fact corporal punishment violates the rights and human dignity of children.

The high to moderate levels of positive encouragement and parent child relationships implied that fathers were available and accessible to directly interact with their sons. However, positive engagement based on rewarding good behaviour does not necessarily mean retention and reproduction of the intended behaviour. Bandura's Social Learning theory confirms this standpoint. According to Bandura (1972) one learns by repeating rewarding behaviours. For example, if aggression is not punished and consistently so then the behaviour persists.

As shown in Table III above, paternal adjustment into parenthood has ramifications on how well family members support each other and spouses' congruence in their parenting techniques. A moderate degree of paternal adjustment means mixed feelings of stress and life satisfaction and coping with the emotional responsibilities of parenting a male adolescent. According to the Family Systems theory, every subsystem has an internal influence on every other system (Nichols & Davis, 2021). Stronger family communication and improved parent-child relationships, for example, are associated with father's emotional regulation, coping abilities, and frustration tolerance.

Further, the findings on parental teamwork showed moderate level of teamwork which could be due to differences in parenting approaches. Spouses are either likely to work as a team in parenting or disagree about parenting and experience a good or strained spousal relationship as a result. From the father's perspectives, some mothers were overprotective while others indulgent which conflicted with their own ideas of raising independent males. Yet, the study also revealed mothers spent more time with the boys while the fathers were away from home for a longer time. Several studies support this notion, for instance Owino and Yigezu, (2023) found fathers played a significant role by providing regular ongoing financial support for necessities which keeps them away from the children compared to mothers. Similarly, Men Engage (2021) found parenting and caregiving was still considered women's responsibilities. Nevertheless, fathers could still be intentional spend quality time with their sons even when the duration was short.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The fathers had a moderate level of parental consistency, coercive parenting, positive encouragement and parent-child relationship. In addition, fathers were moderately adjusted to their parenting role, family relationships and parental teamwork. There is more to paternal participation than just responsibility; direct communication and accessibility are essential. A father's involvement in his son's life is so important that it cannot be outsourced, and a father has no impact without a connection between them. Furthermore, connections take time regardless of the age of the child, so fathers should be proactive about direct interaction. Male adolescents need to see their fathers in action to develop their masculinity appropriately. Male adolescents need rules, boundaries and guidance on appropriate behaviour.

Consequently, there is need for fathers to improve on paternal participation and parental teamwork is very critical for effective communication rather than pulling apart which results in confusion for the male adolescent.

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