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Parenting Styles and Their Influence on Children's Academic Success in Uyole, Mbeya, Tanzania

Ramadhani Masoud
Department of Psychology, University of Iringa

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Corresponding Author
Ramadhani Masoud

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ABSTRACT: This study examined of parenting styles and their influence on children's academic success in Uyole Ward, Mbeya, Tanzania, addressing two objectives: identifying the types of parenting styles frequently applied by parents in Uyole Ward and assessing the impact of these parenting styles on children's academic success in the same setting. A qualitative approach guided by a phenomenological design was employed, using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to collect data from 12 parents, 8 teachers and 10 students selected through purposive sampling. Data were analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's six-step approach, with findings presented through verbatim participant quotations. The findings revealed that all four parenting styles identified by Baumrind authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful were practised in Uyole Ward, with authoritative parenting being the most prevalent and the most consistently linked to positive academic outcomes, including higher motivation, stronger self-discipline and greater classroom engagement. In contrast, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting were associated with academic difficulties such as examination anxiety, poor self-regulation and progressive disengagement from schoolwork, with neglectful parenting often rooted in structural pressures such as poverty and parental workload rather than indifference. The physical home study environment also emerged as an important factor shaping whether supportive parenting translated into academic benefit. The study concludes that parenting styles significantly determine children's academic success in Uyole and recommends that schools, community organisations and policymakers invest in practical, Kiswahili-language parenting education that builds evidence-based skills while addressing the structural barriers constraining effective parenting in this peri-urban Tanzanian community.

I. INTRODUCTION

Parenting styles refer to the consistent patterns of attitudes, behaviours and practices that parents employ in raising their children, including discipline, communication, emotional support and supervision. The concept was first introduced by Baumrind (1966), who identified the authoritative, authoritarian and permissive styles, later expanded by Maccoby and Martin (1983) to include the neglectful style. Research has consistently shown that these patterns significantly shape children's motivation, study habits and academic performance across diverse cultural and educational contexts (Pinquart, 2016; Wu, 2023). Global evidence demonstrates that authoritative parenting, characterised by warmth and structured guidance, is associated with higher academic achievement, resilience and self-efficacy, while authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting are linked to anxiety, poor self-discipline and academic disengagement (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Pinquart, 2016; Wu, 2023). For instance, Pinquart's (2016) meta-analysis of 308 studies found that students raised under authoritative parenting consistently achieved better academic outcomes than peers from other parenting backgrounds, an effect attributed to greater parental responsiveness, behavioural control and autonomy-granting, while Wu (2023) similarly found that supportive and consistent parenting enhanced students' problem-solving skills, self-

confidence and interpersonal relationships, thereby indirectly improving their academic performance. Across sub-Saharan Africa, similar patterns have been documented, with parenting practices repeatedly shown to shape students' motivation, discipline and capacity to manage academic challenges within resource-constrained schooling environments.

Despite a growing body of evidence on parenting styles and academic outcomes, research from sub-Saharan Africa continues to highlight the influence of socioeconomic and cultural factors, including poverty, parental workload and community norms, on how parents apply their chosen parenting approaches and how these translate into children's learning experiences. In Tanzania, studies such as that conducted in Iringa (Mighay, 2024) have examined parenting styles in relation to academic performance. However, these studies rarely integrate parents' perceived competence and skills at the community level and none focuses specifically on the peri-urban context of Uyole, Mbeya, where family and educational demands are rapidly changing and households of differing socioeconomic standing increasingly coexist within the same neighbourhoods.

Recent studies further point to how social perceptions and modelling within families shape children's academic self-efficacy and learning behaviours (Bandura, 1963). Children who observe parents engaging positively with education are more likely to internalise similarly positive orientations toward learning, while those raised under neglectful or authoritarian environments receive weaker self-efficacy inputs, with direct consequences for their academic engagement (Baumrind, 1966; Bandura, 1963). Parents who demonstrate consistent communication, supervision and involvement are perceived by their children as more competent and supportive, leading to better motivation, study habits and academic outcomes (Pinquart, 2016; Wu, 2023).

Theoretically, this study is anchored in Baumrind's (1966) typology of parenting styles and Bandura's (1963) Social Learning Theory. Baumrind's framework conceptualises parenting along the dimensions of responsiveness (warmth) and demandingness (control), generating the authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful typologies later refined by Maccoby and Martin (1983). Bandura's theory complements this framework by explaining the psychological mechanisms through which parenting behaviours are transmitted to children: through observation, modelling and reinforcement, children internalise the attitudes toward learning, effort and achievement that they observe in their parents' behaviour and that their parents reinforce through encouragement, correction or neglect. Taken together, these two frameworks provide both a descriptive typology for classifying parenting practices and an explanatory mechanism for understanding how those practices come to shape children's academic motivation, self-efficacy and behaviour over time. This dual theoretical foundation guided both the design of the data collection instruments and the interpretation of the findings presented in subsequent sections.

In spite of such evidence, parenting-related academic disparities remain evident among children attending the same schools in Tanzanian communities, including Uyole Ward in Mbeya. Existing literature on the area has focused largely on general educational challenges, with limited attention to the specific influence of parenting styles and parents' perceived skills on children's academic success. For such reasons, this study specifically seeks to fill this gap by examining the influence of parenting styles on academic success among children in Uyole, Mbeya, Tanzania, to generate contextually relevant insights that can inform parental practices and educational support strategies at community, school and policy levels. The study was set in Uyole Ward, Mbeya, Tanzania to address the topic under consideration through the following specific objectives:

(1) To identify the types of parenting styles that are frequently applied in Uyole Ward, Mbeya.
(2) To assess the impact of parenting styles on children's academic success in Uyole Ward, Mbeya.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach to examine and understand the influence of parenting styles on children's academic success among families in Uyole Ward, Mbeya. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth exploration of personal experiences, perceptions and meanings, providing detailed and contextually rich insights into how different parenting approaches affect children's academic outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through face-to-face interviews and group discussions, this approach enabled a thorough examination of the lived experiences and subjective perspectives of parents, students and teachers, supporting the study's goal of generating a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under inquiry.

Research Design

A phenomenological research design was adopted, which is considered appropriate for studies that seek to investigate human experiences, behaviours, emotions and social interactions from the perspectives of the participants themselves (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design facilitated the capture of participants' opinions and experiences and enabled meaning to be extracted from each shared account. First-hand information was gathered from parents, students and teachers regarding the parenting styles commonly practised within the community and the perceived effects of such practices on children's academic success. This was implemented through attentive listening and seeking a deep understanding of participants' shared views during one-on-one interviews and dialogues in FGDs, ensuring that the findings remained grounded in participants' lived realities.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Uyole Ward, within Mbeya City Council in Mbeya Region, in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. Uyole Ward was purposively selected due to its peri-urban character, where households with varying levels of parental education,

occupational status and socio-economic standing coexist within a single community, a feature considered relevant since parenting behaviours are known to be strongly shaped by such household-level variables. Assessments conducted by UWEZO Tanzania (2023) and the National Examinations Council of Tanzania (2024) have documented persistent variability in primary school academic performance across the region, indicating that household-level factors such as parenting styles may significantly influence children's learning outcomes. The ward also contains several public and private primary schools, providing an adequate sampling frame for the study. Despite its active educational institutions and socio-economic diversity, limited empirical research has examined the relationship between parenting styles and academic performance in this specific area, making Uyole Ward an appropriate and under-researched context for the present study.

Population and Sample Size

A total of 30 participants were involved in the study. This included 12 parents or guardians, 10 students and 8 teachers from selected primary schools within Uyole Ward. This distribution was designed to capture the perspectives of those most directly involved in the parenting and schooling process while keeping the sample manageable for in-depth, saturation-driven qualitative analysis. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure recruitment of participants with direct involvement in the parenting and schooling processes under investigation, providing accurate and relevant information capable of answering the objectives of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Simple random sampling was additionally used to select specific schools within the ward, ensuring both public and private institutions were represented.

Data Collection

Data collection instruments, comprising separate interview guides for parents, teachers and students together with a focus group discussion guide, were developed in line with the study's two specific objectives and informally pre-tested to ensure that questions were clear, contextually appropriate and capable of generating data relevant to the phenomena under investigation. All data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). With the assistance of interview and FGD guides, all parents, students and teachers were engaged in semi-structured interviews, while students additionally participated in FGDs comprising five participants each to encourage interactive and collaborative discussion. To document insights from interviews and group discussions, the researcher used mobile audio recording and a notebook for capturing important points, a practice consistent with established recommendations for ensuring accuracy and completeness in qualitative data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

Data Analysis

The collected data were thematically analysed following the six-step method of Braun and Clarke (2021), proceeding from initial familiarisation with the data through to coding, theme development and final interpretation. In Step 1, the researcher familiarised themselves with the data through repeated reading of transcripts and field notes. In Step 2, initial codes were systematically generated across the dataset. In Step 3, potential themes were identified by collating codes into candidate thematic groupings. In Step 4, themes were reviewed and refined against the coded extracts and the full dataset. In Step 5, themes were named and defined. In Step 6, the report was produced, with findings presented through direct participant quotations illustrating each theme to maintain proximity to participants' lived experiences.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study adhered to the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with participants during data collection, methodological triangulation across parents, teachers and students and the use of verbatim participant quotations to ensure that the findings accurately reflected participants' lived experiences. Member checking was also employed, whereby preliminary interpretations were shared with selected participants to confirm that the researcher's understanding aligned with their intended meanings.

Transferability was addressed through the provision of thick, detailed descriptions of the study context, participants and procedures, enabling readers to assess the extent to which the findings may apply to similar peri-urban settings elsewhere in Tanzania. Dependability was strengthened through the maintenance of a clear audit trail documenting the research design, data collection instruments, coding procedures and analytical decisions, allowing the research process to be traced and examined. Confirmability was promoted through reflexivity, whereby the researcher continuously reflected on personal assumptions and potential biases throughout data collection and analysis and through peer debriefing with academic supervisors to challenge interpretations and minimise researcher bias. Taken together, these strategies ensured that the findings presented in this study are credible, well-grounded in participants' accounts and dependable for informing parenting-related interventions in Uyole Ward and comparable communities.

Ethical Considerations

With formal permission obtained from the relevant university authorities, Mbeya City Council, relevant school authorities and local education officials, the researcher visited participants in their respective settings and made arrangements for data collection. As data

were collected, participants were secured with informed consent forms, with separate consent obtained from parents or guardians for minor participants. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence, safeguarding voluntary participation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To prevent psychological or social harm, interviews and FGDs were conducted in safe and culturally respectful settings. After collection, gathered data were treated with full anonymity through the use of participant codes and all digital and physical data were stored securely to maintain confidentiality and trustworthiness throughout the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

III. RESULTS

This section presents findings obtained from parent, teacher and student participants in relation to the two objectives of the study. Findings are organised by objective and illustrated through verbatim participant quotations.

Objective 1: Types of Parenting Styles Practised in Uyole Ward

To answer this objective, parents, teachers and students were engaged in semi-structured interviews and FGDs. Based on the analysis of insights captured, the study identified that all four parenting styles described by Baumrind (1966) authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful were practised in Uyole, with notable differences in frequency and academic consequences.

Authoritative parenting emerged as the most frequently reported style, identified by eight of the twelve parent participants and affirmed by both teacher and student participants as the most academically effective approach. Parent 4 stated:

> I explain to my child why rules are important and guide them when they make mistakes. I do not want my child to obey me out of fear, but to understand why certain behaviours are expected. (Parent 4, April 2026)

Teacher 2 added:

> Children from communicative, involved homes come prepared, they participate in class and when they struggle, they ask for help rather than giving up. (Teacher 2, April 2026)

Authoritarian parenting was the second most prevalent style, reported by six parents and characterised by strict control, punishment-centred discipline and limited emotional warmth. Parent 7 noted:

> When my child disobeys, I punish immediately because discipline must be maintained. Fear is sometimes necessary for a child to obey and work hard. (Parent 7, April 2026)

Teacher 4 observed:

> Some students are clearly afraid of making mistakes. They know the answer but they will not raise their hand. That fear comes from home, from a parent who punishes every small mistake without explaining how to do better. (Teacher 4, April 2026)

Permissive parenting was identified by four parent participants and was additionally noted by teachers in relation to several students. Parent 2 explained:

> I allow my child to decide many things on their own. I think children need to be free to grow. If I am too strict, they will fear me and we will not have a good relationship. I prefer to be their friend. (Parent 2, April 2026)

Teacher 6 noted:

> Some children come without homework done, without their books, without any apparent concern. Their parents love them but do not structure them. (Teacher 6, April 2026)

Neglectful parenting was the least commonly self-reported style, acknowledged by only three parents, yet teacher participants identified it as relatively prevalent and consistently associated it with the most severely academically disengaged students. Parent 10 shared:

> Sometimes I do not have enough time to follow up on school matters. I work long hours and when I come home, I am tired. My children know they must study but I cannot always check on them. (Parent 10, April 2026)

Teacher 7 described:

> I have students who have not had a parent attend a single school meeting. When I try to call, no one answers. These children know they are on their own. It affects how they see themselves as students they lose the belief that school matters to anyone. (Teacher 7, April 2026)

Objective 2: Impact of Parenting Styles on Children's Academic Success

To answer this objective, parents, teachers and students participated in interviews and FGDs. The study identified four distinct impact patterns, each associated with a different parenting style and operating through a distinct mechanism.

The most consistently positive impact was associated with authoritative parenting. Students from authoritative homes demonstrated higher motivation, stronger study habits, greater classroom engagement and superior academic resilience. Parent 5 described:

> My child performs well because I follow up on their studies closely. We have a fixed study time every evening. I check the homework before it is submitted. When there are exams, we prepare together. I also talk to the teachers I attend school meetings. My child knows I am part of their school journey. (Parent 5, April 2026)

Student F added:

> My parents always tell me that education is the most important thing we have. I study hard because I love learning and because I respect what my parents have sacrificed. I feel supported and that makes me want to work harder. (Student F, April 2026)

The second impact pattern was associated with authoritarian parenting, producing surface-level compliance masking deeper academic anxiety. Student G shared:

> Before exams, I cannot sleep. I cannot eat well. I am always thinking about what will happen if I fail. I do not enjoy learning anymore I just want to survive school. (Student G, April 2026)

Student B similarly stated:

> I am afraid to fail because my parents will punish me. I study because I am scared. When I do not understand something, I do not ask my parent because I think they will think I am stupid. (Student B, April 2026)

The third impact pattern concerned permissive parenting, associated with erratic academic self-regulation. Student D explained:

> Because no one checks what I do at home, I sometimes do the homework and sometimes I do not. When I do not, nothing bad happens. So after a while, it starts to feel normal not to do it. Then I fall behind and it is hard to catch up. (Student D, April 2026)

The fourth impact pattern involved neglectful parenting, which produced the most consistently adverse outcomes by eroding both practical academic preparation and children's fundamental sense of educational purpose. Student C described:

> At home, no one checks my schoolwork. No one asks if I have homework or if I understand what was taught. I do it alone if I feel like it. Sometimes I do not feel like it. (Student C, April 2026)

Student I added:

> When I see my classmates talk about how their parents check their homework and celebrate with them when they do well, I feel more like I am doing school alone and they are doing it with someone. (Student I, April 2026)

Across all four parenting styles, the physical conditions of the home environment emerged as an important mediating factor. Several student participants described overcrowded living conditions, limited lighting for evening study and competing household responsibilities that constrained their ability to benefit fully from otherwise supportive parenting, while also compounding the disadvantages already associated with permissive and neglectful parenting.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are discussed in relation to the existing literature on parenting styles and children's academic outcomes, with particular attention to the Tanzanian peri-urban context of Uyole Ward.

Authoritative Parenting and Academic Achievement

The identification of authoritative parenting as the most prevalent and academically beneficial style in Uyole is consistent with the global literature. Such involvement and communication aligns with findings by Pinquart (2016), whose meta-analysis of 308 studies confirms that authoritative parenting produces the most academically and socially competent children across diverse cultural settings. Similarly, Wu (2023) found that authoritative parents who combine high responsiveness with clear academic expectations consistently promote stronger intrinsic motivation among school-aged children. From the perspective of Baumrind's (1966) typology and Bandura's (1963) Social Learning Theory, authoritative parenting achieves academic superiority through a dual mechanism: providing structural scaffolding through consistent expectations while simultaneously building self-efficacy through guided mastery, verbal encouragement and positive modelling. This consistency between the present findings and existing literature underscores the central role of authoritative parenting in promoting children's academic engagement in peri-urban Tanzanian communities. Notably, this dual mechanism appeared to operate cumulatively in Uyole: parents who provided practical academic support also tended to offer the emotional warmth and aspirational communication that sustain children's motivation over time, suggesting that the practical and relational dimensions of authoritative parenting reinforce rather than substitute for one another. These findings are further supported by Dearing et al. (2022), who confirm that both the practical and relational components of authoritative parenting make independent and significant contributions to children's academic outcomes across low- and middle-income contexts.

Authoritarian Parenting and Examination Anxiety

The findings regarding authoritarian parenting are supported by Fute et al. (2024), who confirm that authoritarian parenting produces compliance-based academic engagement in which children follow rules without developing intrinsic motivation or critical thinking. Pinquart (2016) similarly found that while authoritarian parenting can produce short-term compliance, this mechanism is fragile and tends to break down in the absence of direct surveillance, a pattern clearly evident in Student G's and Student B's accounts. This is further corroborated by Troskie (2024), who confirms that authoritarian compliance tends to break down when external monitoring is removed, producing academic engagement that is conditional on supervision rather than internally motivated. From the perspective of Bandura's (1963) Social Learning Theory, this pattern can be understood as a consequence of punishment-based motivation displacing the mastery experiences and verbal encouragement that ordinarily build a child's sense of academic self-efficacy. However, Mighay (2024) notes that in certain Tanzanian communities, firm parental authority may be associated with

academic seriousness, highlighting the cultural complexity of applying parenting typologies uniformly in African educational settings. This cultural complexity suggests that the academic consequences of authoritarian parenting in Uyole are not uniformly negative across all families and that the quality of the underlying parent-child relationship may moderate the effect of strict discipline on a child's motivation to learn.

Permissive Parenting and Self-Regulation Deficits

The findings regarding permissive parenting are consistent with Ren et al. (2023), who confirm that parenting characterised by high warmth and low behavioural control weakens children's self-discipline and academic self-regulation. Akinsola (2022) further confirms that permissive parents in urban African contexts consistently overestimate their children's academic autonomy, resulting in chronic under-supervision and lower academic attainment. Teacher participants in this study observed that students from permissive homes often possessed the emotional security to engage with learning when motivated, yet lacked the self-regulatory structures needed to sustain effort across demanding periods of the school calendar, indicating that warmth alone cannot substitute for the consistent behavioural scaffolding that builds lasting study habits. These findings highlight that addressing permissive parenting requires helping parents integrate consistent expectations into their existing warmth-oriented approaches, rather than asking them to abandon the emotional closeness that already represents a notable strength of their parenting.

Neglectful Parenting and Academic Disengagement

The narratives regarding neglectful parenting underscore that this style in Uyole is often not a reflection of indifference per se, but a consequence of structural pressures including poverty, long working hours and large family sizes. These findings correspond with Kahangwa and Kafanabo (2023), who confirm that structural neglect associated with poverty contributes significantly to learners' academic disengagement in Tanzanian primary schools. Li et al. (2022) further demonstrate that academic disengagement resulting from parental neglect creates a compounding disadvantage over time, as early disengagement reduces the probability of academic recovery with each passing year. The accounts of Student C and Student I suggest that the absence of parental engagement also carries a relational cost, leaving children to interpret their parents' silence as a judgement on the value of their efforts. The strong alignment between these findings and existing literature indicates that neglectful parenting in Uyole is largely a structural phenomenon requiring interventions that address economic and social barriers alongside parenting awareness.

The Mediating Role of the Physical Home Environment

Across all four parenting styles, the physical conditions of the home environment emerged as an important mediating factor shaping how parenting translated into academic outcomes, consistent with Bandura's (1963) concept of reciprocal determinism, which holds that cognitive, behavioural and environmental factors interact continuously in shaping human development. Taken together, these findings indicate that improving academic outcomes in Uyole requires attention not only to parenting behaviour but also to the material conditions within which that behaviour takes place.

Furthermore, a recurring theme across all four parenting styles was the gap between parenting awareness and parenting practice. Across all four styles, several parents appeared to recognise, at least in principle, the importance of involvement, consistency and emotional support, yet struggled to translate this awareness into consistent daily practice because of competing economic and time pressures. This gap between awareness and practice suggests that interventions focused solely on raising parental awareness, without addressing the practical constraints that limit its application, are unlikely to produce lasting change.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is clearly stipulated that the parenting practices of families in Uyole Ward have been influencing children's academic success through authoritative approaches characterised by open communication, consistent guidance and emotional warmth; authoritarian approaches driven by fear-based discipline; permissive approaches marked by high warmth but poor academic structure; and neglectful approaches shaped largely by economic hardship and structural constraints. However, due to experienced barriers such as the gap between parenting awareness and practice, inadequate physical home study conditions, time constraints, cultural influences and limited parental knowledge, many families in Uyole Ward have struggled to translate positive parenting intentions into consistent academic support for their children. Therefore, the study concludes that parenting styles in Uyole are not merely individual behavioural choices but complex socio-structural phenomena requiring comprehensive, community-driven and resource-supported responses. This conclusion is reinforced by the observation that the academic consequences of each parenting style are mediated not only by parental intentions but also by the time, resources and physical home environment available to translate those intentions into consistent practice, underscoring the need for interventions that operate simultaneously at the level of parental skills, household economic circumstances and the school-community environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to address the influence of parenting styles on children's academic success in Uyole Ward, the study recommends that schools and community organisations develop and implement structured, practically oriented parenting education programmes

delivered in Kiswahili and addressing communication, disciplinary consistency, guided autonomy and emotional support as core parenting competencies. It also recommends that parents, teachers, local leaders, social welfare officers and all who are concerned with children's educational welfare be actively involved in parenting education and home-school collaboration so as to collectively strengthen the conditions that support children's academic success. Further studies should be conducted to investigate the longitudinal effects of parenting styles on children's academic trajectories, as well as the role of gender, culture, religion and father involvement in shaping parenting practices and educational outcomes in Tanzanian peri-urban communities.

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DISCLOSURE

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