

Assessing Parenting Styles, Impact of Poor Parenting and Challenges in Parenting in the Rural Wututu Community, Southwest Region, Cameroon

Hilaria Lah Pipa¹ | Marisca Amuteng Nih¹ | Didimus Sefela Wirba² | Lucas Bami Agwe³ | Ivo Dang Mbuh⁴ | Harry Fon Mbacham^{1,5*}

¹Department of Nursing, Cornerstone University and Theological Seminary, Limbe Cameroon,

²Department of Medical Laboratory Science, Cornerstone University and Theological Seminary, Limbe Cameroon

³Department of Computer Science and Technology, Cornerstone University and Theological Seminary, Limbe Cameroon.

⁴Department of English language and Linguistics, Cornerstone University and Theological Seminary, Limbe Cameroon.

⁵Department of Animal Biology and Conservation, University of Buea, Buea, Cameroon.

*Correspondence

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Abstract:

Parenting style can positively and negatively affect the development of children. The three major theories in parenting styles include; authoritarian parenting, permissive parenting and authoritative parenting. In the Southwest region, most especially in the Wututu community, information on parenting styles and its impact on children's developments is limited. Thus, this study therefore sought to identify the different parenting styles, the impact of these various parenting styles on the development of children and identify challenges to successful parenting in Wotutu community. A cross-sectional community-based study was carried out in the Wututu community from the 3rd of January to the 20th of February 2025. It involved 115 parents (male and female) who had children between the ages of 0-15 years under their care. The most prominent parenting style was authoritarian parenting (33.9%), followed by free range parenting (23.5%) while the least practiced was attachment parenting (7.8%). The impact of poor parenting included; aggressive children (20%), avoiding peers (16.5%), development of frequent weight loss (11.3%), constantly sick (10.4%) and malnourished (5.2%). The major challenges parents faced in successful parenting were; lack of finance (47.0%), children don't like to study (24.3%), children are addicted to gadgets (24.3%) and the lack of enough time to care for the children (23.5%). Overall, the results suggest a dominance of traditional and structured parenting approaches in Wotutu. Further qualitative studies may help explore the underlying beliefs and socio-cultural factors influencing these parenting choices.

Keywords: Assessing, parenting, styles, impact, children, challenges, Wututu.

1.0 Background:

Parenting style can positively and negatively affect the development of children. One of the hardest tasks to achieve is to have a good and

consistent parenting style, (Chopra, 2014). There are instances of bad parenting that can have lasting consequences on children. Most parents

use their own upbringing as a blueprint for parenting, which is not recommended due to evolution of society and social environment, (De Maeyer, 2016). It is proven that certain practices of parenting are more harmful than they are beneficial to children.

Baumrind (2002) after studying how children and parents relate in their homes, came up with three major theories in parenting styles, including: authoritarian parenting which is a type of child raising that is very demanding and rigid; permissive parenting on the opposite end of the spectrum is the permissive parent or a parent who is not strict at all, contrary to the authoritarian parent, the permissively is extremely responsive to the child's needs and does not enforce many rules or punishment; lastly authoritative parenting, is a parenting style characterized by a combination of expectations and warmth. Authoritative parents present themselves as authority figures and expect their children to behave well but they are also caring loving and responsible.

Every year more than 6.6 million referrals are made to child protection agencies worldwide, (Hoffman, 2012). Poor parenting can lead to neglect and maltreatment of children and in some cases children's abuse. Child neglect is a deficit in meeting a child's basic needs including the failure to provide adequate supervision, health care, clothing, or housing, as well as other physical, emotional, social, educational, and safety needs. In 2008, the U.S state local Child Protective Services (CPS) received 3.3 million reports of children being abused or neglected, (Stokes, 2014). 71% of the children were classified as victims of child neglect. Maltreated children were about 5 times more likely to have a first emergency department presentation for suicide related behaviour, compared to their peers, in both boys and girls, (Nice & Luo, 2012).

A study carried out by Kovess-Masfety, et al., (2016) in France aimed at comparing negative parenting behaviours of French residents from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds, and to investigate the effects of poor parenting on children's mental health, revealed that, caring and

punitive attitudes were significantly different across mothers as a function of region of origin. This association was stronger for punitive attitudes with the highest prevalence in the Caribbean/African group, while mothers from Maghreb were more similar to French natives. Among children of Maghrebian descent, punitive parenting was associated with an increase of internalizing disorders while this association was weaker among children of African and Afro-Caribbean descent.

One study conducted in 4 countries in Africa indicated that, 30% of Africans and 40% of Caribbean parents reported that corporal punishment was necessary to raise and educate children; which was consistent with the proportion of self-reported experiences of physical abuse indicated by their children. Another comparative study of Arab countries suggested that Algerian parenting style was more permissive and authoritarian than what was observed in most other Arab countries, (Gibson, 2014).

In Cameroon, most parents expect their children to be obedient and respect cultural norms as well as respecting elders while exercising social responsibility and social competence at the early age (Yovsi, 2014). The impact of this parenting styles on the children have not been evaluated in most rural settings in Cameroon. In the South West region, most especially in the Wututu community, information on parenting styles and its impact on children's developments is limited. This study therefore sought to identify the different parenting styles, the impact of these various parenting styles on the development of children and identify challenges to successful parenting in Wututu community.

2.0 Materials and method:

2.1 Study Area:

Wututu is a rural village located in the Fako Division of the Southwest Region of Cameroon, falling under the Buea municipality. The village lies at an altitude of approximately 351 meters above sea level and had an estimated population of 827 as of the 2005 census (Mapcarta, 2024).

The primary occupation of the Wututu community is subsistence agriculture. Most households rely on farming for both food and income, cultivating crops such as cocoa, cassava, maize, plantains, and vegetables. In addition, some residents engage in small-scale palm oil processing and fishing in nearby streams and coastal areas (Project House, 2024). This dependence on farming aligns with the rural nature of the area and the fertile volcanic soils found in the Fako Division. Parental life in Wututu is deeply rooted in traditional African family structures. Families are typically extended, with children often raised by a combination of parents, grandparents, and other relatives. Parents involve children in daily farm work from an early age, helping to pass on agricultural knowledge and instill a strong work ethic (Project House, 2024). The social upbringing emphasizes communal values such as respect for elders, shared responsibility, and cultural pride, often expressed through traditional music, dance, and storytelling. Additionally, Christianity plays a significant role in the community, with churches acting as centers for both spiritual and moral education. Despite these strong traditional systems, the community has faced challenges such as land disputes, which have sometimes impacted family and community cohesion. These issues are often addressed through community-based conflict resolution strategies involving elders and local leaders (Project House, 2024).

2.2 Study Design

This study was a cross-sectional community-based carried out in the Wututu community from the 3rd of January to the 20th of February 2025.

2.3 Study Population

This study population involved fathers and mothers living in the Wututu community at the time of data collection.

2.3.1 Inclusion criteria:

- Parents who had children between the ages of 0 to 15 years under their care at the time of data collection.
- Must have signed the informed concern form.

2.3.1 Exclusion criteria

- Parents without children under their care
- Parents with children under their care but did not sign the inform concern form

2.4 Sampling tool and technique

A pre-tested semi-structural questionnaire was used to collect data from parents who had children between 0-15 years, under their care. The questionnaire was written in English language. The Principal investigator verbally translated the questions on the questionnaire to pidgin language when the participant couldn't understand English language. The questionnaire sought to provide information about, demography, parenting styles, impact and challenges of parenting in the Wututu community. To note, a simple random sampling technique was used to collect research data from

2.5 Data analysis

The data collected was entered, cleaned and analysed using SPSS version 23.0. Descriptive statistics was used to determine proportions and the results were presented on figures and tables.

2.6 Ethical consideration

Administrative authorization was obtained from Cornerstone University and Theological Seminary before data collection was initiated. This authorization was presented to the quarter head of the Wututu community who then issued an authorization for data to be obtained in the community. All participants were served an informed concern form and were allowed to participate only their concern was given. Participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any point if he or she felt uncomfortable. All data collected was kept confidential by the principal investigator and it was used only for the purpose of the research.

3.0 Results:

3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the study population

This study involved 115 fathers and mothers who consented and had children between 0-15 years under their care. From descriptive statistical

analysis, majority of the participants were females (52.2%) and between the age-group of 21-30 years (32.2%). Also, most of the participants were single (70.9%) and had secondary education

(42.6%). Additionally most of the participants did farming (43.5%) as a job (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants

FACTOR	Variables	Frequency (N)	Percentages (%)
Sex	Male	55	47.8%
	Female	60	52.2 %
Age Group (Years)	15-20	6	5.2%
	21-30	37	32.2%
	31-40	29	25.2%
	41-50	25	21.7 %
	51-59	15	13.0%
	60 and above	3	2.6%
Marital status	Single	70	60.9%
	Married	45	39.1%
Level of education	No formal education	17	14.8%
	Primary level	37	32.2%
	Secondary level	49	42.6%
	Tertiary level	12	10.4%
Occupation	Student	12	10.4
	Business	40	34.8
	Farming	50	43.5
	Civil servant	13	11.3
Number of children	1-2	65	56.5
	3-5	35	30.4
	6 and above	15	13.1

3.2 Parenting styles in Wotutu community

This study was meant to determine the different parenting styles that parents in the Wututu community employ in bringing up their children. From statistical analysis, it was revealed that the

most prominent parenting style employed by these parents was authoritarian parenting (33.9%, 39/115), followed by free range parenting (23.5%, 27/115) while the least practiced was attachment parenting (7.8%, 9/115) (Figure 1).

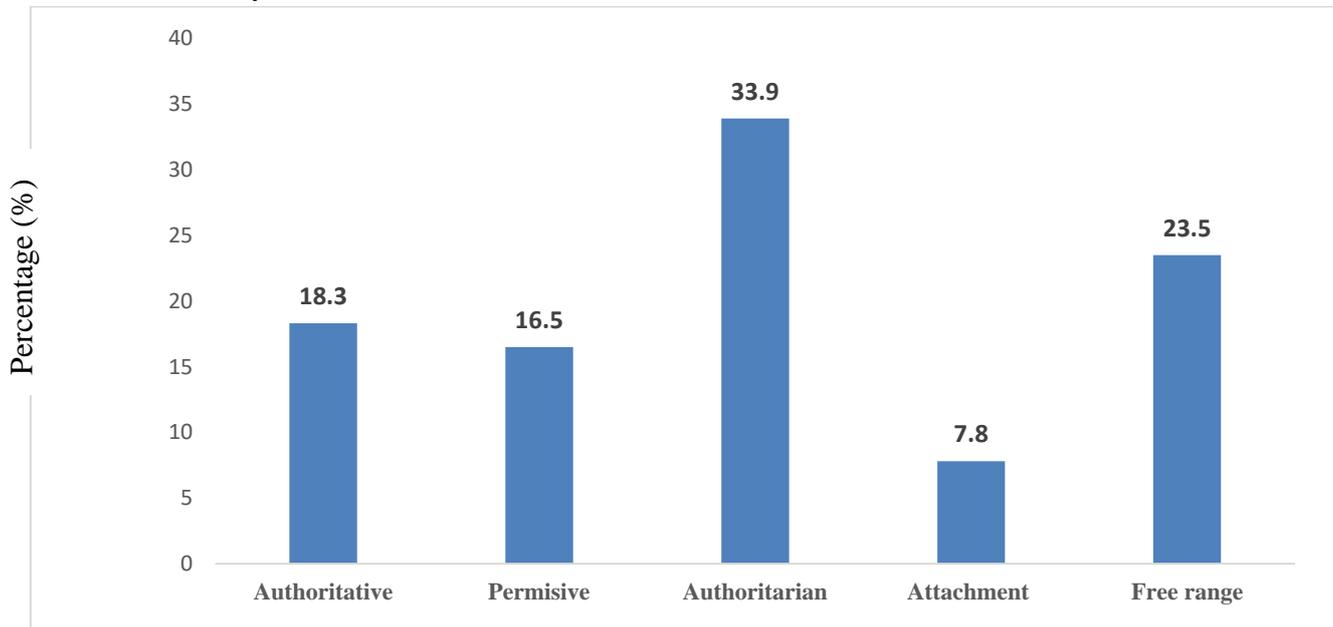


Figure 1: Parenting styles employed by parents in the Wututu community

3.3 The impact of poor parenting on children in the Wututu community

The study further assessed the impact of poor parenting on the children in the Wututu community. Findings from this study showed that, most children who are poorly guided by their

parents turn to be aggressive (20%, 23/115), don't love to associate with other children (16.5%, 19/115), develop frequent weight loss (11.3%, 13/115) and are constantly sick (10.4%, 12/115). A few of the participants revealed that children without parental guidance are always looking malnourished (5.2%).

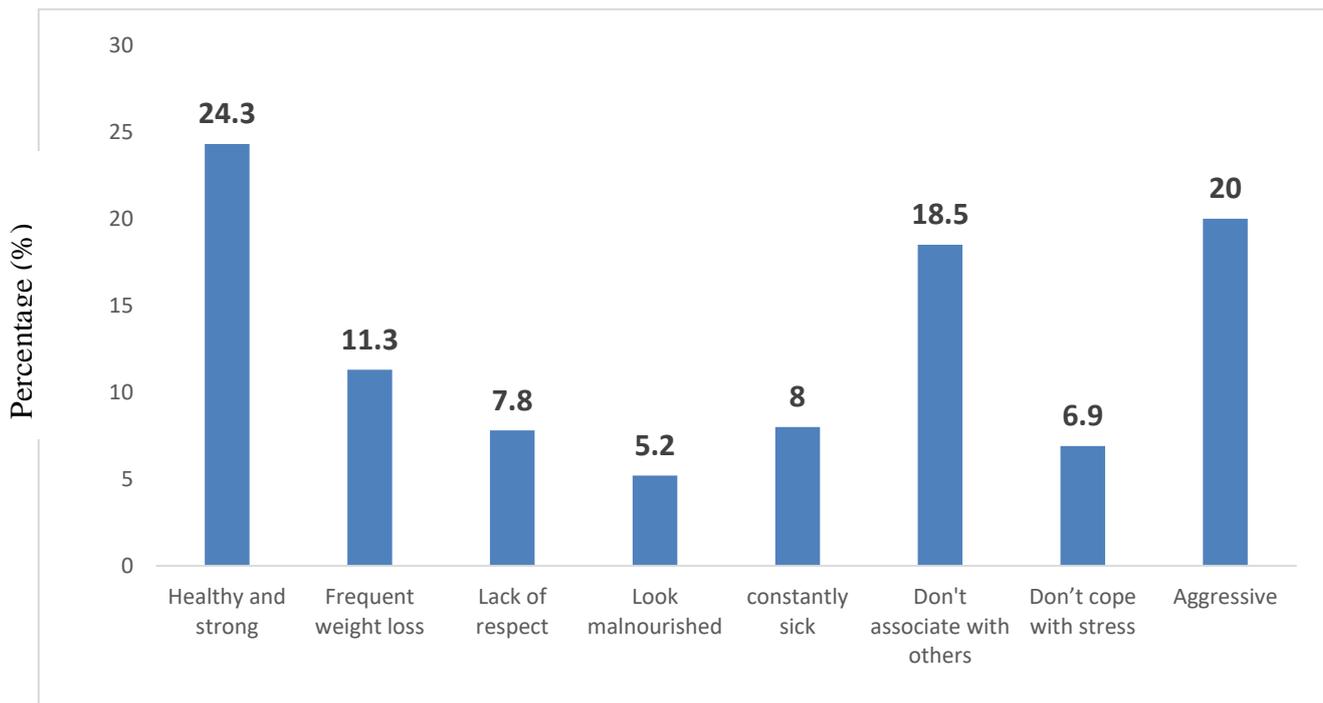


Figure 2: Negative impact of Poor parenting on children in the Wututu Community

3.4 Challenges faced by parents during parenting in Wututu Community

Table 2 presents the challenges parents face in order to guide their children as they grow up. From statistical analysis, the highest challenges that these parents face are; lack of finance (47.0%), children don't like to study (24.3%),

children are addicted to gadgets (24.3%) and the parents complain that because of their jobs and commitments, the lack of enough time to care for the children (23.5%). the least of the challenges were, children being aggressive and violent (7.0%), have poor eating habits (6.1%) and they lacked the knowledge to take care of their children (5.2%).

Table 2: Possible challenges parents face when carrying out parenting

CHALLENGES	RESPONSES			
	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Children do not obey	39	33.9%	76	66.1%
Rivalry among children	12	10.4%	103	89.6%
Children are aggressive and violent	08	7.0%	107	93.0%
Children do not like to study	28	24.3%	87	75.7%
Children have poor eating habit	07	6.1%	108	93.9%
Children are addicted to gadget	28	24.3%	87	75.7%
Lack of finances to take care of the children	54	47.0%	61	53.0%
Little knowledge about care of children	06	5.2%	109	94.8%
Lack of time to care for children	27	23.5%	88	76.5%

4.0 Discussion:

This current study was meant to identify the different parenting styles, the impact of poor parenting on children and to evaluate the various challenges faced by the parents in the Wututu community when carrying out parenting.

The findings of this study indicate that authoritarian parenting is the most commonly employed parenting style in the Wututu community, accounting for 33.9% (39 out of 115) of respondents. This style is characterized by strict rules, high expectations, and low responsiveness to the emotional needs of children (Baumrind, 1966). Its predominance in Wututu may be

attributed to cultural norms that emphasize respect for authority and discipline, which are common in many African societies (Kagitcibasi, 2005). However, while authoritarian parenting may foster obedience, research has shown that it can also lead to lower self-esteem and reduced social competence in children (Lamborn *et al.*, 1991).

Free-range parenting, the second most prevalent style at 23.5% (27/115), is marked by granting children more independence while still ensuring their safety. This approach encourages the development of autonomy and problem-solving skills (Skenazy, 2009). The relatively high occurrence of this style may suggest a shift among

some parents in Wututu toward more liberal and developmentally supportive parenting practices, possibly influenced by increased exposure to global parenting trends and education.

On the other hand, attachment parenting, which emphasizes emotional bonding, empathy, and physical closeness (Sears & Sears, 2001), was the least practiced style at only 7.8% (9/115). This low percentage could be due to socio-economic constraints that limit the time and resources parents can dedicate to intensive parenting practices. It may also reflect a cultural orientation where parenting roles are distributed among extended family members, reducing the emphasis on one-on-one attachment (Nsamenang, 1992).

Furthermore, the findings of this study underscore the detrimental impact of poor parenting on children's behavioural, social, and physical development within the Wututu community. Notably, 20% of the respondents identified aggression as a dominant behaviour among children lacking proper parental guidance. This observation aligns with the findings of Stormshak et al. (2000) who noted that children who experience inconsistent discipline or emotional neglect are more prone to display aggressive and antisocial behaviours.

Additionally, the study revealed that 16.5% of the children showed a reluctance to associate with peers, indicating social withdrawal. This may result from inadequate emotional bonding and communication within the home, which are essential for the development of social skills and emotional security (Baumrind, 1991). Children raised in environments lacking warmth and affection often struggle with peer relationships and exhibit low self-esteem (Hart *et al.*, 2003).

The physical health of children was also found to be compromised. Reports of frequent weight loss (11.3%) and recurrent sickness (10.4%) may be attributed to neglect in areas such as nutrition, hygiene, and access to healthcare. These findings are consistent with studies by Black and Drennen, (2014), which emphasize that poor parental care and neglect can lead to stunted growth, increased

vulnerability to infections, and developmental delays.

More so, a smaller but significant percentage (5.2%) of participants noted signs of malnourishment among children with little or no parental guidance. This supports the assertion by Inbaraj et al. (2020) that the absence of parental involvement in feeding and health practices is closely linked to malnutrition and underdevelopment in children, especially in low-income settings.

The findings from Table 2 indicate several significant challenges faced by parents in the Wututu Community as they navigate the complex task of raising their children. Foremost among these is the issue of financial constraints, with nearly half (47.0%) of the parents citing lack of finance as a major hindrance. This is consistent with previous studies which have shown that economic hardship greatly limits parents' ability to provide quality education, healthcare, and emotional support to their children (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Financial challenges often result in increased stress, reduced parental involvement, and difficulty in meeting the child's basic needs (Conger & Donnellan, 2007).

Additionally, behavioral and motivational issues among children emerged as significant concerns. About 24.3% of parents reported that their children do not like to study, which may be attributed to poor academic motivation or lack of effective learning environments at home. This aligns with the findings of Eccles and Harold (1993), who emphasized that parental involvement and home support are crucial in fostering positive academic attitudes in children.

A growing challenge in modern parenting is children's addiction to electronic gadgets, also reported by 24.3% of parents in this study. Prolonged screen time has been linked to negative outcomes such as poor academic performance, reduced physical activity, and behavioral issues (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Parents also expressed concerns about their limited availability due to work-related commitments, with 23.5%

stating they do not have enough time to care for their children. Time poverty among working parents can diminish opportunities for bonding, supervision, and guidance, thereby impacting children's social and emotional development (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003).

On the lower end of the scale, fewer parents reported issues such as children's aggression and violence (7.0%), poor eating habits (6.1%), and a lack of parenting knowledge (5.2%). While these are less frequently mentioned, they still represent critical areas for intervention, especially as aggression and unhealthy eating behaviours can have long-term psychological and health consequences (Repetti, Taylor, & Seeman, 2002).

4.1 Conclusions:

Overall, the results suggest a dominance of traditional and structured parenting approaches in Wututu, while also highlighting emerging trends toward more autonomy-supportive practices. Also, the data collected from the Wututu community demonstrate that poor parenting can have lasting consequences on a child's psychological, social, and physical well-being. More so, these findings underscore the multifaceted nature of parenting challenges in the Wututu Community.

4.2 Recommendations:

- Further qualitative studies may help explore the underlying beliefs and socio-cultural factors influencing these parenting choices.
- There is a clear need for community-based interventions and parental support programs aimed at equipping parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide holistic care for their children.
- Interventions aimed at improving financial support, enhancing parental education, and promoting work-life balance could significantly alleviate some of these burdens and contribute to healthier family dynamics.

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Author contributions:

HFM conceived, designed, supervised the study and major contributions and performed statistical analysis and drafted manuscript, MAN participated in designing the projected and carried out data collection in the field. HLP, DSW and LBA contributed in the revision of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Availability of data and materials:

All datasets generated and analyzed during the study are presented in the paper

Competing interests:

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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