

Parenting Practices as Predictors of Problem Behaviours among Form Two Students in Embu County, Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose: Problematic behavior in high school is a problem that needs to be addressed. The few studies done have not yet concluded what is the major predictor of problem behaviours in secondary schools. This study focused on parenting practices as predictors of problem behaviour among form two students in Mbeere South Sub-County, Embu County. The research was anchored on social learning theory.

Methodology: A correlational research design was employed in this study. The study population consisted of 18-day schools and 14 boarding schools in Mbeere South Sub County. The target respondents were 8822 form two students. A sample size of 383 students was selected using simple random sampling. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis.

Results: The results showed that there is a negative and significant relationship between parenting practices and problem behaviour.

Conclusion: The study concluded that parenting practices such as parental behavioural control, parental psychological control, parental warmth, and parental acceptance are negative predictors of problem behaviour of students. It was suggested that parents should strive to express parental warmth to their children. Parents should also express acceptance to their children by way of helping them manage stress and problem-solving, helping them with things they are unable to do, and complimenting them. Further, parents are advised not to express too much control over their children.

Keywords: *Parenting practices, parental control, parental warmth, parental acceptance and problem Behaviours*

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1.0 Introduction

Globally, adolescent problem behaviour has been acknowledged as one of the most common problems in institutions of learning. The American government started a welfare system to control problem behaviours among students in 2006. Interestingly, with all the efforts statistics from the center of Behavioural Health Statistics and Quality showed that 2.3 million from the age of 12-17 mainly secondary school students had been involved in substance abuse. This shows that despite the efforts that the USA has tried to enforce, the efforts to control the behavioural problems have not yet come to a good result (Monda et al., 2021).

In South Africa, about 5.8 percent of the population over the age of 15 are addicted to alcohol and show evidence of abuse of other drugs or substances. Middle school students are heavily involved in drug and substance abuse, which significantly affects their performance (Peltzer & Phaswana, 2019). However, Mpiiso (2016) found that several punishment methods were used to punish students in cases of indiscipline that degraded dignity and damaged children's self-esteem and creativity. This greatly affects their academic performance.

For instance, the government of Uganda prioritizes education as one of the social pillars of its Vision 2030, which has helped Uganda become a middle-income nation. Secondary school is extensively supported as a sign of commitment, which raises enrollment and retention rates. Drug and substance abuse, however, appears and tends to thwart these noble steps, discourages students from learning, and then destroys the school children on whom the government depends to take the economy to the next level (Deborah, 2017). There have also been common cases of student strikes in secondary schools in Uganda which have greatly affected students' performance. For example, in 2018 there was a fire accident that happened at Buddo Primary School, in Uganda, which caused the deaths of twenty-one students (Hirano, 2019).

In Kenya, the problem behaviours of students were very high. It brought a lot of worries and threats (Kariuki & Aloka, 2014). Recently, students were burning schools, violence whereby the students are attacking teachers, violence between peer to peer, boy-girl relationships, and also substance abuse are common in all schools. Monda et al. (2021) show that 37% of secondary students have engaged in sexual behaviours, and 36 % of secondary girls have given birth. In 2001, 240 cases of strikes were documented, while in 2008 there were 360 cases. In all these cases, the youth became possessed by burning and destroying their institutions. According to Aluanga (2008), a third grader at Nairobi's Upper Hill School died in a fire believed to have been caused by student riots at the facility in 2008. In 2017 fire burnt down a dormitory and left seven students dead and others injured at Moi Girls Nairobi. Therefore, this is evidence that it was necessary to maintain good behavior in secondary schools, especially among secondary school students in Mbeere South Sub County who are likely to be affected by Miraa activities carried out by their parents as well as social activities done by fellow students in the school environment. More than 40% of secondary schools were burnt in 2021 in Mbeere South Sub County. This raised an alarm about what the problem could be. Mbeere South is a constituency in Embu County, Kenya. It has five wards; Mwea, Makima, South Mbeti, Mavuria and Kiambere. This sub-county has 18-day schools and 14 boarding schools.

1.1 Problem Statement

Problematic behavior in high school is a problem that needs to be addressed. The few studies done have not yet concluded what is the major predictor of problem behaviours in secondary schools. Thernlund and Samuelsson (2016) argue that parental support significantly relates to a child's behaviour. Odoy (2018) observes that teacher-peer support significantly correlates with learning behaviour. However, problem behaviours demonstrated by students including truancy, burning out of school, aggression, and substance abuse are a major challenge (Kimiti & Mwinzi, 2016). More than 40% of schools in Mbeere South were involved in the burning of schools in 2021 (Embu County Director of Education, 2021). Noting that problem behaviour is a concern globally, there is a need to get to the deeper roots of problem behaviour locally (Njagi, 2019).

At the local level, there has been little research to determine the extent to which parenting practices and social support predict student behavior problems. Taylor et al. (2015) study was conducted in Mexico and not Kenya, thus presenting a contextual gap. Kemunto's (2016) study

used a descriptive research design, which is inappropriate for determining how variables are related to one another. There is a methodological gap as a result. The study by Ansong et al. (2017) revealed a conceptual gap since it did not emphasize problem behavior as the dependent variable. This study intended to fill the existing research gaps by investigating whether parenting practices predict problem behaviour among form two students in Mbeere South Sub-County, Embu County.

1.2 Research Hypothesis

H_{a1} : Parenting practices significantly predict problem behaviour of form two students.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Albert Bandura (1997) developed the social learning theory. The social learning theory assumes that learning is achieved by observing modeled behaviour. Bandura argues that observation and imitation increase adolescents' opportunities to learn and acquire new behaviours. The theory was relevant to this study since it focuses on psychosocial issues including opinions, beliefs, and relationships of groups. In this study, the focus was on the role of parenting practices and perceived social support in predicting problem behaviour among secondary school learners. Based on the social learning theory, this study makes a theoretical prediction that relationships (parenting practices) model the behaviour of students. The theory, therefore, underpins the link between parenting practices and problem behaviour.

2.2 Empirical Review

Researchers Ingulia et al. (2020) studied how parental control and coping mechanisms affect teenage problem behavior. To better understand how parental supervision, psychological control, and coping mechanisms are considered to play a part in teenage behavior issues connected to anxiety and drinking, this study set out to examine these issues. The chosen research design was descriptive. According to the findings of the path analysis, coping mechanisms acted as moderators in the association between parental psychological control and adolescent anxiety and drinking. Furthermore, it has been found that parental psychological control and anxiety have a direct positive association, whereas parental monitoring and drinking behavior have a direct negative relationship. The findings of this study offer a thorough model illustrating how various coping mechanisms can account for the psychological mechanisms underlying the association between the two forms of parental control (psychological control and supervision) and the internalizing and externalizing forms of adolescent disability. This study's scope gap was caused by its concentration on all adolescent children. Only students in secondary schools were the subject of the current investigation.

Using data from the Australian Temperament Study, Krug et al. (2016) investigated the impact of bad parenting and supervision on eating disorders in mid-adolescence. This investigation is ongoing. Adolescent participants reported eating disorders using the Eating Disorder Inventory (EDI) subscale for eating disorders and bulimia as well as an additional scale for body dissatisfaction. Parent participants surveyed parenting techniques in late childhood. In boys, eating disorders were not linked to parental affection, supervision, or interaction. Low parental (self) warmth is linked to bulimic behavior in girls. In contrast, there was a higher chance of reporting wasting, bulimia, and physical dissatisfaction when exposed to minimal supervision and warmth. This study is longitudinal, presenting methodological gaps. This study had a cross-sectional character.

The moderating effects of interpersonal strength and prestige in old age were studied by Carrasco et al. (2019) in their study on parental acceptance and child psychological adjustment. The nature of this study is descriptive. For the total sample, there were no moderate impacts of prestige and interpersonal strength. However, when cross-age regression analysis was conducted, it was found that mother acceptance had a stronger impact on psychological adjustment in children between the ages of 9 and 10. It's interesting to note that the younger individuals also showed a substantial moderating influence of interpersonal prestige (as opposed to interpersonal strength). In early adolescence as opposed to late childhood, status has a different moderating effect on mother acceptance-rejection. These findings show how parental prestige can account for the larger influence of maternal acceptability on younger children's psychological development. This study focuses on only one parenting practice, namely parental acceptance, which presents a conceptual gap. The current study focused on three parenting practices including parental control, parental warmth, and parental acceptance.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the anticipated connection between the predictor construct and the outcome construct.

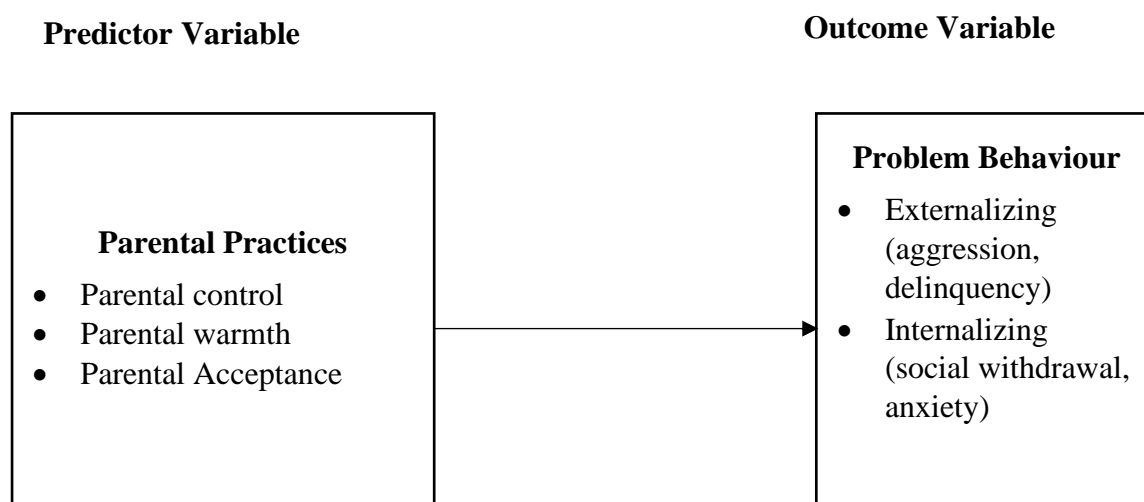


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Methodology

A correlational research design was employed in this study. The study location was public secondary schools in Mbeere South Sub-County, Embu County. The study population consisted of 18-day schools and 14 boarding schools in Mbeere South Sub County. The target respondents were 8822 form two students. A sample size of 383 students was selected using simple random sampling. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The properties of the research variables were described using descriptive statistics (percentages, mean and standard deviation). The link between the research variables was ascertained using correlation and regression analysis. Tables, charts, and graphs were used to present the data. It was anticipated that this study would significantly advance educational psychology theory, practice, and policy.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Problem Behaviour

The descriptive statistics for problem behaviour are presented in Table 1. The scale that was used to measure the variable was Not true-1, Somewhat true-2 True-3.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Problem Behaviour

Statements	Not true	Somewhat true	TRUE	Mean	Std. Dev.
Internalizing factors					
I feel headaches, stomach-aches or sickness when annoyed with something or someone	55.80%	18.60%	25.50%	1.7	0.85
I get annoyed and frequently irritated when disturbed by someone	19.70%	29.60%	50.70%	2.31	0.78
I am always impatient; I cannot stay at rest for a long time when I need something	42.30%	26.30%	31.40%	1.89	0.85
I always do my things. I usually play unaccompanied	52.20%	20.10%	27.70%	1.76	0.86
I struggle to look good to my friends, parents, and other people. I mind about their feelings	24.80%	21.20%	54.00%	2.29	0.84
I bother and worry very much about what others say to me	30.70%	27.00%	42.30%	2.12	0.85
I frequently become unhappy, down-hearted, or tearful when things do not work well with me	13.90%	19.00%	67.20%	2.53	0.73
I have numerous doubts, and fears and get easily scared and fearful	48.50%	26.60%	24.80%	1.76	0.82
Overall Score				2.05	0.82
Externalizing factors					
I frequently fight with others. I always make my friends and other people do what I need	72.60%	15.30%	12.00%	1.39	0.69
I get frequently blamed and accused of doing wrong	54.00%	24.50%	21.50%	1.68	0.81
I always find myself in the wrong	60.20%	23.70%	16.10%	1.56	0.76
I always get uneasy in new circumstances or situations and this makes me lose my confidence	32.80%	40.50%	26.60%	1.94	0.77
I always get uneasy in new circumstances or situations and this makes me lose my confidence	35.40%	35.80%	28.80%	1.93	0.8
I always get easily distracted and hard to concentrate on what I do	31.40%	24.80%	43.80%	2.12	0.86
Overall Score				1.81	0.79

According to the results, slightly above half of the students (55.8%) indicated that it was not true that they feel headaches, stomach-aches, or sickness when annoyed with something or someone (Mean=1.70, std. dev=0.85). The results on the contrary revealed that 80.3% of the students indicated it was true that they get annoyed and frequently irritated when disturbed by someone (Mean=2.31, std. dev=0.78). Similarly, the results revealed that more than half of the

students representing 57.7% indicated that it was true that I am always impatient; I cannot stay at rest for a long time when I need something (Mean=1.89, std. dev.=0.85). In contrast, majority of the students (52.2%) indicated that it was not true they always do their things and usually play unaccompanied (Mean=1.76, Std. dev.=0.86). Nevertheless, most of the students 75.2%) affirmed that it was true that they struggle to look good to their friends, parents, and other people and they mind about their feelings (Mean=2.29, std. dev.= 0.84). Additionally, majority of the students (69.3%) affirmed it is true that they bother and worry very much about what others say to them (Mean=2.12, std. dev.= 0.85). Further, it was affirmed to be true by the majority of the students (86.2%) that they frequently become unhappy, down-hearted, or tearful when things do not work well with them (Mean=2.53, std dev.=0.73). Furthermore, it was shown to be true by most of the students (51.4%) that they have numerous doubts and fears and get easily scared and fearful (Mean=1.76, std. dev.=0.82). The overall score was 2.05 and the standard deviation was 0.82 indicating that students affirmed that most statements on internalizing aspects were true. This revealed that majority of the students manifested internalizing problem behaviours.

The findings revealed that 72.6% of the students said it was not true that they frequently fight with others and always make their friends and other people do what they need (Mean=1.39, std. dev.=0.69). More than half of the students (54%) also said it was not true that they get frequently blamed and accused of doing wrongs (Mean=1.78, std. dev.=0.68). Similarly, most of the students (60.2%) said it was not true that they always find themselves in the wrong (Mean= 1.56, std dev.= 0.76). Most of the students (67.1%) indicated that it was true that they always get uneasy in new circumstances or situations and this makes them lose their confidence (Mean=1.94, std. dev.= 0.77). The majority of the students (68.6%) also indicated that it was true they always get easily distracted and hard to concentrate on what they do (Mean=2.12, std dev. 0.86). The overall score was 1.81 and the standard deviation was 0.79 indicating that students affirmed that most statements on externalizing aspects were true. This revealed that majority of the students manifested externalizing problem behaviours.

This was in line with Atmojo. (2020) found that students express their negative feelings, like frustration or anger by acting overtly. This was also similar to what Sun and Shek (2012) found teachers perceived student problem behaviors as those behaviors involving rule-breaking, violating the implicit norms or expectations, being inappropriate in the classroom settings, and upsetting teaching and learning.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Parental Practices

Descriptive analysis was performed on the variable parental practices. A Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was used to measure the extent to which respondents agreed with the statements. The results are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Parental Practices

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
Parental Control							
My parent take a keen interest in my activities	6.90%	4.70%	10.90%	24.10%	53.30%	4.12	1.20
My parent continues altering the rules and regulations on me	13.10%	14.60%	15.70%	22.60%	33.90%	3.50	1.42
When I make a mistake, I cannot predict my parents' response	23.40%	16.10%	24.10%	17.90%	18.60%	2.92	1.42
My parents discipline me without any explanation	49.30%	23.00%	12.40%	9.10%	6.20%	2.00	1.24
My parents cannot take in my ideas	48.90%	22.60%	13.10%	8.40%	6.90%	2.02	1.26
Overall Score						2.91	1.31
Parental Warmth							
My parent always express love to me	3.60%	3.60%	6.90%	20.40%	65.30%	4.40	1.02
My parents are always happy to see me	2.20%	1.10%	9.90%	19.30%	67.50%	4.49	0.88
My parent always let me know that he/she cares for me	1.80%	4.70%	11.70%	23.70%	58.00%	4.31	0.98
My parents avoid getting angry at me	8.40%	11.30%	14.20%	29.60%	36.50%	3.74	1.29
I get comfort from my parent	7.30%	8.00%	11.30%	14.20%	59.10%	4.10	1.30
Overall Score						4.21	1.09
Parental Acceptance							
I always doubt whether my parents like me	47.80%	15.00%	10.20%	12.40%	14.60%	2.31	1.52
My parents help me go through stress and problem-solving	15.00%	5.80%	13.10%	23.70%	42.30%	3.73	1.44
My parents guide me in things am unable to do	10.60%	4.70%	9.10%	21.20%	54.40%	4.04	1.34
My parents always compliment me	12.40%	8.40%	25.90%	28.80%	24.50%	3.45	1.29
My parents always compliment me	65.30%	16.80%	7.70%	5.80%	4.40%	1.67	1.12
Overall Score						3.04	1.34

The results showed that majority (77.4%) of the students agreed that their parents take a keen interest in my activities. This was supported by a mean of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 1.20. The results also indicated that 56.5% of the respondents who were the majority agreed that their parent continues altering the rules and regulations on me. This was supported by a mean of 3.50 and a standard deviation of 1.42. The results on the contrary revealed that most (39.5%) of the students disagreed with the statement that when I make a mistake, I cannot predict my parents' response. This was supported by a mean of 2.92 and a standard deviation of 1.42. Similarly, most of the students (72.3%) disagreed with the statement my parents discipline me without any explanation. The mean of 2 and standard deviation of 1.24 supported these findings. Similarly, most of the students representing 71.5% disagreed with the statement my parents cannot take in my ideas which was supported by a mean of 2.02 and a standard deviation of 1.26. The overall score for parental control was 2.91 which had a standard deviation of 1.31. This implied that the majority of the students disagreed with the statements on parental control indicating that most of the parents did not exercise parental control over the students.

According to the results tabulated in Table 2, majority of the students (85.7%) agreed that their parents always express love to them and this was supported by a mean of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 1.02. Similarly, majority of the students (85.8%) agreed with the statement that My parents are always happy to see me which was supported by a mean of 4.49 and a standard deviation of 0.88. Additionally, majority of the students (81.7%) agreed with the statement my parent always let me know that he/she cares for me, which attracted a mean of 4.31 and a standard deviation of 0.98. It was also revealed that majority of the students (66.1%) agreed with the statement My parents avoid getting angry at me. This was supported by a mean of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 1.29. Finally, findings revealed that majority of the students (73.3%) agreed with the statement I get comfort from my parent with a mean of 4.21 and a standard deviation of 1.30. The overall score was 4.21 with a standard deviation of 1.09 which indicated that majority of the students agreed with the statements on parental warmth. This implied that the parents did embrace their children's mistakes and correct them in love. This concurred with Boullion, et al. (2023) who found that most adolescents perceive their parents as warm and affectionate. It was also in line with Sun, et al. (2020) who found that both parents and students reported warmth.

From the results presented in Table 2, it was shown that majority of the respondents (62.8%) disagreed that I always doubt whether my parents like me. This was supported by a mean of 2.31 and a standard deviation of 1.52. The majority of the students (66%) however agreed with the statement My parents help me go through stress and problem-solving as shown by a mean of 3.73 and a standard deviation of 1.44. Further, majority of the students (75.6%) agreed that my parents guide me in things am unable to do. This was supported by a mean of 4.04 and a standard deviation of 1.34. Furthermore, majority of the students (53.3%) agreed that My parents always compliment me which was supported by a mean of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 1.29. Finally, majority of the students representing 82.1% disagreed that their parents always compliment them and this was supported by a mean of 1.67 and a standard deviation of 1.12. The overall score for the variable was 3.04 and the standard deviation was 1.34 which indicated that the majority of the students agreed with statements on parental acceptance. This implied that the parents exercised parental acceptance of their children. This was in line with Khaleque (2017) who established that parental acceptance is demonstrated through love, affection, care, comfort, support, or nurturance of children.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 3 shows the correlation matrix that shows the association between parenting practices and problem behaviour.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

	Problem Behaviour	Parenting practices
Problem Behaviour	1	
Parenting practices	-.456**	.1

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). $N = 274$

The results in Table 3 revealed that the coefficient for the correlation between parenting practices and problem behaviour was -0.456 and P was 0.00. This was an indication that parenting practices and problem behaviour change in opposite directions.

4.4 Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was performed to assess parenting practices as a predictor of problem behaviour of form two students.

Table 4: Model of Fitness for the Relationship between Parenting Practices and Problem Behaviour

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.456a	0.208	0.205	0.289

The R square value for the model predicting problem behaviour from parenting practices was 0.208. This means that parenting practices alone explain 20.8% of the variations in problem behaviour of form two students. The remaining percentage variation could be explained by other predictors such as perceived social support.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance for the Relationship between Parenting Practices and Problem Behaviour

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5.999	1	5.999	71.348	0.000
Residual	22.869	272	0.084		
Total	28.867	273			

The analysis of variance results showed that the P value for the overall model was 0.000. This implied that the model used to predict problem behaviour with parenting practices as the predictor variable is significant. Therefore, the model predicting problem behaviour with parenting practices is better than the model without the predictor variable.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients for the Relationship between Parenting Practices and Problem Behaviour

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.343	0.052		44.991	0.000
Parenting practices	-0.155	0.018	-0.456	-8.447	0.000

The results showed that the coefficient for the relationship between parenting practices and problem behaviour was -0.155 and the P value was $0.000 < 0.05$. This revealed that parenting practices had a negative and significant relationship with problem behaviour. Based on the findings, the H_{a1} : Parenting practices significantly predict problem behaviour of form two students was accepted.

4.5 Discussion

The correlation results revealed a negative and significant relationship between parenting practices and problem behaviour. Therefore, it can be deduced that if parenting practices that are parental control, parental warmth, and parental acceptance are increased problem behaviour will be reduced. This concurred with Ingulia et al. (2020) who found that parental psychological control and adolescent anxiety. Regression findings indicated that parenting practices had a negative and significant influence on problem behaviour. In this way, when parenting practices such as parental control, parental warmth, and parental acceptance are increased by a unit, the problem behaviour of form two students would reduce by 0.155. This concurred with Krug et al. (2016) who found that low parental (self) warmth is linked to bulimic behavior in girls. Based on the findings, the H_{a1} : Parenting practices significantly predict problem behaviour of form two students was accepted.

5.0 Conclusion

The study found that there is a negative and significant relationship between parenting practices and problem behaviour. The study therefore concludes that parenting practices such as parental behavioural control, parental psychological control, parental warmth, and parental acceptance are negative predictors of problem behaviour of students. Students who receive love, care, and comfort from their parents will express less problem behaviour. However, if students are always disciplined, not given a chance to express themselves, and feel no warmth and acceptance from their parents, the likelihood of expressing the problem behaviours is high.

6.0 Recommendations

The study concluded that parenting practices are negative predictors of problem behaviour. Based on this conclusion, it is suggested that parents should strive to express parental warmth to their children. This can be achieved by providing comfort to students when they need it, letting them know that they love them, caring for them, and avoiding being angry at them. Parents should also express acceptance to their children by way of helping them manage stress and problem-solving, helping them with things they are unable to do, and by complimenting them. Further, parents are advised not to express too much control over their children. They should allow them to make decisions of their while guiding them, listening to and adopting their ideas and also explaining to them the need for discipline when they make mistakes.

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