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Culturally Informed Parenting Assessment: The Adaptation of the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire With Input From Ugandan Experts and Parents

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ABSTRACT

While parenting practices significantly influence children's developmental outcomes on a global scale, there has been limited comprehensive assessment of the cultural appropriateness of global parenting questionnaires in diverse cultural contexts by researchers. This study examined the cultural relevance of the widely used measure of parenting, the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ) among the Runyankole-speaking community in Uganda. Using a semi-structured interview approach, we interviewed 14 local experts to evaluate the measure. Additionally, 16 parents were interviewed to assess their comprehension of APQ scale items. Feedback from both experts and parents was used to revise and adapt the 42-item APQ scale. Additionally, we used feedback from experts and parents to add five items addressing key parenting practices relevant to the Ugandan context. The process resulted in a 32-item adapted APQ tailored for the target Ugandan context. This research is notable for its contribution to the decolonization of parenting assessment instruments, centered on the perspectives of participants in Uganda, a culturally diverse context. The availability of an adapted parenting measure holds significance for clinicians and researchers as it enables a more efficient and culturally sensitive evaluation of parenting practices. Furthermore, utilizing such a measure facilitates a deeper understanding of the components of parenting, warranting attention in the development of interventions for parents in the target setting.

1 | Introduction

Parenting practices play a critical role in influencing child health outcomes globally (Cortina et al. 2012). Walker and Kirby (2010) define parenting practices as specific behavioral customs or care rituals employed by parents in childrearing. A systematic review of 44 studies revealed that child outcomes associated with specific parenting practices in lower-income countries of Africa mirrored those in high-income settings, underscoring the pivotal role of parenting in shaping child health outcomes (Devlin et al. 2018). In this review, positive parenting practices such as parental involvement, monitoring, age-appropriate discipline, and others were associated with positive child outcomes, while inadequate parenting practices (e.g., harsh discipline) were associated with poor child outcomes. Despite the notable advancements in parenting research in Africa, there are still significant gaps concerning the cultural appropriateness of measurement scales utilized to evaluate various parenting practices.

Many studies implementing parenting interventions in Africa, including those in Uganda, tend to rely on measurement scales designed and tested in predominantly developed countries in the West. This practice raises a crucial question: what are the unintended consequences of evaluating parenting behaviors in culturally diverse settings using instruments developed and tested primarily in English-speaking developed contexts?

1.1 | Parenting in Uganda; Traditional and Contemporary Trends

Parenting in Uganda has long been seen as a shared duty, involving both parents and the wider community (Boothby et al. 2017). This idea of communal parenting is often expressed in African proverbs such as "it takes a village to raise a child" (Kumar 2021, 1). This shared responsibility entails duties such as: (a) caring for and providing basic survival needs for children, (b) ensuring economic, psychological, and spiritual safety for children, (c) transmitting cultural traditions, and (d) guiding children to understand and adhere to societal norms and expectations (CortEvans et al. 2008; Walakira et al. 2021). In many Ugandan households, storytelling (e.g., through folktales) is a tradition that remains prevalent as a childrearing practice. Stories are often transmitted orally from elders to younger children across generations and are used to impart valuable morals and virtues (Goodman and Goodman 2013).

The landscape of parenting in Uganda is slowly evolving due to technological advancement and the rise of alternative childcare options, such as early childhood learning centers and hired house helpers (Walakira et al. 2021). For example, many Ugandan parents now have greater access to information from other cultures through the internet influencing their approach to parenting. Further, various contextual socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, caregiver health issues, the prevalence of diseases, and poor healthcare systems continue to mold the context of parenting in Uganda (Komuhangi et al. 2022). Despite unfavorable socioeconomic factors and shifting parenting trends, most Ugandan parents continue to uphold fundamental values for raising children, including a strong sense of community, a commitment to responsibility, respect for elders, dedication to hard work, striving for collective achievements, and promoting peaceful conflict resolution (Walakira et al. 2021). Considering this evolving context, it is crucial to approach the assessment of parenting practices in Uganda with cultural sensitivity. This means considering the changing dynamics as well as predominant cultural norms. By recognizing these shifts, scholars can gain a more nuanced understanding of how traditional practices intersect with contemporary influences. This in turn will ensure that assessments are relevant and comprehensive.

In the broader contemporary parenting literature, researchers increasingly recognize the importance of considering diverse perspectives and attitudes toward parenting across cultures (Bornstein 2013; Lansford 2022; Shaffer et al. 2022). However, there is a notable shortage of studies examining how these varying perspectives on parenting are integrated into the assessment of parenting behaviors across cultures. Most studies tend to adopt quantitative approaches to assess the validity and psychometric properties (Shaffer et al. 2022). There is a general lack of qualitative studies exploring the clarity, acceptability, and cultural relevance of measurement instruments developed in English-speaking developed countries when used in African settings.

Despite the growing body of research on parenting in Uganda, the adaptation processes to understand the target measure's item acceptability, comprehensibility, and cultural relevance in a new cultural setting, have not been thoroughly described. Notably, apart from Möllerherm et al. (2024), which clearly outlined the procedures for adapting an observational parenting measure to the context of northern Uganda, studies examining comprehensibility, acceptability, and cultural relevance of measures of parenting developed in Western contexts are scarce in Uganda. Given differences in parenting practices between parents in Western settings and those in African settings, it is important to conduct thorough adaptations of measures to ensure that they are culturally relevant, comprehensible, and acceptable, when they are being used in diverse contexts such as those in Uganda. This enhances the measure's validity and applicability in new cultural settings (Sireci et al. 2006).

In the present context, Ogbu (1981) proposed the cultural ecological framework (CEF), positing that parenting and childrearing practices exist within and are impacted by culturally determined characteristics essential for survival and success. Within this framework, culturally relevant characteristics influencing the parenting process are predominantly shaped by (a) the availability of resources in the environment, which facilitate the acquisition of competencies deemed culturally important, and (b) the influence of folk theories portraying culturally relevant values and traditions related to parenting within a specific setting.

Despite the cultural contextualization of parenting, there are a few studies utilizing local stakeholders to conduct transcultural adaptations of available measures of parenting in Uganda. To advance our comprehension of culturally informed assessment of parenting practices in Uganda, we undertook transcultural adaptations of the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ; Frick 1991), an internationally recognized parenting measure. Grounded in the cultural ecological framework, incorporating input from local stakeholders in the adaptation of a well-established parenting measure offers a unique perspective that unveils crucial information about the target culture's beliefs, ideas, and objectives related to childrearing. The APQ's ability to encompass crucial parenting dimensions, such as positive parenting, involvement, discipline, and others, makes it a suitable choice for our study. Further, the measure has robust research supporting its reliability in distinguishing between clinical and non-clinical samples globally. The measure's reliability and consistency across diverse demographic groups have been supported by research studies, including those by Florean et al. (2023), Kyriazos and Stalikas (2019), and Shaffer et al. (2022).

1.2 | The Present Study

The present study conducted transcultural adaptation of the APQ for use among Runyankole-speaking parents in Uganda.

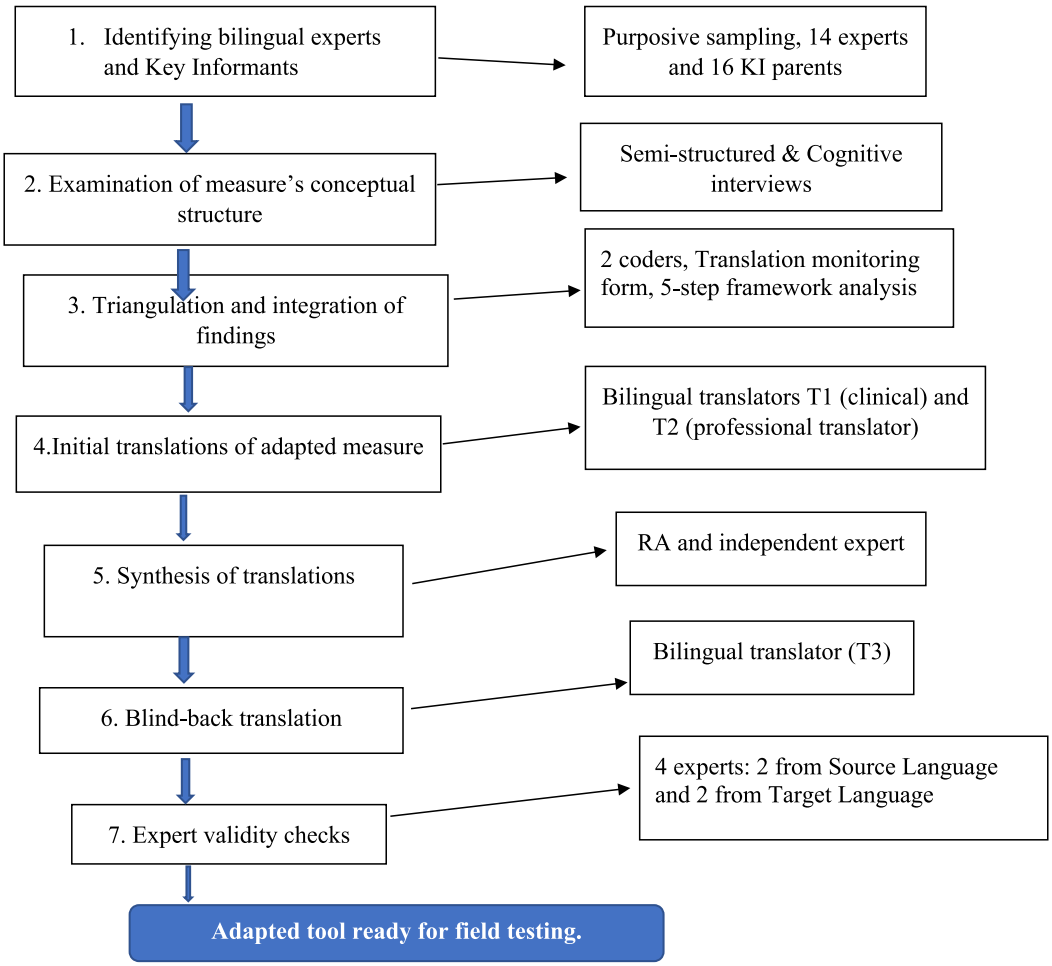

FIGURE 1 | The Stages Involved in the Cultural Adaptation of the APQ in Uganda. Based on the Framework by Beaton et al. (2000), Sartorius and Janca (1996), Van Ommeren et al. (1999), and Modified by Asiimwe (2023).

Runyankole is spoken by the Banyankole people of Western and southwestern Uganda, the second largest tribal group in Uganda. Our evaluation process focused on three key criteria: (a) linguistic comprehensibility (ensuring that each item, originally English, carried a clear and well understood meaning when translated into the target language, Runyankole), (b) cultural relevance (verifying that each item alluded to a construct that was relatable within the target culture), and (c) acceptability (ensuring that items addressed constructs in ways respectful of the target language and culture (Carvajal-Velez et al. 2023). Our study was guided by two research questions: How do Runyankole-speaking parenting experts and parents in Uganda comprehend scale items on the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire? And how does culture and context influence parenting practices among the Banyankole people of Uganda?

It was essential to pursue these objectives given that parenting in the target Ugandan context might be influenced by unique sociocultural and economic factors (e.g., limited access to resources) which may make it potentially different the contexts in Western cultures where the APQ was initially developed. Given this context, it was crucial that our research identifies elements of parenting to incorporate into our adapted measure. This approach would yield an instrument that captures a broad range of parenting behaviors in the target Ugandan setting, while preserving the core constructs of the original APQ, such as positive parenting, involvement, monitoring, and discipline, which have also been identified as significant to Ugandan parents (see Boothby et al. 2017). Our methodology holds the potential for challenging and decolonizing prevailing assumptions derived from dominant cultural perspectives on parenting and subsequent assessment practices.

2 | Method

2.1 | Study Design

We adopted a qualitative approach guided by a modified hybrid seven-step process that integrated the guidelines proposed by Beaton et al. (2000) and Sartorius and Janca (1996) for the cross-cultural adaptation of self-report measures (see Figure 1).

2.2 | Target Measure

The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire, a 42-item self-report survey developed by Frick (1991), served as the evaluative measure in this study (see Table S1). The selection of the APQ was primarily driven by its comprehensive coverage of five

major parenting domains, which includeparental involvement, positive parenting, poor monitoring/supervision, inconsistent discipline, and corporal punishment. These domains have demonstrated significant associations with disruptive child health outcomes among children globally and in various African settings (Madalane 2014; Wieling et al. 2015). Parents report on their parenting using a five-category Likert scale: never (1), almost never (2), sometimes (3), often (4), and always (5).

Second, the reliability and validity of the APQ are well-established across diverse cultural contexts, including both high-income countries (HICs) and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), rendering the APQ to be among the most widely utilized measures of parenting practices globally. Empirical psychometric investigations conducted in various countries, including the United States, Chile, Australia, Poland, Spain, Greece, Mexico, South Africa, and others, have validated multiple factorial structures of the APQ, such as five-factor, four-factor, and three-factor models (Dadds et al. 2003; Cova et al. 2017; Florean et al. 2023; Kyriazos and Stalikas 2019; Madalane 2014; Maguin et al. 2016; Robert 2009), reinforcing the measure's cross-cultural applicability. Moreover, a recent meta-analysis of 32 studies utilizing the brief APQ-9, which comprises three subscales, reported acceptable mean reliability coefficients: 0.84 for positive parenting, 0.66 for inconsistent discipline, and 0.70 for poor supervision/monitoring (Liang et al. 2021). Collectively, this body of literature underscores APQ's reliability and its robust psychometric performance across diverse populations and settings.

2.3 | Participants and Procedures

The sample included 14 local experts and 16 parent participants who were recruited primarily using purposive sampling techniques (e.g., Palinkas et al. 2015). Data were collected by three members of the research team (2 men and 1 woman) between July 2022 and December 2022. All individuals involved in conducting interviews were multilingual and native speakers of the Runyankole language, the primary language used in this study. Lastly, one bilingual graduate research assistant was hired to transcribe the data in English. This study received institutional review board approval from Makerere University, a research university in Uganda, and Michigan State University in the United States (Asiimwe's institutional affiliation at the time data for this study was collected). Additionally, study participants gave written and oral informed consent prior to engaging in interviews.

2.4 | Translation and Adaptation Process of the APQ

2.4.1 | Step I: Identifying Participants

Our process began with identifying bilingual experts and parents who reviewed the conceptual structure of the original APQ. Building from Sartorius and Janca's (1996) framework, which included only bilingual experts at this phase, we added cognitive interviews with bilingual Ugandan parents as a method of data triangulation.

2.4.1.1 | Experts. Table 1 includes sociodemographic characteristics of experts. Experts were identified through research articles on parenting in Uganda and the lead author's local professional networks with researchers and mental health professionals in Uganda. Inclusion criteria were: (a) holding bachelor's or higher degree in a mental health field; (b) clinical or research experience with Ugandan children and families; and (c) proficiency in both English and Runyankole languages. Out of 20 potential experts, 16 agreed to participate in the study. We emailed a copy of the consent forms, the 42-item APQ, and a cover letter to experts for perusal before inviting them for in-person interviews.

The final sample included eight women and six men: 85.8% were between the ages of 35 and 54 years old. Nine were mental health professionals (e.g., child psychologists, counselors, and social workers), two were parenting researchers, two were religious leaders, and one was a university professor. Most experts (57.1%) had a master's degree in a mental health field, 21.4% had a doctorate, 14.3 had a bachelor's degree. Most participants (71.4%) had more than 10 years' experience in their professional role, and about 28.6% had been in their role between four and 10 years. The majority (85.7%) worked with both children and parents, and some (42.9%) were in government settings, while 28.6% worked in NGO and private settings. All experts were bilingual, spoke English and Runyankole, and some identified as multilingual.

2.4.1.2 | Parents. Table 2 includes sociodemographic characteristics of parents. Inclusion criteria for parents were: (a) being 18 years or older; (b) a caregiver of a child or children ages six to 18 years; and (c) a bilingual resident who could speak both Runyankole and English. The final sample included eight women and eight men; most (81.3%) were between ages 35 and 44 years of age. Thirteen (81.3%) were married, and the majority (87.6%) were caretakers of more than four children. Most parents (50%) were from low-income families, with 62.5% having an education level lower than a bachelor's degree. Finally, the percentage of parents caring for biological children only was equal to that of parents who cared for a combined biological and non-biological child (43.8% each). After recruiting caregivers, we explained the study purpose to them and set up their interviews. During the interview, the parents received a copy of the APQ and were allowed 10 to 20 min to review and annotate the measure.

2.4.2 | Step II: Participants Examine the APQ'S Conceptual Structure

In this step, we collected feedback on the original measure's face and content validity from local experts and caregivers through semi-structured interviews with experts and cognitive interviews with parents, respectively. Participants were interviewed one-by-one. Feedback from these interviews was used to improve the acceptability, comprehensibility, and relevance, and to gain an in-depth understanding of important parenting practices in the target Ugandan culture.

TABLE 1 | Socio-demographic characteristics of expert participants ($N = 14$).

Variable	Frequency (*n*)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Women	8	57.1
Men	6	42.9
Expert age (years)		
35–44	6	42.9
45–54	6	42.9
55–65	2	14.3
65+	—	—
Marital status		
Single	2	14.3
Married	11	78.6
Divorced/separated	1	7.1
Education level		
Less than a bachelor's degree	1	7.1
Bachelor's degree	2	14.3
Master's degree	8	57.1
Doctorate or professional degree	3	21.4
Expert's Tribe/Region or Origin		
Western (e.g., Banyankole)	6	42.9
Eastern	4	28.6
Central	4	28.6
Language (in addition to English)		
2–3 languages (Runyankole, Luganda etc.)	14	100
No. of children		
No children	1	7.1
1–3 children	5	35.7
4–5 children	5	35.7
More than 5	2	14.3
Undisclosed	1	7.1
Professional role		
Child and adolescent psychologist	5	35.7
Parenting Researcher	2	14.3
University lecturer	1	7.1
Mental health practitioner (e.g., counselor, social worker etc.)	4	28.6
Other professional (e.g., religious leader in charge of family care)	2	14.3
Type of clients		
Children and adolescents only	2	14.3
A combination of both parents & children	12	85.7
Duration in the role (years)		
Less than 2	—	—
Between 4 and 10	4	28.6
10+	10	71.4
Practice setting		
Government employee (e.g., university lecturer)	6	42.9
NGO employee	4	28.6
Private practice	4	28.6
Location of clients		
Urban	6	42.9
Semi-urban	1	7.1
Rural and Urban clients	7	50.0

Note: Participants who indicated being married, cohabiting, and/or having a partner were considered to be married and/or in a relationship.

2.4.2.1 | **Expert Interviews.** Expert interviews were conducted in two languages, English and Runyankole, and lasted between 45 and 60 min. We asked experts to evaluate the measure based on comprehensibility (i.e., Is this item clear and understandable to the local population?), acceptability (i.e., Would this item be acceptable or unacceptable by parents in this context?) and relevance (i.e., Does the item represent an aspect of parenting considered relevant in the target setting?) We also collected the experts' suggestions for modifications and their opinions on parenting practices in the target culture that are not captured by items on APQ. To avoid overwhelming participants, we asked experts to prioritize items they perceived as difficult, culturally irrelevant, or those that could be rephrased for clarity.

2.4.2.2 | **Parent Cognitive Interviews.** In addition to responses from experts, we collected local parent's feedback about the scale items on the APQ through cognitive interviews (CIs). Cognitive interview (CI) is a qualitative research approach used to evaluate how individuals understand, interpret, and respond to survey questions or items in a specific cultural context. The goal of CI is to identify potential misunderstandings, ambiguities, or cultural inconsistencies in the measure, to ensure that it accurately captures the intended constructs, is relevant, and comprehensible to the target

TABLE 2 | Socio-demographic characteristics of parent participants ($N = 16$).

Variable	Frequency (*n*)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Women	8	50.0
Men	8	50.0
Age (years)		
18–24	1	6.3
35–44	13	81.3
45–54	1	6.3
55–64	1	6.3
Marital status		
Unmarried (e.g., divorced, Single, never been married etc.	1	25.2
Married	13	81.3
Education level		
Less than a bachelor's degree	10	62.5
Bachelor's degree	5	31.3
Master's degree	1	6.2
Doctorate or professional degree	3	21.4
Employment status		
Unemployed	2	12.5
Employed	14	87.5
Income level		
Low income	8	50.0
Lower-middle-income	4	25.0
High income	4	25.0
No. of children under care		
2–3 children	2	12.5
4–5 children	7	43.8
More than 5	7	43.8
Relationship with children		
Biological	7	43.8
Biological & non-biological combined	7	43.8
Non-biological	2	12.5
Residence		
Mbarara	7	43.8
Sheema	7	43.8
Ibanda	2	12.5

Note: All parents in the sample were native Runyankole speakers. Their children were between the ages of 3–17 years. The category "non-biological" included children of an extended family member, a friend/neighbor in the community. Further, parents who indicated being divorced/separated, single but cohabiting, single, and never married or having multiple partners were all coded as "unmarried" in the analysis.

population (Peterson et al. 2017). For consistency, we developed an interview protocol based on Peterson et al. (2017)'s five-step CI framework. The CI protocol (see supplemental material), included questions such as: Tell me what you were thinking when I asked about (topic of the item)? How much do you feel you know about this topic? and Did this question feel awkward or easy for you to answer? The researchers used techniques including general probing, think-aloud, and paraphrasing to facilitate the CI process. Like experts, we prioritized asking parents about items they perceived as difficult or those they felt needed rephrasing or revision. Cognitive interviews were conducted in Runyankole language, lasted between 60 and 90 min, and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by a bilingual graduate student.

2.4.3 | Step III: Data Triangulation and Integration of Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data collected in Step III were analyzed and synthesized by two independent coders, who followed a five-step framework analysis approach (Parkinson et al. 2016). First, we reviewed transcripts alongside audio recordings from both caregivers and experts to get familiar with the data (step 1). We then developed initial framework analysis categories (e.g., acceptability and relevance of items, revision areas) to facilitate appropriate data coding and organization (step 2). Data were indexed and organized into charts (steps 3 & 4). Our fifth and final step involved cross-referencing and synthesizing findings from interviews with both experts and caregivers, which allowed us to make the necessary modifications. These coding and analysis procedures provided a systematic way of modifying items to better align with the target local parenting norms. For example, if multiple participants expressed discomfort with a specific word or concept in an item or an entire item, that item was revised based on coded responses. When we reached saturation, meaning that collecting additional data was unlikely to provide new insights on problematic items requiring revision, we finalized a 32-item adapted measure and moved on to the next steps in the process.

2.4.4 | Step IV: Translation of the Adapted Measure

Translations were conducted by two bilingual local experts. Translator one (T1), female, held a bachelor's degree in

social sciences from a national research university and a postgraduate certificate in mental health counseling. She had over 7 years of field experience in social science research, including conducting qualitative research in local communities of the target culture. She was overall knowledgeable with health and social science concepts including parenting practices, the target measure, and study processes (Beaton et al. 2000). The second translator (T2), male, was a professor of linguistics at a local research university. He had more than 30 years of experience in university teaching and translating various instruments into Runyankole for professional entities in Uganda. As a professional translator, he was familiar with Runyankole colloquialisms, jargons, idioms, and phrases used to express various concepts and ideas in this culture. In line with Beaton et al.'s recommendation, we purposefully selected T2 who was not informed of the construct under investigation (i.e., parenting practices) or the study processes. The main task for T2 was to provide "a translation that best reflected the language used by the target population with less influence of an academic goal" (Beaton et al. 2000, 318). Each translator produced an independent report of their translations, which included additional comments regarding potential problematic items and phrases.

2.4.5 | Step V: Synthesis of Translations

In this step, the first author met with T1 and T2 to review their translation reports, comparing them to the original adapted APQ. At this step, we encountered several discrepancies in translations (e.g., in certain terminology, phrases, and jargon) between translators, but because we were all fluent in Runyankole, the target language of the translation, we discussed discrepancies and reached a quick consensus to produce a single reconciled version of the translation.

2.4.6 | Step VI: Blind-Back Translation of the Preliminary Measure

At this step, another bilingual individual (T3) conducted back-translation of the preliminary measure developed based on reports from step four. T3 was completely unfamiliar with the APQ and with the study processes; however, she was a parenting scholar at a research-intensive university in Uganda. Additionally, she is an experienced local translator of measures for health and social science and, therefore, was familiar with Runyankole colloquialisms, jargon, idioms, and phrases. One author (RA) met with T3 to review her translations, paying particular attention to discrepancies between her back-translated tool and the translations by T1 and T2. There were minor discrepancies between the two instruments, and these were quickly resolved through discussion and agreeing on which terms to adopt. After reaching a consensus, we collaboratively drafted a final measure for further validity checks.

2.4.7 | Step VII: Expert Validity Checks

In this step, the tool drafted in steps II through VI was sent for further review to four experts (two proficient in the source language, English, and two were local experts proficient in both English and Runyankore). The two English-speaking experts were researchers at a research university in the United States, while the bilingual experts were Ugandan experts based in Uganda. The four experts were not involved as participants in the study. We emailed them both the original and the adapted version of the measure, in English for review and comparison. Their roles were to examine the adapted measure's face and content validity and ensure that words and phrases were clear in the adapted version. They also examined the adapted measure to ensure that the original meaning and intent of the tool were preserved while incorporating relevant cultural adaptations.

3 | Results

The adaptation process resulted in the development of a 32-item adapted APQ, tailored for a Runyankole-speaking Ugandan population. This version is available in both English (Table S2) and a translated Runyankole version (Table S3). The results in this section revolve around themes of item comprehensibility, acceptability, and cultural relevance. Out of the original 42 items on the APQ, 32 (76.2%) underwent modifications based on participant feedback, while only 10 (23.8%) items (specifically, items 3, 10, 17, 21, 24, 26, 32, 34, 39, and 40) retained their original wording. Notably, 20 items (47.6%; items, 1, 2, 9, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 35, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42) underwent significant revisions, such as merging to reduce redundancy or deletion due to participants deeming them culturally irrelevant. Additionally, 12 items (28.6%; items, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 18, 22, 25, 31) were either rephrased or had new words and examples added to them to improve clarity and relevance (refer to Table S2). In response to participant feedback regarding relevant parenting practices in Uganda, five items were incorporated into the revised scale to improve its relevance. These items are numbered 2, 12, 17, 18, and 25 on the new 32-adapted measure; they are also labeled, "new item" in the table (refer to Table S2).

3.1 | Item Comprehensibility

In general, participants found most scale items to be clear and comprehensible, with a few items being flagged as poorly worded. For example, participants suggested that item 23 on the original measure, "Your child helps plan family activities," be modified to "You involve your child in planning family activities" (listed as number 21 on the adapted measure). This way, it would be clearer that the item is targeting the parent's behavior rather than that of the child. Moreover, several phrases in certain items were revised, as they could potentially cause comprehension issues, either because they were redundant or contained idioms that were not culturally resonant. For example, in item 8 "Your child talks you out of being punished after he/she has done something wrong," the phrase "talks you out of being punished" confused local participants; thus, we replaced it with persuades, so that the revised item read, "Your child persuades you not to punish them...." Similarly, the phrase "call off or stop punishing" was preferred in item 22, which originally read, "You let your child out of a punishment early."

In another instance, participants recommended the inclusion of culturally appropriate examples to elaborate on or clarify certain

items. A notable example is item 31, where the use of the word "mood" was deemed unclear. The original item, "The punishment you give your child depends on your mood" confused participants which prompted consideration for culturally specific illustrations to enhance comprehension. Particularly, expert participants wondered if the item referred to a "bad mood" or "good mood," emphasizing that Banyankole parents typically do not administer punishment when in a good mood. Conversely, participants noted that a parent might be more inclined to impose harsher punishment when in a bad mood, due to factors such as illness, work-related stress, or financial hardships. To enhance the clarity of item 31, participants recommended incorporating specific examples of being in a bad mood.

3.2 | Acceptability

Participants indicated that certain phrases within certain items were culturally offensive or inappropriate, leading to their removal to enhance the acceptability of the items. As an illustration, in item 6 "Your child fails to leave a note or to let you know where he/she is going," the phrases "leaving a note" and "letting the parent know where child is going" were identified as culturally disrespectful and were consequently removed. One participant explained, "We do not leave notes informing our parents where we are going in our culture. That is so disrespectful. We instead ask for permission in the presence of the parent" (Expert 9). Another expert emphasized that "leaving a note in Africa is considered rude" (Expert 6) and a parent asserted that "leaving a note is not relevant for us, our children ask for permission" (Parent 3). Based on this input, we revised this item to read, "Your child fails to ask for permission or inform you where he/she is going."

Similarly, participants found the phrase "kiss your child" in item 18, which originally stated, "You hug or kiss your child when he/she does something well," culturally inappropriate as reflected in statements such as these: "In our culture, it's actually like an abomination to kiss your child" (Expert 1); "We simply do not kiss our children; that's not African" (Expert 4); "Surely, kissing is anti-African parenting" (Expert 9); "A man never kisses his female children" (Parent 1); and "Kissing isn't usual to Banyankole" (Parent 8). Although participants found the word "kissing" culturally inappropriate, they recognized the intent of the item and suggested replacing "kissing" with relevant examples of positive parenting through praise. Some examples suggested included, "giving a high-5," "hugging the child," and "giving them a pat on the back" (Parents 4 5, 8; expert 7). Subsequently, this item was revised to "You hug, high-5, or pat your child when he/she does something well."

3.3 | Cultural Relevance

Participants identified various items or phrases that were potentially irrelevant, and these were either modified entirely removed. For instance, item 15 "You drive your child to a special activity," was revised by adding examples of other ways parents in the target context help their children attend special events if they do not own a car or know how to drive, which is common in Uganda. Although participants found this item clear, the use of the word "drive" was considered discriminatory or insensitive because "driving is mainly for high-income urban parents" (Experts 5, 13, 14) or because "many parents don't own cars, children walk to major activities in our culture" (Parents 3, 6, 9). Consequently, the words "support or arrange for your child" were preferred, as these were considered inclusive of other ways the parents ensured their children attended a special activity. The revised item (13 on the adapted measure) reads, "You support or arrange for your child to attend a special activity, e.g., by walking with the child to the activities." In item 7 on the original measure, "You play games or do other fun things with your child," participants preferred "engage" over "play." They felt "playing games" seemed childish. As parent 3 noted, playing is "mostly left to fellow children in our neighborhoods, not parents." Participants also suggested adding examples of how parents engage with their children. Activities like storytelling or jumping ropes were more relevant to them. For item 11 (number 10 on the adapted tool), "You help your child with his/her homework," participants recommended examples to clarify meaning and make the item more inclusive. They felt it was, for example, unfair to expect non-literate parents, many of whom have limited resources, to sit with their child to complete homework. Even educated parents, participants said, often don't have time for this level of supervision. As expert 5 noted, "some hire tutors, and that's how they show involvement." The item was thus revised to reflect inclusive ways parents with various socioeconomic backgrounds could support their child's learning, such as paying a tutor or doing homework with the child (for high-income families), arranging for their children to study with friends or classmates who can explain concepts, providing encouragement, and using free resources like public tutoring programs (for low-income families). These revisions ensured that the item captures the diverse strategies parents used, especially those facing financial, time, or literacy challenges, to support their child's education effectively and equitably.

Furthermore, items numbers 19, 28, 29, 30, 37, and 41 were completely removed from the scale, because participants considered them inapplicable or irrelevant. Item 19, "Your child goes out without a set time to be home," item 28, "You don't check that your child comes home at the time she/he was supposed to," and item 30, "Your child comes home from school more than an hour past the time you expect him/her," were deleted because "the concept of time is mostly fluid in Uganda" (Expert 13). Another participant added, "many parents have to prioritize survival over keeping track of the child's schedule" (Expert 11). Item 29, "You don't tell your child where you are going," was also deleted because, "it is not a cultural practice for parents to tell their children where they are going." One participant stated, "they (children) have no business knowing where their parent is going" (Parent 2). Similarly, item 37, "You send your child to his/her room as a punishment," and 41, "You use time out (make him/her sit or stand in a corner) as a punishment," were deleted based on participant feedback, for example:

> Timeout is not an African concept. It is hard to do given that many families have many kids and limited living space. Most children are sharing bedrooms, they are sharing living space, where are they going to do time out from?
>
> (Expert 1)

Another participant explained it, using a different example:

> Timeouts are more stressful to implement. Personally, I don't have that time; I don't have those seven minutes for my 7-year-old child to be observing and checking out actually and you know how children really are. You make a turn like this, and they are busy with something else; actually, you will get more stressed out when your child is in timeout.
>
> (Parent 10)

3.4 | Merging and Deleting Items

A total of 13 items (30.9%) were merged to minimize scale redundancy. For example, item 36, "You take away privileges or money from your child as a punishment," and item 42, "You give your child extra chores as a punishment," were interpreted as forms of non-physical discipline in the Ugandan setting. One participant remarked "for many of our parents in rural areas, giving a child [a] lot of chores is part of life skills training; it is not a punishment; they don't even bring it in a way to discipline you; it is part of your life; it's part of you, you know" (Expert 3). Further, participants were confused by the difference between the phrases "You slap your child" (item 33), "You spank your child" (item 35), and "You hit your child with a belt, switch, or other object when he/she has done something wrong" (item 38). Participants suggested merging the three items, because the item was about physical punishment. This was reflected in the comment that "in our culture, it is the hand that does both the slapping and spanking" (Expert 5). Subsequently, we merged the three items to form, "You physically punish your child," followed by the examples of slapping, spanking, and hitting with an object.

Similarly, items 1, 9, 14, and 20 were all merged into one item, "You talk to your child (e.g., about his/her friends, plans for the day, favorite sport, plans for the following day)." This resulted from participants expressing that all four items were related to the parent talking to their child, whether the parent was "having a friendly talk" (item 1), "talking about friends" (item 20), "talking about his/her day" (item 9), or "discussing plans for the coming day" (item 14). The "parent talking to their child was the primary idea" (Parent 15), and the content of their discussion was secondary. Another source for confusion involved items 2, 13, 16, and 27. Particularly, parent participants felt perplexed by the supposed difference between "letting a child know when they do a good job" (item 2), "praising a child" (item 16), "complimenting a child" (item 13), and "telling child that you like it when they help out" (item 27). For many participants, these items held the same cultural connotation as verbal expressions of positive parenting through "motivation" (Expert 10) or by "encouraging continuation of good behavior" (Parent 11). Participants thus suggested combining these items to reduce confusion and scale redundancy. Eventually, the four items were merged to form item 14: "You verbally praise or compliment your child if he/she behaves well or does something well."

Participants emphasized parenting as a vital aspect of Banyankole culture, highlighting positive parenting, child discipline, and involvement as key elements. Involved parenting was praised for teaching children's essential skills, such as gardening and cultural values, and for enabling parents to provide guidance as children grow. One participant remarked, "when you are involved in your children's things, like gardening with them, they grow up knowing what we did to get food." (Parent 12). Positive parenting was associated with instilling morals, teaching life skills like saving and cooking, and prioritizing education. Discipline, particularly physical, was seen as crucial for helping children distinguish acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Well-disciplined children were viewed as a source of joy and a reflection of good parenting, as their behavior had an impact on family reputation and community harmony as illustrated by "a well-behaved child, a well-brought-up child is my tomorrow's joy." (Parent 9). Participants stressed that raising well-behaved children benefits both parents and the broader community by reducing disturbances. Poorly behaved children, however, were seen as tarnishing a parent's reputation. Overall, parenting was depicted as a culturally grounded responsibility tied to shaping children's character and safeguarding the family's social standing.

Some participants expressed concerns that corporal punishment did not constitute a favorable parenting practice in their culture. Such punitive measures were compared to torture, with statements such as "some parents who give corporal punishments, their children grow up scared, they are harassed, it's like mental torturing, and it's like child abuse, actually" (Parent 16). According to our participants, corporal punishment did not improve the child's discipline but rather worsened: "it makes the child become hardened, because you will have used a lot of force, it even worsens bad behaviors" (Parent 10). Another parent added, "With those corporal punishments, they can make the children wild; kids can sometimes run away from home, which is not helpful" (Parent 15). However, given that corporal punishment remains widely practiced in Uganda (Boydell et al. 2017), despite being viewed as unfavorable by participants in our study, we included the item 28 "you physically punish your child" in the adapted measure.

3.5 | New Items

Participants also recommended incorporating new items into the measure that reflect aspects such as providing, teaching life skills, and instilling discipline and morals, as these aspects are crucial to parenting among Banyankole parents. Subsequently, five new items reflecting these aspects of parenting were introduced to the revised APQ scale: "You teach your child good morals (e.g., asking for forgiveness, welcoming visitors at home, etc.)"; "You teach or ensure that your children have technical skills (e.g., washing clothes, making baskets and mats, cooking, etc.)"; "You ensure that your child arrives to school on time"; "You ensure that your child has school supplies (e.g., books, pens, pencils, etc.)"; "You teach your children life skills (e.g., working hard and saving money)."

4 | Discussion

This study used feedback from Ugandan parenting experts and caregivers to inform appropriate modifications of the 42-item APQ so that it is more culturally relevant to Ugandan families who speak Runyankole. Transcultural adaptations of the APQ items were conceptualized through the cultural ecological framework (CEF; Ogbu 1981). Through a cultural ecological framework, we revised certain words and phrases to fit the context, as well as added new items to capture a wide range of parenting behaviors in the target setting. By taking a cultural ecological framework perspective, the potential for imposing Western parenting norms onto Ugandan families was minimized. Subsequently, we developed a 32-item culturally adapted measure from this process.

Several APQ items were perceived as relevant and comprehensible but still needed revisions (e.g., rephrasing a word) to improve their clarity and relevance. Previous studies (e.g., Carvajal-Velez et al. 2023) adapting measurement instruments in diverse settings found that that rephrasing some words or replacing them altogether improved the scale items' comprehensibility and cultural relevance. This is also demonstrated in one African setting in Madalane's (2014) adaptation of the APQ to Xhosa-speaking parents in South Africa. In this study, the author changed either the tense of an item or the spelling of a word in six items and rephrased seven items to make them clearer and more culturally relevant. In our study, such changes were noticeable in item 15, "You drive your child to a special activity," where participants suggested using the words "support" or "arrange" instead of "drive" to highlight other ways parents enable their children to attend special events if they do not own a car or do not know how to drive.

Conversely, some items—although comprehensible—were perceived as irrelevant to the Ugandan context. Subsequently, these items were removed from the scale based on participant feedback. For example, item 37, "send child to his/her room," and 41, "use timeout as a punishment" were deleted because participants deemed timeout and like punishments to be culturally inapplicable. This finding is consistent with adaptations of other instruments in diverse settings, which found that deleting some scale items might improve the scale's relevance (Carvajal-Velez et al. 2023; Namisango et al. 2022). Participants in our study expressed timeouts were stressful and difficult to implement, given that many families had many children and shared a small living space. To our participants, sending a child to a room as a punishment would mean that other family members must vacate the house to create space for time out which was not feasible. Additionally, this feedback was not surprising, given that the challenging economic circumstances in Uganda force parents to prioritize survival and providing for the basic needs of the family over implementing time-consuming and systematic discipline strategies such as timeouts. Another major revision that resulted from participant feedback was merging several items that held similar meanings to reduce scale redundancy as well as to improve the time of completion for future participants.

Participants said that 42 items on the original APQ were time consuming and could be reduced through merging. For example, the items focused on hitting or spanking children (namely, items 33, 35, 38) were combined into one. In Runyankole language, the words *"okutera"* or "*okufubira*" are used interchangeably to describe the correcting of a child's misbehavior, by using either a hand or an object. Ugandan parents usually do not care whether a hand or an object was used; what matters is that the punishment was physical. This led to a condensed item, number 28: "You physically punish your child." Similarly, many participants in our study got confused by different expressions of praising children in items 2, 16, 13, and 27, as discussed. This confusion was not surprising, since in Runyankole there is only one word, *"okuhimbisa*," that denotes various forms of praising, complimenting, or letting the child know they are doing well. Given this context, we merged the four items to reduce redundancy and improve relevance.

Feedback from participants highlighted the critical role of culture in shaping parenting practices and the subsequent assessment. Most participants emphasized parental involvement, positive parenting (e.g., teaching morals), and child discipline as essential for raising hard-working, well-behaved, culturally respectful, and socially responsible individuals. These findings align with prior studies in Uganda (e.g., Boothby et al. 2017), which identify practices such as teaching morals, accompanying children to school, repairing clothing, bathing children, and structuring study time as key to fostering positive child development. Drawing from our participant insights, we added five culturally relevant items to the adapted APQ to reflect Banyankole parenting practices.

Interestingly, participants viewed corporal punishment as a harmful and ineffective practice, contrasting with previous Ugandan research which found corporal punishment to be a widely used practice, particularly among low-income parents (Boydell et al. 2017). This shift could signify positive trends toward contemporary, non-punitive parenting approaches (Walakira et al. 2021). Alternatively, the demographic characteristics of participants in our study may have influenced these findings, as younger and more educated parents tend to commonly adopt positive parenting methods, such as praising and complimenting good behavior in children (Walakira et al. 2021). However, because our goal was to create a measure that could capture the full range of parenting behaviors in the Runyankole-speaking community, not only those deemed favorable by a select group, including the item on physical punishment in the adapted measure was vital in that it aligned with the study's objective to create a culturally sensitive yet holistic tool that reflected both desirable and undesirable behaviors in this community. Having such a comprehensive measure of parenting holds the promise of providing valuable data for future interventions aimed at promoting positive parenting practices in this community.

4.1 | Working Between Two Languages in the Adaptation Process

Runyankole served as the predominant language among our participants, with occasional use of English. The fact that most members of the research team members were proficient in both Runyankole and English was crucial for effective

communication and comprehension throughout the research process. Conversations in Runyankole helped to clarify concepts and, occasionally, participants would use English expressions if it was difficult to find a word or phrase in the native language. The practice of interweaving English and native languages is widespread in Uganda, given that English serves as the national and official language. Many participants found it challenging to adhere to a single language during the interviews, reflecting the common linguistic blend prevalent across the country. As an illustration, the term "kissing child" in item 18, which translates into Runyankole as "*okunywegyera*," took on a different connotation, signifying sexual relations between two individuals in a romantic relationship. This made most of the participants uncomfortable; hence, a recommendation was made to remove the item to ensure cultural appropriateness. This example highlights the nuanced challenges that can arise in transcultural adaptations, where cultural and linguistic variations may cause shifts in meaning.

Key strengths of this study include the use of a hybrid model integrating two empirically supported frameworks for cross-cultural adaptation of self-report measures. This approach enabled the researchers to systematically attend to key adaptation issues while ensuring that the original intent of the APQ measure was maintained. Second, the triangulation of data using local experts and parents is a key strength. Survey experts and developers support combining expert feedback and cognitive interviews as a strong method for the pretesting or cross-cultural adaptation of any new or existing instrument in a new population (Ouimet et al. 2004). This approach was helpful in identifying potential problematic items, words, and phrases on the APQ that could have been missed through traditional psychometric testing approaches. Additionally, the use of source language experts and local experts for final validity checks (in step 7) ensured that translations were linguistically sound and that no words or phrases were mistranslated. Source language experts ensured that clinical relevance and content validity of the adapted tool were appropriate.

Despite the above strengths, this study had some limitations that are worth considering. First, the study heavily relied on purposive sampling to recruit participants. A major limitation of this sampling technique is that it is prone to researcher bias (Sibona et al. 2020). Second, the experts were highly educated compared to the general Ugandan population. Given existing differences in knowledge and parenting experiences between experts from high socioeconomic backgrounds and lower SES parents in Uganda, this limitation could imply that the feedback provided by the educated experts mostly reflected perspectives and parenting experiences more aligned with higher SES groups, potentially missing nuances from lower SES parents in the Runyankole-speaking community. Nonetheless, it is important to note that these experts were still familiar with local parenting dynamics across both high-income and low-income families in the Runyankole-speaking community. We believe that their familiarity still contributed meaningfully to assessing the comprehensibility, acceptability, and relevance of the APQ. Therefore, while this limitation calls for further inclusion of diverse socioeconomic perspectives, it does not undermine the study's core conclusions about the tool's potential usefulness and relevance in this setting. Lastly, the generalizability of this adaptation is another notable limitation. Our adaptations were conducted exclusively among the Runyankole-speaking people, without considering Uganda's many other languages. Given that parenting practices may vary slightly among different tribal groups in Uganda, our findings may not fully reflect the country's cultural diversity, which limits their applicability to other linguistically diverse cultural groups within the country.

4.2 | Implications for Future Research and Practice

This study generated important findings that contribute to theory related to the subject of culturally informed assessment of parenting in Africa. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first qualitative study to detail the adaptation of the APQ measure for application among the Runyankole-speaking community in Uganda. The lack of empirical validation of assessment tools for parenting is a significant challenge that requires urgent attention and resolution, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (Augustinavicius et al. 2020; Madalane 2014). Given the eminent cultural differences between parenting in Western contexts, where most assessment measures tend to originate, it is imperative that future research efforts prioritize the empirical validation of assessment instruments before their application in evaluating parenting constructs within African contexts. We particularly strongly advocate for the inclusion of input from local experts and other stakeholders involved in the parenting process during the adaptation phases as the initial step. Local experts often know the "social ecologies of good parenting," nuanced local idioms, phrases, and meanings of words of items on a measure (Boothby et al. 2017, 169).

Adopting this decolonial approach will mitigate the risk of imposing Western parenting norms onto African cultures (Weber et al. 2021). Further, it will ensure that distinct and nuanced aspects of African parenting are accurately reflected during the development of measures for parenting and related constructs. More importantly, given that most of our expert reviewers were highly educated, future research should explore how aspects such as corporal punishment are understood across diverse socioeconomic samples in Uganda to ensure broader representation and inclusivity in the adaptation process. If resources such as time, trained personnel, and finances allow, it would be interesting if future research could utilize alternative methods, such as photovoice (Beazley 2016) to assess corporal punishment beyond the use of traditional assessment tools.

Our process resulted in a new 32-item adapted APQ that had items that were comprehensible, acceptable, and relevant to the target setting. Assessing parenting using a culturally adapted measure will provide insights into which components of parenting should be targeted in the development of parenting interventions for parents in the target setting. A crucial next step is to quantitatively test the psychometric properties of the adapted measure. Further, given Uganda's diversity in tribes, socioeconomic status, and other factors, future research should explore cross-group comparisons to evaluate the validity of the adapted measure across various demographic contexts.

Finally, the process and findings of our study also hold critical implications for family therapy. Family therapy emphasizes the

contextual nature of relationships in which individuals find themselves. In Uganda, parenting and parenting practices take place in the context of a web of relationships that extend beyond the nuclear family to include extended family members (e.g., aunts, uncles, grandparents) and in some instances members of the community. Thus, the development of a culturally adapted APQ holds the potential to enhance the family therapy practitioners' ability to assess parenting behaviors, in tandem with considering a myriad of sociocultural and economic factors that influence parenting within Ugandan families. In turn, this will enable family therapists to provide culturally responsive guidance, strengthening parent–child relationships, fostering positive parenting strategies, and ultimately promoting mental and relational well-being among families in Uganda and in other similar cultural contexts.

In conclusion, this study represents a pioneering effort in examining the comprehensibility, acceptability, and relevance of scale items on the APQ among the Runyankole-speaking community in Uganda. Framed within a cultural ecological framework, the study's conceptualization emphasized the utilization of local stakeholders, including parents and experts, to gather rich information, to support important and relevant adaptations. Taking such a decolonial approach to conducting empirical validation of a parenting scale holds significant implications for the future of parenting research in Uganda.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The corresponding author (R.A.) could avail the qualitative data files that supported the findings of this research upon reasonable request.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section.