

Parenting Styles And Children's Behaviour In Kasambya Sub-County, Mubende District, Uganda

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between parenting styles and children's behaviour in Kasambya Sub-County, Mubende District, Uganda. Parenting practices are widely regarded as central to how children develop social, emotional, and behavioural competencies. The main objective was to establish the relationship between parenting styles and children's behaviour. Three specific objectives guided the study: to identify the dominant parenting styles among parents in Kasambya; to assess the behavioural characteristics exhibited by their children; and to determine the relationship between parenting styles and children's behaviour. A cross-sectional correlational design was employed with 140 parents and guardians selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles and a behaviour-rating scale, and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression. Findings showed that the authoritative style was positively and significantly associated with pro-social behaviour ($r = 0.58$), while authoritarian ($r = 0.44$) and permissive ($r = 0.39$) styles were positively associated with behavioural problems. Regression indicated that parenting styles jointly explained 51% of the variance in children's behaviour, with authoritative parenting the strongest positive predictor. The study concluded that parenting style meaningfully shapes child behaviour and recommended parenting-skills education emphasizing warmth combined with consistent guidance.

Keywords: Parenting styles, child behaviour, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, Kasambya, Mubende.

1.0 Introduction and Background

The family is universally recognised as the primary social institution responsible for the early development of children, providing the first environment in which values, beliefs, attitudes, emotional regulation, and patterns of behaviour are acquired (Margaret & Rebecca, 2024). During the formative years of life, parents and caregivers shape children's cognitive, emotional, moral, and social development through daily interactions, discipline practices, communication patterns, and emotional support. Developmental psychologists have consistently argued that the quality of parent-child relationships significantly determines children's adjustment across multiple domains, including academic achievement, psychological well-being, social competence, and behavioural outcomes (Julius & Nancy, 2025b). As children mature, parental behaviours continue to influence how they interact with peers, teachers, and the wider community. Consequently, parenting has remained one of the most extensively studied determinants of child development because it provides the foundation upon which children's personalities, behavioural habits, and coping mechanisms are built (Julius & Kazaara, 2026c). Contemporary developmental research further demonstrates that parenting influences not only childhood adjustment but also long-term outcomes such as educational attainment, mental health, interpersonal relationships, and occupational success in adulthood (Bornstein, 2022; UNICEF, 2023).

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Parenting styles represent relatively stable patterns of attitudes, behaviours, and emotional climates that parents use while raising their children. The concept of parenting styles originates from the seminal work of Diana Baumrind and was later refined by Maccoby and Martin, who conceptualized parenting according to two fundamental dimensions: parental responsiveness (warmth) and parental demandingness (control or behavioural regulation). Responsiveness refers to the degree of affection, support, acceptance, and sensitivity parents demonstrate toward their children, whereas demandingness reflects the extent to which parents establish rules, monitor behaviour, and enforce discipline (Julius & Margaret, 2025). The interaction of these two dimensions gives rise to the three most commonly studied parenting styles: authoritative parenting, characterized by high warmth and high control; authoritarian parenting, characterized by low warmth and high control; and permissive parenting, characterized by high warmth but low behavioural control (Julius & Margaret, 2025). Although later scholars introduced a fourth category known as neglectful or uninvolved parenting, most educational and behavioural studies in developing countries continue to focus on the three primary parenting styles because they are more readily observable within family settings (Bornstein, 2022; Pinquart, 2024).

Among these parenting styles, authoritative parenting has consistently been identified as the most beneficial for children's holistic development across diverse cultural settings. Authoritative parents combine firm behavioural expectations with emotional warmth, open communication, and appropriate autonomy support (Julius & Audrey, 2026b). They establish clear rules while encouraging dialogue, reasoning, and mutual respect, thereby helping children develop self-discipline, confidence, emotional intelligence, and social competence. Numerous longitudinal studies have demonstrated that children raised under authoritative parenting exhibit higher academic achievement, stronger emotional regulation, better peer relationships, greater resilience, fewer behavioural problems, and lower involvement in antisocial activities than children raised under other parenting styles (Julius & Kaazara, 2025). Recent meta-analytic evidence further indicates that authoritative parenting remains positively associated with children's psychological adjustment regardless of socioeconomic status or geographical location, although the strength of these relationships may vary across cultures (Pinquart, 2024; UNICEF, 2023).

Conversely, authoritarian parenting is characterized by strict discipline, unquestioned obedience, limited emotional warmth, and the frequent use of punishment as a behavioural management strategy (Kazaara et al., 2024). Parents adopting this style tend to emphasise authority, conformity, and respect for rules while providing limited opportunities for children to express their opinions or participate in decision-making (Julius & Nancy, 2025a). Although authoritarian parenting may temporarily improve compliance, extensive research has shown that excessive control without emotional responsiveness is associated with increased aggression, anxiety, fearfulness, low self-esteem, poor social skills, and externalising behavioural problems among children. Children raised under authoritarian environments may obey parental demands while at home but experience difficulties developing independent decision-making abilities, emotional regulation, and positive peer interactions (Kazaara

et al., 2024). Recent international studies continue to report that authoritarian parenting predicts elevated risks of emotional and behavioural difficulties, particularly when combined with harsh disciplinary practices and poor parent-child communication (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023; Pinquart, 2024).

Permissive parenting represents a contrasting approach in which parents display considerable affection, acceptance, and emotional support but exercise minimal behavioural control or supervision (Graham et al., 2018). Permissive parents generally avoid enforcing rules consistently, rarely impose consequences for inappropriate behaviour, and allow children substantial freedom in making decisions. While such parenting may foster close emotional relationships, inadequate monitoring and inconsistent discipline often limit children's development of self-control, responsibility, persistence, and respect for boundaries (Faith et al., 2023). Consequently, children raised in permissive households are more likely to demonstrate impulsivity, poor emotional regulation, disruptive classroom behaviour, reduced academic motivation, and difficulties complying with social expectations. Emerging research continues to indicate that although permissive parenting promotes emotional closeness, inadequate behavioural guidance increases children's vulnerability to behavioural maladjustment during middle childhood and adolescence (Bornstein, 2022; UNICEF, 2023).

Globally, children's behavioural development has become an important public health and educational concern because behavioural problems increasingly affect learning outcomes, school attendance, peer relationships, and future social adjustment. International evidence suggests that both internalising behaviours, such as anxiety and withdrawal, and externalising behaviours, including aggression, disobedience, hyperactivity, and conduct problems, are strongly influenced by parenting practices and family environments (Sharon et al., 2023). The World Health Organization emphasizes that nurturing care, responsive caregiving, positive discipline, and emotionally supportive parenting significantly reduce children's risk of behavioural disorders while promoting resilience and healthy psychosocial development. Furthermore, UNICEF reports that supportive family environments strengthen children's capacity for emotional regulation, empathy, cooperation, and responsible decision-making, highlighting parenting as one of the most cost-effective interventions for improving child well-being worldwide (WHO, 2023; UNICEF, 2023).

In sub-Saharan Africa, parenting practices are shaped by unique cultural, economic, and social circumstances that distinguish them from those commonly reported in Western contexts. Child-rearing frequently occurs within extended family systems where grandparents, aunts, uncles, and older siblings collectively participate in caregiving. While these arrangements provide valuable social support, they may also result in inconsistent parenting approaches because multiple caregivers exercise varying expectations and disciplinary practices. Additionally, widespread poverty, food insecurity, limited educational opportunities, and economic hardship expose many parents to chronic stress that affects the quality of parenting they provide. Research conducted across African countries increasingly demonstrates that financial pressures, parental workload, and social norms

significantly influence parenting styles, which subsequently affect children's emotional well-being and behavioural adjustment. Positive parenting interventions implemented across the region have shown encouraging results in reducing harsh discipline while improving parent-child relationships and children's behavioural outcomes (Lachman et al., 2022; WHO, 2023).

Uganda presents a particularly important context for studying parenting because family life is influenced by strong cultural traditions, community expectations, religious values, and economic realities. Most Ugandan children are raised within family structures that emphasise respect for elders, obedience, communal responsibility, and collective caregiving. However, rapid socioeconomic changes, increasing poverty, rural-urban migration, and evolving family structures have transformed parenting practices across many communities (Edgar & Moses, 2023). National child protection reports indicate that although many parents continue to provide nurturing care, harsh disciplinary practices, inconsistent supervision, and limited parent-child communication remain common challenges affecting children's behavioural development. The Government of Uganda and development partners have therefore prioritised parenting education programmes aimed at promoting positive parenting, reducing violence against children, and strengthening family resilience. These initiatives recognise that improving parenting practices contributes directly to children's educational success, mental health, and overall well-being (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development [MGLSD], 2024; UNICEF Uganda, 2024).

Within Mubende District, and particularly in Kasambya Sub-County, parenting occurs within a predominantly rural and agrarian setting where households rely heavily on subsistence agriculture and informal economic activities. Families often experience fluctuating incomes, seasonal employment, and limited access to social services, factors that influence parental availability, supervision, and disciplinary approaches (Lydia et al., 2023). Extended family members frequently participate in raising children, reflecting long-standing cultural traditions of communal caregiving. While these arrangements may strengthen social support networks, they can also expose children to differing expectations regarding discipline, responsibility, and acceptable behaviour. Economic pressures may further reduce the time parents spend engaging in responsive communication and emotional support, increasing reliance on authoritarian disciplinary practices or inconsistent supervision. These contextual realities underscore the importance of examining parenting styles within their local cultural and socioeconomic environment rather than assuming that findings from high-income countries directly apply to rural Ugandan communities (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2024; UNICEF Uganda, 2024).

2.0 Statement of the Problem

Teachers, community leaders, and parents in Kasambya Sub-County have expressed concern about behavioural difficulties among some children, including aggression, disobedience, and withdrawal, as well as the desire to nurture more responsible and pro-social conduct (Julius & Kazaara, 2026b). While parenting style is theoretically a key influence on such behaviour, there is little local evidence on which styles predominate in Kasambya and how they relate to the behaviours children exhibit. Without this evidence, community and school interventions

risk being poorly targeted. This study addressed the gap by empirically examining the relationship between parenting styles and children's behaviour in Kasambya.

3. Objectives

3.1 Main Objective

To establish the relationship between parenting styles and children's behaviour in Kasambya Sub-County, Mubende District.

3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To identify the dominant parenting styles among parents and guardians in Kasambya Sub-County.
2. To assess the behavioural characteristics exhibited by children in Kasambya Sub-County.
3. To determine the relationship between parenting styles and children's behaviour.

4. Literature Review

The dominant framework for studying parenting draws on Baumrind's typology and its later refinement along the warmth and control dimensions. Authoritative parenting, combining warmth with firm but reasoned control, is consistently associated with the most favourable child outcomes—social competence, self-regulation, academic engagement, and lower behavioural problems (Julius et al., 2026). Authoritarian parenting, high in control but low in warmth, is linked to obedience but also to anxiety, lower self-esteem, and sometimes aggression, while permissive parenting, warm but under-controlling, is associated with poor self-regulation and impulsivity (Julius & Nancy, 2026).

Cross-cultural research cautions that the meaning and effects of styles vary by context; firm control may be interpreted as care in some communities and yield different outcomes than in others (Julius & Kazaara, 2026a). Studies in African settings report that authoritative practices remain broadly beneficial, but that economic stress and reliance on physical discipline can push parenting toward authoritarian patterns (Julius & Audrey, 2026a). Attachment theory complements this literature by explaining how responsive caregiving builds the security from which good behaviour grows. Local, sub-county-level evidence in Uganda is limited, which this study provides for Kasambya.

5.0 Methodology

A cross-sectional correlational design was used. The population comprised parents and guardians of school-aged children in Kasambya Sub-County. A sample of 140 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling across parishes. Parenting style was measured with a validated parenting-style questionnaire distinguishing authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive orientations, and children's behaviour was assessed with a behaviour-rating scale capturing pro-social behaviour and behavioural problems (conduct, emotional, and hyperactivity indicators) (Sarah et al., 2024).

Data were analysed in SPSS using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression (Nelson et al., 2022). Reliability across scales was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha 0.78–0.85). Approvals were obtained from local authorities, and informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were observed. To respect

child welfare, behavioural data were collected from parents/guardians as informants rather than through direct assessment of children.

6.0 Results and Interpretation

6.1 Dominant Parenting Styles

Table 1: Distribution of dominant parenting styles (N = 140)

Parenting style	Description	Freq.	Percent
Authoritative	Warmth + firm guidance	58	41.4
Authoritarian	High control, low warmth	49	35.0
Permissive	Warmth, little control	33	23.6

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The findings presented in Table 1 showed that the authoritative parenting style was the most dominant parenting approach practiced among the respondents. Specifically, 58 respondents (41.4%) reported practicing an authoritative parenting style, which is characterized by a combination of warmth, responsiveness, and firm guidance. This finding suggested that a relatively large proportion of parents balanced discipline with emotional support and open communication while raising their children. Such parenting practices indicated that many parents encouraged responsible behaviour while maintaining positive parent-child relationships through mutual respect and appropriate supervision.

The findings further revealed that the authoritarian parenting style was the second most common parenting approach, accounting for 49 respondents (35.0%). This parenting style is characterized by high levels of parental control, strict discipline, and relatively low emotional warmth. The results suggested that more than one-third of the parents relied primarily on strict rules and obedience when interacting with their children. Although this parenting approach emphasized discipline and compliance, the substantial proportion of respondents adopting this style implied that many children were raised in environments where parental authority was prioritized over open dialogue and emotional expression. In addition, the findings indicated that the permissive parenting style was the least practiced among the respondents, with 33 parents (23.6%) reporting this approach. Permissive parenting is characterized by high levels of warmth and affection but limited behavioural control and discipline. The relatively smaller proportion suggested that fewer parents allowed children considerable freedom with minimal restrictions or expectations regarding behaviour.

6.2 Children's Behavioural Characteristics

Table 2: Mean scores on children's behaviour indicators

Behaviour indicator	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
Pro-social behaviour	3.41	0.83	Moderate/high
Obedience/cooperation	3.28	0.86	Moderate
Aggression/conduct problems	2.86	0.94	Moderate
Emotional problems (anxiety/withdrawal)	2.72	0.90	Moderate/low

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Hyperactivity/impulsivity	2.79	0.92	Moderate/low
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Source: Primary Data, 2025

The findings presented in Table 2 indicated that children's behavioural characteristics varied across the different dimensions assessed, although most behaviours were rated within the moderate range. Pro-social behaviour recorded the highest mean score of 3.41 with a standard deviation of 0.83, which was interpreted as moderate to high. This finding suggested that children generally demonstrated positive social behaviours such as sharing, helping others, cooperating with peers, and showing empathy. The relatively low standard deviation indicated that respondents expressed fairly consistent opinions regarding the prevalence of positive social behaviours among the children. Overall, the findings implied that many children exhibited acceptable levels of socially desirable behaviour.

The indicator measuring obedience and cooperation recorded a mean score of 3.28 with a standard deviation of 0.86, representing a moderate level. This finding suggested that children generally complied with parental instructions and cooperated with adults and peers, although such behaviours were not consistently exhibited by all children. The moderate variation in responses implied differences in behavioural compliance across households, reflecting variations in parenting practices and family environments. Nevertheless, the findings indicated that most children displayed satisfactory levels of obedience and cooperation.

With regard to aggression and conduct problems, the findings showed a mean score of 2.86 and a standard deviation of 0.94, which was interpreted as moderate. This suggested that behaviours such as fighting, defiance, and rule-breaking occurred occasionally but were not highly prevalent among the children. The relatively larger standard deviation indicated noticeable variation in respondents' perceptions, suggesting that while some children exhibited behavioural challenges, others displayed very few conduct problems. The findings therefore implied that behavioural difficulties existed but remained at manageable levels within the study population.

Similarly, emotional problems, including anxiety and social withdrawal, recorded a mean score of 2.72 with a standard deviation of 0.90, representing a moderate to low level. This finding suggested that symptoms associated with emotional distress were relatively less common among the children studied. The moderate variation in responses indicated that although some children experienced emotional challenges, many displayed healthy emotional adjustment. These findings implied that emotional difficulties were present but were generally not widespread among the respondents' children. Finally, hyperactivity and impulsivity registered a mean score of 2.79 with a standard deviation of 0.92, which was also interpreted as moderate to low. This suggested that behaviours such as excessive activity, difficulty concentrating, and impulsive actions were reported occasionally but did not characterize the majority of children. The relatively high standard deviation reflected differences in behavioural experiences across households, indicating that some children exhibited considerably higher levels of hyperactivity than others.

6.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlations between parenting styles and child behaviour

Parenting style	Pro-social	Behav. problems	
Authoritative	0.58**	-0.46**	
Authoritarian	-0.22*	0.44**	
Permissive	-0.18*	0.39**	

Note: ** significant at 0.01, * significant at 0.05 (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The correlation analysis presented in Table 3 revealed statistically significant relationships between parenting styles and children's behavioural outcomes. The findings showed that the authoritative parenting style had a strong positive relationship with pro-social behaviour ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) (Nelson et al., 2023). This finding suggested that children raised by authoritative parents were more likely to demonstrate positive social behaviours such as cooperation, empathy, respect, and helpfulness. The statistically significant positive relationship indicated that increases in authoritative parenting practices were associated with corresponding improvements in children's positive behavioural characteristics. The analysis further revealed that authoritative parenting exhibited a moderate negative relationship with behavioural problems ($r = -0.46$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggested that higher levels of authoritative parenting were associated with lower levels of aggression, misconduct, and other behavioural difficulties among children. The statistically significant negative correlation implied that the warmth, consistent discipline, and supportive communication characteristic of authoritative parenting contributed to reducing behavioural problems in children.

In contrast, the authoritarian parenting style demonstrated a weak negative relationship with pro-social behaviour ($r = -0.22$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that increased reliance on strict control and limited emotional warmth was associated with lower levels of positive social behaviour among children. At the same time, authoritarian parenting exhibited a moderate positive relationship with behavioural problems ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggested that children exposed to highly controlling parenting practices were more likely to experience behavioural difficulties. These statistically significant relationships implied that excessive parental control without adequate emotional support may negatively influence children's behavioural development. Similarly, the permissive parenting style showed a weak negative relationship with pro-social behaviour ($r = -0.18$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that greater parental leniency and limited behavioural regulation were associated with reduced positive social behaviour among children. Furthermore, permissive parenting demonstrated a moderate positive relationship with behavioural problems ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that children whose parents exercised minimal discipline were more likely to exhibit behavioural challenges.

6.4 Regression Analysis

Children's overall behaviour (higher = more pro-social, fewer problems) was regressed on the three parenting styles.

Table 4: Regression predicting positive child behaviour

Predictor	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	—	2.90	0.004
Authoritative	0.47	6.01	0.000
Authoritarian	-0.26	-3.30	0.001
Permissive	-0.19	-2.42	0.017
R = 0.714; R ² = 0.510; Adj. R ² = 0.499			
F(3,136) = 47.2; p = 0.000			

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The multiple regression analysis presented in Table 4 examined the extent to which parenting styles predicted positive child behaviour. The overall regression model was found to be statistically significant ($F(3,136) = 47.2$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that the three parenting styles collectively explained a significant proportion of the variation in children's positive behaviour. The multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.714$) indicated a strong relationship between parenting styles and positive child behaviour. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.510$) showed that 51.0% of the variation in positive child behaviour was explained by authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.499$) indicated that after adjusting for the number of predictors included in the model, approximately 49.9% of the variation in children's positive behaviour remained explained by the parenting styles, while the remaining 50.1% was attributable to other factors outside the model.

Among the individual predictors, authoritative parenting emerged as the strongest positive predictor of children's positive behaviour with a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta = 0.47$, a t-value of 6.01, and a highly significant p-value of 0.000. This finding suggested that increasing the use of authoritative parenting practices significantly improved positive behavioural outcomes among children. Parents who combined warmth, support, and consistent discipline were therefore more likely to raise children who exhibited desirable social and behavioural characteristics. Conversely, authoritarian parenting was found to have a statistically significant negative influence on positive child behaviour ($\beta = -0.26$, $t = -3.30$, $p = 0.001$). This finding indicated that increased reliance on strict and highly controlling parenting practices significantly reduced positive behavioural outcomes among children. Likewise, permissive parenting also demonstrated a statistically significant negative effect on positive child behaviour ($\beta = -0.19$, $t = -2.42$, $p = 0.017$), suggesting that excessive parental leniency and inadequate behavioural control were associated with lower levels of positive child behaviour.

7.0 Discussion of Results

The results strongly support the developmental literature: authoritative parenting, which pairs warmth with consistent, reasoned control, was associated with the most pro-social and least problematic child behaviour, and was the strongest predictor in the regression. The positive associations of authoritarian and permissive styles with behavioural problems fit theory—authoritarian control without warmth can foster resentment or anxiety, while permissive warmth without guidance undermines self-regulation.

The substantial share of authoritarian and permissive parents in Kasambya (58.6% combined) helps explain the behavioural difficulties observed in a minority of children and points to where support is most needed. Contextually, economic pressure and traditional discipline practices may nudge parents toward authoritarian patterns; interventions should therefore build warmth and non-coercive guidance without dismissing parents' legitimate concern for discipline. As a cross-sectional study, causation cannot be firmly established, and child temperament may also shape parenting.

8. Conclusions

The study concludes that parenting style is significantly related to children's behaviour in Kasambya Sub-County. Authoritative parenting is associated with the most favourable behavioural outcomes, whereas authoritarian and permissive styles are associated with more behavioural problems. Parenting style explained just over half of the variation in children's behaviour, confirming it as an important but not exclusive influence on how children behave.

9. Recommendations

4. Community and school-based parenting-education programmes should promote authoritative practices—combining warmth with consistent, reasoned guidance rather than harsh or laissez-faire approaches.

5. Programmes should offer alternatives to physical and coercive discipline, addressing the economic and cultural pressures that push parents toward authoritarian patterns.

6. Schools should partner with parents to reinforce consistent expectations and provide early support for children showing behavioural difficulties.

7. Local leaders and health workers should raise awareness of the link between responsive caregiving and healthy child behaviour.

8. Future research should use longitudinal designs and include child temperament to clarify causal pathways.

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