UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

PARENTAL ABSENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON ATTENTION SEEKING BEHAVIOURS AMONG SCHOOL GOING 13-18 YEAR-OLDS IN MIDDLE CLASS URBAN ENVIRONMENT

THE CASE OF WESTLANDS DISTRICT, NAIROBI COUNTY

BY

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NOVEMBER, 2014
DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college, institution or University other than the University of Nairobi for academic credit.

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This thesis has been presented for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

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Dr. Robinson Ocharo
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research to my friends, parents and mentors under whose blessings and care the study was undertaken.
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I owe a debt of intellectual gratitude to Prof. Edward Mburugu and Dr. Robinson Ocharo, for their supervision, immense support, guidance and technical input throughout the research process. Without their constructive criticism, I would not have accomplished this task.

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ABSTRACT
The process of child-rearing has been changing over time. Present-day dynamics have necessitated parental absence due to the strain they place on parents thus reducing the quantity and quality of time parents spend with their children. This study examines the impact of parental absence on attention seeking behaviours among school going 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment, the case of Westlands District, Nairobi County. Attention seeking behaviours means all those repeated actions which, through their very annoying nature, bring a child to the attention of a number of adults and other members of society. Six aspects of attention seeking behaviours are examined in detail including teen cutting classes, engaging in physical fights in and out of school, engaging in drug and substance abuse, teen predisposition to depression and withdrawal, early initiation into sexual activities and having problems with the law and getting arrested. Specifically, the study examines how today parents conceptualizes parenting, the social and physical distance between parents and teenagers, attention seeking behaviours that teenagers engage in as a result of parental absence and the relationship between parental absence and attention seeking behaviours.

The study employed descriptive correlation research design. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. It targeted 90 teenagers in class eight (8), forms two (2) and three (3) and 10 purposively selected parents. In addition, head teachers and guidance and counseling teachers from the target schools took part in the study. Borgadus Social Distance scale was used in analyzing the social distance between parents and teenagers. Likert Scale was used to measure the teenagers’ and parents’ attitudes on what constitutes optimum interaction. Hypothesis was tested using Chi Square statistic test.

Study findings reveal that today’s parents are largely aware of what parenting entails. However, there are increasing aspects of delegated parenting, privatization of the family institution, increasing levels of parental absence and reducing levels of teen behaviour monitoring by parents. The social and physical distance between parents and their teen children seem to be increasing and house helps are more and more filling this gap. Chi Square test was calculated at the degree of freedom of (2-1) (2-1) =1 at 5% level of significance. Findings on the relationship between parental absence and the assessed attention seeking behaviours reveal that there is an association between parental absence and teen cutting classes; teenagers’ involvement in physical fights in and out of school; teen predisposition to engage in drug and substance abuse; teen predisposition to depression and withdrawal and early initiation of teenagers into sexual activities. On the other hand, there is no association between parental absence and teenagers having problems with the law or getting arrested.

The study concludes that although the attention seeking behaviours are associated with flaws in the parenting process, they are a consequent of societal changes and their effects are also societal. Society must find alternative mechanisms to supplement the rather flagging parenting process. Due to continued unavailability of natural mentors, the study recommends among others, that there is need to institute supplementary programs, particularly planned mentorship programs, which will augment parenting process. There is also need to put in place training programs for parents on effective teen parenting. This should focus on topics important to parents today including effective teen-parent communication.

The study was conducted under the supervision of Prof. Edward Mburugu and Dr. Robinson Ocharo.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The process of child-rearing has been changing over time. Gander and Gardiner (1981) observe that thinking back, we find that our grandparents had a somewhat different concept of children and child rearing from our own. They probably had different ideas about how children should be disciplined and educated, and what constituted proper behaviour for children. Gander and Gardiner (1981) also indicate that the role of parents in the parenting process was well spelt out and that the farther back we go, the more we realize that concepts of childhood and child rearing have changed dramatically through centuries. In the 18th and 19th centuries, parents and the community in general spent time with children influencing and shaping their social and cognitive skills. With many changes experienced in the contemporary society, the quality and quantity of time parents in particular spend with their children has significantly diminished.

According to Mellor (1997), attention seeking behaviours means all those repeated actions which, through their very annoying nature, bring a child to the attention of a number of adults and other members of society in a persistent manner preferably over a long period of time, causing great concern. This excludes the sudden reaction of a child to an upset at home lasting for a few days or weeks and the pattern appears in more than one setting (Dawson, 1985). Whereas the definition insinuates that attention seeking behaviours are in contravention of society’s customs, the term may also be seen in a positive context, such as with the development of humor (Mellor, 2005). On the negative scale, attention seeking encompasses child delinquency behaviours. Delinquency and deviance are equivalent. According to Siegel (1985), delinquency refers to a vast array of illegal activities including violence, theft and drug-related offences. Delinquency is
defined as the violation of current norms of conduct (Sellin, 1958). It also refers to a conduct that is in conflict or at variance with the priorities of the community (Robinson, 1960) or a behaviour that is totally contrary to normal social usage (Cavan, 1969). In this study, attention seeking behaviours refer to the mild, relatively serious or extreme deviant behaviors that bring a child to the attention of other members of society.

Brisbane (1988) defines parenting as the process of caring for children and helping them grow and learn; it is concerned with the rearing of children. Brisbane indicates that parenting is more than being a parent. Parental absence is measured in terms of the quality and quantity of time parents spend with their children. This definition is adopted in this study.

According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), a child is any individual aged below 18 years. Similarly, in Kenya, the Children Act No. 8 of 2001 defines a child as any human being under the age of 18 years. By focusing on 13-18 year-olds, this study is by and large focusing on children who are in their teenage years. The stage also coincides with adolescence (Stang & Story, 2005). In this study, the 13-18 year-olds are also referred to as teenagers.

In African traditional societies, the community was very involved in the caring for children and in shaping the individual’s fate, parent-child relations were regulated and monitored by relatives and other community members and what happened inside the family was relatively public (Collins and Coltrane, 1991). A micro-community of close by adults and older children acted as surrogate parents, and there were always plenty of people around to offer advice on what to do in specific situations. A child was socialized by the whole community in the sense that she/he could be corrected or disciplined by any adult if she/he misbehaved (Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 1984).

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In African societies, education and socialization of the children started earlier through story telling meaning that adult members of society and parents were always close to their children. Mwanamwambwa and Tadesse (1979) observe that child socialization took place largely through three processes: informal education, traditional formal education and modern formal education and much of the learning that took place involved imitation, inclusion in household tasks or being sent on small errands in which the child learnt through practice or by example. Further, the children not only belonged to the parents but also to the kin group (Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 1984). The child emerged with a highly developed “social sense” from the earliest years and learnt cooperation, responsibility and mutual support (Mwanamwambwa and Tadesse, 1979). Children were granted maximum attention by their parents thus properly socialized to effectively adjust to the immediate social conditions and adult life. This means therefore that parents and other community members spent most of the time with children at home and on farms.

The family was an integral agent of social control that taught children limits of tolerated behaviour, a role that is evenly fundamental today. According to Farmer (1979), the family introduced children to the acceptable ideas of right and wrong. They absorbed the moral standards of their family, their attitudes to honesty, cupidity, violence, e.t.c. It is against this observation that Hoeflin (1960) indicated that the kind of a family a person came from had powerful influence on his/her character in that it largely determined his/her personality and influenced his/her ethical code. Similarly, the family molded the child’s taste; much was consciously taught but was absorbed by the child from their family environment and their own taste was (and is) likely to reflect the lifestyle she/he experienced at home.

The family remains a place in which children learn to interpret reality and parents serve as significant interpreters for children of information about the world (Mills and Mills, 2000). Parenting is a process that is central to child development. It involves introducing
the child to accepted standards of social behaviour. It involves continued child nurturing and molding into a socially functioning being. According to Brisbane (1988), nurturing is an important part of parenting. A parent nurtures a child by providing encouragement and enriching experiences. Nurturing also means showing love, support and concern-understanding all the things that are part of the special closeness between parent and child. Brisbane (1988) further observes that the more time parents spend talking with and observing their children the better they (parents) will be able to meet each child’s individual needs. However, the present widening of the physical and social distance between parents and children has negatively affected the nurturing process. As said by Ocharo (2009), physical isolation includes all those cases in which either the pleasant or unpleasant stimulus (the other individual) is absent, leading to feelings of being rewarded or punished as the case may be. To Ocharo, physical isolation is likely to result into social isolation, a case where a member of the group is directly or indirectly inhibited from actively participating in social systems. He also indicates that active participation includes all those cases where a member of a community is directly exercising both his/her emotional and physical abilities as a contribution towards the attainment of group goals. Emerging social trends have amplified the parents-children distance affecting individual families and particularly young people as they find their place in society and initiate their own families (Collins and Coltrane, 1991). One way is by depriving children of much needed parental presence.

Bandura’s social cognitive theory asserts that people learn a great deal simply by watching or observing others, by reading about what people do, and by making general observations of the world. This learning may or may not be demonstrated in the form of behaviour. This is more so to children. According to Delcampo and Delcampo (1995), children (and adolescents) learn most readily from observing how people around them conduct their lives, primarily their parents. It is therefore possible that children
experience adjustment challenges when physical and social distance between them and their parents is widened.

Parenting is also the universal way a culture reproduces itself from one generation to the next. Parents are the principle interpreters of various cultural issues to their children; in their absence, children bring into life cultures from different environments and without caution put them to test (Callahan, 1973). Whereas children are deemed to be expert observers, they usually make many mistakes in interpreting what they observe as they often draw wrong conclusions and choose mistaken ways in which to find their place (Dreikurs and Soltz, 1964).

Children and adolescents whose parents are warm and responsive and provide reasonable expectations for behaviour feel especially good about themselves (Baumrind, 1971, 1997; Bishop and Ingersoll, 1989; Lord, Eccles and McCarthy, 1994). Warm and positive parenting lets young people feel they are accepted as competent and worthwhile; and firm but appropriate expectations backed up with explanations, help them make sensible choices and evaluate their own behaviour against reasonable standards (Berk, 1997). Parental warmth entails them being present and attending to all issues raised by their children.

Mills & Mills (2000) aver that increasingly today, teenagers join the social world and adulthood so abruptly without sufficient prior preparation. According to Mills & Mills (2000), parents do not prepare their children of the various challenges they should expect in life and the only challenge which remains with us is how to minimize children vulnerability while at the same time allowing space and time in which they enjoy the pleasures of their childhood. It has been observed that problems occurring at the societal level find their root at the family and more so, on the quality of parenting (Hoeflin, 1960). Social problems such as juvenile crime or drug taking are blamed on a disintegrating family life (Wilson, 1985). Parents are blamed for their failure to properly socialize children leading to behaviour variations among children (Mead and
Wolfenstein, 1955). Studies of urban children in self-care suggest that children at home alone often feel bored, lonely and isolated and terrified (Long and Long 1982), and that they have lower academic achievement and social adjustment than supervised children (Woods, 1972).

The most significant changes in children’s lives from medieval times to the modern era were ushered in by the rise of formal education and by growth of “affective individualism” and both of these trends were promoted by the growth of capitalism and the gradual shift from home-based production to waged labour, industrialization and a market economy (Stone, 1977; Aries, 1979). In the process of traditional-modern changeover, the family became private, personalized and sentimentalized (Collins and Coltrane, 1991). These changes have mostly affected the middle and upper class families.

Prime architectural advancements characteristic of today’s society have also served to disengage the family institution and in particular children from the public space. According to Skolnick (1987), the gradual shift toward family self-sufficiency that continues today was helped along by technological development. In small pre-industrial towns and villages, the layout of houses made privacy difficulty. Most homes built in the 17th century consisted of a single room. Eating, sleeping, recreating and procreating all took place in the same area, usually in the company of others. According to Newman and Grauerholz (2002), this architecture began to change as society became more industrial and urban. Even in middle-class homes, the trend toward inside doors and a central hallway, with rooms opening to it, permit a degree of family privacy not previously available (Laslett, 1973). Today, we take for granted a home consisting of separate rooms that accommodate separate functions, freeing family members from even one another’s watchful gaze. Indeed, many homes being built today include a secluded “couples’ suite” and a children’s area in a totally separate floor or wing of the house. This means then that parental absence from their children is a reality that is still felt even though parents are presumably present at home.
Newman and Grauerholz (2002) observe that the amenities available within the home such as refrigerators, telephones and indoor plumbing have all contributed to the increasing family privacy by bringing family activities from more visible, more public locations into the home. Today, with the internet and other technologies, a family can practically survive without leaving the privacy of its home. Child rearing is thus a private affair and these changes have complicated the society’s response to challenges facing children.

Further, the complexity of today’s society due to industrialization and rapid urbanization has influenced the nature of human relationships at family and societal levels. As the complexity increases, the family institution is increasingly interacting with other institutions such as the economy, polity, the judiciary, educational system, media, welfare and social security agencies; in fact with every aspect of community life. This entails that some functions formerly carried out by the family institution are now being carried out by these agencies which have affected overall human behaviour including that of teenagers. The loss of family and community support systems for the children is a matter of concern in Africa because sociality and “socially distributed nurturance” within a family unit were at the heart of important cultural values throughout the continent (Serpell, 1992; Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 1984).

In Kenya, similar occurrences are endemic. Weisner, et al. (1997) observe that shared social support is no longer possible for Kenyan children but they hope for it; they continue to defend its possibility, if not predictability in their lives and this is how the African family crisis is being experienced. In similar vein, Mburugu and Adams (2005) note that childcare is a challenging task for the increasing number of working women with children particularly in urban areas. They further observe that women with more education and who reside in urban areas (including Nairobi) use a hired worker to take care of a child. This is delegated childcare (O’Brien, 1989), where, though parents choose to walk that path, there are no clear mechanisms of monitoring the delegated
responsibilities. Parents monitor aspects that make their children comfortable such as the quality of food, entertainment and cost of care. Other aspects of importance such as behaviour constancy and attention seeking are not accorded due consideration. Whereas under such arrangements childcare is delegated to the other institutions specifically the house servants, parents have less control over such servants in the sense that servants are often strangers with no moral obligation to the parents and yet remain the major socializers of children in terms of language and moral behaviour (Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 1984). Therefore, the house servants may not attend adequately to the various intricate social needs of teenagers.

Another aspect of particular concern is that today’s middle class urban parents are preoccupied especially with career and other material ventures and spend most of their time away from home. They have ‘substituted’ their parental responsibilities with handouts and other material gifts. The monitoring of children’s behaviour has thus become difficult leaving the entire socialization delegated to the media, school, house helps and peers. Given the changes in today’s society, parental response to various challenges facing children, especially teenagers, is by far, not adequate. It is therefore likely that teenage children may engage themselves in attention seeking behaviours with intent to attract the notice of others.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the importance of parenting in child socialization and development, the process has considerably changed in the contemporary society, exposing children to many challenges. In the African traditional society, parenting was a socially distributed role. The traditional African institutions such as grandparents, housewives, and rites of passages were central in child rearing. In the process of traditional-modern changeover, these processes are slowly fading away. Families are increasingly becoming private and
progressively getting detached from communities and other kin members who were involved in child rearing. The rites of passage which were important avenues through which societal values were inculcated into the children are also diminishing in intensity and prevalence. Housewives, who were central in child socialization at home, are today career women. This is particularly so in middle class urban zones.

Further, present-day changes in associational patterns and family structure have necessitated parental absence of parents thereby limiting the quality and quantity of time they spend with their children. Today, parents are more preoccupied with education, career and other material engagements mostly at the expense of parenting. The duty of parents as primary socializing agents for children has been declining with the responsibility being delegated to other institutions such as the school, media and house helps. This thinning availability of natural mentors (parents) has affected the growing powers of children toward the fulfillment of the tasks which they must master in life. Although children of the middle class urban environment are affluent and typically seen as low risk, these dynamics have affected their optimal growth. As such, in the process of growing up, the children have been acquiring undesirable characteristics and fail to achieve a sense of security and an attitude of respect for themselves and for others (Ginott, 1965).

This study therefore examines the impact of physical and emotional absence of parent on school going 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment. The research seeks to understand how the quality and quantity of time parents spend with their school going 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment affects children’s attention seeking behaviours. Looking at Westlands District in Nairobi County, the study looks at the 13-18 year-olds attention seeking behaviours from both the parents and children’s perspectives.
1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Broad Objective

The broad objective of the study was to examine the impact of parental absence and/or presence on the attention seeking behaviours among school going 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Specific objectives of the study were:

a. To find out how today’s parents conceptualize parenting.

b. To examine the physical and social distance between parents and their 13-18 year-olds.

c. To find out the various attention seeking behaviours school going 13-18 year-olds engage in.

d. To establish the relationship between parental absence and the attention seeking behaviours among school going 13-18 year-olds.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The research restricted itself to the study of parental absence and/or presence and how it influences teenagers to seek alternative adjustment mechanisms (attention seeking behaviours). The study limited itself to the understanding of the process of parenting among families from the African descent and how it has evolved over time. The study focused on school going 13-18 year-olds from the African family descent who were born and raised at Westlands district, Nairobi County. Further, the research limited itself to six aspects of attention seeking behaviours among 13-18 year-olds namely:
a. Teen cutting classes;
b. Physical fights in and out of school;
c. Teen predisposition to engage in drug and substance abuse behaviours;
d. Teen predisposition to depression and withdrawal;
e. Early initiation into sexual activities;
f. Having problems with the law or getting arrested.

The researcher posits that these are deliberate, directed behaviours aimed at attracting the attention of others. The study is limited in that it examines the current presence of the attention seeking behaviours among school going 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment, without giving it a historical perspective.

1.5 Structure and Organization of the Report

This report falls into five chapters. The first chapter presents a general introduction and background to parenting, captures the problem statement as well as the objectives of the study. The second chapter outlines the literature review and theoretical framework underlying the study. Chapter three details the study methodology while section four presents the study findings and discussion of the results. Finally, chapter five presents summary, concluding comments and recommendations.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a broad discussion on the development process among school going
13-18 year-olds. The process of parenting and parental role in child socialization and how
it has changed over time is also discussed in detail. Extensive discussion on African
values and parenting is given and so is the attention seeking behaviours (and examples of
such) visible in the 13-18 year-olds due to parental absence. The closing part of this
chapter discusses three theories upon which the study is anchored, conceptual framework
and the conceptual definition and operationalization of key variables.

2.2 Development During Teenage Years

Child development is an incessant process that begins early in life. According to Biracree
and Biracree (1989), child development is the study on how, why and when children
grow and change over time between conception and adulthood. Human beings are born
with the ability to learn from experiences (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 1999) and the role of
parents in early childhood development is vital. Erikson’s psychosocial theory of
development states that development from early childhood is characterized by life crises.
According to Erikson (1968), if these crises are not resolved adequately, a child may turn
into an adult who is constantly striving for success or showing off, or who is inhibited or
unspontaneous or self-righteousness and intolerant.
From the above sentiments by Papalia et al (1999) and Erikson (1968), it may be argued that parenting and parental presence is more critical in early years of children development than during teenage years, a period when children have already grown. However, adolescence is a time of socialization when young people are gathering information, advice, ideas, and signals from people other than their parents and teachers. They look to their peers for approval, comparison, sources of self-esteem, and their own identity. It is important to instill a sense of self into young people if they are to learn to make educated decisions in situations where input from authority figures differs from peer input\(^2\). Parents are therefore important in helping the teenagers make such educated decisions.

The assertion is affirmed by Stang & Story (2005) who aver that teenage is a stage in life which coincides with the turbulent stage of adolescence. It involves changes in personality, as well as in physical, intellectual and social development. During this time of change, teens are faced with many issues and decisions. To Stang & Story (2005), the early stage of adolescence is a time of great cognitive development. At the beginning of adolescence, cognitive abilities are dominated by concrete thinking, egocentrism, and impulsive behaviour. Young adolescents (thus teenagers) also lack the skills necessary to problem solve in an effort to overcome barriers to behaviour change. Despite the strong observations, Stang and Story (2005) fail to enumerate the role of parents in helping adolescents maneuver the turbulent stage of adolescent by helping them unravel facts from fiction and adequately navigate through teenage stage.

According to Erikson (1968), one of the primary tasks of development during this period is the construction of identity. To Erikson, adolescents struggle with questions of identity and fidelity; a realized sense of identity consists of subjective feelings of self that help to guide specific life choices and decisions. Erikson suggests that through processes of

\(^2\)As espoused by Three Valley Mentor Program at [www.state.vt.us/stw/trvmentorguide.pdf](http://www.state.vt.us/stw/trvmentorguide.pdf); retrieved on 18\(^{th}\) February 2013.
exploration and commitment, adolescents successfully resolve these challenges and develop the abilities to effectively function in environments and have a reasonable sense of control in life. It is important to note that Erikson also indicates that teenagers who lack such a supporting environment within the social fabric experience role confusion. Such teens respond by aligning themselves with deviant groups which provide values they cannot find in their immediate, proper environments. The social ties referred to here include ties with kin members and the extended family network. There is general tendency among families in middle class urban environments to emphasize material gains (e.g. African Development Bank, AfDB, 2011) at the expense of close social relationships. Erikson’s submissions and the AfDB’s observations explain the reason why teenagers from such affluent environments experience adjustment problems and engage in mild or even severe attention seeking behaviours.

In similar vein, Jeneka (2012) insinuates that identity development processes contribute to psychosocial adjustment and healthy adolescent/teenage maturation. According to Jeneka (2012) parent-child relationships and parenting practices play key roles in supporting positive teenage outcomes. Adolescent competence (i.e., positive future outlook and academic orientation) can be developed in the context of connected parent-child relationships. It is these connected parent-child relationships that have or are slowly thinning due to present-day engagements among parents that has necessitated their absence. Jeneka (2012) further says parent-child relationships play a prominent role in the development of positive youth/teenage outcomes. Although Jeneka’s findings were not primarily directed at children in middle class urban environments, this study concurs generally, with her observation; that parental absence can inhibit optimal growth of the children.

In the same way, early philosophers mainly J.J. Rousseau (1712–1778) and G. Stanley Hall (1844-1924) viewed adolescence as a time of great upheaval and turbulence. To Sigmund Freud, the stage coincides with the genital stage- a period in which instinctive
drives are re-awaken and shift to the genital region. This leads to psychological conflict and volatile, unpredictable behaviour. The social environment thus becomes critical in ensuring successful negotiation of teenage stage. According to George Herbert Mead\(^3\), the social environment is judged to be entirely responsible for the negative and positive experiences in teenagers. Given that the middle class urban family has largely been privatized, where the community plays little or no role in child rearing, the social environment central for teenage development and behaviour modeling is found at home with parents playing a key role in molding the teenagers’ behaviours. As observed in chapter 1 above, parents are the principle interpreters of various cultural issues to their children; in their absence, children bring into life cultures from different environments and without caution put them to test (see also Callahan, 1973). Parental presence is particularly important in helping teenagers interpret realities in their lives and overcome life challenges that characterize the turbulent stage.

In sum, whereas the literature above on development during teenage years demonstrates the essence of parental presence in child development during this stage, it highlights such in general sense, without touching on school going teenagers from middle class urban families. It does not, as well, expound on how the individualistic model of parenting common in these families exposes the children to some level of anxiety and pressures (such as pressure to succeed) that are not common in areas with more collective child-rearing practices. It is this gap that this study will fill.

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\(^3\) Published by the Mead Project (2007) at [www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Mead/pubs/Mead_1898.html](http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Mead/pubs/Mead_1898.html); originally published as George Herbert Mead. "The Child and His Environment", *Transactions of the Illinois Society for Child-Study* 3, (1898): 1-11.
2.3 Parenting

According to Brisbane (1988), parenting is the process of caring for children and helping them grow and learn; it is a process that is concerned with the rearing of children. Brisbane (1988) insinuates that parenting is more than being a parent. It is a social process that is negotiable and variable (Booth and Booth, 1998). In the context of this study, parenting is a central social process for teenage development. Parental presence is a critical element of the overall parenting process. Parental presence provides an opportunity for parents to monitor the behaviour of children and intervene in cases of deviation.

To demonstrate the above reality and in particular the importance of parenting and parental presence in molding the behaviours of children, Haim Omar4 argues that parental presence and the readiness of the parents (and the concomitant experience of this parental readiness by the child) sets the parents as boundaries to the child's unruly expansiveness. Parents do so by personally supervising the child's doings, containing the child's outbursts and demands and protecting them, the other children and the house from the aggressive child's attacks. Omar argues that parental absence creates a lacuna in the restraining and containing parental net over children other institutions are not always capable of filling up. This study concurs with Omar's observations.

Further, available literature on families from diverse social layers, cultures and countries, intimates that parental supervision, which is a function of parental presence, is linked to lower levels of child aggression and anti-social activities (Frick et al., 1992; Kolvin, Miller, Fleeting & Kolvin, 1988; Laub & Sampson, 1988; Loeber & Dishion, 1984; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Wilson, 1987). Steinberg, (1986) observes that even the mere fact that the parents know where and with whom the child spends his or her

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after-school hours may have a significant deterrent effect over the child's susceptibility to anti-social peer pressure which may result into attention seeking behaviours. Parents are there to train and guide children as they grow and nurture them into civilized and socialized adults. If parents do not have the time to spend with children to teach them such values, then we will all in time pay the price\(^5\). This price may be manifests itself in attention seeking behaviours, which although, may be mild and sometimes socially acceptable (positive) can be socially detrimental.

As observed above, parenting is central in child socialization and social development. Socialization is the process by which people acquire the behaviours and beliefs of the social world—that is, the culture—in which they live thus becoming functional members of a particular group and take on values (Gander & Gardiner, 1981; Jeffrey, 1995). Child socialization facilitates effective social, emotional and moral development. The home is to the child, a place of such true development. The modifying influences of social environment have deeper and super effects on the human race than any other and that the effect is strongest on the young (Gilman, 1972). Brisbane (1988) says therefore that part of the job parents do is that to teach and socialize children. The role of nurturing parents is to provide positive examples, encouragement and enriching experiences (e.g. Mills & Mills, 2000). The implication here is that parental presence is important if parents are to provide enriching nurturing processes to their children. It is therefore difficult for parents to meet this responsibility if they are absent.

The above observation mirrors Suma, Furstenberg, Brown, Larson & Wilson’s (2002) affirmation that families are without doubt the most important institutions in people’s interpersonal lives, yet they have been changing dramatically in ways that affect both children’s interpersonal experiences and what will be required of them as adults. In line with Brisbane’s (1988) assertion, effective guidance resulting from the socialization helps

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children learn to get along with others and to deal with their own feelings in acceptable ways; it promotes security and positive self-concept. Parents are important pillars in any family. Mead and Wolfenstein (1955) note that parents prepare children to meet the challenges of life’s lessons. This is so because life sets tasks and prepares tests which the children can only master by displaying the autonomy learned in the course of his/her upbringing. As children grow out of the infancy-dependency period through the ups and downs of childhood on into adolescence and finally into the young adulthood-independent stage, they continue to need the love, understanding and guidance of parents all along the way (Hoeflin, 1960). While Mead and Wolfenstein (1965) and also Hoeflin (1960) observations are important, the submissions were made in the 1960s which may not be the case 60 years later. This study will examine whether this is still the case or whether parental absence has left a gap in today’s children.

There is consensus however, from above that parenting is an integral process in child socialization and development. Further, parenting entails being more than having a biological relationship with a child, that of being a parent. It is this very understanding of parenting that is informing this study.

2.4 African Values and Parenting

Changes in modern society have transformed the normative values and parenting styles of the African family. The African family has become highly privatized with the community taking a lesser role in child rearing. Modern parental commitments have also deprived children of the most important parental presence essential for their (children) socialization. African communities flourished and survived in the past in considerable part because of their successful elaboration of shared social allegiance and support in corporate groups in what is widely referred to as the African “communal solidarity” (Lesthaeghe, 1989; Serpell, 1992). Likewise, Mwanamwambwa & Tadesse (1979) posit
that in African societies, socialization and informal education went hand in hand. The African child was raised in the midst of close, often large and often changing family group. Here, siblings, parents, foster or substitute parents and other family members were often present and provided a continuous stream of social contact for the child. Young children were therefore rarely left alone. Mwanamwambwa & Tadesse note that children were occasionally taken with their mothers wherever they went or left in the care of other family members. This is not the case with modern, urban families.

All for the above observation, Kayongo-Male & Onyango (1984) found out that the most striking socialization in the African family is the large number of agents of socialization as opposed to the family systems where only the parents are involved in the socialization of their own children. Kayongo-Male & Onyango further observe that age groups were also important socializing agents. Children learned and were taught as they participated in the daily living activities in the home, through ceremonies, direct instructions, observation, and apprenticeship. Beginning in infancy, children were taught through lullabies, songs, and games, mainly by their mothers, although other caregivers such as grandparents, aunts, and older siblings assisted (Garcia et al., 2008). Mbithi (1982), notes that fathers, elders, and neighbors participated in the education and socialization of older children while grandparents played a special role of teaching children sensitive topics (such as sexuality) and of passing on morals, values, history, and traditions through stories, legends, and conversations. Bame Nsamenang (1992a, quoted in Carson 2005:94) describes this collective parenting as “social enterprise in which parents, kin, sometimes neighbors and friends and older children were active participants...the close texture of traditional life and the courtesies and human warmth it engendered and fostered, supported individuals and families.” Parents are pillars in any family.

Viewed broadly, therefore, in Africa, child socialization was a society’s responsibility that began early in life. In contemporary African family life, particularly the middle class urban families, new agents of socialization have entered family life-house workers
mainly filling the gap left by working women. Grandparental roles in child rearing and socialization have been severely circumscribed in urban areas because of physical distance between the village and the town and because of difficulties where the extended families live as residential units in towns. The family institution has become more and more privatized; parents have become more preoccupied with careers thereby increasing the distance from their teen children. This has greatly affected the quality of child socialization and attention given to children by their parents and other parent-figures. Children in middle class urban environment, by virtue of not enjoying the close family ties characteristic of the traditional families, are experiencing more challenges.

2.5 The Changing Parental Role in Child Socialization

Nations around the world are undergoing rapid changes that are altering the nature of child rearing in their societies (Larson et al, 2002). Referring to adolescents (who are also teenagers), Larson (2002) observes that the future of world societies rests, in part, on how well they succeed in preparing adolescents to the productive adults who contribute to their communities. Today, the family has lost a number of its functions; institutions such as businesses, political parties, schools and welfare organizations now specialize in functions formerly performed by the family (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). Whereas modern changes in society are widely perceived that they will provide many youth and children with greater opportunities to develop the more versatile interpersonal resources required in the future, many of them will have restricted opportunities to acquire these resources (Suma et al, 2002).

With regard to Booth & Booth (1998), parenting is not usually a task undertaken by parents alone—mothers and fathers are not often the only people involved in bringing up children; other people may contribute including members of the extended family, older brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors and professional helpers. This is a network
that seems to be fading away in modern society and the other parent-figures that Booth & Booth (1998) refer to are largely absent today.

From the literature above, it is widely acknowledged that the child’s ability to develop a healthy personality depends on parental guidance. The observation mirrors Erikson (1968) observation that a child with a healthy personality is one who actively masters his environment, shows certain unity of personality and is able to perceive the world and himself correctly. Hoeflin (1960) argues that to develop a criteria mentioned in Erikson’s definition, parents must help a child since these characteristics are absent in the youngster. With these critical roles of parents among teenagers, their (parents’) absence creates a lacuna in the teen’s life which in turn affects their social and cognitive development. Whereas parental absence is common among the affluent families, the impact of that among teenage children has not been documented. The inordinate emphasis on material success has limited attainment for child well-being, such as close relationships. This study will therefore go a step further, beyond description of the problem among children in middle class urban environments to establish a correlation between parental absence and attention seeking behaviors common to 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment.

2.6 Primary versus Secondary Socialization

By and large, both primary and secondary agents of socialization play an important role in the shaping an individual’s personality. This study however, argues that primary socialization is more important in influencing the personality of an individual. Primary socialization is a formative process that allows individuals to gain the basic attitudes and social skills to live successfully in society; it is carried out by the immediate family; parents are the primary socializing agents of society and their role goes far beyond care and nurture. It occurs as parents teach and expose their children to the basic rules of
society and levels of tolerated behaviour. According to Baumrind (1991), primary socialization is carried out by parents who shape the development of children’s pro-social and antisocial behaviours, behaviours that have clear implications for children’s success or failure in the school setting. By this, Baumrind is clear in stating that parental absence leads to antisocial behaviors among children. The observation is applicable in this study.

According to Juang & Syed (2010), parents play an important role in relation to cultural factors such as ethnic identity that extend beyond adolescence and/or teenage life. The observation mirrors Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory (1978) which posits that parents transmit particular values, beliefs, and adaptive behaviours within an “apprenticeship” in thinking, which occurs in social transactions between teenagers and parents. The transmission of particular values, beliefs, and adaptive behaviours for teenagers often occurs in collaborative dialogue with a model or influential adult. Socio-cultural theory argues that children learn specific values, beliefs, and behaviours within collaborative dialogues with parents. When these interactions occur within warm, supportive, and engaged context, adolescents and/or teenagers are more prone to incorporate their parents' values within their emerging value set. Vygotsky’s views are overly valid and relevant in this study; absent parents lack the privilege of having collaborative dialogue and effective social transactions with their children for purposes of transmitting values and adaptive behaviours to them.

The importance of primary socialization on child development is further underscored by Gottfredson and Hirschi’s general theory of crime (1990). According to Gottfredson and Hirschi, parental socialization is a distal cause of criminal behaviour among children; parents who do not monitor their children’s behaviour, recognize deviant behaviour when it occurs, and then punish such deviance are expected to produce children who are low in self-control and thus exhibit more deviant, delinquent, and criminal behaviours over the life-course. Gottfredson and Hirschi assert that children who develop low self-control do so as the result of ineffective parenting, which entails the failure of parents to effectively
monitor their children’s behaviour, recognize deviant behaviour when it occurs, and punish the child for misbehaving. In sum, Gottfredson and Hirschi indicate that crime could be prevented if parents would adequately play their parental responsibilities do a better job of raising their kids.

Collective socialization augments primary socialization. However, the current productive organization of our society has precluded optimal primary socialization. According to Sampson and Groves (1989) neighborhoods are experiencing high levels of social isolation and adverse familial circumstances and have therefore become “socially disorganized”. Chase-Lansdale et al. (1997) assert that parental efficacy is high in socially cohesive neighborhoods; neighbors in these community contexts encourage higher-quality parenting techniques and help supervise neighborhood children. Sampson and Groves (1989) and Chase-Lansdale et al’s (1997) contentions are relevant in explaining middle income urban environments which, owing to the contemporary changes, have become largely socially disorganized and are not socially cohesive.

On his part, Richard Louv (2005) argues that human beings, especially children, are spending less time outdoors resulting in a wide range of behavioural problems. Parents are keeping children indoors in order to keep them safe from danger. Although children are kept indoors, parents spend most of the time away from homes meaning children are left on their own without an adult figure to attend to them, including members of the extended family. Louv believes we may be protecting children to such an extent that it has become a problem and disrupts the child's ability to connect to nature. The parent’s growing fear of "stranger danger" that is heavily fueled by the media, keeps children indoors and on the computer rather than outdoors exploring. Stranger danger is a phrase intended to sum up the danger associated with adults whom children do not know.

It is these dynamics that have exposed teenagers to myriad social challenges and led to their ultimate adoption of the attention seeking behaviours that this study is examining
with a focus on 13-18 years-olds from middle class urban environment. The attention seeking behaviours are therefore due to a failure in the primary socialization processes. While this study will benefit from the above literature on the importance of primary socialization, that urban neighborhoods are experiencing high levels of social isolation and adverse familial circumstances and have therefore become “socially disorganized”, it will also explore and document gaps in the contemporary secondary agents of socialization that have failed to address challenges in primary agents of socialization, mainly the family.

2.7 Parental Absence

Parental absence has been necessitated by the changes experienced in society today. The quality and quantity of time parents spend with their children has been diminishing over time. To demonstrate the extent of parental absence in modern times, a survey carried out by National Family Week UK (2010)\(^6\) discovered that parents spend on average 49 minutes a day together with their children. According to the survey, of the 3,000 parents surveyed 68% cited money as a barrier to spending more time with their family. Also, of the children surveyed 66% were happy to spend time with their family at home rather than going out.

According to Jeffrey (1995), family practices reflect and transmit the values of the culture as a whole. Corsaro (2005) argues that children enter into their society through the family and that families play a central role in children’s early lives. However, Corsaro (2005)

\(^6\) The findings were captured by the BBC ahead of the National Family Week 2010 in the UK. National Family Week is an annual event in the UK that is organized to bring together families with the aim of highlighting the importance of spending time together. Findings to this survey were retrieved from the link: http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/8703010.stm+time+that+parents+spend+with+their+children+in+a+day&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=ke&source=www.google.co.ke; on March 14\(^{th}\) 2011.
observes that that the family institution has been undergoing rapid changes in the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} centuries. He observes that a major change in families that has led to increasing parental absence, began in the 1940s and is still increasing today is the dramatic rise in mother’s labor force participation. This means that mothers now have two jobs-one in and another outside the house.

In 2012, parental absence was blamed for the dipping learning among pupils in Kenya. In an expert commentary to the Daily Nation\textsuperscript{7}, Irene Nyamu (Childline Kenya), referring to a prior research by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) on learner achievement and how it spells out little parents are involved in their children’s education noted that 49\% of the pupils contacted in the study did not get any assistance in their school work. Of the 51\% who got assistance, 43.3\% got it from older siblings; 36.4\% from their mothers and a paltry 17.3\% from their fathers. A sizeable group in urban areas got assistance from house helps. Nyamu observes that these findings confirm the inadequacies in parenting and in particular parental absence. This has an impact of producing children who are emotionally damaged and misguided young Kenyans.

Overall, therefore, parental absence creates a gap in a child’s life. As children grow older after infancy, parents begin to assume additional roles beyond that of providing nurturance through warm and responsive parenting (for example, Attachment Parenting International (API, 2008). Brooks-Gunn & Markham (2005)\textsuperscript{8}, observe that some of these other types of involvement include: discipline, teaching, modeling language, providing stimulating materials, monitoring, and managing of schedules. To Brooks-Gunn & Markham, discipline involves parental efforts and strategies to guide children so that they behave in culturally acceptable ways. Teaching includes attempts to encourage children to master the knowledge and skills valued in the culture. Monitoring involves being

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7} Daily nation of 12\textsuperscript{th} October 2012, PP. 14, “parenting gone wrong to blame for dip in learning standards among pupils” by Irene Nyamu of Childline Kenya.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Brooks-Gunn, J., & Markham, L. (2005). The contribution of parenting to ethnic and racial gaps in school readiness. The Future of Children, 15, 139-168; quoted in Attachment Parenting International (2008:2)
\end{itemize}
aware of how children are spending their time and with whom. According to API (2008) when parents keep their child in mind (and are there for them), they can respond sensitively and thereby promote a sense of security; guide and discipline positively and thereby promote self-regulation; follow their child's interests and thereby promote rich and elaborated dialogue, and a love of exploration, mastery, and learning; monitor their children's activities in and away from home and thereby promote a sense of connection. The bottom line is, according to API, that being present for the child means helping children grow socially and cognitively. It is therefore not possible for parents to adequately measure up to these responsibilities in child rearing if they do not spend sufficient quantity and quality of time with their children.

This study espoused physical presence of parents as an approach for promoting adequate social and cognitive development of teenagers. However, it is arguable that contemporary dynamics and innovations in the information and communication technology (ICT) and the computer mediated communications have highly lessened the limitations of distance between parties (for example Rosenmayr, 1977)\(^9\). This implies therefore, that parents can mediate with their teen children even when they are physically absent. In similar vein, various studies have shown that computer mediated communications can ease loneliness and increase feelings of closeness (Aguila, 2009), relationship satisfaction, trust, and commitment, while lowering jealousy (Dainton, M., and Aylor, B, 2002). That there is a possibility of family members using video chat systems to stay connected over distance. However, none of these studies look specifically at how ICT has enabled parents monitor the behaviour of their teenage children from a distance. Further, these studies have focused more on long distance relationships between family members with less emphasis on family members who may be available but with limited time, such as busy career parents who may show up late and leave early the following day.

This study presents a departure from this standpoint. Given that behaviour monitoring, advice and role modeling are not attainable in distant relationships, the alternative is to ensure physical presence of parents in the absence of which teenagers engage in attention seeking behaviours.

2.8 Teenagers’ Attention Seeking Behaviours

In this study, attention seeking behaviours constitute all those actions which, through their very annoying nature, bring a child to the attention of a number of adults and other members of society causing great concern. Most commonly the term has been used to describe situations where a great deal of attention is being sought, and this is judged to be in some way inappropriate i.e. situations where “problem behaviour … is described” (Odendaal, 2000:276). Attention seeking may also be seen in a positive context, such as with the development of humor (Mellor, 2005). The literature above insinuates that children adopt attention seeking behaviours due to the absence of parents who are primarily responsible for molding their behaviours.

The reasons why teens adopt attention seeking behaviours are varied. Social referencing was one argument that was used to explain why teenagers possibly engage in such behaviours in case of continued absence of adult figures. According to Berk (1997), social referencing involves on relying on another person’s emotional reaction to appraise uncertain situation. Berk (1997) observes that parents (mothers and fathers) serve as effective sources of emotional information for children. Quoting Camras & Sachs (1991), Berk notes that when parents are absent, children turn to other familiar adults especially those who interact with them in an emotionally expressive way. However, with the family becoming largely a private institution and parents getting more involved in

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career and academic pursuits, accessing other familiar adults for purposes of social referencing may well be difficult for children.

In a research on middle childhood in Central Scotland, Borland, *et al.* (1998) discovered that parents regard childhood as a difficult stage and children who, on the whole, are less troubled draw attention to a number of their concerns to which they think adults do not give much attention. The study examined how children perceive their social environs and what they want from their parents. In the findings, children who participated in the study, according to Borland *et al.*, indicated that they desired to be granted more attention by their parents. They noted that parents should spend more time with them, play with them, take them places, not leave them alone in the house, make time to do things together with them on weekdays and give them more attention in spare time (Borland *et al.* 1998:166). The study concluded that parents were not expected to do anything new to their children rather to attend more to children, in several respects; they were expected to be around more of the time, listen more closely to what children say and attend to their concerns. Whereas Borland’s *et al.* (1998) findings are relevant in the study, it is not clear whether these concerns are being felt in Kenya today. This study will seek to establish whether this is the case among school going teenagers in middle income urban environment in Kenya.

Teen attention seeking behaviours manifest variously. According to Giallombardo (1972), the behaviours may be manifested in mild delinquent behaviours. These portray personal maladjustment to the environment include thumb-sucking, nail-biting, temper tantrums and waywardness such as running away from home, fighting and disobedience. There are also antisocial attitudes which reveal subjective reactions antagonistic to authority but without serious overt aggressions. These include hostility, isolation, anxieties and guilt feelings. According to Dreikurs and Soltz (1964), while in restaurants, attention seeking children often display deplorable manners; they may disturb other diners with their petulance, their loud demands for attention and many may refuse to eat
unless coaxed. Dreikurs and Soltz (1964) observe that at home, such children show a deplorable lack of cooperation and may refuse to accept any responsibility for helping with home tasks. They are noisy, inconsiderate, boisterous and unmannerly and they sometimes show a colossal lack of respect for their parents and any other adult. The scholars conclude that the reason for these behaviours is that today’s adults distinct from the past, have failed to give children good examples mainly because they (parents) are absent.

2.9 Theoretical Frame Work

2.9.1 Social Cognitive Theory

In this study, the researcher hypothesized that parental absence leads to attention seeking behaviours among 13-18 year-olds. To support the arguments for the position, the researcher drew from among other theories, the social cognitive theory postulated by Bandura (1977). According to the theory, development is learned and is influenced by environmental factors. This means that an individual’s personality depends on a unique interaction between the outside environment and his/her psychological processes.

Bandura emphasizes that behaviour, environment and individual cognition operate together each influencing the other. In his idea of reciprocal determinism, Bandura noted that environment causes behaviour but behaviour causes environment too. Albert Bandura also argued that individuals, especially children learn aggressive responses from observing others, either personally or through the media and environment. He stated that many individuals believed that aggression will produce reinforcements. These reinforcements can formulate into reduction of tension, gaining financial rewards, or gaining the praise of others, or building self-esteem (Siegel, 1992).
Bandura established that people learn and sometimes modify their behaviour not only what happens to them as a consequence of what they do – i.e. operant conditioning - but also by observing whether others are rewarded or punished for their behaviour – i.e. vicarious learning. In other words our environmental feedback takes in the environmental feedback that others are receiving. In the context of this study, children learn and take feedback from their parents and they use such information to improve their behaviours. Thus parents constitute the environment that children need to effectively get through their development cycle. Parents who raise children in a caring, supportive environment can contribute to their children's abilities to develop good self-esteem, enabling the children to better deal with outside situations and influences that they are sure to encounter now and then. Thus this theory is relevant in this study.

Although Bandura’s theory is relevant in this study due to its focus on observation and modeling and emphasis that behaviours are learned by observing and imitating models, the theory is limited in that it does concentrate on certain stages or timelines that a child or adolescent follows during development. It is inadequate in its accounts of developmental changes and challenges that individuals encounter at each stage of development. To narrow down and focus on developmental challenges that teenagers or adolescents face, this study, in addition, took cue from social learning theory by Erik Erikson.

### 2.9.2 Erik Erikson’s Social Learning Theory

Erik Erikson, a German psychoanalyst heavily influenced by Sigmund Freud, explored three aspects of identity: the ego identity (self), personal identity (the personal idiosyncrasies that distinguish a person from another and social/cultural identity (the collection of social roles a person might play). Erikson’s psychosocial theory of development considers the impact of external factors, parents and society on personality
development from childhood to adulthood. According to Erikson’s theory, every person must pass through a series of eight interrelated stages over the entire life cycle. These stages are:

1. Infant (*Hope*) – Basic Trust vs. Mistrust (birth to 18months);
2. Toddler (*Will*) – Autonomy vs. Shame (18months to 3years);
3. Preschooler (*Purpose*) – Initiative vs. Guilt (3 to 5years);
4. School-Age Child (*Competence*) – Industry vs. Inferiority (6 to 12years);
5. Adolescent (*Fidelity*) – Identity vs. Identity/role Diffusion (12 to 18years);
6. Young Adult (*Love*) – Intimacy vs. Isolation (18 to 35years);
7. Middle-aged Adult (*Care*) – Generativity vs. Self-absorption (35 to 55 or 65years);
8. Older Adult (*Wisdom*) – Integrity vs. Despair (55 or 65 to death).

These eight stages, spanning from birth to death, are split in general age ranges. The topic under review will zero in on the 5th stage under which teenagers fall.

According to Erikson up until this fifth stage, development depends on what is done to a person. At this point, development now depends primarily upon what a person does. A teenager must struggle to discover and find his or her own identity, while negotiating and struggling with social interactions and “fitting in”, and developing a sense of morality and right from wrong. Those unsuccessful with this stage tend to experience role confusion and upheaval.

According to Erikson, ego identity means knowing who you are and how you fit in to the rest of society. It requires that one take all he/she has learned about life and him/herself and mold it into a unified self-image, one that his/her community finds meaningful. There are a number of things that make things easier: Erikson says first, we should have a mainstream adult culture that is worthy of the adolescent's/teenager’s respect, one with good adult role models and open lines of communication. Further, society should provide
clear rites of passage, certain accomplishments and rituals that help to distinguish the adult from the child. Without these things, we are likely to see role confusion, meaning an uncertainty about one's place in society and the world. If teenagers successfully negotiate this stage, they will have the virtue Erikson called *fidelity*. Fidelity means loyalty, the ability to live by societies standards despite their imperfections and incompleteness and inconsistencies. However, parental absence coupled with our individualistic model of parenting makes teenagers lack immediate role models hence affecting their ability to effectively adjust to social and adult life.

This theory finds relevance in this study. The storm of development that characterizes teenage years given that they coincide with adolescence makes the interpretation of what they observe a difficult task. They therefore rely on their parents and the people they interact with to help in this interpretation. It is this confusion that makes them resort to alternative attention seeking behaviours.

Both Bandura’s social cognitive and Erikson’s social learning theories are important underpinnings of this study. They suggest that society plays a key role in a child’s development and that a child’s development is successful if the child understands how their own society works such that they fit within the society. Despite the importance of Bandura and Erikson’s theories in this study, they do not explain for instance, how and when the self develops which is important in helping individuals interpret symbols that give meaning to the social world. The theories do not also give an account of how individuals develop capacity to use symbols in imagining how other people will respond to their actions thereby allowing them to be conscious of themselves-self-consciousness. The fact that attention seeking behaviours are anti-social can also be explained in terms of lack of self-consciousness and the inability of the 13-18 year-olds to interpret socially constructed symbols from the family set-up. As such, the study also took insights from the symbolic interactionism theory.
2.9.3 Symbolic Interactionism Theory

The study will as well be anchored on the symbolic interactionism theory. This is a social psychological theory developed from the work of Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead. Symbolic interactionism theory posits that people inhabit a world that is in large part socially constructed. The symbolic interactionism perspective is based on how humans develop a complex set of symbols to give meaning to the world (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). The meaning attached to objects, events, and behaviours comes from the interpretation people give them, and interpretations vary from one group to another. Meaning evolves from their interactions in their environment and with people. It is through interaction that humans develop a concept of larger social structures and also of self concept. Society affects behaviour through constraints by societal norms and values. According to the theory, self does not exist at birth but is developed through interaction with others. It also emerges from the social interaction of humans in which the individual takes on the role of the "other" and internalizes the attitudes and perceptions of others through those interactions. Learning is an interactive process; meaning learning takes place in a particular society, family, place or culture and is mediated by specific social relationships and involves symbolic interaction through spoken symbols or nonverbal gestures and facial and body language.

According to Mead (1934), a symbol is nothing but the stimulus whose (interpreted) response is given in advance. Symbols require and produce shared meanings; they have the same meanings for all the individual members of a given society or social group. The universality of symbols means the symbols produce shared responses and understandings. Parents serve as the agents for helping children interpret the meanings of such symbols.

In the context of the family, symbolic interaction theory describes the family as a unit of interacting personalities. The theory observes that families are social groups and that individuals develop both a concept of self and their identities through social interaction.
Symbolic Interactionism is the way we learn to interpret and give meaning to the world though our interactions with others. As the theory suggests that individuals are not born with a sense of self but develop self concepts through social interaction, children too interpret social realities in the very fashion that their parents do. They also develop their self concepts in such social settings which in turn, provide an important motive for behaviour. Humans interact and develop roles in the family according to symbols used to describe the family. How family members react to a situation is determined by how they interpret the situation. So, it is important to understand the symbols the family uses to understand their interactions and behaviours. The theory further states that people are purposeful creatures who act in and toward situations.

In a family, complicated sets of meanings are transmitted through symbols that permit each member to communicate with each other and share experience. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning they have. These things do not have an inherent or unvarying meaning; rather, their meanings differ depending on how we define and respond to them how we define, or give meaning to the things we encounter will shape our actions toward them. The meaning attributed to those things arises out of social interaction with others. We are not born knowing anything. The meanings we give to objects, situations and individuals are modified through an interpretive process. Thus parents help children in interpreting and giving meaning to the situations and objects.

Principles that underlie symbolic interactionism theory are further amplified by Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical and game theoretic proposition. According to Goffman, we are all portrayed as performers enacting rehearsed lines and roles in places that are carefully constructed in order to maximize the potential for deception. Goffman suggests that as performers we both knowingly ‘give’ and unwittingly ‘give off’ impressions. Because nearly all of us are skilled in the arts of impression management, we monitor all aspects of the behaviour of the people we encounter. We are in a dramaturgical world which is
characterized by misdirection and in which general suspicion is necessary. It therefore follows that attention seeking behaviours constitute deliberate theatrical and game metaphors aimed at attracting the notice of others in society. This theory is therefore relevant to this study.

2.10 Conceptual Frame Work

Parenting is a nurturing process. Parental presence facilitates effective child socialization leading to a well developed and adjusted teenager. Behaviours that result from continued parental presence and supervision of the teen’s growth include a teen with adequate self-esteem and self-image, cooperative and always willing to help in household chores and other responsibilities, fun loving and with adequate self-control. On the other hand, parental absence leads to increased social and physical distance between the parent and the teenager. This result to teenagers resorting to alternative adjustment mechanisms herein described as attention seeking behaviours. These behaviours include physical fights in school, having problems with the law, absence from school, engaging in early sex, drug abuse and teen depression and withdrawal.
2.11 Research Hypothesis

School going 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment who spend less time with their parents at home are more likely to adopt attention seeking behaviours than those who spend more time with their parents.

H₁: School going 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment who spend less time with their parents are more likely to adopt attention seeking behaviours.

H₀: School going 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment who spend less time with their parents do not adopt attention seeking behaviours.
**Dependent Variable:** Attention seeking behaviours indicated in terms of frequency of occurrence.

**Independent Variable:** Parental absence measured by the quality and quantity of interaction demonstrated by the number of hours parents spend with their teen children as well as the degree of parental involvement during the interactions which may be high or low.

### 2.12 Unit of Analysis and Unit of Observation

**Unit of Analysis:** The attention seeking behaviours School going 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment adopted as a result of parental absence.

**Unit of Observation:** data was collected from ninety (90) 13-18 years-olds and ten (10) parents to the teenagers. Besides, guidance and counseling and/or class teachers and head teachers were selected to take part in the study as key informants.

### 2.13 Conceptual Definition of Variables

**Attention Seeking Behaviours:** In this study, attention-seeking behaviour refer to those repeated actions which, through their very annoying nature, bring a teenager to the attention of a number of adults and other members of society, causing great concern. Overall, the attention seeking behaviours were measured in terms of the socially acceptable (positive) and socially unacceptable (negative) behaviours that teenagers engage in to exert a pull on the notice of their parents, peers and those within their immediate social space.
**Parenting:** in this study, parenting referred to the process of caring for children and helping them grow and learn; the rearing of children which principally involves more than just being a parent.

**Parental Absence:** In this study, parental absence was defined in terms of the amount of time parent(s) spend with their teen children and how the parents spend this time with the children—whether they replace their presence with material goods and handouts. This was quantified in terms of the number of hours parents spend with the teenager. Accordingly, parental involvement was measured by the level of knowledge parents have on their teen children, how they monitor their behaviours, and to whom and how much they delegate their parental responsibilities.

### 2.14 Operational Definition of Variables

**Parental Absence:** This derived from the National Family Week UK survey (2010) that demonstrated the extent of parental absence in modern times. The survey discovered that parents spend on average 49 minutes a day together with their children. Parenting time guidelines issued by Indiana Rules of Court (2013)\(^{11}\) for non-custodial parents indicate that parents should spend alternating weekends from Friday at 6:00P.M until Sunday at 6:00P.M and one (1) evening per week, preferably in mid-week, for a period of up to four hours. While the guidelines are meant for non-custodial parents, they provide a clear pointer on what constitutes ideal time that parents should spend with their teenage children. If the parents stay together with their teenage children, a simple calculation translates these hours into two compact hours per day (excluding nights) that parents should spend with their teenage children. In this study, therefore, 2 hours were used to

benchmark the time that parents should spend with their teenagers. The extent of parental absence was categorized as below:

**Very high:** for parents who spend less than 30 minutes with the teenagers per day.

**Moderately high:** for parents who spend between 30 minutes and less than 1 hour per day with the teenage children.

**High:** for parents who spend 1 hour per day with the teenagers.

**Moderately low:** for parents who spend over 1 hour and less than one and half hours per day with the teenagers.

**Very low:** for parents who spend over one and half hours per day with their teenage children.

**Attention Seeking Behaviours:** This was measured in terms of the severity of the behaviours depicted by the teenager. This was classified as below:

**Very severe:** for teenagers who exhibit 5-6 of the behaviours being investigated.

**Moderately severe:** for teenagers who exhibit 3-4 behaviours under study.

**Severe:** for those who exhibit 3 behaviours being investigated.

**Less severe:** for teenagers who exhibit 1-2 behaviours under study.

**Not severe:** for teenagers who exhibit none of the behaviours being investigated.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research approach, with the accompanying methodological considerations taken into account during the study. The research design touching on the qualitative, quantitative and descriptive designs are discussed. The chapter also describes the site where the study will be conducted, the sampling procedure, sample size, methods for data collection and finally data analysis techniques.

3.2 Site Selection and Description

The study was conducted at Westlands District, Nairobi County. Westlands is located 3kms northwest of the central business district of Nairobi. The District is one of the administrative units of the capital city with a population of 3,138,369 (2009 national population census). The 2009 national population census estimated the total population of Westlands to be 247,202 (124,748 males and 122,353 females). It is also an electoral constituency, with similar borders as those of the District. It is one of the seventeen constituencies of Nairobi County. It comprises of five County Assembly wards namely: Kitisuru, Parklands/Highridge, Karura, Kangemi and Mountain View.

Westlands is a middle class zone that has historically, been associated with the middle class residents of the city including the European settlers and members from the Asian communities (K’Akumu & Olima, 2007). According to K’Akumu & Olima (2007), Westlands is a medium income and medium density population area in Nairobi whose residents show general characteristics associated with the class. The observation by K’Akumu and Olima’s mirrors Kingoriah’s (1980) assertion that after Kenya’s
independence in 1963, the choice of residential areas in Nairobi by individuals was based largely upon the economic ability to acquire land and housing. Kingoriah observe that the middle income Africans joined the Asians and lived in Parklands (presently Westlands), Eastleigh and Nairobi South. In terms of housing, the District consists of mainly owner-occupier housing.

The human capital investment in Westlands also depicts characteristics of a middle class environment as presented by the African Development Bank (AfDB). According to AfDB (2011), there is a high likelihood among the middle class to send their children to school. Statistics available at Westlands District Education Office in 2014 pointed out that there are approximately 56 private primary schools with enrollment of 13,600 pupils compared to 26 public primary schools with enrolment of 21,591 pupils in the district. On the other hand, there are 20 private secondary schools with student enrolment of 2,722 compared to 5 public secondary schools with student population of 6,618. According to the District Education Office, despite the fact that public schools record slightly higher enrolment levels than private schools, the figures demonstrate significantly high enrolment levels in private schools in the district. This may be explained by AfDB (2011) which notes that in countries where public schools are seen not to provide good education, private schools provide an alternative option especially for the middle and upper classes. According to AfDB, school enrolments in private schools at preprimary, primary and secondary levels indicate noticeable high school enrolments in private schools in quite a number of countries, which may indicate the existence of a strong middle class.

Being part of the capital, Westlands District is an urban setting that provided a good understanding of the effects of modernity, urbanization and career on parental roles and how the processes have ushered in new family structures with new patterns of child socialization. The site was also, easily accessible.
3.3 Research Design

The study employed descriptive correlation study design. Overall, the design was concerned with examining conditions, practices, structures, differences or relationships that exist in society, opinions held on child socialization and parenting, and trends that are going on in our society today that affect child upbringing. The correlation aspect of the research design entailed collecting data to determine whether, and to what extent, a relationship exists between the two quantifiable variables, that is, parental absence and attention seeking behaviours among 13-18 year-olds. It sought to explain the relationship between the variables that is not causal in nature.

3.4 Methods and Tools

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative research techniques in the collection of data that facilitated research into the teenagers’ attention seeking behaviours associated with parental absence.

3.4.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative data was employed in proving or disproving the hypothesis. After statistical analysis of the results, a correlation between the variables was identified. Quantitative data also helped filter out external factors, which had no direct influence on the variables to remove any sort of biasness.

3.4.2 Qualitative Research

According to Lichtman (2010), the qualitative research approach aims at proving an in-depth description and understanding of the human experience. Its primary process is to assess and describe the perceptions that individuals hold regarding a specific
phenomenon. Greig, Taylor & MacKay, (2007) observe that qualitative research focuses on a world in which the experiences and perspectives of individuals are socially constructed. Where utilized, the researcher attempts to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. The qualitative approach was relevant for this study due to the following reasons: 1) little research had been conducted on the subject and 2) the researcher wanted to use one-on-one interviews to generate in-depth information on the subject.

3.5 Sampling Procedure

Purposive, stratified and systematic sampling strategies were employed in the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the site and schools that participated in the study. According to Neuman (2006), the advantages of this technique include the researcher being able to select unique cases that are especially informative. To Gibson & Brown (2009), the use of this procedure leads to the selection of participants who possess the characteristics, roles, opinions, knowledge, ideas or experiences that are particularly relevant to the study.

Due to the cosmopolitan nature of the District and in particular, the schools sampled, teenagers from different cultural backgrounds were eligible to participate in the study. However, the participants were selected on the basis of the given criteria, that is, from one specific cultural background, namely the African family descent. Because this constituted a predefined group of respondents, the researcher used purposive sampling to arrive at the classes that took part in the study.

The sampling frame used in the study was the schools’ admission registers in all cases. To ensure gender representation, the research made use of stratified sampling, where the
sampling frame was divided into non-overlapping groups of boys and girls. Systematic sampling was used to select equal number of boys and girls to participate in the study.

3.6 Sample Size

Given the high population level of the schools in the District, a representative sample was selected to participate in the study. The study sample included the following:

a. **Teenagers**: A total of 90 teenagers were sampled from two secondary schools and two primary schools. This entailed 15 teenagers per class (four classes in the case of secondary schools and two classes in the case of primary schools). In the selected sample, gender representation was ensured.

b. **Parents**: Due to resource constraints, 10 parents to the teenagers were randomly sampled to take part in the study.

c. **Teachers**: class and/or guidance and counseling teachers in the schools took part in the study. In addition, two (2) head teachers from the schools were sampled to participate in the study. Their role was to give more insights into disciplinary issues regarding the teenagers being students.

3.7 Sources of Data

3.7.1 Primary Data

Primary data was used in this study. The data was collected through interviews of teenagers, selected parents, class teachers and/or guidance and counseling teachers.
3.7.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data was collected through review of relevant literature from libraries, complementary sources such as research abstracts, journals and child development reports as indicated in the literature review.

3.8 Techniques for Data Collection

3.8.1 Interviews

Data was gathered through interviews. Both structured and unstructured interviews were carried out. In line with Gillham’s (2000) assertion, the aim of research interviews was to obtain information and understanding of issues relevant to the general aims and specific objectives of the research.

One-to-one semi-structured interviews were employed in the collection of data from key informants. This method is qualitative. The semi-structured interview is defined by Kvale (1996) as an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena. According to Kvale (1969), a researcher conducts qualitative research interview in order to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanation (for example Kvale, 1996). The semi-structured interviewing method enabled the researcher gain a detailed picture of the key informants in regard to the researched topic. On their part, the school-going teenagers participated in structured interview.
3.9 Data Analysis

The analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were used to present the description of the subjects including demographics and factors that demonstrate effective parent-teen interactions. Questionnaires were coded, entered and analyzed using the SPSS software. Borgadus Social Distance scale was used in analyzing the social distance between parents and teenagers. Likert Scale was used to measure the teenagers’ and parents’ attitudes on what constitutes optimum interaction. Hypothesis was tested using Chi-Square statistic test.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings and an in-depth analysis of the findings. The chapter is methodically organized along the four objectives which the study sought to answer.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

4.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of Teenagers

The study examined the demographic characteristics of the participating teenagers. These included the teenagers’ sex, age and their class/form. The reason was to ascertain that only those teenagers who fit within the required age category (13-18 years) and class took part in the study. The gender composition of the teenagers who took part in the study was comparable; 52.7% were boys while girls made up the remaining 47.3%. Regarding age, the study results show that 39.1% of the teenagers were aged 13 years. Those aged 14 years comprised 8.1%; 15 year-olds made up 17.6% of the teenage respondents while 16 year-olds were represented by 33.8% of the participating teenagers. Only 1.4% were 17 years of age. Majority of the teenagers were form two students, represented by 40.5% of the teenage respondents followed by those in class eight who made up 38.3% while form three students comprised the remaining 21.1%.

A summary of the demographic characteristics of the teenagers is given in Table 1 below.
Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Teenagers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Response Categories</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class/form</td>
<td>Class 8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form 2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form 3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2 Social and Demographic Characteristics of Parents

An analysis into the social and demographic characteristics of parents was also conducted including their sex, levels of education, type of employment and monthly income. Regarding gender, Majority of the parents who took part in the study were female, represented by 55.6% while males comprised the remaining 44.4%.

A vast majority of the parents (88.9%) had university/tertiary level education. Only 11.1% had secondary level education. The study established that majority of the parents (55.6%) were in formal employment while 44.4% were self-employed. On monthly income, 77.8% of the interviewed parents earn more than Kshs. 60,000 per month.

The study purposively targeted career parents who may not be available most of the time to undertake their parenting responsibilities. Thus the background characteristics of parents supremely capture this category. A summary of the social and demographic characteristics of parents is presented in Table 2 below.
Table 2: Social and Demographic Characteristics of Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Response Categories</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University/Tertiary</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Type</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Income (Kshs.)</td>
<td>Below 15,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46,000-60,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above 60,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Present Day Conceptualization of Parenting

The first objective of the study was to find out how today’s parents conceptualize parenting. It also entailed examining the factors that either facilitate or hinder the parenting process. Data to this objective was primarily obtained from the parents who took part in the study. Parenting, as defined by Brisbane (1988), is the process of caring for children and helping them grow and learn; it is a process that is concerned with the rearing of children. According to Brisbane (1988) parenting is more than being a parent and therefore is a central social process for teenage optimal development. It is this definition by Brisbane that is used throughout this study and benchmarks the ideal conceptualization of parenting.

By and large, based on the definition of parenting by Brisbane (1988), the study results reveal that parents are aware of what parenting entail. According to the parents interviewed, parenting goes beyond the biological relationship between the parents and their children to include role modeling, being there for the children emotionally, physically, and financially and provision of all forms of support to the child from
toddlerhood to adulthood. The parents also indicated that parenting is also the art of bringing up children (own or adopted) in a manner that gives them the basic requirements of life and passing on values that would make them responsible and able to deal with life issues.

The above observations insinuate that parenting is a function of presence, supervision of child behaviour and provision of support to facilitate growth and development. It is an important child support process carried out at the family level.

4.3.1 Family Type

The type of family from which a child belongs has lot of influence on the general life pattern of the child (for example Amato, 1987). The study sought to establish the type of family the teenagers and also parents who took part in the study were from and how the family type affects parenting. All parents interviewed (100.0%) indicated that they were from nuclear families consisting of the father, mother and their children. None of them was therefore from an extended family type which includes kin members and grandparents. This confirms Collins and Coltrane’s (1991) assertion that today’s family, which is a product of the traditional-modern changeover, has become private, personalized and sentimentalized. Child rearing is thus a private affair and these changes have complicated the society’s response to challenges facing children. Shared social support in child rearing is not possible for the respondents who took part in this study.

Majority of parents however, observed that the nuclear family type was very facilitative to parenting roles. Responding to a Likert-scale type questions with very facilitative, facilitative, less facilitative and hardly facilitative response options, 66.7% of the parents observed that the nuclear family type was very facilitative while 33.3% of them said the family type was facilitative to parenting roles. None of them said the family type was
either less facilitative or hardly facilitative. A summary of their responses is captured in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Parents’ Rating of the Family Type on Facilitation of Parenting Roles**

![Bar graph showing responses of parents on facilitation of parenting roles.](image)

### 4.3.2 Delegated Parenting

The process of delegated child care is not new in human history. Huber (2012) notes that since Ancient times, parents purposely entrusted their children to members of other ethnic groups/nations who were believed to have specific skills in childcare, the foremost one being, their capacity to teach their charges their mother tongue and culture. These structures have faded away and today, parents entrust their parental responsibilities mainly to house helps. The study sought to establish the persons who spend time with the teenagers in the absence of parents. The views were sought from both the parents and the teenagers. Majority of the teenagers (66.7%) said they spend with the house help while 33.3% observed their teen children spend time on their own because they are busy studying. This was particularly valid since all parents who took part in the study were...
from nuclear families meaning no other kin members are available to spend time with their children. A summary of the responses is given in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents (Teenagers) by whom they Spend Time With

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whom teenagers spend time with</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House helps</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themselves</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results in Table 3 above show that majority of the children spend time with house helps when parents are away. Although spending time with house helps in the absence of parents is important, it also signifies elements of delegated childcare. According to O’Brien (1989), in such arrangements, parents usually lack clear mechanisms of monitoring the delegated responsibilities which may expose children to aspects of maladaptive behaviours.

4.3.3 Passage of Parental Values to Teenagers

The introduction and literature review chapters clearly demonstrated that there has been a shift in the manner today’s parents are passing values to their children compared to traditional African parents. Passage of parental values to the children is an important component of child socialization. According to Vygotsky’s
socio-cultural theory (1978), parents transmit particular values, beliefs, and adaptive behaviours through social transactions between teenagers and parents. As explained in other sections of this study, Vygotsy observes that the transmission of particular values, beliefs, and adaptive behaviours for teenagers often occurs in collaborative dialogue with a model or influential adult. Socio-cultural theory argues that children learn specific values, beliefs, and behaviours within collaborative dialogues with parents. When these interactions occur within warm, supportive, and engaged context, adolescents and/or teenagers are more prone to incorporate their parents' values within their emerging value set.

Parents were asked what methods and/or platforms they use to transmit important societal values to their teen children. The study established that 55.6% of the parents use role modeling while 22.2% take children to family outings where they talk to them about ideal family and societal values. Only 11.1% use storytelling and 11.1% show them other role models for the children to emulate.

Although family outings were mentioned as avenues for transmitting parental values to the teenagers, the study established that they are not necessarily important in facilitating parenting process in general. With regard to frequency of family outings, only 33.3% of the parents go out with their teenage children weekly while 66.7% said they go out once in a while. The study further established that when in such family outings, all that parents and their children engage in is eating and hiking. No time is spent on constructive dialogue especially on issues that may be pressing to the teenagers. This means that although the family outings may be important, they are only meant for fun and therefore partly inadequate for teenage socialization and behaviour monitoring.
4.3.4 Parental Response to Teen Physical Petulance

Parents were asked what they do and how they respond when their teen children look physically uncomfortable due to unmet needs (such as electronics, clothing e.t.c). The study established that 44.4% of the parents do discuss with the children and explain their financial circumstances and why they cannot provide while 33.4% said they just provide what their teens need. On a lower level, 11.1% of the parents said they discuss with him/her what the problem could be and see whether they can provide what the teen needs as the same percent (11.1%) said they find out exactly what the teen needs and whether it is a want or a need and negotiate when it can be obtained. A summary of the responses is captured in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Distribution According to Parental Responses to Teen Physical Petulance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss with them and explain our financial circumstances and why we cannot provide</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide him/her with what is demanded</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss with him/her what the problem could be and see whether we can provide what he/she needs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find out exactly what they need and whether it is a want or a need, negotiate when this can be obtained</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings above reveal that majority of parents will respond to the physical petulence of their teenage children through provision of the unmet needs. Although this is a parental responsibility, it has negatively affected the overall process of parenting as most parents provide the items to cover up for their absence. Some of the parents interviewed observed that their teen children place immense pressure on them to provide similar items
(such as i-phones and laptops among others) that the parents buy for themselves. The parents agreed that they provide the teens with the items to avoid conflict and also to make their children ‘fit well’ in their peers. According to the parents who provide the items to the teens, such items are important as they promote high esteem of their teens.

4.3.5 Parental Response to Teen Emotional Irritability

Besides assessing how parents respond to the teen physical petulance, the study sought to establish what parents do and how they respond when their teens look emotionally uncomfortable (such as being angry, annoyed or reserved). A greater part of the parents observed that they talk to their children to find out what the problem is (66.7%). Others (22.2%) noted that they counsel their children on their own or refer them to a professional counselor or pray for them. Some male parents (11.1%) said they ask their wives to talk to the children to find out what the problem could be. A summary of the responses are as captured in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Distribution According to Parental Responses to Teen Emotional Irritability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk to him/her and find out what the problem is</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel him/her personally or refer him/her to a professional counselor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or pray for him/her</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask mother (my wife) to talk to him/her</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By and large, parents respond to the emotional irritability of their children through dialogue and counseling, on their own or someone else. The referral of the children by their fathers to their mothers for counseling demonstrates that male parents are mostly absent to better understand the problem teen children may be going through. Parents
observed that there is a close relationship between emotional and physical irritabilities in the teenagers. According to the parents, emotional irritabilities mostly manifest themselves when the physical needs of the teenagers are not met.

### 4.3.6 Parental Correction of Teen Maladaptive Behaviours

The ever increasing focus on child rights and protection has weakened the traditional methods of correcting maladaptive behaviours among children. As such, parents were asked how they correct their teen children’s maladaptive behaviours (such as his/her being violent, absent from school, attempts to self harm etc). Majority of the parents, 77.8%, talk with and/or counsel the child while 22.2% said they reprimand the child as indicated in Figure 4 below.

Of importance to note is that unlike early traditional African families where the correction was conducted by extended families and members of the kin groups, the study established that today, this is a sole responsibility of the parent conducted at the nuclear family level. This entails that the maladaptive behaviours among teenage children cannot be corrected if indeed, parents are absent and away from their children.
4.4 Physical and Social Distance between Parents and Teenagers

Establishing the physical and social distance between parents and their teenage children was the second objective of the study. Physical and social distance between parents and their teen children was examined from both the parents and the teens’ perspectives. Focus was placed on parental presence/absence, teen knowledge of their parents, the number of hours parents spend together with their children, parental involvement in child upbringing, teenage behaviour monitoring and teenage and parents’ attitudes on what constitutes optimum interaction. The findings are presented in the following sections.

4.4.1 Parental Presence/Absence

Parenting is about being present to children and providing support and guidance that facilitate growth. Parents were asked how often and at what time of the day or week they were available to interact with their teen children and other family members. Majority of the parents (88.9%) observed that they were available every evening; only 11.1% said they were available during the weekends. This means that the quantity of time parents spend in their homes is high.

The information on parental presence and availability was corroborated by data from teenagers. The teenagers were asked whether their parents (fathers and mothers) do go home every evening after work. Concerning fathers, 67.6% of the teenagers agreed that their fathers do go home after work. On the other hand, 85.9% of the teenagers affirmed that their mothers do go home every evening after work. Table 6 below summarily captures the responses.
Table 6: Daily Parental Availability (from the Teenagers’ Perspective)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Responses on whether Father &amp; Mother is Available Daily</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>85.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We note from Table 6 above that female parents are more likely to be at home (and perhaps spend more time with their children) compared to their male counterparts, a demonstration that fathers are more absent and therefore likely to be less involved in parenting compared to mothers. According to Amato (2005) the partial absence of fathers from home subjects the children to more social and other problems and emotional imbalances which may affect their development. This is likely due to the ability of couples to share parenting tasks and thereby be less stressed and more effective.

Further, according to the teenagers, there are times their parents do not go home totally. This was affirmed by 43.9% of the teenage respondents. The remaining 56.1% of the teenagers observed that their parents do go home daily however late. According to the teenagers, majority of the parents (73.3%) who do not go home do so over the weekends while the remaining may not go home any day of the week. As said by the teenagers, the reasons given by parents for being absent were all job related including being away on job related meetings or being away on business trips.
4.4.2 Levels of Parental Presence/Absence

An assessment into the time that parents get home after work was conducted. From the teenagers’ perspective, the study established that male parents get home more late compared to female parents. The findings are summarized in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Levels of Parental Presence/Absence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th></th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th></th>
<th>Average</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 5:00pm and before 6:00pm</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 6:00pm and before 7:00pm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 7:00pm and before 8:00pm</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 8:00pm and before 9:00pm</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 9:00pm and before 10:00pm</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 10:00pm</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assuming that teenagers in the study age ideally sleep for 8-9 hours as scientifically prescribed by the National Sleep Foundation\textsuperscript{12} (see also Eide and Showalter, 2012), and since the teenagers wake up early to go to school, it is possible that teenagers’ retiring time is between 9:30pm and 10:00pm. Based on the operational definition of variables discussed in section 2.14 above, these findings intimate that:

a. On average, only 11.85% of the teenagers (or 12 teenagers whose parents get home at 5:00pm but before 7:00pm) spend more than two hours with their parents.

This represents very low levels of parental absence;

\textsuperscript{12} How much sleep do we need? See link http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/how-sleep-works/how-much-sleep-do-we-really-need retrieved on September 7th 2013
b. Other (22.8% or 20) teenagers who get home at 7:00pm but before 8:00pm spend approximately one hour with their parents representing high levels of parental absence;

c. A further 29.35% of (or 26) teenagers, whose parents get home between 8:00pm but before 9:00pm, spend an average of 30minutes with their parents; these are moderately high levels of parental absence;

d. Finally, the remaining 36% of (or 32) teenagers whose parents get home at 9:00pm or after may not have time with their parents, indicating very high levels of parental absence.

### 4.4.3 Teen Knowledge of their Parents

Overall, teen knowledge of their parents is high. Teens were asked whether they know the full names (three names) of their parents and the organizations that the parents work with. Regarding the names of their parents, 95.9% said they know the full names of their fathers while 98.6% said they know the full names of their mothers. A similar trend was recorded with regard to the teens’ knowledge of the organizations their parents work with. With regard to fathers, 85.1% said they know the organization their father work with while 91.9% said they know the organization their mothers work with. A summary of the responses is presented in Table 8 below.
Table 8: Distribution of Teens According to Knowledge of Parents on Various aspects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Knowledge About Parents</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know the full names of your father?</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know the full names of your mother?</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know the organization your father works with?</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know the organization your mother works with?</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the percentage is both high in both parents (fathers and mothers), it is higher with regard to teen knowledge of their mothers compared to fathers. Reason could be that and as observed above, mothers are more likely to be available at home and therefore to their teenagers than fathers. Again, this could be attributed to the traditional conception that in most cases mothers tend to be closer to their children compared to fathers.

4.4.4 Parental Knowledge of their Teenage Children

The study sought to establish the parents’ knowledge of their teenage children by asking them a set of questions that centred on the parents’ knowledge of the teens’ friends and their parents, favorite gift and also future career prospects. Parents’ knowledge levels on various issues regarding their teenage children are varied. For instance, the study established that 77.8% of parents know their teens’ friends compared to 22.2% who said they do not know them. On the contrary however, only 22.2% of the parents agreed that
they know their teen children friends’ parents; a vast majority of the parents (77.8%) do not know their teens’ friends’ parents.

Regarding the teens’ favorite gift, 87.5% of the parents know their teens’ favorite gift while 12.5% said they do not know. Majority of parents (88.9%) know their teen children’s future career prospects as the same percent (88.9%) of parents affirmed that the children know what their careers are. However, only 33.3% of the parents observed that their teens had dreams of pursuing a career similar to their own. The results indicate that overall, parents’ knowledge of their teenage children on issues examined is high. A summary of parental knowledge of their teenage children is presented in table 9 below.

Table 9: Distribution of Parents According to Knowledge of Teenagers (Their Children) on Various Aspects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Knowledge About Teenagers</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know your teen child’s friends?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know your teen child’s friends’ parents?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know your teen child’s favorite gift?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know your teen child’s future career prospect?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your teen child know what your career is?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your teen child dream of pursuing a career similar to your own?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.5 Parent-Teen Interactions

To understand the physical and social distance between parents and their teenage children, the study examined how parents are interacting with their teenage children. The
essence was to capture two sets of responses from parents, that is, frequency of interaction and what parents considered constitutes optimal interaction.

4.4.5.1 Parent-Teen Frequency of Interaction

Various items were administered and Parents were asked how much they interact with their teen children. Majority of the parents, 88.9%, affirmed that their teens do accompany them to church/mosque with only 11.1% saying the teens do not accompany them to church/mosque. Similar percentages were recorded with regard to whether the teens accompany their parents to weekend outings where 88.9% of the parents responded in affirmation. All parents interviewed (100%) agreed that they go out shopping with their teens. Further, all parents agreed that they do monitor their children’s academic reports. In similar vein, all parents agreed that they do buy their teens birthday gifts. Vast majority of the parents (88.9%) agreed that they do attend the children’s school visiting days. Table 10 below presents a summary of the responses on parent-teen frequency of interaction.

Table 10: Parent-Teen Frequency of Interaction on Basis of Various Occasions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occasion of Interaction</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your teen child accompany you to church/mosque?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the child accompany you on a weekend outing?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you go out shopping with the child?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you monitor his/academic reports?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you buy the child birthday gifts?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you attend the child’s school visiting days?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results in table 10 above intimate that the levels of parent-teen interactions are high, at least from the parents’ perspective. The high level of interaction facilitates parental knowledge of their teenage children which is a vital component for socialization and therefore growth.

4.4.5.2 Parent-Teen Optimal Interaction

Parents’ attitudes on what constitutes optimum interaction were captured through Likert scale-type questions with very untrue, untrue, neutral, true and very true response options. The first item was to establish whether parents considered their personal characteristics a shortcoming to their parenting responsibilities. 50% of the parents indicated that the view was very untrue; 37.5% said it was untrue while 12.5% remained neutral on the question. None of the parents said the statement was true or very true.

Parents were also asked whether flexibility within their career enhance their parenting abilities. 22.2% of the parents felt that it was very untrue that flexibility within their career enhanced their parenting abilities; 11.2% said it is untrue; 33.3% were neutral and 33.3% said it was true.

On whether parents often have enough time to spend with their teen children, 22.2% said it very untrue; 44.5% said it is untrue while 33.3% observed that it is true that they have enough time to spend with their teen children.

Parents were asked whether they considered their financial positions a hindrance to their parenting responsibilities. 44.4% said that is very untrue; 11.2% said it is untrue; 33.3% remained neutral as the remaining 11.1% said it is true.

Support from extended family networks is sometimes considered important in parenting process. Parents were asked whether they feel support from the extended family networks
add value to their parenting process. 33.3% said the view is very untrue; 11.2% said it is untrue; 22.2% remained neutral while 33.3% said it is true.

A summary of the results is presented in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Extent of Truth about Parent-Teen Child Interaction on the Basis of Selected Statements and Responses by Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Statement</th>
<th>Parents’ Responses (Percentage)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very True (5)</td>
<td>True (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider my personal characteristics a shortcoming to my parenting responsibilities</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility within my career enhances my parenting abilities</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often have enough time to spend with my teen child</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My financial position is a hindrance to my parenting responsibilities</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from the extended family networks adds value to parenting process</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.6 Residential Arrangements

Residential arrangements affect the degree of interaction between parents and their teenage children. Majority (76.7% or 69) of the teenagers who took part in the study agreed that they live with both their parents; only 23.3% or 21 said they do not live with both their parents. Majority of the teenagers who do not live with their parents observed
that they live with house helps and their siblings (51.1%); house helps only (38.6%); siblings only (6.1%) and other family members such as aunties, uncles and/or grandparents (4.2%). According to the teenagers, the other family members are usually called in to stay with them temporarily when their parents are away. A summary of their responses is given in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Parent-Teen Residential Arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House help &amp; siblings</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House help only</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings only</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Aunt, uncles and grandparents)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, 88.9% of the parents indicated that they live with their children in the same house as 11.1% said they live and work away from their teen children. This is a clear demonstration that house helps are important parts of the modern urban family.

4.4.7 Teen Behaviour Monitoring and Time Diaries

4.4.7.1 After School Diaries

The basic assumption in this study is that parental absence and lack of their involvement in monitoring behaviours of their teen children leads to their (teenagers) adoption of attention seeking behaviours. Participating teens were asked to state the activities they engage themselves in after school and with whom they undertake the activities. Majority of them, 41.7%, said they watch TVs, movies and play computer games; 33.4% observed that they do homework; 15.1% said they concentrate on surfing the internet; while the
remaining 9.8% indicated that all they do is eat and sleep. A summary of the responses were captured in table 13 as follows:

**Table 13: Distribution of Teenagers According to After School Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>After-School Activity</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watching TV, movies and playing computer games</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing homework</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfing internet</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating and sleeping</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Majority of the teenagers, 30.4% to be precise, said they do the activities on their own; 26.8% do the activities with their siblings; 20.0% do it with their mothers alone; 14.1% do it with both parents and only 8.7% do the activities with the house helps as summarized in Figure 5 below.

**Figure 5: Parental Involvement in Executing after School Diaries**
4.4.7.2 Weekend Diaries

Teenagers were also asked to state the activities they engage in during weekends and with whom they undertake the activities. In descending order, teenagers observed that the go out (42.4%); watch TV and movies (22.3%); surf internet and play computer games (21.0%) and 14.3% said they stay indoors, sleep and generally do nothing. A summary of the results were as presented in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Distribution According to Teenagers’ Weekend Diaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekend Activity</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Going out</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching TV and movies</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfing internet</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying indoors, sleeping and doing nothing</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Parental Involvement in Teenagers’ Weekend Diaries

Regarding the persons with whom they undertake the activities, 40.5% of the teenagers said they do the activities on their own; 21.1% do the activities with their mothers alone; 16.4% do them with both parents (mother and father); 12% do them with their siblings. Only 5.8% of the teenagers observed that they do the activities with their fathers as 4.2% said they do the activities with their friends (Figure 6).

68
The findings on the activities teenagers undertake after school and over the weekend largely mirror the findings already discussed above. Of importance is that the results reflect that:

a. The level of parental involvement in activities that their teen children undertake after school and over the weekends is generally low. The study established that majority of parents go home every day after work and also over the weekends. However, their physical presence does not reflect itself in the parents helping their teen children accomplish the activities they are doing. This is a clear demonstration of low parental involvement in child upbringing and the overall socialization process. The quantity of time spent at home by the parents does not necessarily entail quality parenting which is measured in terms of their levels of involvement in teenage activities. Involvement of the male parents is lower than that of the female counterparts. Results indicate that the level of involvement of female parents in their teenage children activities almost remain the same during the week and over the weekend. These dynamics are especially important in determining the effectiveness of parenting process. The lack of parental involvement presents them a challenge in monitoring the teenagers’ behaviours. They also increase the social and physical distances between teenagers and their parents.

b. More and more, the study findings reveal that house helps are important components of our modern families. The study found out that although their input in the families, particularly helping teenagers undertake various activities during the week is felt, their role declines during the weekends. This can be explained by the fact that, conventionally, most of the house helps take day offs during the weekend when parents are present at home.

c. Media socialization among teenagers is extensive. This was confirmed by the high number of teenagers who spend their evenings (after school) and weekends
watching TV, movies and playing computer games. The findings mirror those discussed in above, where parents affirmed that their teenagers sometimes compel them to provide them (teenagers) with electronics such as iPhones and laptops that match their own.

### 4.4.8 Examination of Academic Reports

Examination of academic report is an important indicator of parental involvement. Parental involvement in child academics increases academic performance of the child and nurturing better relationships in school. According to Hill and Craft (2003), parental involvement in a child's education positively influences the nature of the student-teacher relationship. Teenagers were asked who examines their academic report. Results show that 52.1% of teenagers’ academics reports are examined by both parents (mother and father); 21.9% said only their mothers examine their academic reports; 13.7% said it is their fathers who examine the reports while 12.3% mentioned other persons such as aunties, uncles and/or grandparents. A summary of the responses are as presented in Table 15 below.

**Table 15: Distribution of Teenagers’ Responses on Whom examines their Academic Reports**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response on Whom Examines Academic Report</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both parents (mother and father)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (aunties, uncles and/or grandparents)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the teachers interviewed, majority of the parents were not keen in monitoring academic reports of their teenage children. Teachers observed that most parents do not keenly read the academic reports and respond to the areas highlighted by
the teachers that need the parents’ intervention. In most cases, where parents cannot meet their children, they only sign the academic diaries and place them at a location where children pick and return to school. The teachers indicated that this has a direct bearing on the academic performance of the teenagers. Further, teachers observed that some students were too rude to their teachers. This can be explained by the limited levels of parental involvement (Hill and Craft, 2003).

4.4.9 Social Distance Between Parents and Teenagers

Social distance between teenagers and their parents was measured by use of the Borgadus Social Distance Scale. Social distance represents the degree of perceived distance that people believe exists between themselves and another person within an interaction (Hoffman, McCabe & Smith, 1996). It is the measure of how close one feels toward another group. In this study, the items on the Borgadus scale sought to describe relationships between parents and teenagers specifically the interactive distance between the two parties. Interactive social distance focused on the frequency and intensity of interactions between parents and teenagers. The questions increased in terms of how closely parents want to associate with their teen children with varying degrees of closeness. A person is perceived by a subject on to be more or less psychologically distant or close, and this distance influences the way that the object is understood. The gist of the Borgadus social distance scale and particularly the interactive aspect of social distance is that the more the members of two groups interact, the closer they are socially.

Items were worded in terms of inclusion and administered to the parents. Results indicate that vast majority of parents (88.9%) would prefer house helps staying with their teen children while they are away from home. This confirms the findings discussed in other sections of the study that house helps have become important components of the contemporary family and therefore parents do not have problems with them interacting
with their children. This was the only easy item that majority of parents could include in their association with their teenage children.

The study established that other items on the scale were hard to parents and based on the intensity of their responses, they were excluded by majority of the parents. For instance, 77.8% of parents would not prefer that they always accompany their teen children to school; 77.8% would not prefer that their parents accompany their teen children to school; 77.8% of the parents would not prefer that their parents attend their teen children’s school visiting days and 77.8% would not prefer that their parents accompany their teen children to school.

Parents demonstrated intense exclusion of the remaining items on the scale. Study findings reveal that 88.9% of the parents would not prefer that their house helps assist their teen children in completing home work. Hardly any parent would either prefer that their house helps accompany their teen children to school or punish the children when they are wrong. This demonstrates that despite house helps being important ingredients in the family, parents do not necessarily want them to exclusively interact with their teenage children.

The findings demonstrate that although parental absence is a reality, it does not increase the psychological distance between parents and their teenage children; parents feel their interactive distance between themselves and their teenage children is strong and intact.

A summary of the findings is presented in Table 16 below.
Table 16: Responses on Indicators of Social Distance between Teenagers and their Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator of Social Distance</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you prefer that your house help stay with your teen child while you are away from home?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you prefer that you always accompany your teen child to school?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you prefer that your parents accompany your teen child to school?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you prefer that your parents attend your teen child’s school visiting day?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you prefer that your parents assist your teen child in completing his/her homework?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you prefer that your house help assist your teen child in completing home work?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you prefer that your house help accompany your teen child to school?</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you prefer that your house help punish your teen child when the child is wrong?</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Attention Seeking Behaviours Common to 13-18 Year Olds

The third objective of the study was to examine the various attention seeking behaviours common to teenagers aged 13-18 years. As explained in section 2.8 above, in this study, attention seeking behaviours constitute all those actions which, through their very annoying nature, bring a child to the attention of a number of adults and other members of society causing great concern. Six attention seeking behaviours were purposively examined by the study including teen cutting classes; physical fights in and out of school; having problem with the law and getting arrested; engaging in drug and substance abuse behaviours; teen predilection to depression and withdrawal and early initiation of sexual activities.
4.5.1 Teen Cutting Classes

Cutting classes simply means skipping classes for some reasons. Parents are important ingredients in children’s educational lives as they ensure that the children go to school daily and emphasize to the children the importance of education to their future. Thus the study sought to establish whether parental absence results in teen cutting classes as an attention seeking behaviour. Teenagers were asked whether they attend school every day in a term. 56.3% of the teenagers agreed that they do attend school every day in a term while the remaining 43.7% said they do not.

Majority too (78.6%) or 71 teenagers agreed that they sometimes miss out of school. On the other hand, 66.7% of parents confirmed that they have not discovered from their teens deliberate absence from school. Only 33.3% of the parents agreed to have witnessed deliberate absence of their teens from school. The reasons for teenagers’ missing out of school are varied. Majority (51.4%) miss out of school when they are sick; 25.6% when they are bored or they do not feel like going to school; 18.7% when there is a family problem such as funeral while 4.3% said they miss out of school when travelling.

Teen cutting classes also manifest itself when the children are in school. According to the teachers interviewed, some teenagers ‘forge’ illnesses while in school and demand that their parents be called upon to take them to hospital. Reports from the teenagers and affirmed by class teachers indicated such teenagers usually complain of the increased parental absence and therefore forging sickness is seen as the surest way of securing time and definitely the attention of their parents. This puts to question the realism of the sickness that 51.4% of the teenagers claimed makes them miss out of school. Further, the study findings reveal that 25.6% of the teenagers miss out of school when they are bored or do not feel like going to school and 33.3% of parents have witnessed deliberate absence of their teenagers from school. This reason is partly feeble and based on the submissions by the class teachers, the behaviour is deliberate and targeted. By and large
therefore, the findings insinuate that teenagers’ cutting classes is a problem that can be explained from the family level.

4.5.2 Physical Fights in and out of School

Although the causes of teen violence are varied and diverse, the study sought to find out whether such behaviours could be linked to parental absence and indeed the failure by parents to identify and correct the maladaptive behaviours among their teenage children. Available literature indicates that teen intolerance can be traced from the general weaknesses at the family level and in particular failures of parents to undertake their parenting responsibilities. According to Farmer (1979), the family is an integral agent of social control that teaches children limits of tolerated behaviour; the family introduces children to the acceptable ideas of right and wrong. Baumrind (1991) observes that primary socialization is carried out by parents who shape the development of children’s pro-social and antisocial behaviours.

Teenagers were asked what they would resort to if they went to a party with friends and the friends insist on listening to a certain music which the teens are not interested in. The reason was to establish how teens manage their anger and whether their failure to effectively manage anger and remain tolerant could result in them engaging in physical fights in and out of school. Majority of the teens (28.3%) observed that they would pretend that they like the music and listen while 26.4% would keep quiet and listen to it although they do not like the music. A further 16.5% said they would negotiate with their friends to see whether they can change the music; 11.1% would walk out until the music is over and 9.6% would find someone to talk to until the music is over. Only 8.0% said they would insist and even physically fight to have their way. On their part however, all parents (100%) said that they have not discovered their teens taking part in violent riots.
or fights in and out of school. A summary of their responses is presented in Table 17 below.

**Table 17: Responses on Possibility of Teen Engaging in Physical Fights in and out of School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretend that I like it and listen</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep quiet and listen to it although I don’t like it</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiate with them to see whether they can change</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk out until the music is over</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find someone to talk to until the music is over</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insist and even physically fight to have my way</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teenagers’ responses above demonstrate that their tolerance to other persons or their peers’ preferences is largely a function of pretence (as confirmed by the majority of the respondents, 28.3%). Moreover, the observation by some teenagers that they would walk out until the music is over (11.1%) or even insist/physically fight to have their way (8.0%) is a demonstration of low levels of tolerance among teenagers.

Besides teenagers’ physical fights in and out of school, the study examined whether the teenagers are cooperative at home and whether they complete all tasks assigned to them by their parents. Teen discipline and cooperation at home is sometimes an issue of concern to many parents. Parents were asked whether their teen children effectively complete tasks allocated to them. Of the total responses, 62.5% agreed that their teen children do effectively complete the tasks allocated to them while 37.5% said that the teenagers do not effectively complete the tasks. Although they complete the tasks, parents observed that they have to remind the children more than once before they complete the
tasks. Parents who said their teenage children do not complete the tasks assigned to them, indicated that their teens are so glued to the TV and internet that they do not take time to complete any task assigned to them.

4.5.3 Teen Predisposition to Engage in Drug and Substance Abuse Behaviours

Literature on drug and substance abuse among teenagers in Kenya is limited. A situational analysis of alcohol consumption among high school students conducted by Students’ Campaign Against Drugs (SCAD, 2011)\(^\text{13}\) reveal that 48.9% of the respondents have ever taken alcohol with 18.5% currently taking alcohol, with the highest being among private school at 22.9%. According to SCAD (2011), family background plays a significant role as either a risk or protective factor against substance abuse. For instance, youths without a highly involved father are more at risk of first substance use.

Teenage inclination toward drug and substance abuse was examined variously including through asking questions to establish ease of access to and contact with drugs. These included establishing whether teenagers do go out on their own or with their parents or even friends to restaurants where alcoholic drinks are sold. On whether the teenagers go out with their or friends parents, 97.3% of the teenagers agreed that they go out with their parents or friends. All the teenagers (100%) affirmed that there are occasions they visit restaurants to take food and/or drinks when they go out.

Regarding going to restaurants where alcoholic drinks are sold, 44.4% agreed that they do accompany their friends to restaurants where alcoholic drinks are sold while 55.6% said they do not. However, majority of the teenagers (52.8%) observed that they do accompany their parents to restaurants where alcoholic drinks are sold. Only 29.2% of

\(^{13}\) SCAD is a youth not-for-profit organization aimed at reducing the escalation of alcohol, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS infections, among young people in Kenya.
the teenagers agreed that there are occasions they visit, on their own, restaurants where alcoholic drinks are sold. See the summary in Table 18 below.

Table 18: Teen Engagement in drug and Substance Abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Engagement</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you go out with your parents or friends?</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there occasions you visit restaurants to take food and/or drinks when you go out?</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you accompany your friends to restaurants where alcoholic drinks are sold?</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you accompany your parents to restaurants where alcoholic drinks are sold?</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there occasions you visit restaurants where alcoholic drinks are sold on your own?</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On their part, 44.4% of the parents interviewed agreed that they have discovered their teen children going out and engaging in drinking behaviours. The remaining 55.6% of parents said they have not discovered the drinking and substance abuse behaviours among their teenage children. The above findings indicate significant levels of access to drugs and substance among teenagers, the very factors that predispose teenagers to engage in the vice. The acknowledgement by 44.4% of parents of having discovered their teen children going out and engaging in drinking behaviours confirms the presence of drug and substance abuse tendencies among teenagers.
4.5.4 Teen Predisposition to Depression and Withdrawal

Teen predisposition to depression and withdrawal is a function of many factors such as having too much to handle and being driven to succeed. It causes irritability and mood swings. In the study, 74.3% of the teenagers affirmed that there are times they feel overbooked, (that is, having too much to do than they can adequately handle). Indeed, 61.6% of the teenagers agreed with the observation that they lack time to do all they want compared to 38.4% who disagreed with the observation.

Teenagers were asked whether they were driven to succeed mainly by their parents. A vast majority (80.9%) of the teenagers agreed that they are driven to succeed. A further 72.2% of the teenagers confirmed that they are faced with conflicting demands from teachers, parents and peers which may also precipitate depression and withdrawal. The findings show that teenagers are more and more under pressure from their parents (and partly their teachers) to succeed especially in academics.

Teenagers were further asked whether there are times they feel deeply annoyed or depressed at home. A vast majority, 84.7%, agreed that there are times they feel annoyed while 15.3% said there are no times they feel deeply annoyed at home. Table 19 below presents the summary findings.

Table 19: Teen Predisposition to Depression and Withdrawal According to Some Selected Occasions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predisposing Occasions</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there times you feel overbooked?</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you lack time to do all you want?</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that you are driven to succeed?</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you faced with conflicting demands from teachers, parents and peers?</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there times you feel deeply annoyed or depressed at home?</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reasons for the predisposition to depression as mentioned by the participating teenagers were varied. Top in the list was when they are pressured to succeed (28%); when parents argue or fight amongst themselves (20.3%); when parents do not respond to their needs and provide them with what they need (19.1%); when they are given too much work to do (17.5%); teenagers not getting what they need from their parents (10.9%) and being shouted at for no reason (4.2%).

It was interesting to find out that even though majority of the teenagers confirmed to have the factors that can predispose them to depression, 66.7% of parents interviewed said they have not witnessed any form of prolonged stress or withdrawal among their teenage children. This means that majority of the parents are not in a position to adequately respond to predisposing factors.

It is the responses to the teenagers’ predisposition to depression and withdrawal that may, to a large extent, be classified as attention seeking behaviours. When asked what they resort to when depressed, 30.7% of the teenagers’ said they lock themselves in the bedroom and cry; 24.9% keep quiet and watch TV, listen to music or read a book; 21.0% observed they think of taking away their lives through suicide; 11.3% said they visit friends or go online; 9% pray while 3.1% said they masturbate to relax. A summary of the responses are presented in Table 20 below.

Table 20: Response to Teen Predisposition Depression and Withdrawal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to the Predisposition Depression and Withdrawal</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lock myself in my bedroom and cry to relax</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep quiet and watch TV, listen to music or read a book</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think of taking my life away through suicide</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit friends or go online</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pray</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masturbate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the context of this study, these responses constitute attention seeking behaviours. The failure by majority of the parents not to discover the aforementioned behaviours is particularly detrimental.

4.5.5 Early Initiation into Sexual Activities

Teenage sexual experiences are not new in literature. In Kenya for instance, SCAD (2011), established that 39.7% of the high school students have ever had sex including 71.5% of the males and 28.5% of female. This study sought to examine whether teenagers were engaging themselves in early sexual activities by asking questions to demonstrate potential exposure to such activities. Teenagers were asked whether their parents know their friends; 79.5% said their parents know their friends while 20.5% said their parents do not know their friends.

On whether the teenagers have both boys and girls as their friends, 93.2% responded in affirmation while only 6.8% said they do not have both boys and girls as their friends. Ninety three percent (93.0%) of the teenagers agreed that they do visit their friends while 7.0% said they do not. Majority of the teenagers, 73.5% affirmed that when they visit their friends, they spend at their places while 26.5% said they do not spend at their friends’ places when they visit. Pertaining to visiting and spending at their friends of the opposite sex, 41.7% of the teenagers affirmed that they do spend at the places of their friends of opposite sex while 58.3% said they do not as summarized in Table 21 below.
Table 21: Response on Factors Likely to Lead to Early Initiation of Sexual Activities among Teenagers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors in Initiation of Sexual Activity</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your parents know your friends?</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have both boys and girls as your friends?</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you visit them?</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you visit friends do you spend at their place?</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about your friends of the opposite sex; do you spend at their place when you visit them?</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above results demonstrate certain levels of exposure of teenagers to sexual activities. Visiting friends of opposite sex by 93.0% of the teenagers and spending at their places confirms probable contacts that can trigger sexual intercourse.

4.5.6 Having Problems with the Law and Getting Arrested

The family, parents and parenting is central in promoting teenagers’ compliance with the law. Omboto et al (2012) assert that parents must take responsibility over their children up to the time when they would be in the position to stand on their own. This involves providing for their children’s material needs and giving them moral guidance. However, Omboto et al (2012) note that parents have forfeited the former role and have left it to the movies and advertising agencies to run their children’s lives. There must be a realization that in adulthood, values come from the family, religious and education background.
Therefore, parenthood should be taken more seriously thus parents must not be too busy to know and monitor the activities of their teenage sons and daughters. Against this understanding, participating teenagers were asked whether they have had problems with the law or even been arrested.

An assessment of the teenagers having problem with the law and getting arrested was conducted by asking the teenagers whether they have been punished by other persons they live with at home, their teachers, parents and also the police. In this context, punishment encompassed physical torture, confinement and verbal abuse or reprimand.

Majority of the teenagers, that is, 54.8% said they have never been punished by other people they live with at home such as other siblings, house helps, drivers and watchmen. Only 45.2% agreed that they have been punished by the other people they live with at home. With regard to being punished by their parents, 51.2% of the teenagers agreed that they have been punished by their parents while 47.8% said they have never been punished by their parents.

On the other hand, a vast majority (95.9%) of the teens said they have been punished by their teachers while 4.1% said they have never been punished by their teachers. A greater part of the teenager (94.6%) said they have not been punished by the police as only 5.4% agreed to have been punished by the police. Further, 93.2% of the teenagers said they have never been arrested by the police as 6.8% said they have been arrested. A summary of the teenagers’ responses is given in Table 22 below.
Table 22: Teens Having Problems with the Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of Teen Having Problems with the Law</th>
<th>Response (Yes)</th>
<th>Response (No)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been punished by other people you live with at home?</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been punished by your parents?</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been punished by your teachers?</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>95.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about the police; have you ever been punished by the police?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been arrested by the police?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On their part, 77.8% of parents said their teens have had no problems with the law enforcement agencies. Only 22.2% said their teens have had problems with the law or even being arrested. We note from the findings that a small percentage of the teenagers (5.4%) have been punished by the police while 6.8% said they have been arrested by the police. The figures reflect a difference between the teenagers’ submissions and those of parents. This is because in the event of the teenagers having problems with the law, parents are mostly informed by the law enforcement agencies because the teenagers are minors. According to the parents interviewed, in the circumstances, they become aware and more involved in such cases than the teenagers to the extent that the teenagers may not deem them as problems.
4.6 Relationship between Parental Absence and Teen Attention Seeking Behaviours

The final objective of the study was to establish the relationship between parental absence and attention seeking behaviours among teenagers. The association between parental absence and attention seeking behaviours were computed through a Chi Square test. The Chi Square statistic was used to test the hypothesis of no association between parental absence and attention seeking behaviours. As indicated in section 2.14 above on operational definition of variables, parental absence was measured in terms of the number of hours parents spend with their teen children and in this study, therefore, 2 hours were used to benchmark the minimum time that parents should spend with their teenagers daily. On their part, attention seeking behaviours were measured in terms of their frequency of occurrence, that is, the average number of teenagers agreeing with the items used to examine the presence or otherwise of a particular behaviour.

Chi-square test on the relationship between parental absence and the assessed attention seeking behaviours was calculated at the degree of freedom of (2-1) (2-1) =1 at 5% level of significance. From the \( c^2 \) table, we find a critical value for 1 degree of freedom at 5% level of significance is 3.841. Overall, a Chi Square value \( (X^2) \) which exceeds the critical value of \( c^2 \) demonstrates an association between the variables while \( X^2 \) value less than the critical value of \( c^2 \) indicates no association between the variables. Test results reveal an association between parental absence and:

a. Teen cutting classes which produced a \( X^2 \) value of 25.099;

b. Teenagers’ involvement in physical fights in and out of school whose \( X^2 \) value is 5.011;

c. Teen predisposition to engage in drug and substance abuse whose \( X^2 \) value is 11.424;

d. Teen predisposition to depression and withdrawal whose \( X^2 \) value is 17.198;
e. Early initiation of teenagers into sexual activities whose $X^2$ value is 12.851.

On the other hand however, a test on the relationship between parental absence and teenagers having problems with the law or getting arrested produced a value of 2.291 which is less than the critical value of $c^2$. This demonstrates that there is no association between the variables and that parental absence is not a factor in teenagers having problems with the law or getting arrested.

### 4.6.1 Teen Cutting Classes

In this study, cutting classes means skipping classes. On average, 71 teenagers agreed they are cutting classes. A further analysis of the study findings revealed that of the 71 teenagers who agreed to be cutting classes, 68 teenagers indicated that they spend less than 2 hours with their parents daily while only 3 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily. On the other hand, 19 teenagers are not cutting classes. Of the 19, 9 teenagers spend less than 2 hours with their parents while 10 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily. A summary of the observed data is presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time Teenagers Spend with their Parents Daily</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 2 hours</td>
<td>More than 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting classes</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not cutting classes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the observed data above, the expected frequencies are as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time Teenagers Spend with their Parents Daily</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 2hours</td>
<td>More than 2hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting classes</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not cutting classes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 25.099$

The above value of $X^2$ exceeds the critical value of $c^2$ (3.841) thus there is a departure from the expectation. The study concludes that there is an association between parental absence and teen cutting classes as an attention seeking behaviour.

The study established that participating teenagers who agreed to be skipping classes were occasional class cutters. Indeed, 66.7% of parents affirmed that they have not discovered from their teens deliberate absence from school. This is because parents are either too absent to discover the absence of children from school, the occasional nature of class cutters or limited interactions between parents and teachers. According to Ubogu (2004) parents’ interaction with teachers enables them to know what their children are encountering in school and what could be done to deal with the problems. It would also put pupils on alert and study in school as they would know that their parents would inquire about their performance. Parental absence has however made parents ignorant of what happens in school. According to the teachers interviewed in this study, parents talk to the teachers about their children’s academic progress and behaviour only when a problem emerges. The teachers further observed that parents spend limited time reading the academic reports, annual or end of term newsletters schools prepare for parents and therefore rarely give feedback to teachers as required in the correspondences. These realities only increase the problem of teen cutting classes.

The study also established that teen cutting classes also manifest itself when the children are physically in school. According to the teachers interviewed, such teenagers ‘forge’ illnesses while in school and demand that their parents be called upon to take them to
hospital. Teachers make out that while the sicknesses are mostly falsified, such schemes help the teenagers secure time with their parents. This is also an attention seeking strategy. The researcher notes too that such behaviours may go beyond cutting classes to exposing the affected teens to psychological problems including depression and withdrawal.

Studies have shown that cutting classes can be detrimental beyond teenage years. According to Allensworth & Easton (2007), students who cut classes and therefore have low attendance have been shown to be at heightened risk of high school dropout, as well as other potentially deleterious behaviour. In line with Get Schooled Organization\textsuperscript{14} (August 2012), occasional class cutters are more likely to graduate from high school, but have little understanding that missing school is directly affecting their preparation for college. Many will face a slate of remedial classes upon enrolling in college and may grow disillusioned and drop out before earning a degree. In the context therefore, cutting classes is a problem with potential future risks not only to the teen and the family but also the nation at large.

Researchers have further observed that cutting classes is a deviant behaviour; a contravention of conventional norms. For instance, social control theorists attempt to explain why individuals choose to obey conventional norms such as teenagers attending school throughout the term (see Hirschi 1969: 10). According to Hirschi’s social bond theory, the attachment an individual holds to persons, groups or institutions which support conventional values and norms is of central interest. If this attachment is fragile, the risk of deviant behaviour is greater. The attachment depends, to a greater extent, on the emotional attachment to meaningful persons such as family members, teachers and peers. According to the social bond theory, close relationships to conventionally acting persons should decrease the risk of deviant behaviours. An important component of the

\textsuperscript{14} Get Schooled is US based Non-Governmental Organization working with students in establishing the reasons why students miss out of school. The referenced report is titled “Skipping to nowhere: students miss their views about missing school” retrieved from https://getschooled.com/system/assets/assets/203/original/Hart_Research_report_final.pdf on October 18th 2013.
social control theory is the focus on the family as a critical reference group for teenagers and adolescents. Emotional attachment between parents and teenagers encompasses the manner in which parents contribute toward the bringing up, supervision, guidance and disciplining of children. In the event that parents are absent and delegate child rearing to other persons including house helps, the children’s predisposition to observe societal conventional norms may be compromised. Since attending school and staying in school is a conventional norm, principles of the social bond theory may be used to explain teenagers’ inclination toward cutting classes.

4.6.2 Physical Fights in and out of School

The study sought to establish from the teenagers, what they would resort to, if they went out with their friends and the friends insist on listening to a particular music they are less interested in. Study results show that in the circumstances, 7 teenagers would insist and even physically fight to listen to the music they want. Of the 7, the study established that 4 teenagers spend less than 2 hours while 3 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily.

The remaining 83 teenagers would not resort to physical fights. Of these, 71 teenagers observed that they spend less than 2 hours while 12 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily. A summary of the observed data is presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Teenagers Spend with their Parents Daily</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 2 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in physical fights in and out of school</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not engage in physical fights in and out of school</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the observed data above, the expected frequencies are as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Teenagers Spend with their Parents Daily</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2hours</td>
<td>More than 2hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in Physical fights in and out of school</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not engage in physical fights in and out of school</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X^2 = 5.011\]

The above value of \(X^2\) exceeds the critical value of \(c^2 (3.841)\) thus there is a departure from the expectation and the null hypothesis. There is an association between parental absence and teenagers’ engagement in physical fights in and out of school.

The strength of the association between parental absence and teen engagement in physical fights in and out of school is however, weak, meaning parental absence may or may not be a factor in teenage aggressive behaviours. A detailed analysis of the study findings reveal that majority of the teenagers who agreed that they could resort to physical fights are male teenagers represented by 71% compared to the 29% who are females. Additionally, younger teens are more likely to take part in aggressive behaviours than older teens. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2000), the young teens mostly do not know how to control their anger and prevent or avoid conflicts; they often believe that fighting is the only acceptable solution. According to the CDC (2000) report, students who fight at school are much less likely than other students to believe that it is effective to apologize or avoid or walk away from someone who wants to fight. They are also more likely to believe their families would want them to hit back if someone hit them first. There is a parenting dimension in this argument. According to Estevez and Gongora (2009), where present, teenage/adolescent aggression is associated with among others those whose social interactions based on an egocentric interest and their parents normally show an educational style excessively permissive. The
fact that some teenagers who took part in the study agreed that they could physically fight to listen to the music they like is a clear demonstration of the presence of aggressive behaviours among them and a confirmation that their social interactions are based on egocentric interests.

Pagani et al., (2004) assert that a family environment characterized by weak parent-child involvement in shared activities and positive interactions is an important risk factor in teen aggression including engaging in physical fights. The lack of affective cohesion and parental support, problems of communication or the inadequate expression of acceptance and understanding, have been identified as relevant influential factors associated with subsequent behavioural problems in children (for example Barrera & Li, 1996; Baumrind, 1978, 1991; Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Musitu, Estévez & Emler, 2007). These factors are associated with parental absence. As observed elsewhere in this study, parental absence limits the quality and quantity of interactions with their children which may also affect levels of affective cohesion, parental support and bring about problems of teen-parent communication. This entails that parents are largely hampered in terms of abilities to support their children in anger management and prevention of aggressive behaviours.

The study also established that today’s parents are permissive in the socialization of their teenage children. The emergence of child rights movements and laws have discouraged certain types of punishments against children. These, coupled with increasing privatization of the family institution in middle income urban environment and locking it from kin members who were central in correcting children’s maladaptive behaviours and overall delegation of parenting responsibilities to other parties including house helps, have aggravated the problem of aggression among children.

On the other hand however, majority of the teenagers observed that they could not fight or resort to violence in case their friends insisted on listening to a particular music in a party. This means the teenagers have no difficulty in expressing their emotions; they
possess recommendable levels of social skills and are less cruel toward their peers. Drawing from Hirschi’s social bond/social control theory (1969), the teenagers’ failure to indulge in physical fights can be explained by the presence of pro-social bonds that the teens share amongst themselves. According to this view, teenagers would not want to risk jeopardizing their relationship with their friends by committing criminal or deviant acts. In essence, Hirschi noted that people are less likely to misbehave when they know that they have something to lose. For teenagers, this could mean not wanting to look bad in front of friends for having committed a crime; something for which shame from those whose opinion of them matters would be a likely consequence.

4.6.3 Teen Predisposition to Engage in Drug and Substance Abuse

From the study findings, an average of 58 (64.4%) teenagers agreed with the items used to test possible inclination toward drug and substance abuse behaviours. Of the 58, the study found out that 53 teenagers spend less than 2 hours with their parents while the remaining 5 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily.

The remaining 32 teenagers do not engage in drug and substance abuse behaviours. Of the 32, 20 teenagers said they spend less than 2 hours with their parents daily while the remaining 12 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily. A summary of the observed data is presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Teenagers Spend with their Parents Daily</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 2 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predisposed to engage in drug &amp; substance abuse</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not predisposed to engage in drug &amp; substance abuse</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the observed data above, the expected frequencies are as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Teenagers Spend with their Parents Daily</th>
<th>Predisposed to engage in drug &amp; substance abuse</th>
<th>Not predisposed to engage in drug &amp; substance abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 2 hours</td>
<td>More than 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predisposed to engage in drug &amp; substance abuse</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not predisposed to engage in drug &amp; substance abuse</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X^2 = 11.424\]

The above value of \(X^2\) exceeds the critical value of \(c^2 (3.841)\) thus there is a departure from the expectation. The study concludes that there is a departure from the null hypothesis and there is an association between parental absence and teen predisposition to engage in drug and substance abuse.

Parental absence is therefore a factor in teen inclination toward drug and substance abuse. Family background is an important protective or risk factor against drug and substance abuse. According to SCAD (2011) in its situational analysis report on alcohol consumption among high school students, the absence of parents particularly fathers, during childhood leaves children exposed to substance abuse and many other risks. Indeed, as observed in this section, Amato (2005) notes that the partial absence of fathers from home subjects the children to more social and other problems and emotional imbalances which may affect their development.

The study established while parents are generally absent, fathers are more absent compared to mothers (refer to section 4.4.1 above); 67.6% of the teenagers agreed that their fathers do go home after work. On the other hand, 85.9% of the teenagers affirmed that their mothers do go home every evening after work. SCAD’s study (2011) established that 48.9% of the respondents have ever taken alcohol with 18.5% currently taking alcohol, with the highest being among private schools at 22.9%; most respondents (67.6%) indicated that they lived with both parents. It is interesting from the findings that
living with both parents do not necessarily mean that teenagers will not engage themselves in drug and substance abuse.

As observed in section 4.4.7.2 above, the level of parental involvement in teenage activities is low. Staying with parents and spending quantity time with them does not safeguard children from drug and substance abuse. Children spending quality time with parents and parents knowing what their children do and with who increases levels of parental involvement, cushions children against maladaptive behaviours (including exposure to drug and substance abuse) and promotes optimal teenage growth.

Being a period of socialization, drug and substance abuse among teenagers is a learnt behaviour. Social interactionism theory posits that self does not exist at birth but is developed through interaction with others. Teenagers learn taking drugs due through interactions with other peers taking part in similar behaviours. The theory, which also underpins this study intimate that learning, is an interactive process; meaning learning takes place in a particular society, family, place or culture and is mediated by specific social relationships and involves symbolic interaction through spoken symbols or nonverbal gestures and facial and body language.

Further, the study established that teenagers have access to areas where drugs are sold, especially restaurants, where alcohol is sold. Family activities such as parents going out with their teen children to restaurants where alcoholic drinks are increases access of the teenagers to drugs (see also SCAD 2011). It is mainly out of this that some teenagers confirmed they visit such places on their own which again increases the chances of abusing drugs.
4.6.4 Teen Predisposition to Depression and Withdrawal

An average of 67 teenagers responded positively to the study items used to test their possible predisposition to depression and withdrawal. Of the 67, 61 teenagers spend less than 2 hours with their parents daily while 6 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily.

On the other hand, 23 teenagers did not respond positively to the study items used to measure their possible predisposition to depression and withdrawal. Of the 23, 11 teenagers spend less than 2 hours with their parents while 12 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily. A summary of the observed data is presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time Teenagers Spend with their Parents Daily</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 2 hours</td>
<td>More than 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predisposed to depression &amp; withdrawal</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not predisposed to depression &amp; withdrawal</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the observed data above, the expected frequencies are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time Teenagers Spend with their Parents Daily</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 2 hours</td>
<td>More than 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predisposed to depression &amp; withdrawal</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not predisposed to depression &amp; withdrawal</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X^2 = 17.198\]
The above value of $X^2$ exceeds the critical value of $c^2 (3.841)$ thus there is a departure from the expectation. The study concludes that there is a significant departure from the null hypothesis and there is an association between parental absence and teen predisposition to depression and withdrawal.

Available literature reveals that parental absence and lack of supervision which may predispose children to depression and withdrawal constitutes parental neglect. According to Howarth (2007), lack of supervision and guidance is a common type of parental neglect. To Howarth, this involves a failure to provide an adequate level of guidance and supervision to ensure a child is physically safe and protected from harm. It may involve leaving a child to cope alone, abandoning them or leaving them with inappropriate carers, or failing to provide appropriate boundaries about behaviours such as under-age sex or alcohol use.

The behavioural signs of child neglect that teenagers go through due to parental absence mirror those catalogued by Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Children Board$^{15}$, such as over-active, aggressive, impulsive behaviours; indiscriminate friendliness, withdrawn with poor social relationships, wetting, soiling or destructive behaviours, substance misuse or running away, school non-attendance, sexual promiscuity, self harm, offending behaviours. These behaviours are associated with depression and withdrawal.

All participating teenagers were from nuclear families. As observed above, this confirms Collins and Coltrane’s (1991) assertion that today’s family, which is a product of the traditional-modern changeover, has become private, personalized and sentimentalized. Child rearing is thus a private affair and these changes have complicated the society’s response to challenges facing children. Shared social support in child rearing is not possible for the teenagers. The absence of parents further exposes teenagers to

psychological challenges that may predispose them to depression and withdrawal. The increasing physical and social distance between parents and the teenage children means parents are rarely able to identify the warning signs of that predispose teens to depression and withdrawal.

### 4.6.5 Early Initiation into Sexual Activities

An average of 68 teenagers agreed with the study items testing the presence of early initiation into sexual activities. Of the 68, 64 teenagers spend less than 2 hours with their parents while 4 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily.

Of the remaining 22 teenagers who responded negatively to the study items measuring early initiation into sexual activities, 14 teenagers spend less than 2 hours with their parents while 8 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily. A summary of the observed data is presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Teenagers Spend with their Parents Daily</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2 hours</td>
<td>More than 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated to early sexual activities</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not initiated to early sexual activities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the observed data above, the expected frequencies are as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Teenagers Spend with their Parents Daily</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 2hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated to early sexual activities</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not initiated to early sexual activities</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 12.851 \]

The above value of \( X^2 \) (3.841) exceeds the critical value of \( c^2 \) thus there is a departure from the expectation. The study concludes that there is a significant association between parental absence and teenagers’ early initiation into sexual activities.

Access to sexuality education among teenagers in Kenya is low. While teenagers spend more time in schools, the curriculum is lacking in matters sex education. Darroch et al., (2000)\(^{16}\) observe that schools, especially, have been constrained by when they can begin sex education, even if the primary goal is to promote abstinence. In addition, given recent pressures toward increasing classroom learning time for academic subjects, it has become increasingly difficult to find time in the school day to provide health programs, including sexuality education. This is particularly challenging given the important role of the school today as an agent of socialization. In the traditional societies with strong social ties, teenagers could easily access information on sexuality from other kin members especially grandparents (for example Mbithi, 1982). Today however, in the absence of these social ties, teenagers can only access such information from their parents.

Although parental monitoring may not totally deter teenagers from engaging in early sex, it is an important protective factor. In a study by Wang’eri and Otanga (2013) on family,\(^{16}\)

peer and protective factors related to sex behaviour among urban adolescents in secondary schools in Mombasa County in Kenya, students who reported having been monitored by their parents or guardians engaged in all the sexual behaviours investigated including holding hands with their friends from the opposite sex, kissing, touching and fondling, going out to the parks, watching pornography and having sexual intercourse. Wang’eri and Otanga (2013) conclude that the fact few students reported having had engaged in sexual intercourse may mean that parental monitoring served as a protective factor. This is in agreement that rule setting, supervision and authoritative values transmitted to adolescents determine the age and frequency of involvement in adolescence sex initiation.

Parental absence created by the changing structure of families, employment patterns has however, placed constraints on parents’ ability to remain actively involved in children’s lives. From the study findings, it can be construed that teen initiation into early sexual activities is a function of two factors: 1) lack of proper information from schools and parents on the need to delay initiation into sexual activities and 2) the desire among teens to take sexual adventures owing in part, to peer pressures and limited parental monitoring. The study established that level of parental involvement in the teenagers’ activities during the week and weekends is low while access to internet and media socialization among the teenagers is high. As observed in the background section above, parents are the principle interpreters of various cultural issues to their children; in their absence, children bring into life cultures from different environments, including the media and peers, and without caution put them to test (Callahan, 1973). Parents may also be ill-equipped to discuss sex matters with their teenagers. This explains the information gap on sexual matters teenagers experience which is amplified by the absence of natural mentors (parents) who are supposed to interpret the realities for them to facilitate optimal growth.
This observation can be supported by Bandura’s social cognitive theory. According to Bandura, behaviour, environment and individual cognition operate together each influencing the other. It is possible that teenagers are initiated into early sexual behaviours by observing their peers do it or through the media.

We also note too that the target teenagers were from Westlands district in Nairobi. This is an urban site. According to Ikamari and Towett (2007), teenagers’ early initiation to sexual activities can be attributed to the influence of western cultures and urbanization. The process of urbanization and the increasing influences of western cultural precepts on many population groups, but especially the young, are seen to be responsible for the breakdown of traditional customs. To Ikamari and Towett, the increase in premarital sexuality and the increase in unmarried teenage pregnancy are seen by many authors as a consequence of the introduction of "western" values and ways of conduct, which expand more easily in the urban context and through the media available in this context.

4.6.6 Having Problems with the Law and Getting Arrested

Study results reveal that an average of 37 teenagers responded positively to the various aspects used to measure whether the teenagers have had problems with the law. A further analysis of the results show that of the 37 teenagers who have had problems with the law, 31 teenagers spend less than 2 hours with their parents while 6 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily.

On the other hand, 53 teenagers responded negatively to the aspects measuring whether they have problems with the law. Of the 53, 38 teenagers spend less than 2 hours with their parents while the remaining 15 teenagers spend more than 2 hours with their parents daily. A summary of the observed data is presented below:
From the observed data above, the expected frequencies are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Teenagers Spend with their Parents Daily</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Less than 2hours</strong></td>
<td><strong>More than 2hours</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have had problems with the law</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have had no problem with the law</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 2.291 \]

The above value of \( X^2 \) is less than the critical value of \( c^2 \) (3.841) thus there no reason to reject the null hypothesis. The study concludes that there is no association between parental absence and teenagers’ having problems with law.

Parental absence is not a factor in teenagers having problems with the law and getting arrested. Having problems with the law is largely associated with delinquent behaviours among children. Broken homes have been associated with delinquency and children having problem with the law. Given that the study focused more on teenagers from intact families, it could well explain why they have had no problems with the law or even got arrested.
It is also possible that the ‘confining’ nature of the nuclear family environment characteristic of the teenagers who took part in the study may be a reason why the teenagers are not engaging in delinquency behaviours thus getting arrested. This means teenagers have limited opportunity to take part in criminal activities. While establishing the link between opportunity and crime, environmental criminologists argue that opportunities play a role in causing all crime and that crime opportunities are highly specific. It can be argued therefore, that the family locations of the participating teenagers are unfavorable for the teenagers to commit criminal activities. Again, the isolated locations of the homes could not be ideal for the commission of delinquency.

Although the above findings are positive with regard to teenage behaviours, the study did not establish whether the teenagers’ failure to engage in delinquency behaviours with potential to have them arrested is a form of tactical displacement; that is they have substituted one method of committing crime for another or even a crime type displacement where they have substituted one kind of crime for another. This is because the study established that there are associations between parental absence and other attention seeking behaviours for instance teen engagement in physical fights in and out of school.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The overall objective of the study was to examine the impact of parental absence and/or presence on the attention seeking behaviours among school going 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment. The study was anchored on four specific objectives including to find out how today’s parents conceptualize parenting; to examine the social and physical distance between parents and their 13-18 year-olds; to find out the various attention seeking behaviours school going 13-18 year-olds engage in and finally to establish the relationship between parental absence and the attention seeking behaviours among school going 13-18 year-olds.

Six aspects of attention seeking behaviours among 13-18 year-olds namely: Teen cutting classes; physical fights in and out of school; teen predisposition to engage in drug and substance abuse behaviours; teen predisposition to depression and withdrawal; early initiation into sexual activities and having problems with the law or getting arrested. The study hypothesized that school going 13-18 year-olds in middle class urban environment who spend less time with their parents at home are more likely to adopt attention seeking behaviours than those who spend more time with their parents.

By and large, based on the definition of parenting by Brisbane (1988), the study results reveal that parents are aware of what parenting entail. Parents conceptualize parenting as a process that goes beyond the biological relationship between themselves and their children to include role modeling, being there for the children emotionally, physically, and financially and provision of all forms of support to the child from toddlerhood to adulthood. Majority of the parents also indicated that the nuclear family type common in middle class urban environment is very facilitative to the parenting process. Further, the
study established that house helps have become integral components of the contemporary urban family playing a more important role in child upbringing. However, their responsibility in correcting maladaptive behaviours among children is limited; when children experience behaviour deviation, it remains the responsibility of parents to address the challenge.

The study also established that the social and physical distance between parents and children in the middle class urban environment is expanding, with male parents spending less time with children compared to their female counterparts. Monitoring of the children’s behaviours by parents has thus become challenging. Parental involvement in activities that their children undertake after school and over the weekends is generally low. Despite this, the children’s and parents’ knowledge of each other is high.

Chi-Square test results reveal an association between parental absence and teen cutting classes; teenagers’ involvement in physical fights in and out of school; teen predisposition to engage in drug and substance abuse; teen predisposition to depression and withdrawal and early initiation of teenagers into sexual activities. On the other hand, there is no association between the variables and that parental absence is not a factor in teenagers having problems with the law or getting arrested.

5.2 Conclusion

The process of parenting in the African family today is very different from what it was two or three generations ago; today children are being raised in very different family environments. Traditionally, the role of parents in the parenting process in general and parental presence in particular was very important. The farther back we go, the more we realize that concepts of childhood and child rearing have changed dramatically through centuries (Gander and Gardiner (1981). There is a shift from extended families to nuclear families with the family institution becoming increasingly private. Further, child rearing
is no longer a socially distributed role; there is a decreasing level of attachment to members of the kin group. Families are smaller in size, there is an increase in female participation in wage labor and increasing market economy necessitating the need by parents to focus on career and educational pursuits. Above all, time parents spend in home production fulfilling their parenting responsibilities seem to be varying with the opportunity cost of time. Families are struggling to cope with the time crunch which has affected optimal social growth of children.

Children are most likely to be successful if they spend time together with their parents. Societal changes are experiencing changes that have deprived children of the parental presence. African societies and families have been affected by the contemporary changes which have further uncovered children to numerous challenges. The positive associations between parental absence and most of the examined attention seeking behaviours examined in this study attests to this reality. Although the attention seeking behaviours are a result of flaws in the parenting process, they are a consequent of societal changes and their effects are also societal. Society must find alternative mechanisms to supplement the rather flagging parenting process.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for Addressing Parental Absence

In light of the findings of the study and the above conclusion, the researcher recommends as follows:

a. The study has confirmed that parental absence is real and is affecting children. These tendencies will ultimately be costly to society. Due to continued unavailability of natural mentors, there is need to institute supplementary programs, particularly planned mentorship programs, which will augment
parenting process. As a policy intervention, such programs should be integrated into the education system and should utilize both face to face and online platforms to facilitate interaction between teenagers and other caring adults. This will facilitate effective child socialization and cushion them against indulging in the attention seeking behaviours discussed in this study.

b. There is need for a training program targeting parents on effective teen parenting. This should focus on topics important to parents today including effective teen-parent communication. The study established that male parents for instance, refer their teenage children to their mothers for appropriate solution. The training will be important to parents in that they will be able to spend the little time they spend together with their teens to address the behaviour challenges that the children may be undergoing. The training will also offer a platform for experience sharing among parents on effective teen parenting.

c. There is need for capacitating house helps as important institutions for socializing children. The study established that due to increased absence of parents from home, house helps are increasingly playing an important role in child rearing. House helps therefore need training to among other things, on how to identify maladaptive behaviours in children and communicating the same to parents as a strategy for addressing the challenges as soon as they occur.

d. The government should develop and enforce strict mechanisms for ensuring increased parental involvement in child education. Such mechanisms should, at minimum, require termly parental presence in schools to help track child behavior and minimize cases of for instance, children cutting classes. It will also help teachers share the children’s reports with their parents.

e. Parents should be encouraged to explore approaches to promoting talent growth among teenagers if they cannot excel in academics. The pressure to succeed that
parents sometimes mount on their children is a major reason that they (children) are predisposed to withdraw or become depressed. This should be accompanied by government commitment to promote talent growth and development.

f. There is need for sexuality education and also education on dangers of drug and substance abuse in schools. In the face of increasing parental absence and the challenges that school going children encounter as a result, the government and education stakeholders should consider including in the education curricula important topics on sexuality and drug and substance abuse to better equip youngsters to deal with the problems.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Further Research
The gist of the study was to find out the impact of parental absence on teenage attention seeking behaviours. The study findings have provided strong support for the continued research of the parenting process and how it has affected the growth of teenagers. There is evidence from the study that parental absence is a critical challenge to today’s children. In light of this:

a. There is need for further research targeting a larger sample of teenagers both in urban and rural settings. The respondents should also be disaggregated in terms of socio-economic statuses to establish the unique attention seeking behaviours that teenagers in higher socio-economic status families do experience compared to those in low socio-economic status families. In similar vein, there should be equal representation of genders to create clarity on, perhaps, why male teenagers may engage in certain attention seeking behaviours than female teenagers and vice versa.

b. On the issue of time parents spend together with their teen children, there is need to conduct research on not only the amount of time but also which time is more important in promoting teen-parent interactions. This can help parents develop schedules that will enhance the interactions.
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Appendix I: Data Collection Tools

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEENAGERS

Hallo;

My name is Range Mwita, a Master of Arts student at the University of Nairobi. I am conducting a research on parental absence and its impact on attention seeking behaviours among 13-18years old teenagers in Westlands District Nairobi. As a teenager in this district, I am seeking your views on the subject. The information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will help unearth the challenges that teenagers may encounter due to parental absence and contribute toward suggesting alternative interventions on the issue. Thank you for your willingness to take part.

PART A: BACKGROUND

Instructions: Please Tick (√) where appropriate

1. Sex a) Male { } b) Female { }
2. Age_______________years
3. Class_______________
4. Do you live with both parents? a) Yes { } b) No { }
5. Whom do you live with? (Tick that apply)
   a) Mother and father { }
   b) Mother { }
   c) Father { }
   d) Grandparents { }
   e) Grandmother { }
   f) Grandfather { }
   g) Uncle { }
   h) House help { }


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i) Other (please specify)___________________________________________

6. Do you know the full names (3 names) of your father? a) Yes {   } b) No {   }

7. Do you know the full names (3 names) of your mother? a) Yes{   } b) No {   }

8. Do you know the organization your father works with? a) Yes {   } b) No {   }

9. Do you know the organization your mother works with?a) Yes{   } b) No {   }

10. Does your father come home from work every evening?

   a) Yes {   } b) No {   }

If yes, what time does he get home? _______________________________________

11. Does your mother come home from work every evening?

   a). Yes {   } b). No {   }

If yes, what time does she get home? ______________________________

12. a). Are there times that your parents or guardians do not come home?

   a). Yes {   } b). No {   }

   b). If yes to 12 (a) above, how often?

      i) Every day__________________________________________________

      ii) Twice a week____________________________________________

      iii) Over weekend____________________________________________

      iv). Other (please specify)_____________________________________

   c). If yes to 12 (a) above, which class and how old were you when your parents or
      guardians stopped coming back home regularly?

      i). Class___________________________ii). Age_____________________

13. a). Are there times you feel overbooked, (that is, having too much to do than you
      can adequately handle?) a) Yes {   } b) No {   }

   c). Do you lack time to do all you want to do? a) Yes {   } b) No {   }

   d). Do you feel that you are driven to succeed? a) Yes {   } b) No {   }

   e). Are you faced with conflicting demands from teachers, parents and peers?
PART B: TEENAGER’S BEHAVIOUR MONITORING

14. What activities do you engage in when you get home in the evening after school?
   a) _______________________________________________________________
   b) _______________________________________________________________
   c) _______________________________________________________________
   d) _______________________________________________________________
   e) _______________________________________________________________

15. With whom do you carry out these activities?
   a) Mother and father {   }
   b) Mother             {   }
   c) Father             {   }
   d) Grandparents       {   }
   e) Grandmother        {   }
   f) Grandfather        {   }
   g) Uncle              {   }
   h) House help         {   }
   i) Other (please specify)__________________________________________

16. What activities do you engage in during the weekends?
   a) _______________________________________________________________
   b) _______________________________________________________________
   c) _______________________________________________________________
   d) _______________________________________________________________
   e) _______________________________________________________________

17. With whom do you carry out these activities?
   a) Mother and father {   }
   b) Mother             {   }
c) Father

d) Grandparents

e) Grandmother

f) Grandfather

g) Uncle

h) House help

i) Other (please specify)

18. Who examines your academic report?

a) Mother and father

b) Mother

c) Father

d) Grandparents

e) Grandmother

f) Grandfather

g) Uncle

h) House help

i) Other (please specify)

19. Do you visit friends when at home?  
a) Yes { }  

b) No { }

If yes, what time of the week? _________________________________________________

20. With whom do you visit your friends? __________________________

21. Do your parents restrict you from visiting your friends?

a) Yes { }  
b) No { }

If yes, why? Please explain briefly.

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
PART C: ATTENTION SEEKING BEHAVIOURS

22. You go to a party with friends and they insist on listening to a certain music which you are not interested in, what would you do?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

23. a). Have you ever been punished by your parents?   a) Yes { } b) No { }

b). Have you ever been punished by other people you live with at home?  
   a) Yes { } b) No { }

c). Have you ever been punished by your teachers?  a) Yes { } b) No { }

d). What about the police; have you ever been punished by the police? 
   a) Yes { } b) No { }

e). Have you ever been arrested by the police?  a) Yes { } b) No { }

24. a). Do you go out with parents or friends?  
   a) Yes { } b) No { }

b). Are there occasions you visit restaurants to take food and/or drinks when you go out?  
   a) Yes { } b) No { }

c). Do you accompany friends to restaurants where alcoholic drinks are sold?  
   a) Yes { } b) No { }

d). Do you accompany your parents to restaurants where alcoholic drinks are sold?  
   a) Yes { } b) No { }

e). Are there occasions you visit restaurants where alcoholic drinks are sold on your own?  
   a) Yes { } b) No { }

25. a). Do your parents know your friends?  
   a) Yes { } b) No { }

b). Do you have both boys and girls as your friends?  a) Yes { } b) No { }

c). Do you visit them?  
   a) Yes { } b) No { }

d). When you visit friends do you spend at their place?  a) Yes { } b) No { }
e). What about your friends of the opposite sex; do you spend at their place when you visit them?  
   a) Yes { }  
   b) No { }  

26. a). Do you attend school every day in a term?  
   a) Yes { }  
   b) No { }  

   b). Do you sometimes miss out of school?  
   a) Yes { }  
   b) No { }  

   If yes, why?______________________________________________________________

27. a). Are there times you feel deeply annoyed or depressed at home?  
   a) Yes { }  
   b) No { } 

   b). If yes, what usually makes you feel such annoyed or depressed? Please state all that apply.

   i)______________________________________________________________

   ii)______________________________________________________________

   iii)______________________________________________________________

   iv)______________________________________________________________

   v)______________________________________________________________

   c). In case you are annoyed or depressed at home, what do you resort?

   i)______________________________________________________________

   ii)______________________________________________________________

   iii)______________________________________________________________

   iv)______________________________________________________________

   v)______________________________________________________________
Hallo;

My name is Range Mwita, a Master of Arts student at the University of Nairobi. I am conducting a research on parental absence and its impact on attention seeking behaviours among 13-18 years old teenagers in Westlands District Nairobi. I am seeking views of parents whose children have been sampled to participate in this study. The information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will help unearth the challenges that teenagers may encounter due to parental absence and contribute toward suggesting alternative interventions on the issue.

Thank you for your willingness to take part.

PART A: BACKGROUND

Instructions: Please Tick (√) where appropriate

1. Sex
   Male { }   Female { }

2. Level of education
   a) None { }
   b) Primary { }
   c) Secondary { }
   d) University/Tertiary College { }
   e) Other (Please specify)__________________________________________________________

3. Type of employment
a) Unemployed {  }

b) Self-employed {  }

c) Employed {  }

d) Other (please specify)______________________________________________

4. What is your monthly income level (In Kenya Shillings)? Please tick that applies.

   a. Below 15,000 {  }
   b. 15,000-30,000 {  }
   c. 31,000-45,000 {  }
   d. 46,000-60,000 {  }
   e. Above 60,000 {  }

PART B: PRESENT-DAY CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PARENTING

5. What does parenting mean to you?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

6. What family type are you currently living with your children? (Please tick that applies)

   a. Nuclear family {  }
   b. Extended family {  }

________________________________________________________________________
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7. How do you rate the family type in 7 above in terms of facilitating your parenting roles?
   a. Very facilitative {   }
   b. Facilitative {   }
   c. Neutral {   }
   d. Less facilitative {   }
   e. Hardly facilitative {   }

8. How often are you available to interact with your children and other family members?
   a. Every evening {   }
   b. Every weekend {   }
   c. Once in a while {   }
   d. Rarely do I {   }

9. With whom does your teen child spend time while you are away at work?
   a. Grandparents {   }
   b. Grandmother {   }
   c. Grandfather {   }
   d. Uncle {   }
   e. House help {   }
   f. Other (please specify)________________________________________________________________________

10. Do you help your child complete his/her home work?
   a) Yes {   }   b) No {   }
   If no, who helps him/her?__________________________________________________________

11. a) Do you know your teen child’s friends?
   a) Yes {   }   b) No {   }
   b) Do you know his/her friends’ parents?
   a) Yes {   }   b) No {   }
   c) Do you know the child’s favorite gift?
   a) Yes {   }   b) No {   }
d). Do you know your teen child’s future career prospects?
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }

12. a). Does the teen child know what your career is?
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }  c) Don’t know { }
b). Does he/she dream pursuing a career similar to your own?
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }  c) Don’t know { }

13. a). Does your teen child accompany you to church/mosque?
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }
b). Does the child accompany you on a weekend outing?
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }
c). Do you go out shopping with the child?
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }
d). Do you attend the child’s school visiting days?
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }
e). Do you monitor his/her academic reports?
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }
f). Do you buy the child birthday gifts?
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }
g). Do you let your teen child go out on his/her own or with his/her friends?
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }
h). Do you facilitate him/her financially when going out with friends?
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }

14. When the child looks **physically uncomfortable** due to unmet needs (such as electronics, clothing e.t.c) what do you usually do?
   a. __________________________________________
   b. __________________________________________
   c. __________________________________________
   d. __________________________________________
   e. __________________________________________
   f. __________________________________________

15. When the child looks **emotionally uncomfortable** (such as being angry, annoyed or reserved) what do you usually do?
16. How do you pass your parental values to your teen child?
   a. Story telling
   b. Role modeling
   c. Family outings
   d. Other (please specify) __________________________________________

17. How do you correct your teen child’s maladaptive behaviour (such as his/her being violent, absent from school, attempts to self harm etc)?
   a. ___________________________________________________________
   b. ___________________________________________________________
   c. ___________________________________________________________
   d. ___________________________________________________________
   e. ___________________________________________________________

PART C: PARENT-TEEN SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL DISTANCE

18. How can you describe your work and residence arrangements? (Please tick the appropriate answer)
   a) I live in the same house with my teen child.
   b) I live and work away from my teen child.

19. If your answer to 19 above is (b), how often do you visit your child?
   a) Daily {   }
b) Weekly {   }

c) Monthly {   }

d) Twice a year {   }

e) Yearly {   }

f) Other (please specify)______________________________________________

20. How often do you go out with your teen child?

a) Daily {   }

b) Weekly {   }

c) Once in a while {   }

d) Not at all {   }

21. What activities do you engage in with your teen child when in an outing?

a) ______________________________________________________________

b) ______________________________________________________________

c) ______________________________________________________________

d) ______________________________________________________________

22. If you were to make a choice:

a) Would you prefer that you always accompany your teen child to school?
   a) Yes {   } b) No {   }

b) Would you prefer that your parents accompany him/her to school?
   a) Yes {   } b) No {   }

c) Would you prefer that your parents attend your teen child’s school visiting
day?
   a) Yes {   } b) No {   }
d) Would you prefer that your parents assist your teen child in completing his/her homework?  
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }

e) Would you prefer that your house help accompany your teen child to school?  
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }

f) Would you prefer that your house help assist your teen child in completing home work?  
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }

g) Would you prefer that your house help stay with your teen child while you are away from home?  
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }

h) Would you prefer that your house help stay with your teen child away from your home?  
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }

i) Would you prefer that your house help punish your teen child when the child is wrong?  
   a) Yes { }  b) No { }

23. Please indicate how TRUE or UNTRUE the following statements are to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very True (5)</th>
<th>True (4)</th>
<th>Neutral (3)</th>
<th>Untrue (2)</th>
<th>Very Untrue (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>I consider my personal characteristics a shortcoming to my parenting responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Flexibility within my career enhances my parenting abilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>I often have enough time to spend with my teen child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>My financial position is a hindrance to my parenting responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>Support from the extended family networks adds value to parenting process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART D: TEENAGE ATTENTION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR**

24. Does your teen child effectively complete all tasks you allocate to him or her
25. Have you ever discovered one or some of the following behaviours in your teen child? (Please tick all that applies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Deliberate absence from school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Taking part in violent riots in school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Engaging in physical fights in and out of school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Having problems with the law</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Going for outings and engaging in drinking behaviours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Prolonged stress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TEACHER ASSESSMENT OF ATTENTION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG TEENAGERS

1. Do your students sometimes exhibit anti-social behaviours?

2. Please mention some of the most common anti-social behaviours mostly displayed by the students?

3. In your own opinion, what do you feel contributes to the presence or absence of these behaviours among these children in your school?

4. How do these behaviours affect a child’s academic, social and psychological performance?

5. What are some of the issues that arise in school when teens engage in the aforementioned anti-social behaviours?

6. In case of presence of such behaviours, how does the school deal with them?

7. Do you get regular feedback from the pupils/students on how their academic reports are examined at home?

8. What do you recommend to be effective intervention strategies to deal with the behaviours among teenagers?