

Parenting Styles and Behavioural Disposition among Adolescents Involved In Delinquent Acts

Emekwisia, Chukwubuike U.* and Uzoh, Bonaventure C.

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

Received: 11.09.2026 | Accepted: 15.10.2026 | Published: 20.10.2026

*Corresponding Author: Emekwisia, Chukwubuike U.

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.23500789](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23500789)

Abstract

Original Research Article

Behavioural disposition among adolescents involved in delinquent acts may reflect how parental control, supervision, emotional responsiveness and communication are experienced at home. This study examined perceived effects of authoritarian, neglectful, authoritative and permissive parenting on the behavioural dispositions of adolescents involved in delinquent acts. The analysis used 289 valid questionnaire responses and six qualitative interviews from the original study. Results showed that 85.8% perceived authoritarian parenting as making students disciplined, while 5.9% associated it with anxiety and aggression. Neglectful parenting was strongly associated with disregard for rules/laws (93.4%). Authoritative parenting was associated with positive decision-making by 92.4% of respondents. Permissive parenting was associated with antisocial behaviour by 80.3%. The original chi-square test showed a statistically significant relationship between parenting styles and behavioural dispositions ($\chi^2=20.687$, $df=9$, $p=0.014$). Qualitative findings added an important nuance: although strictness was often perceived as disciplinary, excessive control could create fear, anger or reluctance to communicate. The findings suggest that behavioural outcomes depend not only on whether parents exercise control, but also on how control is combined with responsiveness, communication and supervision.

Keywords: Adolescents, Behavioural Disposition, Delinquent Acts, Parenting styles.

Copyright © 2026 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent behavioural development takes place within a social environment shaped by family relationships, school expectations, peer networks and wider community conditions. The family is an important setting in which young people first encounter rules, responsibility, emotional support and the consequences of their actions. Parenting style describes the relatively consistent pattern through which caregivers combine warmth, supervision, communication and behavioural expectations. These

dimensions matter during adolescence, a period when young people seek greater independence while continuing to need guidance and boundaries (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Xiong et al., 2020).

Four commonly discussed parenting styles are authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful. Authoritative parenting combines emotional responsiveness with clear, age-appropriate expectations and explanations; authoritarian parenting emphasizes obedience and control, often with less dialogue; permissive parenting offers



Citation: Emekwisia, C. U., & Uzoh, B. C. (2026). Parenting styles and behavioural disposition among adolescents involved in delinquent acts. *GAS Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences (GASJAHSS)*, 4(10), 1-10.

warmth but limited consistent limits; and neglectful parenting is characterized by low involvement and weak monitoring. These categories are useful for analysis, but they should not be treated as rigid labels for every family: caregivers may use different practices across situations, and cultural and economic circumstances influence how parenting is experienced (Baumrind, 1991; Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Behavioural disposition in adolescence includes tendencies and responses that appear in everyday conduct, such as rule adherence, decision-making, emotional regulation, aggression, responsibility and interaction with peers. These outcomes overlap with, but are not identical to, juvenile delinquency. Delinquency refers to conduct that violates legal or institutional rules, whereas behavioural disposition also captures attitudes and patterns that may precede, accompany or follow misconduct. Examining distinct behavioural domains can therefore provide a more precise understanding than treating all adolescent difficulties as one outcome (Cho, 2021; Jugovac et al., 2022).

Research indicates that parenting and adolescent behaviour are related, although the strength and direction of associations vary by parenting dimension, context and outcome (Hoeve et al., 2009; Pinquart, 2017). A two-wave study of Chinese adolescents found that authoritative parenting negatively predicted delinquency, with mental-health difficulties and association with delinquent peers partly explaining the relationship (Xiong et al., 2020). A longitudinal analysis of South Korean adolescents likewise examined parenting alongside school climate and delinquent-peer association in patterns of general and serious delinquency (Bloss et al., 2024). These findings support examining parenting as one part of a wider social process rather than assuming it alone determines behaviour.

Parenting is also relevant to emotional behaviour. Firm and predictable expectations can help adolescents understand boundaries, but control experienced as harsh or unresponsive may discourage disclosure and open communication. A meta-analysis of attachment- and emotion-focused parenting interventions found improvements in

externalizing and internalizing behaviours, although effects and certainty differed across studies (Jugovac et al., 2022). Accordingly, discipline should be considered together with responsiveness, communication and the adolescent's opportunity to explain concerns.

These issues have practical significance in Nigeria, where schools and families share responsibility for adolescent socialization. The wider study situates delinquent behaviour within interacting family, peer, school and community influences. The present analysis is narrower: it examines respondents' perceptions of the relationship between four parenting styles and particular behavioural domains, rather than estimating a causal effect or claiming that the results represent all adolescents in Anambra State. This distinction is important because survey responses describe respondents' views and do not, by themselves, establish that one parenting practice causes a particular behaviour (Bloss et al., 2024; Cho, 2021).

Evidence-based parenting support offers one possible application. The World Health Organization recommends making evidence-based parenting interventions accessible to caregivers of children and adolescents, including in low- and middle-income settings, to reduce harsh parenting, strengthen parent-child relationships and improve behavioural outcomes (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023, 2024). Such support can emphasize consistent non-violent discipline, active supervision, respectful communication and involvement in school life. Schools can complement this work through counselling, early identification of behavioural concerns, parent-teacher collaboration and supportive peer activities.

Despite international research on parenting and delinquency, locally grounded descriptions of how specific parenting styles are perceived to relate to distinct behavioural outcomes remain useful. The present study examines 289 valid questionnaire responses and six qualitative interviews from the original field investigation. It considers perceived emotional-behavioural effects of authoritarian parenting, attitudes toward rules associated with neglectful parenting, decision-making associated

with authoritative parenting, and peer interaction associated with permissive parenting. The analysis retains the chi-square result while interpreting it as evidence of association, not proof of causation. This study therefore focuses on providing a basis for recommendations to parents, teachers, school counselors and community stakeholders.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design and Participants

The study adopted a descriptive survey design within a mixed-methods framework. The quantitative component involved senior secondary school learners and other relevant respondents drawn from five communities-Awka, Nibo, Amawbia, Mbaukwu and Isiagu. The qualitative component comprised six purposively selected participants: one male teacher, one female teacher, one male parent, one female parent, one male student and one female student. The original study population across the selected public secondary schools was 1,120 senior secondary school students, and a quantitative sample size of 295 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. Of the 295 questionnaires administered, 289 (97.97%) were correctly completed and returned and formed the basis of quantitative analysis.

Sampling and Data Collection

A multistage sampling procedure was used for the quantitative strand, while purposive sampling was used for the qualitative strand. The selected schools were Igwebuike Grammar School Awka, Ezike High School Nibo, Community Secondary School

Amawbia, Community Secondary School Mbaukwu and Community Secondary School Isiagu. Data were collected with a structured questionnaire developed from the study objectives and relevant literature, together with an in-depth interview guide. The questionnaire covered demographic characteristics, juvenile delinquency, parenting styles, behavioural dispositions and mitigation strategies. Face and content validity were established through expert review.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics, principally frequencies and percentages. The original study tested its two hypotheses with chi-square statistics at the 0.05 level of significance. For the present objective-specific manuscript, only analyses directly relevant to the stated objective are emphasized, while the original inferential results are retained where they directly support the objective. Qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically and used to complement the quantitative findings.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and respondents were informed of the academic purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their responses. Participants were not compelled to answer questions with which they were uncomfortable and were informed of their right to withdraw. Interviews were conducted privately and with participant consent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Authoritarian Parenting and Emotional Behaviour

Table 1: Perceived Effect of Authoritarian Parenting on Students' Emotional Behaviour

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Makes students anxious and aggressive	17	5.9

Makes students disciplined	248	85.8
No effect	6	2.1
Encourages responsible behaviour	18	6.2

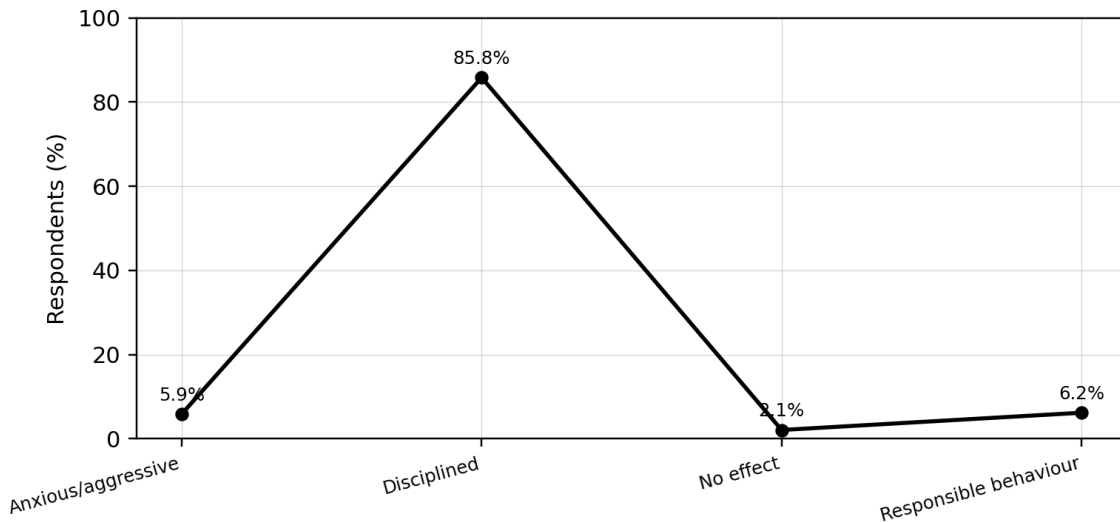


Figure 1: Perceived emotional-behavioural effect of authoritarian parenting.

Table 1 and Figure 1 revealed that 248 respondents (85.8%) perceived authoritarian parenting as making students disciplined. In contrast, 17 respondents (5.9%) associated it with anxiety and aggression, 18 (6.2%) linked it to responsible behaviour, and 6 (2.1%) reported no effect. The distribution indicates a strong perception that strict parental control can produce outward discipline. However, discipline and positive behavioural adjustment are not interchangeable outcomes. A young person may comply in the presence of authority without internalizing the reasons for a rule. Qualitative responses similarly suggested that excessive strictness could produce fear, anger or reluctance to communicate. This nuance matters because adolescent behaviour is shaped not only by the

existence of rules but also by the fairness and emotional climate in which rules are enforced. Research on delinquency trajectories examines parenting alongside school climate and delinquent-peer association, reinforcing the need to interpret parenting within a wider environment (Cho, 2021). The finding should not be read as proof that authoritarian parenting always improves behaviour. Parent education should encourage clear expectations, proportionate consequences and opportunities for dialogue. School counselors can help families distinguish consistent discipline from intimidation. The result is descriptive and represents perceptions in this sample, not a direct measurement of every adolescent's behaviour.

Neglectful Parenting and Attitudes toward Rules

Table 2: Perceived Effect of Neglectful Parenting on Students' Attitudes toward Rules

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Disregard for rules/laws	270	93.4
Neutral attitude	5	1.7
Promotes self-discipline	8	2.8
Encourages responsibility	6	2.1

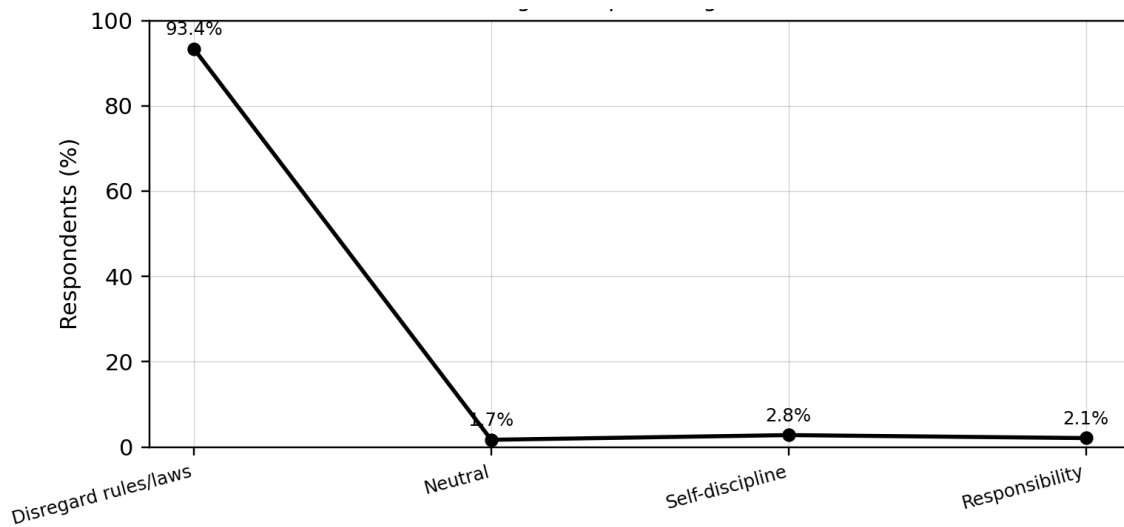


Figure 2: Perceived effect of neglectful parenting on attitudes toward rules.

Table 2 and Figure 2 indicated that 270 respondents (93.4%) associated neglectful parenting with disregard for rules or laws. Only 5 respondents (1.7%) selected a neutral attitude, 8 (2.8%) believed it promoted self-discipline, and 6 (2.1%) associated it with responsibility. The concentration of responses suggests that respondents viewed limited parental involvement and monitoring as important risks for weak adherence to rules. Where caregivers are unaware of adolescents' whereabouts, peer groups or school attendance, opportunities for guidance and timely correction may be reduced. Nevertheless, neglect should not be assumed to be the sole cause of delinquency: peer influences, school climate,

community safety and material pressures may also contribute. Research has found that parenting processes and delinquent-peer association can operate together in explaining adolescent conduct (Cho, 2021; Xiong et al., 2020). The result highlights the difference between supervision and intrusive control. Effective monitoring involves knowing a young person's activities while maintaining a relationship in which the adolescent can disclose difficulties (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). The very small proportions selecting other response categories show strong endorsement of the perceived link in this dataset, but do not establish a causal effect. Parent workshops could focus on regular communication,

reasonable knowledge of peer relationships, school attendance follow-up and consistent expectations. Schools may support this through timely contact with caregivers when repeated absenteeism or rule-

breaking is observed. Responses should be supportive and preventive rather than automatically punitive.

Authoritative Parenting and Decision-Making

Table 3: Perceived Effect of Authoritative Parenting on Students' Decision-Making

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Encourages positive choices	267	92.4
Causes over-dependence on adults	6	2.1
No noticeable effect	8	2.8
Leads to risky behaviour	8	2.8

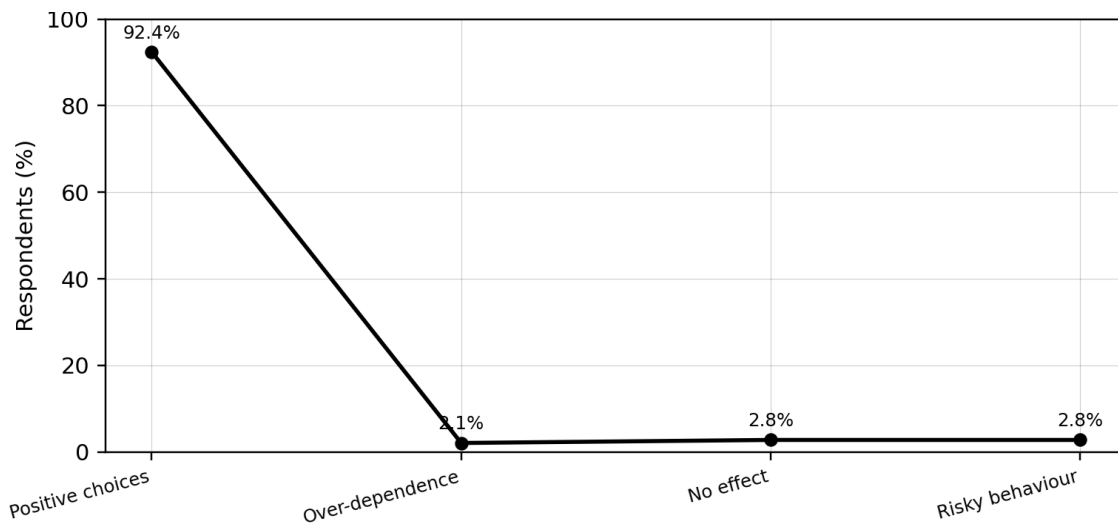


Figure 3: Perceived effect of authoritative parenting on decision-making.

Table 3 and Figure 3 showed that 267 respondents (92.4%) perceived authoritative parenting as encouraging positive choices. Six respondents (2.1%) associated it with over-dependence on adults, while 8 (2.8%) reported no noticeable effect and another 8 (2.8%) linked it to risky behaviour. The dominant response suggests that respondents value a

combination of parental guidance and reasonable freedom in supporting adolescent decision-making. Authoritative parenting involves explaining expectations, listening to adolescents and applying consistent limits rather than relying exclusively on punishment or permissiveness. In a longitudinal study, authoritative parenting negatively predicted

delinquency among Chinese adolescents, with mental-health problems and delinquent-peer association partly mediating this relationship (Xiong et al., 2020). The present survey is compatible with that evidence, but it measures local perceptions and does not independently test those mechanisms. Positive decision-making may be strengthened when adolescents understand why rules exist and feel able to seek help before problems escalate. Parents can use everyday situations-peer pressure, school attendance, conflict and online conduct - to discuss alternatives and likely consequences. Teachers and

counselors can reinforce these skills through problem-solving exercises and restorative conversations. The small proportions selecting negative or neutral options should not be ignored, because parenting effects may vary among individuals and circumstances. The result supports promoting balanced parenting rather than portraying any style as a guarantee of a particular outcome. Table 3 and Figure 3 should be interpreted as evidence of a strong perceived benefit, not a causal estimate.

Permissive Parenting and Peer Interaction

Table 4: Perceived Effect of Permissive Parenting on Peer Interactions

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Encourages anti-social behaviour	232	80.3
Encourages cooperative behaviour	21	7.3
No effect	8	2.8
Encourages independence with minimal guidance	28	9.7

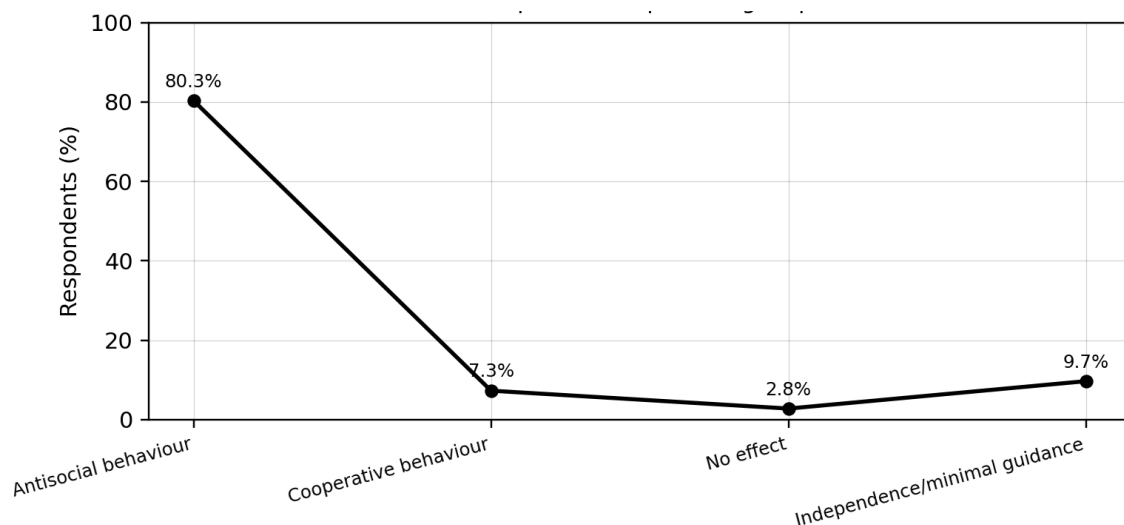


Figure 4: Perceived effect of permissive parenting on peer interaction.

Table 4 and Figure 4 indicate that 232 respondents (80.3%) associated permissive parenting with antisocial behaviour in peer interactions. Twenty-eight respondents (9.7%) viewed it as encouraging independence with minimal guidance, 21 (7.3%) associated it with cooperative behaviour, and 8 (2.8%) reported no effect. The pattern suggests concern about freedom without clear and consistently enforced boundaries. Adolescence is a period when peer relationships become increasingly important, and parental guidance may help young people evaluate pressure to participate in misconduct. The association should not mean that independence itself is harmful; autonomy is developmentally important when paired with responsibility and support. Longitudinal work on delinquency shows the value of considering parenting, school climate and delinquent-peer association together rather than in isolation (Bloss et al., 2024). The WHO also identifies parenting interventions as a way to strengthen caregiver–adolescent relationships and reduce harsh or ineffective responses (WHO, 2023). Parents can encourage social independence while setting clear expectations about whereabouts, school attendance, online behaviour and respectful treatment of others. They should also know adolescents’ friends and provide non-judgmental opportunities to discuss peer conflict. Schools can offer peer mentoring, cooperative activities and confidential counselling to reinforce prosocial interaction. Because the present data are based on respondent perceptions, the findings do not establish that permissive parenting directly causes antisocial conduct. Table 4 and Figure 4 nevertheless indicate a clear local concern about weak boundaries and peer behaviour.

Inferential Finding

The original study reported $\chi^2=20.687$, $df=9$ and $p=0.014$ for the relationship between parenting styles and behavioural dispositions. Since $p<0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result supports a statistically significant association between parenting style and behavioural disposition in the study dataset, while not establishing a simple causal

pathway.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrates a statistically significant association between parenting styles and behavioural dispositions in the study dataset ($\chi^2 = 20.687$, $df = 9$, $p = 0.014$). Among the specific domains examined, 93.4% of respondents associated neglectful parenting with disregard for rules or laws, while 92.4% associated authoritative parenting with positive decision-making. In addition, 80.3% linked permissive parenting with antisocial behaviour in peer interactions. Authoritarian parenting was most often perceived as disciplinary, with 85.8% selecting this response; however, interview evidence cautioned that excessive strictness could generate fear, anger or reduced communication. Taken together, the results suggest that respondents distinguish between constructive parental guidance and parenting practices perceived as insufficiently involved or overly controlling. These results are perceptions reported by 289 questionnaire respondents and should not be interpreted as proof of causation or generalized automatically to all adolescents in Anambra State.

The findings have practical applications for family education, school counselling and community-based delinquency prevention. Parents should be encouraged to combine clear expectations with warmth, consistent non-violent discipline, active supervision and open communication. Rather than granting unrestricted freedom or relying only on punishment, caregivers can involve adolescents in age-appropriate decisions and explain the reasons behind rules. Schools should strengthen guidance and counselling services, establish regular parent–teacher communication, and respond early to repeated truancy, aggression, peer conflict or other signs of behavioural difficulty. Community and youth organizations can provide mentoring and structured activities that promote cooperation, responsibility and positive peer relationships. Parent-support programmes should be adapted to local cultural and economic realities and made accessible to families who face time or resource constraints.

Future research should use validated behavioural measures, include adolescents' and caregivers' perspectives, and examine possible differences by age, gender and socioeconomic conditions. Longitudinal or mixed-methods studies would help establish whether changes in parenting precede changes in behaviour and clarify the roles of peers and school climate. Overall, the study supports a balanced, relationship-centred approach to parenting in which supervision and boundaries are maintained alongside responsiveness and respectful dialogue.

DECLARATIONS

Funding Source: No external funding was received for this study.

Acknowledgement: The author acknowledges the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and all respondents and participants who contributed information to the study.

Data Availability: The underlying study data are available on reasonable request, subject to appropriate ethical and confidentiality considerations.

Authors' Contribution: The authors conceived the study, conducted the analysis, interpreted the findings and prepared the manuscript.

Use of AI and AI-Assisted Technologies: AI tools were used for structural formatting and language refinement. The empirical data and findings were derived from the field study.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Copyright Permissions: All tables and figures are derived from the author's field-survey dataset.

REFERENCES

- Baumrind, D. (1991). The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 11(1), 56–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431691111004>
- Bloss, C., Brown, S., & Sawrikar, V. (2024). Does

behavioural parent training reduce internalising symptoms (or not) among children with externalising problems? Systematic review and meta-analysis. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 33, 2485–2501. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-022-02122-3>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). *Youth risk behavior survey data summary & trends report: 2013–2023*. <https://www.cdc.gov/yrbs/>

Cho, S. (2021). Functions of parenting styles on patterns of general and serious delinquency trajectories: A mediated model of school climates and delinquent peer association. *Journal of Adolescence*, 89(1), 114–127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2021.04.006>

Costantini, I., et al. (2023). Early parenting interventions to prevent internalising problems in children and adolescents: A global systematic review and network meta-analysis. *BMJ Mental Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjment-2023-300811>

Darling, N., & Steinberg, L. (1993). Parenting style as context: An integrative model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 113(3), 487–496. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.113.3.487>

Hoeve, M., Dubas, J. S., Eichelsheim, V. I., van der Laan, P. H., Smeenk, W., & Gerris, J. R. M. (2009). The relationship between parenting and delinquency: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 37(6), 749–775. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-009-9310-8>

Jugovac, S., O'Kearney, R., Hawes, D. J., & Pasalich, D. S. (2022). Attachment- and emotion-focused parenting interventions for child and adolescent externalizing and internalizing behaviors: A meta-analysis. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 25, 754–773. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-022-00401-8>

Kerr, M., & Stattin, H. (2000). What parents know, how they know it, and several forms of adolescent adjustment: Further support for a reinterpretation of monitoring. *Developmental*

- Psychology*, 36(3), 366–380.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.36.3.366>
- Kuhn, M., Gonzalez, E., Weil, L., Izguttinov, A., & Walker, S. (2022). Effectiveness of child-focused interventions for externalizing behavior: A rapid evidence review. *Research on Child and Adolescent Psychopathology*, 50, 987–1009.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-022-00904-6>
- McAloon, J., & de la Poer Beresford, K. (2023). Online behavioral parenting interventions for disruptive behavioral disorders: A PRISMA based systematic review of clinical trials. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 54(2), 379–396. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-021-01253-z>
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). *The promise of adolescence: Realizing opportunity for all youth*. National Academies Press.
<https://doi.org/10.17226/25388>
- Pinquart, M. (2017). Associations of parenting dimensions and styles with externalizing problems of children and adolescents: An updated meta-analysis. *Developmental Psychology*, 53(5), 873–932.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000295>
- Schneider, M. S., Falkenberg, I., & Berger, P. B. (2022). Parent-child play and the emergence of externalizing and internalizing behavior problems in childhood: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.822394>
- United Nations Children’s Fund. (n.d.). *Adolescent development and participation*.
<https://www.unicef.org/adolescence>
- United Nations Children’s Fund. (2021). *The state of the world’s children 2021: On my mind—Promoting, protecting and caring for children’s mental health*.
- United Nations Children’s Fund. (2023). *The state of the world’s children 2023: For every child, vaccination*.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2023). *Global study on homicide 2023*.
- World Health Organization. (2023). *WHO guidelines on parenting interventions to prevent maltreatment and enhance parent–child relationships with children aged 0–17 years*.
<https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/violence-prevention/parenting-guidelines>
- World Health Organization. (2024). *Designing, implementing, evaluating and scaling up parenting interventions: A handbook for decision-makers and implementers*.
<https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/violence-prevention/parenting-guidelines>
- Xiong, R., Li, S. D., & Xia, Y. (2020). A longitudinal study of authoritative parenting, juvenile delinquency and crime victimization among Chinese adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(4), Article 1405.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17041405>