AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARENTING STYLE AND MALE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN VIOLENCE IN GATANGA SUB COUNTY, MURANG'A COUNTY IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT
The impact of violent conflicts has been documented as unquantifiable and ruinous. It is evidenced that current judicial approaches in use are counterproductive. There is need to look for social approaches in mitigating these violent conflicts. This study contributed towards this goal by investigating the relationship between the family environment and secondary school male youth participation in violent conflicts in Gatanga Sub County, Muranga County, Kenya. The study adopted correlation research design. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilized. A multistage sampling strategy was used to sample, eleven secondary schools, 33 violent youths, 33 non violent youths and their 66 parents, 11 (eleven) teacher counselors and 24 selected key informants. The study relied on primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using four instruments; student self report; family self test; teacher counselors unstructured interview schedule and IDI schedule for the key informants. Data collected was analyzed using the SPSS analytical package. The Pearson's chi- square (x^2) was run to assess the association between the identified variables and secondary school male youth participation in violence. The key findings of the study showed that, on parenting style and youth violence, there is a highly significant association between the paternal and maternal physical presence, how parents treated the male youth's emotions and male youth participation in violence. The study recommends that guidance and counseling programs should be organized in the community to sensitize, educate and empower parents on various parenting issues. (239 Words)

1.0 INTRODUCTION
1.1 Background of the study
Globally, youth violence has been cited as very destructive, visible and contagious; and generally undermining the fabric of society (Shalala, 2009). The youth factor in these violent conflicts, is currently an issue of major societal concern. It has been indicated that, there is no violence without youth involvement either as witnesses, victims, architects, reactionary groups or perpetrators (Muthoni, 2011).

Wangai (2001) avers that, statistics collected indicate that most of the perpetrators of violence in Kenya are male youth. Though attributed to varying factors, several studies have consistently given family influences as central factors in the development of violent behavior in young people (WHO, 2002; Liu & Situ, 2006; and Wedge, 2013). Various reports on the analysis of destructive and violent school unrests in Kenya have also consistently given parental and family factors listed among the major factors (Wangai, 2001, Karioba, 2012). It would be feasible, therefore, for an investigation of these family factors that would be related to youth participation in violence. This study based its argument on the UN report on the youth at risk of violent conflicts which suggests the use of social, rather than judicial approaches when dealing with youth problems. The UN report highlights the need of the use of the family as the institute to control or minimize the escalating incidence of violence among the youth (WYR, 2007; Cravero, 2009). Based on the foregoing, this study investigated the relationship between the family environment and male youth participation in violence in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County, Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the problem
The youth factor in violent conflicts is currently an issue of major societal concern. It has been indicated that, there is no violence without youth involvement either as witnesses, victims, architects reactionary groups or perpetrators (Muthee, 2010). Cases of youth, intrapersonal, interpersonal and collective violence in many parts of the country, form of domestic violence, sibling violence and inter-village violent conflicts are a common occurrence (Muthoni, 2011).

There is evidence that, the youth factor in these violent incidences is key. For example, it is documented that youth played a central role during Kenya's post election violence in 2011, with over 70% of the direct perpetrators of the violence being young people (Educational Development Center, 2009). Youth are also reported to have constituted the majority of victims. There is therefore an urgent need to put in place mitigating factors to deal with youth violence because the current judicial systems in Kenya are counterproductive. The role of the family in youth violence has been documented. However, with the changing dynamics of the family, it is imperative to investigate how these changes could be impacting on family members. This study thus set out to establish if there was a relationship between parenting style and male youth participation in violence.

1.3 Research Objectives
The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between the parenting style and male youth participation in violence in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County in Kenya.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

A parenting style is a psychological construct representing standard strategies that parents use in their rearing. Parenting styles have been characterized by dimensions of parental responsiveness and demandingness (Baumrind, 1991; Williams *et al.,* 2012). Research over the past 20 years suggests that the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship significantly affects the development of risk behaviors in adolescent health.

Alizadehel *et. al. (*2011) and Williams *et. al.,* (2012) argue that, children who are treated harshly may view rough treatment as acceptable and those who are given no guidance may engage in whatever behavior. Among the risk factors with effect on youth violence is poor parent-child relations. Marital discord and family instability also exert some effect on later violence. Broken homes include: divorced, separated, or never-married parents and a child's separation from parents before age 16. Separation from parents also operates as a distinct risk factor (Maccoby & Martin (1983); Rinaldi and Howe (2012).

Higher levels of family cohesion and structure will protect youth exposed to violence from negative psychosocial outcomes because they have a supportive environment to process these potentially traumatic events. Neglect operates as a distinct risk factor, possibly because neglected children are less likely to be supervised or taught appropriate behavior. Indeed, they have large effects on mental health problems, substance abuse, and poor school performance (Rinaldi & Howe, 2012). Parental disengagement is a predictor of many of the male youth problem behaviors whose levels have reached alarming proportions.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This study utilized the correlation research design to investigate the relationship between the family socioeconomic factors and secondary school male youth participation in violence. The study area was Gatanga Sub County; Muranga County, Kenya. This Sub County was purposefully selected since it has experienced youth violence which had manifested itself in destructive school unrest; and hopelessness, helplessness and dependency syndrome tendencies (Mwai, *et. al.,* 2013). The target population was all the 32 secondary schools in the Gatanga Sub County as at 2011 when the data was collected. The target populations for this study were the male youth aged between 16 and 20 years; their parents or guardians; and teacher counselors. The study targeted male youth between form two and four because they were considered to have stayed in the school for a considerable time to enable the assertion of their violence behavior pattern by the teacher counselors.

This study adopted the Multi-Stage sampling method that led to sampling sequentially across a number of hierarchical levels **(**Jacob, 2007**).** Sampling of schools was done using the proportional allocation method (Ritchie *et. al.*, 2003). This resulted in 40% (11) of all the schools in Gatanga Sub County becoming study sample as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). The four girls only schools in the sub county were not included in the sample.

This study, further put into consideration suggestion by (Kombo & Tromp, 2006), who states that, a group in qualitative research should have a minimum of 30 respondents. Based on this, the study sampled 33 student respondents per group to ensure that the data collected maintained a threshold. It therefore, included 33 youths who were deemed violent, 33 youths who were deemed non-violent, 33 parents of the violent youths and 33 parents of the non-violent youths. These

respondents were enough to give the required information regarding the population and enabled the researcher to draw the conclusions from the data collected.

Data collection was done using questionnaires and interview guides. To ascertain validity of the data collection instruments the research instruments were submitted to supervisors for verification and their views were incorporated as Kothari (2004) advises. The study used methodological triangulation to increase the credibility and validity of the results (Denzin, 2006). This involves using more than one method to gather data. On reliability of the research tools, to gauge test-retest reliability, the research tools were administered twice at two different points in time during the piloting stage (Denzin, 2006). The results assisted to adjust language and context to the level of the respondents (Kothari, 2004). The result of the two pre-tests were the same, hence they were considered reliable.

On the ethical aspect, the researcher followed the required procedure and process of conducting research in Kenya. This required, obtaining authorization from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovations (NCSTI). This was followed by request and further authorization by the sub county Commissioner and Education Officer in Gatanga. During data collection, researcher observed the five ethical principles of counseling practice namely: fidelity, autonomy, beneficence, discomfort and justice.

The study used quantitative and qualitative method of data analysis where, the raw data collected was organized, coded and analyzed using the SPSS analytical package. The Pearson's chi-square test (χ^2) was run to assess the association between the identified variables and secondary school male youth participation in violence. Frequency distribution tables, graphs, and the verbal responses from the responses were used to summarize and present the data. These provided tools for describing statistical observations and reduce information to understandable form. Research findings were presented systematically and discussed scientifically.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
A summary of the findings is discussed both descriptively and by analysis of chi square test results.

4.1.1 Parental treatment of youth emotions and participation in violence
The youth were asked to rate how their mothers and fathers treated their emotions on a four point likert scale. A total of 63 youths responded. Data collected is shown in Figure 4.1.
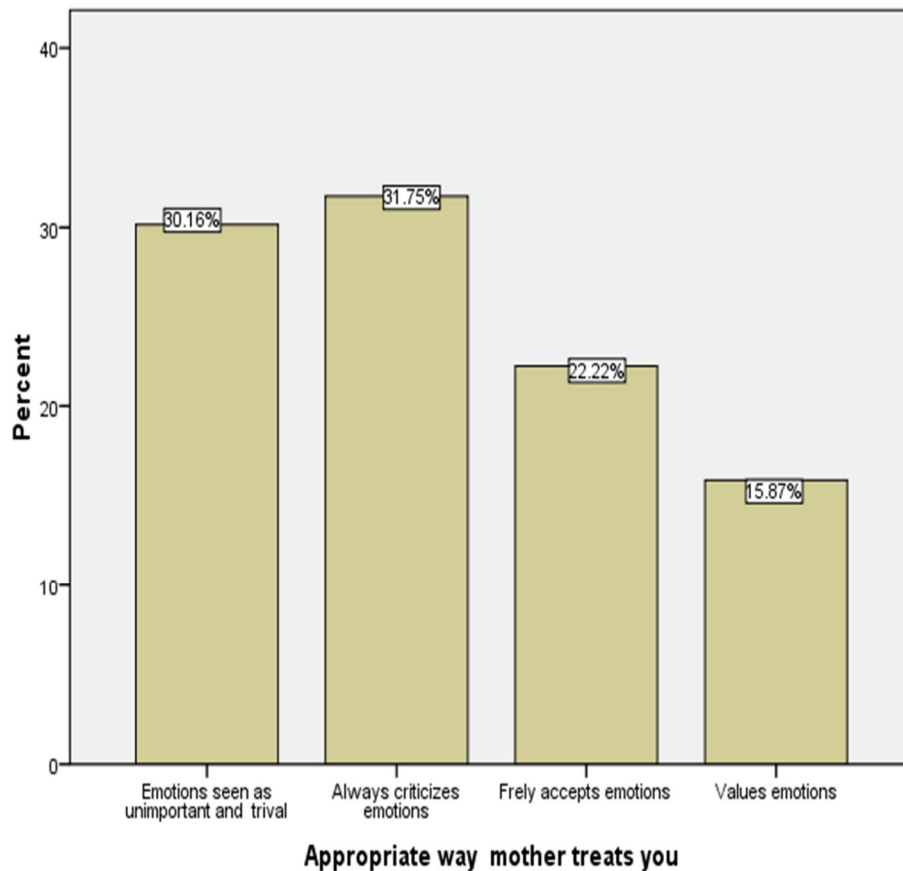
N=63

Figure 4.1:   Maternal treatment of youth's emotion

Fig. 4.1. shows that, 21 (31.75%) said their mothers always criticized the youth's emotions, 19 (30.16%) indicated that their mothers saw the youth's emotions as unimportant and trivial, 14(22.22%) freely accepted the youth emotions while only 9(15.89%) valued the youth's emotions. A male village elder (Plate 4.1), expressing his views on maternal treatment of youth emotions explained that:

> *At times mothers are overprotective and do not allow their sons to feel. In some cases, it is brought clear to the male youth that men do not have to express feelings in the open. This is seen as a sign of weakness to the male. This makes the male youth to grow up conceptualizing that expression of emotions is wrong for a man. However, as a man, I know men also have feelings and that at time these feelings have to b e expressed.* (Source, Field Data, 2011)

Plate: 4.1 The researcher conducting an in-depth interview with a male village elder at his home (Source: Field data, 2011)

The study findings on the fathers' treatment of the male youth emotions are shown in Figure 4.2**. N=63**
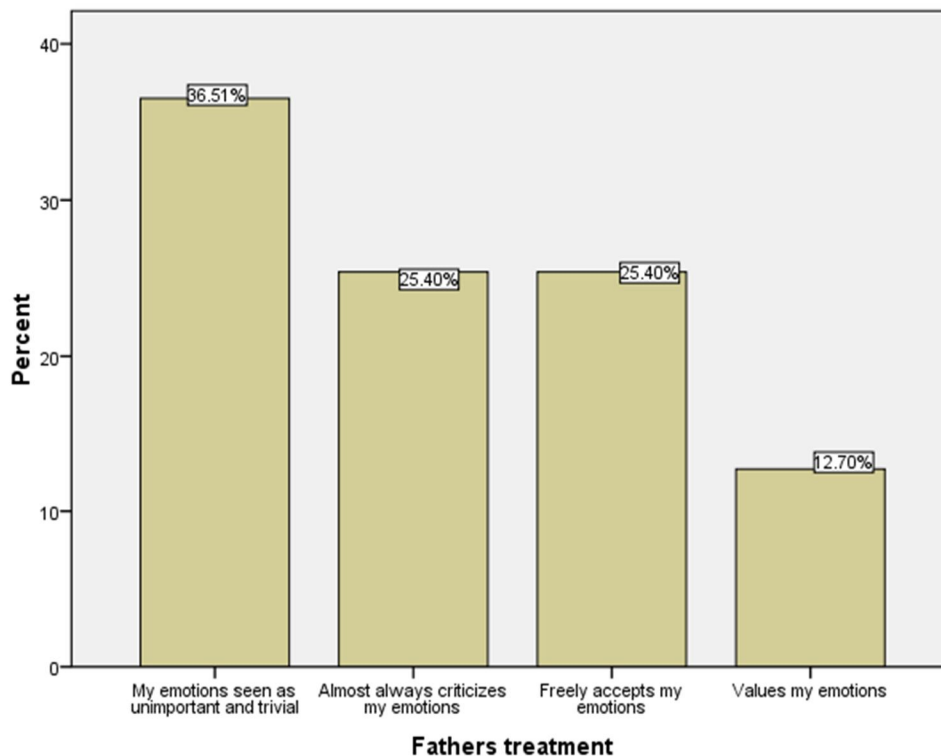

Figure 4.2 Paternal treatment of youth's emotions

From Fig. 4.2, the findings indicate that, most of the fathers 31(36.51%) saw the youths' emotions as unimportant and trivial, 13(25.40%) almost always criticized the youths' emotions, and 13(25.40%) freely accepted the youths' emotions while 6(12.70%) valued the youth's emotions.

4.1.2 Parental physical presence and secondary school male youth participation in violence in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a   County, Kenya

This study investigated the parental physical availability in relation to the phenomena in question. On maternal physical presence, Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2_{6,0.01} = 30.10$) showed that there was a highly significant (P<0.01) association between mother's or mother figure's physical presence to the youth and male youth participation in violence.

Due to the stipulated importance of the mothers' role in parenting, this study also ascertained the mothers' availability by investigating youths' view on the mothers or female guardian involvement in religion. The use of this parameter was based on what has now become a common practice, as one of the religious leaders commented:

> *In Kenya today, women flock into churches and make up most of the congregation. Most women streaming into churches are vulnerable, some to a point of desperation, and others abandon their family duties for the sake of religion.* (Source: Field Data, 2011)

The results for this item are summarized in Fig. 4.3.
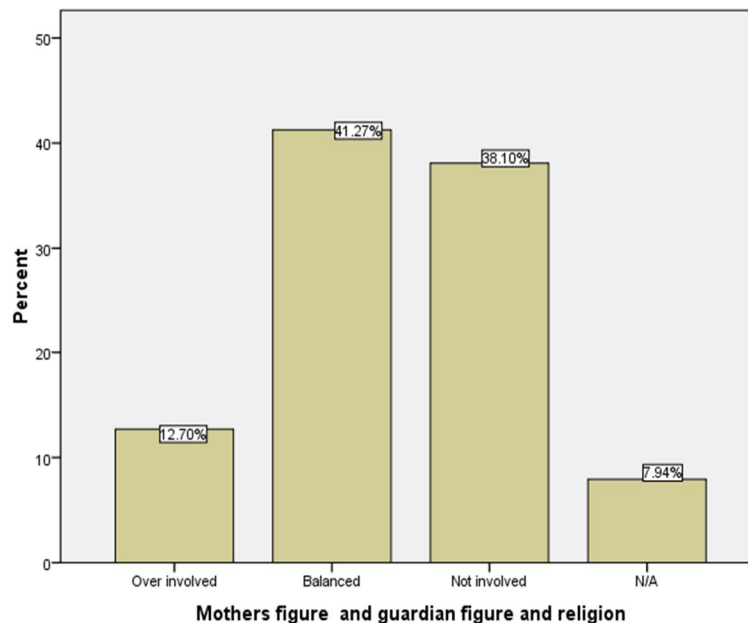
N=63

Figure 4.3: Levels of mother figure / female guardian involvement in religion

from Fig. 4.3. noted that, (8)12.7% of the mothers / mother figures were over involved in religion, 26(41.3%) had a balanced involvement in religion, and 24(38.1%) were reported not to be involved in religion, while 5(7.9%) indicated that the question was not applicable. A total of 54% of the female respondents were found to be religious in Gatanga Sub County. Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2_{25,0.01} = 55.588$) showed that there was a highly significant (P<0.01) association between rate of mothers involvement in religion and male youth participation in violence.

This study further sought to understand the situation of paternal physical availability to secondary school male youth in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County, Kenya. Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2_{25,0.05} = 40.255$) showed that there was a significant (P<0.05) association between rate of fathers physical availability to the youth and male youth participation in violence. One of the chiefs commented that:

> *Children whose fathers spend a significant amount of time taking care of them exhibit positive psychological adjustment and cognitive and intellectual development, strong academic achievement, ability to empathize, flexible gender-role orientation, and competency at problem-solving tasks. We rarely have a problem with them. These are the ones we utilize to help us solve our local community problems.(*Source: Field Data, 2011*)*

This study negates previous studies that had indicated that, the mother role was more superior to the fathers' role. The findings are supported by recent studies which indicate that conduct disorder, behavior problems, delinquency, and externalizing behaviors, including violent and non-violent crimes, have all been found to be significantly related to maternal and paternal warmth (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2003).

The bottom line is that, when parents are role models of infidelity, their children can't help but react. Studies conducted on the impact of spousal cheating indicate that children whatever age exhibited a number of feelings and behaviors (Monique & Adrian, 2006)

4.1.3 Family member(s) taking alcohol and secondary school male youth participation in Violence

The study asked the youth respondents to give information on members of the family taking alcohol. The results are as indicated in Figure 4.6.
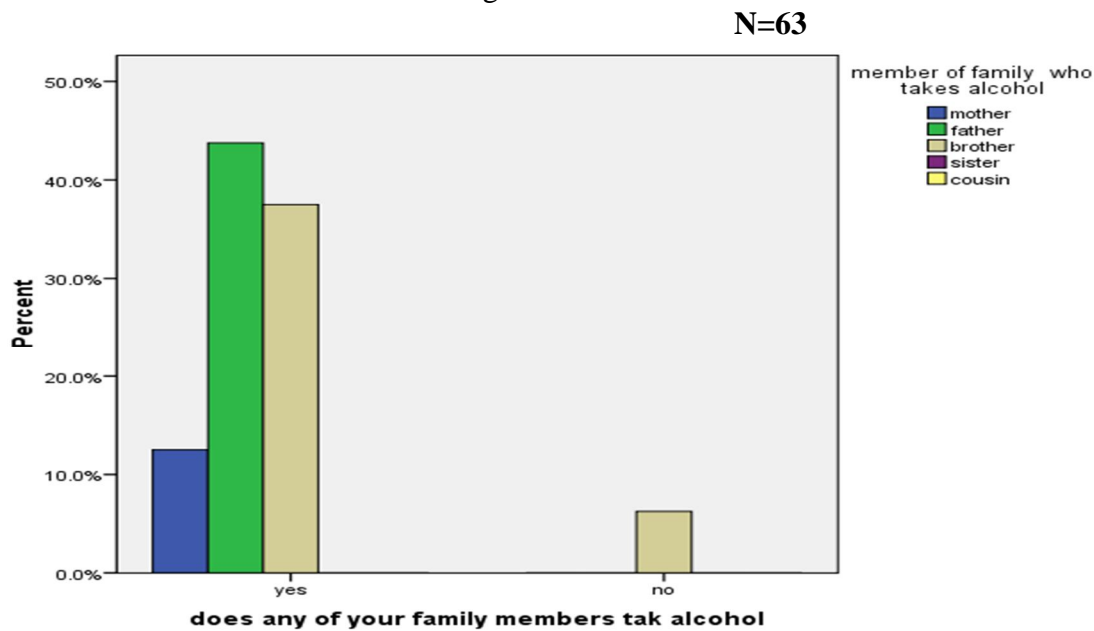
N=63

Figure 4.3: Family member(s) taking alcohol

From Fig. 4.3, more men were taking alcohol than women in Gatanga. This included 45% fathers and 38% brothers. However, this study also noted that 12 % of female family members were also

taking alcohol. The Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2_{2,0.05} = 1.371$) showed that there was no significant (P>0.05) association between family member taking alcohol and secondary school male youth participation in violence.

4.2   Discussion

On the maternal and paternal treatment of emotions, the results indicated that only a small number of mothers and fathers valued the youth's emotions. The study referred to this as perceived rejecting parenting, which creates a parent –child barrier and insecure attachment. Eventually, these may result in difficulties which create sense of inferiority and the unconnectedness between the child and parent and leads to develop psychopathology which presents as either an internalizing (depression/anxiety) or externalizing disorder which may include violence.

On maternal and paternal physical presence, Pearson Chi-Square value identified a highly significant association between the paternal and maternal physical presence and male youth participation in violence. This study negates previous studies that had indicated that, the mother role was more superior to the fathers' role. It proposes the involvement of a father by redefining their role in the family, which is associated with positive children outcomes. The results indicate that most marital relationships in Gatanga were conflictual and disturbed. Families are seen as systems of interconnected and interdependent individuals, none of whom can be understood in isolation from the system. Every family member is connected to each other through a system of overlapping and intertwining relationships that can only be deciphered when all members work as one. From this perspective, the youth violence is not embedded in the young man's psychic; rather it is a product of the family interactions.

Finally, on alcohol intake in the family, results indicate that there is family alcohol intake in families in Gatanga with more men in the families taking alcohol than women. Secondary data revealed that children of alcoholics tend to feel isolated and have self-esteem issues; as they get older, they are more likely to be affected by peer pressure and become involved in juvenile behavior which includes violence. In order to deal with youth violence, there is need to improve the paternal and maternal parenting styles.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Summary

The results showed that, Pearson Chi-Square value identified a highly significant association between the paternal and maternal physical presence, a highly significant association between how they treated the male youth's emotions and male youth participation in violence. This study negates previous studies that had indicated that, the mother role was more superior to the fathers' role in parenting and sees that fathers as irreplaceable. There was a highly significant (P<0.01) association between the quality of the marital relationship and male youth participation in violence and showed no significant (P>0.05) association with family members taking alcohol.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that understanding how violence within the family works is at the core of youth violence mitigation. Families need to deliberately create communication family forums to

allow family communication and bonding. Therefore, any attempt to reduce secondary school male youth violence should include a systematic effort to improve the family environment.

5.3. Recommendation

Guidance and counseling programs should be organized in the community, learning institutions, churches and other faith based institutions to sensitize, educate and empower parents on various parenting issues. There should be programs to address family dysfunctionality before it manifests in youth delinquent behavior. This would include ways of making families be havens of love and care in order for family members to develop a sense of belongingness hence buffer disruptive behavior.

5.4 Suggestion for further research

Further research should be conducted on the emerging complex family structures and the impact they have on members in such families.

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