

# Effect of Perceived Parenting Styles on Prosocial Behavior among Young Adults

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## ***Abstract:***

The main purpose of present study was to assess the effect of perceived parenting styles on prosocial behavior among young adults. The sample ( $n = 380$ ) was calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, with a mean age range of 18-25 years, recruited from different universities in Peshawar. The instruments used were The Perceived Parenting Style Scale and The Prosocial Scale for Adults (PSA). The Descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, and stepwise regression analysis were employed. The Independent sample t-test showed no significant gender differences in prosocial behavior ( $p > .05$ ). The one-way ANOVA revealed that young adults with authoritative parenting styles exhibited higher prosocial behavior ( $p < .01$ ) compared to those with authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. Stepwise regression analysis indicated that authoritative parenting significantly predicted prosocial behavior ( $p < .001$ ). The present study underscore styles of parenting in enhancing prosocial behavior, suggesting that mental health professionals should focus on parenting interventions.

Keywords: Perceived Parenting Styles, Prosocial Behavior, Young Adults, Prosocial Behavior, PSA.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Perceived Parenting Styles**

The development of children is significantly influenced by the strategies that parents use in raising them and has a profound impact on their adult readiness

(Khanum et al., 2023). Also, parents play fundamental roles in developing the cognitive and emotional competencies of children, which are long lasting, spanning well into young adulthood. The sequence of attitudes, behaviors, and approaches that parents use in raising their children is referred to as parenting style (Ren and Zhu, 2022).

Specifically, an individual's subjective assessment about the attitudes and behaviors of one's parents is termed as perceived parenting style. Similarly, perceived parenting styles are defined as what a child thinks about his/her parent's actions, how they treat him or her, and all things relevant to the parenting style of his parents (Hashmi et al., 2023). The perceived parenting style is characterized as a child's or adult's perception of parents' behavior patterns in childhood (Stavroulaki et al., 2021). Perception of parenting styles by children regarding his / her parents are explained as set of behaviors and names which apply on all different varieties of styles of rules and regulations, care and brought up encouragement, and acceptance used during child-rearing (Garbe et al., 2020). These perceptions have a profound impact on the core factors, like prosocial behavior that are important for providing young adults with the capability to well behave in social and academics environments.

Moreover, the parenting styles have been well known and significantly impact numerous behavioral and psychological outcomes. Baumrind (1966) explores 3 main parenting styles; authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting, and permissive parenting. Two of main dimension namely: responsiveness and demandingness are main aspect of parenting style (Goagoses et al., 2022; Heynen et al., 2021; Pinquart, 2017a, Pinquart, 2017b).

Authoritative parents exhibit high level of demandingness as well as high responsiveness. In authoritative approach, parents set high standards and rules for their children as well as explain the reasons behind their disciplinary actions. They do not use their disciplinary actions as punishment, but utilized as a tool for assistance. Authoritative parents have a close and supportive relationship with their children. These parents encourage independence, accountability, and adaptability in children. Such children have higher self-esteem because they have the confidence to set and achieve goals independently. Also, children of authoritative parents have better emotional regulation and, therefore, have better social outcomes and psychological well-being (Masud et al., 2019).

However, authoritarian parents communicate in a one-way approach: they set up strict rules, and the child has no say or negotiating capacity regarding the rules. Rarely do they explain them to the child; children have high expectations with little scope for error. In this type of parenting, punishment for the mistakes is very common. Authoritarian parents have relatively fewer nurturing behaviors as their expectations are very high and have little room for error (Masud et al., 2019). Consequently, the strict rules and punishment imposed by authoritarian parents can result in a high level of aggression in children. The difficulties in managing anger can be due to a lack of proper guidance. Also, these children have difficulties in making their own decisions and are socially incompetent due to lower self-esteem (Sanvictores & Mendez, 2022).

Furthermore, permissive parenting style involves lower demandingness but high level of responsiveness. These parents are usually warm and have supporting relationship with their children, but also have low parental control. Permissive parents encourage their children to make decisions independently. Due to positive, non-punitive, and accepting behavior of permissive parents, their children have better adaptability and high self-esteem. However, due to lower parental control these children can be impetuous, self-centered, and have difficulty self-regulation (Sanvictores & Mendez, 2022).

#### Prosocial Behavior

All those behaviors that are performed with the aim of helping or benefiting others are referred to as prosocial behaviors. These behaviors have a significant influence in the social and emotional development of adolescents (Snippe et al., 2018, Gerbino et al., 2018).

Due to the importance of prosocial behavior for social and psychological well-being in adolescence and adulthood, it is necessary to understand the elements that influence people's tendencies to engage in prosocial behavior, as well as supporting culturally sensitive psychoeducational activities that encourage young people to be motivated to help and share with others (Snippe et al., 2018). Prosocial behavior significantly improves and maximizes one's personal self-esteem along with general life satisfaction at the personal level. These prosocial behaviors positively influence social relations while promoting interpersonal harmony among persons at the social level. Moreover, these

behaviors serve as demonstrations of social responsibility, and their importance for fostering social harmony is significant (Li et al., 2023b).

Additionally, prosocial behaviors are regarded as key pointers of social well-being and moral character in adults. Most parents want their children to demonstrate such traits as kindness, generosity, and helpfulness to others. In fact, the vast majority of adults exhibit these traits, and they form the foundation of strong interpersonal relationships and societal cooperation. This explains how all societies hold prosocial behavior of high importance, used as the base for all other moral role models or relationships between groups and forms collaboration (Carlo & Padilla-Walker, 2020). Moreover, it has been shown in numerous literatures that prosocial behavior is linked with lower antisocial behaviors, better academic outcomes, physical health, and psychological adjustment (Chen et al., 2019; Jung & Schröder-Abé, 2019; Memmott-Elison et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding the causes, progression, and outcomes of prosocial behaviors is necessary to promote social well-being, health, and character development.

#### Parenting Styles and Prosocial Behavior

In bioecological framework, individual development emerges from the association between person's characteristics, communal interactions, and environmental settings. Therefore, the family environment, especially parenting styles significantly impacts the development of prosocial behaviors. The significant role of parents in fostering prosocial tendencies across adolescence and beyond has been shown by numerous studies. (Brownell, 2016; Eisenberg et al., 2015). For instance, parents might create helping opportunities for adolescents or they may provide rewards to their young children for exhibiting a prosocial behavior. In this way parents foster prosocial tendencies in their children (Padilla-Walker, 2014).

Different theories explain how parenting styles are associated with prosocial behavior. For instance, Bandura and Walters (1963), the Social learning theory emphasizes learning of new behavior of children, frame of mind, and emotional reactions by watching and copying of others. This suggests that when parents model empathy, provide guidance, and create helping opportunities for others, their children will learn these behaviors by observing their parents and will respond compassionately to the needs of people. On the other hand, harsh or

unresponsive parents might be less likely to promote prosocial tendencies in their children. Previous research has shown that different forms of parenting (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) have varying effects on the development of prosocial tendencies.

#### Authoritative Parenting and Prosocial Behavior

Authoritative parenting is characterized by empathy, trust, warmth, and open dialogue, which encourages children to develop prosocial behaviors. In this parenting style, parents establish clear rules and expectations while being attentive to their children's emotions and needs. They provide explanations for their disciplinary measures, support autonomy, and promote independent decision-making. Consequently, children who view their parents as authoritative are more likely to cultivate prosocial values and behaviors. (Luo et al., 2024).

Gross et al. (2017) review theoretical models on how parent-child attachment influences the development of prosocial behavior. They suggest that parents who are responsive and sensitive foster a sense of security in their children. Such secure attachment promotes trust, emotional security, and emotional regulation that encourage children to respond compassionately to the needs of people. Additionally, a previous study on Chinese students revealed a positive relationship between mothers' authoritative parenting and prosocial behaviors. This suggests that mothers who encourage independence and exhibit warmth in their parenting approaches are more likely to promote prosocial tendencies such as helping, sharing, and comforting others (Ding et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Wong et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis on adolescents and examined the association between parenting and prosocial behaviors. Their findings revealed that regardless of country and age, authoritative approach has been positively associated with higher levels of prosocial behaviors. This describes that care, responsiveness, and appropriate discipline exhibited by authoritative parents fosters understanding, self-regulation, and moral reasoning in children and adolescents, which in turn leads them to engage in helping behaviors. Also, authoritative parents listen to their children patiently during communication and allow them to make their own decisions. Therefore, their children are more likely to develop autonomy and better social skills and exhibit a compassionate, optimistic, and confident attitude towards their society (Ren & Edwards, 2015).

### Authoritarian Parenting and Prosocial Behavior

Authoritarian parents set high expectations, rigid rules, and harsh discipline for their children. Instead of support, understanding, and explaining the reasons behind their discipline, they impose rules through punishment, threats, and coercion. These parents prioritize obedience over moral reasoning or compassion. This punitive approach used by authoritarian parents can lead to feelings of resentment, helplessness, and diminished trust in children. Therefore, children who perceive their parents as authoritarian may comply with rules to avoid punishment rather than understanding the reasons behind those rules and discipline. Consequently, this may hinder their ability to understand how their actions affect others as well as to adopt prosocial values (Luo et al., 2024).

Awiszus et al., (2022) reviewed multiple studies on the effect of parenting styles on the child development and outcomes, including prosocial behavior. They found that authoritarian parenting was associated with poor social skills. This suggests that parents who adopt harsh and punitive approach are more likely to limit open communication and emotional expression. As a result, children may lack the opportunities to learn empathy and moral reasoning, which in turn limit their ability to develop prosocial tendencies. Likewise, children whose parents are verbally aggressive, coercive, or exert psychological control are less likely to engage in helping behaviors (Padilla-Walker et al., 2016; Gryczkowski et al., 2017; Xing et al., 2017).

Contrarily, a study was conducted on Chinese children to examine prosocial behaviors and the factors influencing them. The study found that fathers and mothers who adopt authoritarian approach were more likely to predict helping and sharing behaviors respectively in children. This suggests that while authoritarian parenting negatively influences the development of prosocial behaviors, it can also foster some aspects of prosociality in certain contexts (Bi et al., 2017).

### Permissive Parenting and Prosocial Behavior

Research has shown that parents, who are high responsive and low demanding, rarely enforce rules and control over their children, are less likely

to promote prosocial behavior. Children who perceive their parents as permissive tend to be more passive, have poor social skills, and unresponsive to others' needs, which may limit their ability to engage in prosocial behaviors (Vasiou et al., 2023). Likewise, children of permissive parents may perceive their excessive permissiveness as parental negligence for their needs, which can negatively impact their emotional development. Consequently, this emotional instability may increase the likelihood of behavior problems and reduce prosocial behaviors (Llorca-Mestre et al., 2017).

Ngai et al., (2018) examined how different parenting approaches influence prosocial behavior among adolescents and found negative association between permissive parenting and prosocial behavior. They suggest that although warmth exhibited by permissive parents might be beneficial, the lack of guidance and appropriate discipline may hinder the adolescent's development of adaptability, responsibility, and responsiveness to others' needs, all of which are necessary for developing prosocial tendencies. Nevertheless, research has shown that parental warmth and protection also helps in fostering prosocial values in their children. As compared to punitive parenting approaches, prosocial behaviors are more positively influenced by parental responsiveness and encouragement (Pan & Zhu, 2019).

Furthermore, a study by Cong (2014) revealed that children are more inclined towards prosocial behaviors when they are treated with affection and kindness by their parents. Also, a study conducted on adolescents found that prosocial behavior was positively predicted by fathers' protective training and parents' emotional warmth (Jiang, 2020). Likewise, a study on private students revealed that the children will be more inclined to engage in helping behaviors when their parents exhibit more protectiveness (Yin & Xu, 2021).

#### Rationale

Young adulthood is a critical phase of development in the human lifespan that manifest significant changes in emotional, social, and cognitive domains. It is during this phase that individuals experiences the challenges of increased independence, complicated interpersonal relationships, and greater expectations in academic, career, and societal functioning. The growing concern is evident when observing the behavioral patterns of today's youth. Young adults increasingly report difficulties in coping with peer conflicts and social demands,

usually reacting with emotional withdrawal. Meanwhile, there has been a marked decrease in community engagement, mutual cooperation, and empathetic behavior in university settings. The inability to provide support to peers not only impacts individual relationships but also adversely affect communal well-being. Therefore, prosocial behavior (all those behaviors that are intended to help others), is essential for successfully navigating this phase (Eisenberg et al., 2006).

Therefore, understanding the foundational influences that shape adaptive functioning during this period is of the utmost significance. One of the most foundational and long-standing influences on these traits is parenting. From early childhood into emerging adulthood, perceived parenting style plays a pivotal role in shaping how individuals interact with others. Research shows that an individual raised under a warm, responsive, and structured environment i.e. authoritative parenting is more inclined towards helping behaviors (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg, 2001). In contrast, those who perceive their parental figures as overly controlling, indifferent, or permissive may struggle to regulate emotions or display empathy in complex social situations (Pinquart, 2017).

While parenting styles have been extensively studied in children and adolescents, their long-term perceived effects on prosocial capacities in young adults remain unexplored. Given the rise in emotional dysregulation and interpersonal conflicts, it is timely and important to investigate how early parental influences relate to these adaptive skills in later developmental stages.

Thus the current study seeks to address this gap by examining the effect of perceived parenting styles on prosocial behavior among young adults (university students). Understanding this relationship, this study also aspires to promote a greater societal awareness about the enduring consequences of parenting during adolescence and beyond. By highlighting how perceived parenting continues to impact young adult development, it may encourage educators, counselors, and parents themselves to adopt more reflective and supportive practices. Ultimately, this will not only promote individual growth of university students but also create more empathetic and resilient communities.

### Objectives

1. To examine the effect of Parenting style on pro social behavior among university students
2. To examine the difference in the mean score of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting on prosocial behavior.

### Hypotheses

1. Male will show high level of prosocial behavior as compared to females.
2. Participants with authoritative parenting style will score high on prosocial behavior than participants with authoritarian and permissive parenting styles.

## METHOD

### Sample

The population for the study consisted of a total of (N=3,986) young adults enrolled across various universities of Peshawar, KP. To determine an appropriate and statistically representative sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula for sample size determination was applied. Based on this method, a minimum sample size of (n=380) participants was calculated. The final sample comprised of university students in age range between 18 to 25 years ( $M=.25$ ,  $SD=.43$ ). The sample was selected using Simple Random Sampling Technique from various departments within the selected universities.

## INSTRUMENTS

### Demographic Sheet

The self-constructed demographic sheet included all the relevant information regarding the participant's age, gender, education, family system, and socioeconomic status.

### Perceived Parenting Style Scale (PPSS)

Divya and Manikandan's (2013) Perceived Parenting Style Scale evaluates how children perceive their parents' behavior across three domains: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. The scale contains 30 positively worded items and uses a 5-point Likert response format – Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). Each parenting style is scored separately.

Reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) for the subscales was reported as satisfactory: authoritative = 0.79, authoritarian = 0.81, and permissive = 0.86.

#### Prosocial Scale for Adults (PSA)

Caprara et al.'s (2005) Prosocial Scale for Adults is a 16-item self-report instrument designed to measure adults' tendency to engage in behaviors that benefit others (e.g., helping, sharing, caring, and empathic responding). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = never/almost never true, 2 = occasionally true, 3 = sometimes true, 4 = often true, and 5 = almost always/always true. Total scores are calculated by summing responses across all items (no items are reverse scored), with higher totals reflecting greater prosocial behavior. The scale shows strong internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

#### Procedure

To initiate the study, a written permission letter was submitted to the Directors of Admissions of different universities of Peshawar, KP. After getting formal approval, access was allowed to departmental lists, which facilitated the initiation of the sampling process.

After obtaining the lists, different departments within each university were randomly selected. Based on the overall population size of the selected departments, a sample size was calculated through Krejcie & Morgan formula for sample size determination. After selection of the departments and calculation of sample, permission was taken from the Heads of Departments (HODs) through a formal permission letter. The permission letter describes the study's aims and requested authorization to approach students for participation.

After getting consent from the HODs, students were selected using a simple random sampling method. The study's objectives were clearly explained to the participants, and they were assured that their information would be used solely for research purposes and kept confidential. Afterward, standardized questionnaires were distributed to the chosen students. They were given enough time for questionnaire completion, during which the researcher remained available to answer any questions or offer clarification as needed. Upon completion, participants were thanked for their time and contribution to the study.

## RESULTS

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Characteristic of the Participants (n=380)

| Sample Characteristics      | N   | Percentage % |
|-----------------------------|-----|--------------|
| <b>Age</b>                  |     |              |
| 18-21                       | 285 | 75.0         |
| 22-25                       | 95  | 25.0         |
| <b>Gender</b>               |     |              |
| Male                        | 190 | 50.0         |
| Female                      | 190 | 50.0         |
| <b>Education</b>            |     |              |
| 2nd Semester                | 81  | 21.3         |
| 4th Semester                | 110 | 28.9         |
| 6th Semester                | 101 | 26.6         |
| 8th Semester                | 88  | 23.2         |
| <b>Family System</b>        |     |              |
| Nuclear                     | 256 | 67.4         |
| Joint                       | 124 | 32.6         |
| <b>Socioeconomic Status</b> |     |              |
| Lower                       | 29  | 7.6          |
| Middle                      | 314 | 82.6         |
| Upper                       | 37  | 9.7          |

Table 2

Psychometric Properties of Major Study Variables

| Variables | No. of Items | M    | SD   | Range  | $\alpha$ |
|-----------|--------------|------|------|--------|----------|
| PPSS      | 30           | 85.1 | 11.3 | 64-111 | .65      |
| PSA       | 16           | 56.8 | 18.4 | 20-80  | .97      |

NOTE: PPSS= Perceived Parenting Style Scale, PSA= Prosocialness Scale for Adults

Table 2 indicates the Cronbach Alpha of the major study variables. The Perceived Parenting Style Scale (M=85.1, SD=11.3) showed average reliability with Cronbach alpha of .65 and consisted of 30 items, while the Prosocialness Scale for Adults (M=56.8, SD=18.4) have 16 items and Cronbach alpha is .97 which shown higher internal consistency of the scale.

Table 3

## Descriptive Statistics and Correlation of the Study Variables

| Variables | N   | M    | SD   | 1      | 2 |
|-----------|-----|------|------|--------|---|
| PPS       | 380 | 85.1 | 11.3 | 1      |   |
| PS        | 380 | 56.8 | 18.4 | -.22** | 1 |

Note: PPS= Perceived Parenting Styles, PS= Prosocial Behavior

Table 3 shows the Pearson Product Moment correlation between perceived parenting styles and prosocial behavior. The result indicates a significant negative correlation between perceived parenting styles and prosocial behavior ( $r = -.22, p < .001$ )

Table 4

## Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-Value of Prosocial Behavior in Gender (n=380)

| Variables | Male M | SD    | Female M | SD    | t (190) | p         | Cohen's d |
|-----------|--------|-------|----------|-------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| PS        | 55.30  | 20.69 | 58.42    | 15.88 | -1.64   | $p > .05$ | .16       |

Note: PS= Prosocial Behavior

Table 4 indicates the result of independent sample t-test. The result shows that mean score of male on prosocial behavior is a bit higher than female but result is not significant.

Table 5

## Mean, Standard Deviation, and t- Value of Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive Parenting on Prosocial behavior

| Variables | Authoritative |       | Authoritarian |       | Permissive |      | F(2,376) | $\eta^2$ |
|-----------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|------|----------|----------|
|           | M             | SD    | M             | SD    | M          | SD   |          |          |
| PS        | 60.89         | 16.75 | 41.07         | 16.42 | 42.62      | 17.8 | 41.65*** | 0.18     |

Note: PS= Prosocial Behavior

A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there is a difference in prosocial behavior of children with respect to parenting style. The result shows that the effect of parenting style is significant ( $\eta^2 = 0.18$ ) ( $\alpha =$

.001) indicates large effect size. The participants who perceived their parents as authoritative have more prosocial behavior ( $M = 60.89$ ,  $SD = 16.75$ ) than authoritarian ( $M = 41.07$ ,  $SD = 16.42$ ), and permissive parenting style ( $M = 42.62$ ,  $SD = 17.8$ ).

Table 6

## Stepwise Regression of Parenting Styles on Prosocial Behavior

|        | Variables     | B     | 95% CI |       | SE   | $\beta$ | R <sup>2</sup> | $\Delta R^2$ |
|--------|---------------|-------|--------|-------|------|---------|----------------|--------------|
|        |               |       | LL     | UL    |      |         |                |              |
| Step 1 | Constant      | 6.64  | .996   | 12.33 | 2.88 |         |                |              |
|        | Authoritative | 1.37  | 1.22   | 1.53  | .077 | .680    | .462           | .462***      |
| Step 2 | Constant      | 6.57  | -20.13 | 6.98  | 6.89 |         |                |              |
|        | Authoritative | 1.57  | 1.33   | 1.80  | .120 | .775    | .468           | .006*        |
|        | Authoritarian | -.247 | .017   | .477  | .117 | .124    |                |              |

Note: Constant= Prosocial Behavior,  $p < .001$

Table 8 indicates the results of stepwise regression of effect of parenting on prosocial behavior in young adults. The result of Model 1 indicates that Authoritative Parenting Style significantly and positively predicted prosocial behavior ( $\beta = 1.37$ ,  $p < .001$ ). While in Model 2 Authoritative Parenting Style significantly predicted prosocial behavior ( $\beta = 1.57$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Moreover, Authoritarian Parenting Style significantly but negatively predicted prosocial behavior ( $\beta = -.247$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Furthermore, Permissive Parenting Style excluded from Model 2.

## DISCUSSION

The present study investigated how young adults' perceptions of parenting styles relate to prosocial behavior, and whether prosocial tendencies differ by gender. The first hypothesis predicted that male university students would exhibit higher levels of prosocial behavior than female students. This prediction was not supported: although males had a marginally higher mean score, the difference between genders was not statistically significant.

This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that gender differences in prosocial behavior tend to be small or contingent on context rather than absolute. Some studies report greater prosociality among men, while others find higher levels among women (De Caroli & Sagone, 2013; Brañas-Garza et al., 2018). Overall, the literature suggests that gender effects on prosocial actions

are situation-dependent – men may be more prosocial in certain circumstances, and women in others (Balliet et al., 2011; Croft et al., 2020; Diekmann & Clark, 2015; Van Den Akker et al., 2020).

For example, Abdullahi and Kumar (2016) compared prosocial behavior across 60 Indian students and found that females scored significantly higher than males on two prosocial dimensions but showed no significant differences on five other dimensions. These results imply that, despite specific disparities, males and females are similar on most measures of prosocial behavior.

Furthermore, Olsson et al. (2021) examined gender differences in prosocial behavior across ten diverse countries and found that men and women reported similar perceptions of their own prosocial behaviors. However, they observed differences in gender emerge depending on the gender of the person they interacted with; i.e., females exhibited greater prosocial intentions towards same-gender individuals, while men showed higher prosocial intentions towards the opposite gender. Moreover, actual prosocial behavior measured through a prisoner's dilemma game revealed that men engage in prosocial conducts such as sharing more than women, regardless of the recipient's gender. These findings highlight that gender differences in prosocial behavior are influenced by situational and relational contexts, rather than specifying the presence of a universally "more prosocial" gender.

The second hypothesis proposed that students who experienced an authoritative parenting style would exhibit higher prosocial behavior than those who experienced authoritarian or permissive styles. The study's results supported this prediction: there were statistically significant differences among the three parenting styles in their association with prosocial behavior. In particular, participants who perceived their parents as authoritative reported substantially higher prosocial scores than those who described their parents as authoritarian or permissive.

Stepwise regression further clarified these relationships. In the first model, authoritative parenting emerged as a significant, positive predictor of prosocial behavior. When authoritarian parenting was added in the second model, authoritative parenting remained the dominant positive predictor, while authoritarian parenting contributed a significant negative effect. Permissive parenting did not predict prosocial behavior in any of the models.

These findings are in line with prior research that highlights the role of authoritative parenting in fostering prosocial tendencies. For example, Wong et al. (2020) reported a positive link between authoritative parenting and multiple forms of prosocial behavior, consistent with the idea that warmth, responsiveness, and clear boundaries encourage children to adopt prosocial values. Similarly, the present study's higher prosocial scores among students who perceived their parents as authoritative support the view that this parenting approach promotes social and moral development.

Conversely, the negative association between authoritarian parenting and prosocial behavior observed here echoes earlier work (e.g., Clark et al., 2015), which suggests that high control combined with low responsiveness can inhibit children's prosocial capacities. Finally, the lack of predictive power for permissive parenting aligns with Hu and Feng's (2021) regression results showing that permissive style did not significantly predict overall prosocial scores or its subdimensions.

## LIMITATIONS

Limitations of the current study are;

1. The sample was taken only from university students in Peshawar, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations, including non-university young adults or those from different sociocultural backgrounds.
2. The current study has explored the effect of only three parenting styles, excluding the uninvolved/neglectful parenting style, which is an essential dimension in the full typology of parenting and could have enriched the analysis.
3. The study did not assess maternal and paternal parenting styles separately, making it difficult to determine which parental figure had a more significant impact.
4. The instruments used in the current study were psychometrically reliable but were originally developed in western contexts. These may not fully capture culturally specific parenting practices or behaviors in a South Asian context.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

In light of the limitations in the present study, the following directions are recommended for future studies:

1. Future studies should include large and more diverse samples across various regions, educational levels, and cultural backgrounds to improve the generalizability of the study.
2. The uninvolved/neglectful parenting style should be integrated into future studies to provide a comprehensive analysis of all parenting typologies.
3. Future research should conduct a separate analysis of maternal and paternal parenting styles to identify differential effects on prosocial behavior.
4. Future research should adapt or validate the existing scales for the specific cultural context to ensure relevance and accuracy in non-Western populations.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Based on the findings of the current study, we came to know that perceived parenting styles significantly impact prosociality among young adults. Among today's youth, those people who perceived their parents as neglectful or authoritarian tend to struggle with emotional regulation, and social cooperation.

These deficits in prosocial tendencies are manifesting in various forms, including relationship difficulties and reduced social integration. The lack of empathy is also pushing many young individuals toward self-centered behavior, social withdrawal, and even anti-social tendencies in some cases.

One of the significant findings is that individuals with authoritative parents (warm yet structured) were more socially cooperative and demonstrated higher levels of empathy, moral reasoning, and constructive conflict resolution. On the contrary, inconsistent or harsh parenting was linked to reduced social concern.

In light of these findings, this study recommends early psychoeducational interventions focused on parenting practices, particularly targeting new and future parents. Promoting authoritative parenting can assist in reducing behavioral maladaptation among youth. At the same time, integrating empathy training in school and university settings can reinforce these skills in individuals who may not have experienced optimal parenting.

Teachers, counselors, and mental health professionals can use these insights to tailor guidance programs and training modules that build empathy, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution skills in young adults. Family-based therapies, parental training programs, and campus counseling initiatives should emphasize the enduring impact of parenting on mental health and prosocial development.

In the long-term, these interventions can help reduce interpersonal conflicts, impulsive behavior, and social dysfunction in educational environments. Enhancing prosocial behaviors can also contribute to a more harmonious society by nurturing responsible, empathetic, and emotionally balanced adults.

## CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of perceived parenting styles on prosocial behavior among young adults. The study anticipated that students who perceive their parents as authoritative would show higher prosocial behavior than those who perceive their parents as authoritarian or permissive. It was also assumed that there would be gender differences in prosocial behavior. The study sample comprised 380 university students aged between 18 and 25 years, selected through Simple Random Sampling Technique from multiple universities in Peshawar. In the current study, standardized tools, including the Perceived Parenting Style Scale (PPSS), and the Prosocialness Scale for Adults (PSA) were employed. To test the research hypotheses, an independent sample t-test was used to examine the gender differences in prosocial behavior. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess the differences in prosocial behavior across different perceived parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive). Pearson product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationships among the study variables. Finally, stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the predictive role of perceived parenting styles on prosocial behavior.

The results of the study showed no significant gender differences in prosocial behavior, thereby rejecting the first hypothesis. However, the second hypothesis was supported, as students who perceived their parents as authoritative scored significantly higher in prosocial behavior compared to those with authoritarian or permissive parenting styles. Regression analysis further confirmed

authoritative parenting as the strongest positive predictor for prosocial behavior. Authoritarian parenting showed a small but positive association with prosocial behavior, whereas permissive parenting demonstrated no significant relationship with prosocial behavior.

The results of the current study underscore the importance of parenting style as a significant determinant of young adults' social functioning. Authoritative parenting appears to foster the development of prosocial behavior. In contrast, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are less beneficial to this developmental outcome. The study has important implications for clinical, educational, and familial settings. It suggests that promoting authoritative parenting through psychoeducational programs can enhance young adults' prosocial behavior. Future research should consider longitudinal designs, explore additional parenting styles such as uninvolved parenting styles, examine maternal and paternal roles separately, and examine diverse populations to better understand the broader impact of parenting across cultures.

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