

## Are We Raising Future Leaders? Parenting Styles and Leadership Traits in Adolescents

### ABSTRACT

*A leadership deficit is perhaps Pakistan's most pressing problem. You talk to any expert or analyst; all would agree that Pakistan has a serious dearth of leaders. Is it possible that we are raising more followers than leaders? Research shows that parenting styles may hinder or enhance leadership traits in children (e.g. children of authoritarian parents may lack critical social/communication skills). This study investigates how parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) influence leadership behaviors in children. Data was collected from Lahore high schools (both public & private schools, boys and girls). Parenting styles were assessed by approaching respective parents. Overall, results indicate that children significantly lack leadership characteristics. It was also noticed that majority of the parents had authoritarian style, whereas authoritative parenting style positively predicted ( $\beta = .27, p < .001$ ) leadership behaviors. Implications are discussed highlighting the contribution of parents in development and emergence of leadership behaviors at younger ages in the Pakistani context.*

**Keywords:** Leadership Development, Parenting Styles, Adolescent Leadership, Authoritative Parenting

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## **Introduction**

Since years, trait theories of leadership dominated the viewpoint that great leaders are born not made and stable personality traits influence the emergence of leadership (Colbert, Judge, Choi, & Wang, 2012; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Mann, 1959). However, later research showed that in leadership emergence role of heritability is not more than 30% (Avery, Zhang, Avolio, Krueger, 2007). Which means that remaining 70% is controlled by environmental and situational factors, such as early childhood experiences, exposure to different role models, parenting and early opportunities.

Leadership is an area of interest for the researchers for more than a century, however, majority of the work has focused on role of personality traits and cognitive abilities that differentiate effective from ineffective leaders (Bass, 1990; Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Similarly, there is huge amount of literature that has identified techniques for leader development, but most of the research has been done using adults and very few explore its developmental roots (Popper & Maysel, 2007). Early socialization experiences of children with parents play a significant role in molding their adulthood relationships (Parker, Barrett & Hickie, 1992). Parenting styles and parent-child relationship translates adulthood of a child, his/her future leadership styles and the way he/she will build relationships with others later in life (Avolio, Rotundo, & Walumbwa, 2009; Ferguson, Hagaman, Grice, & Peng, 2006; Keller, 2003; Popper & Maysel, 2003). Parents also serve as a leadership role model for their children (Avolio, Rotundo & Walumbwa, 2009; Ferguson, Hagaman, Grice & Peng, 2006; Popper & Maysel, 2003; Bandura, 1969). Hence, considering the importance of the phenomenon that leaders are made and leadership skills can be taught through early childhood experiences and effective parenting. Current study focuses on exploring leadership behaviors in adolescents and how parenting styles are linked and contribute in enhancing leadership traits and behaviors in their children.

## **Parenting Styles and Leadership Traits**

Leadership is basically a practical skill characterized by the ability of an individual or organization to "lead" and "Influence" other individuals, teams, or entire organizations. Yukl (2008) defines leadership as a process of influencing others in developing an understanding of what to do and how to do it as well as facilitating others in accomplishing shared goals. Leaders tend to possess certain set of skills, abilities and traits i.e. they score higher than average on tests of ability (intelligence, relevant knowledge, verbal facility),

sociability (participation, cooperativeness, popularity), and motivation (initiative and persistence) (Shaw, 1976; Fraser, 1978).

Leadership traits can be developed and learned in early years of life. Investigation of the main causes of the development of effective and maladaptive leadership can be helpful in determining future leaders. Therefore, present study considered parenting as a crucial factor in forming leadership traits because a child's ability to behave in a particular manner, even to be a good leader later in life, is heavily influenced by parenting, parenting strategies and family environment (Turner, Chandler, & Heffer, 2009; Schilling, Sparfeldt, & Rost, 2006; Parker, Barrett & Hickie, 1992).

Parenting is often defined as the process of advancing and sustaining the physical, communal, zealous, financial and scholarly development of a youngster from early life to adulthood. Berman (1997) highlighted that socially competent behaviors of children depend on the way their parents deal with them. The ways that parents bring up their children are known as parenting styles. The renowned theorist Baumrind (1971) provided a classification of parenting styles as demandingness and responsiveness, further categorizing them in authoritative, authoritarian, neglectful and permissive parenting styles. These different parenting strategies influence children personality in different ways.

*Authoritarian parents* put high demands yet are low in responsiveness. They have very high expectations from their children, yet provide very little feedback and nurturance (Baumrind, Larzelere, Owens, 2010). This parenting style is quite similar to autocratic leadership where full control and inflexible rules are applied (van Vugt, Jepsen, Hart, & De Cremer, 2004). This results in more negative outcomes. Children who grew under this parenting style were found to have high levels of depression and low levels of self-esteem, low academic achievement and lacked effective leadership skills (Gove, 2015; Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter, Keehn, 2007).

*Permissive parents* are non-requesting yet responsive. They demonstrate absence of control and consistency. They do not set rules and show decrease steep in monitoring of their children. Permissive parenting is more flexible than other parenting styles but surprisingly it fosters negative effects on children, especially leading them toward deviant behaviors (Querido, Warner, Eyberg, 2002). Individuals who grow under this parenting style create negative and stressful environment in organizations (Jenkins, 2007). Vardi and Weitz (2004) found that such individuals lack clear objective and provide high degree of freedom to act within organizations ultimately destroying the workplace environment.

Furthermore, *uninvolved or neglectful parenting* results in more negative outcomes than authoritarian and permissive parenting. Uninvolved parent neither support their children nor supervise their behaviors. This kind of

parenting lacks control and closeness in child rearing and often involves complete disengagement in their life (Baumrind, Larzelere, Owens, 2010; Hoeve, Dubas, Eichelsheim, van der Laan, Smeenk, Gerris, 2009).

Finally, the most effective and responsive parenting styles in child rearing is *authoritative parenting*. Such parents consider their children as competitive, targeted, and pay attention to them. They allow the child to explore on his/her own and provide an encouraging environment for children to make independent decisions. They not only foster confidence in their children but also manage, guide and direct them in right directions. Smith (2011) found authoritative parenting to be positively related with healthy development of a child, even, the presence of at least one authoritative parent is helpful in encouraging positive outcomes (Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, Carrano, 2006). Several studies have revealed that children who grow up with authoritative parenting possess better mental health and well-being, have higher academic achievement and lowest rate of depression (Simons & Conger, 2007; Spera, 2005; Aunola, Stattin & Nurmi, 2000; Shucksmith, Hendry & Glendinning, 1995). Leaders who grow up with this parenting have clear objectives, are mature, goal oriented, responsible, flexible and motivated (Greenfield, 2007). Kudo, Longhofer and Floersch (2012) found authoritative parenting to be positively related with emotional autonomy and transformational leadership. Moreover, stimulating, nurturing and supportive family environment build positive self-concept of children and helps in increasing their creativity (Mehrinejad, Rajabimoghadam & Tarsafi, 2015). Smith (2011) proposed that affectionate and warmth parenting is associated with healthy development of a child and results in various positive outcomes in their life.

Besides, parenting styles, parents as an authoritative figure itself serve as a role model and leader for their children (Grunwald & McAbee, 1999). Children not only observe their parents' behaviors but also try to model them. Early childhood experiences with parents can govern their future leadership practices (Ferguson, Hagaman, Grice, & Peng, 2006). Hartman and Haris (1992) conducted first study on parenting and leadership and highlighted that parenting styles in early year of life influence leadership styles adopted later in life. Lyon (2006) also proposed that perceived parenting in early years determines leadership styles exhibited by adults later in life.

Body of the research clearly indicates a strong link between leadership traits in children and role of family and parenting styles (Avidan Milevsky, 2007). Current research focuses on similar assumptions and intends to find out current state of science in Pakistan by asking three major questions. 1) What is the current level of leadership characteristics in adolescents? 2) What parenting styles are most used by parents in child rearing? 3) And finally, how/if parenting styles are related to the leadership traits and behaviors in adolescents?

## Method

### Sample

Using a correlational research design, the main goal of the research was to assess the level of leadership traits in adolescents and the relationship with parenting styles. Data was collected from adolescents ( $n = 181$ ) using convenient sampling technique. We used convenient sampling technique not because it's simple and convenient, but because this was most suitable technique given our hypothesis. We needed to approach the parents of the students to assess parenting styles, so given the two important features of convenient sampling i.e. availability and willingness, this technique was used. Parents were approached to get the parenting styles questionnaires filled directly from them, since, not all the parents were available (in some cases only mothers were available) so final sample used for analysis was 133 adolescents, (whose both parents' data was available), with the age range from 13 to 16 years ( $M = 14.9$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). Fifty-one percent of the sample comprised of girls with 62% from nuclear family system (See Table 1).

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics of the Demographic Variables of the sample (N = 133).*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>F (%)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Age		14.9 (1.01)
Gender		
Boys	65 (48.9%)	
Girls	68 (51.1%)	
Previous Class Grade		
A, or A+	76 (57.1%)	
B, or B+	52 (39.1%)	
C, or C+	5 (3.8%)	
Type of school		
Private	66 (49.6%)	
Government	67 (50.4%)	
No of Siblings		
1-4	98 (73.7%)	
5-7	33 (24.8%)	
8 and above	2 (1.5 %)	
Family System		
Nuclear	82 (61.7%)	
Joint	51 (38.3%)	
<i>Variables</i>	<i>F (%)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Father' education		

Matric	29 (21.8%)
Intermediate	31 (23.3%)
Bachelor	38 (28.6%)
Masters	25 (16.8%)
Above masters	10 (7.5%)
Mother' Education	
Metric	43 (32.3%)
Intermediate	40 (30.1%)
Bachelor	39 (29.3%)
Master	10 (7.5%)
Above master	1 (8%)

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Note. F= frequency, %= percentage, M= mean, SD= standard deviation

### Measures

**Parenting Practices Questionnaire (PPQ).** The short version of Parenting Practices Questionnaire of Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen and Hart (2001) was used (after seeking formal permission from the authors). It consists of 32 items, yielding permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative scores for both mother and father. Two forms of this questionnaire were used; one to evaluate the parental authority provided by the mother and one to evaluate the parental authority provided by the father. Responses to each of these items were based on a five-point Likert scale. Reliability of mother's authoritarianism scale was .81, and father's authoritarianism scale was .85. Reliability coefficients for remaining parenting scales, both for mothers and fathers (ranged from .75 to .92).

**Roets Rating Scale for Leadership (RRSL).** To measure emergence of leadership traits in adolescents, Roets Rating Scale for Leadership (Roets, 1997) was used. It consisted of 26 items, with five-point Likert scale (from 1—almost always to 5—never). Internal consistency of the scale was good ( $\alpha = .71$ ).

### Procedure

Following ethical guidelines, formal permission from authors was obtained. To formally begin with data collection, permission letter was taken from the institutional board. Schools were approached, and formal permission was taken from school heads. The students were contacted (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders) and briefed about the study. The consent form along with questionnaire (leadership traits) was provided to 181 participants. Later, permission was taken from adolescents to approach their parents. Upon receiving permission, parents were approached, and data was collected from parents using Parenting practices questionnaire. Only parents of 133 participants gave their consent to participate in the study and provided with the data, therefore, the final sample of 133 out of 181 adolescents was retained. Data was analyzed using statistical package SPSS version 20.

## Results

Firstly, Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was used to investigate the assumption of normality of data on the Leadership Traits (our main dependent variable). We used Shapiro above that of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test as latter is more appropriate for small sample statistics (Guo, 2012). The distributions were found to be approximately normal for all three parenting styles; authoritarian ( $W = .98, p = .10$ ), authoritative ( $W = .88, p = .16$ ), and permissive ( $W = .95, p = .68$ ).

Secondly, the descriptive and reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) were calculated for the scales used. Reliability of leadership traits scale and authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles was good; however, reliability of permissive parenting style was low (See Table 2). These low coefficients may be attributed to smaller number of items i.e. 5 items (Cortina, 1993; Green et al., 1977). Descriptive for each of the variable were also calculated (see Table 2). Overall, participants scored significantly low on leadership skills ( $M = 42.4, SD = 8.7$ ), whereas cut off point for leadership traits was 75. It was observed that parents were mostly exercising authoritarian parenting styles, especially mothers ( $M = 48, SD = 7.5$ ), which is significantly above the cutoff point of 36. On the other hand, Fathers were exercising both authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Psychometric properties of the Scales used in the Present Study (N=133).*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>Potential</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cut offs</i>
<b>Parenting styles</b>							
Authoritative Mother	15	.74	15-75	22-75	38	5.6	45
Authoritative Father	15	.81	15-75	25-75	40	6.4	45
Authoritarian Mother	12	.70	12-60	21-60	48	7.5	36
Authoritarian Father	12	.80	12-60	18-60	42	6.8	36
Permissive Mother	5	.50	5-25	5-20	12	3.0	15
Permissive Father	5	.50	5-25	5-20	11	2.7	15
Leadership Traits	25	.73	25-125	36-75	42	8.7	75

Note. k = No. of items, α = Cronbach's alpha, M=Mean, SD= standard deviation

Secondly, Pearson's product moments correlations were calculated. Results indicated a positive relationship between authoritative parenting style (both for the mother and the father) and leadership traits in adolescents, indicating that parents who exercise authoritative parenting style have kids who demonstrated more leadership traits and skills, as compared to those with authoritarian and permissive parenting styles (see table 3). Most interesting finding was that authoritarian parenting style (both for mother and father) was negatively and significantly related to leadership traits, which means that

parents who exercise authoritarian parenting style more, their children exhibit significantly lower leadership traits. Permissive parenting style (both from father and mother) was not significantly related to leadership traits in their children (See Table 3).

Table 3  
Table showing Pearson Product Correlations among Study Variables (N=133)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Parenting Styles							
1-Authoritative Mother	-	.56***	-.03	-.005	-.024	-.04	<b>.20**</b>
2-Authoritative Father		-	-.15*	-.06	-.07	-.004	<b>.24**</b>
3-Authoritarian Mother			-	.60***	.39*	.30***	<b>-.28*</b>
4-Authoritarian Father				-	.28**	.44***	<b>-.18*</b>
5-Permissive Mother					-	.68***	<b>.09</b>
6-Permissive Father						-	<b>.11</b>
7-Leadership traits							-

Note. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$

Multiple hierarchical regressions were applied to find parameters that predict leadership traits, and to calculate variance in adolescent's leadership from variance in parenting styles. In hierarchical regression, potentially important demographic variables as highlighted in previous research were controlled. Thus, Family system (Nuclear vs Joint), previous academic grade (academic achievement), and type of school (Private vs Public) were entered in block 1 so we can control for the effects of these variables. These three demographics explained 5% of the variance in emergence of leadership traits ( $R^2 = .05$ ,  $F(3,129) = 2.22$ ,  $p = .09$ ). In the second block, we entered the three parenting styles (coming both from father and mother), where we combined mother's and father's authoritarian into one authoritarian style, and similarly the other two styles. So, we added the three parenting styles i.e. authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style, and permissive parenting style into the second block. The three parenting styles alone, after controlling for potential demographic variables, explained 10% of the variance in emergence of leadership traits in adolescents ( $F(6,126) = 3.6$ ,  $p = .003$ ). The overall model explained 15% of the variance in emergence of leadership traits. Findings highlighted that authoritative parenting style ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was turned out to be the only significant positive predictor of leadership emergence and leadership behaviors in adolescents compared to authoritarian ( $\beta = -.16$ ,  $p = .08$ )

and permissive parenting styles ( $\beta = .18, p = .06$ ). Among the three demographics, previous grade was the only one that significantly and positively predicted leadership traits, which is quite consistent with previous research. (see Table 4).

Table 4  
*Hierarchical Regression Analysis predicting Leadership Traits in Adolescents.*

Predictors	B	R2	R2 Change	F Change
<b>Block 1</b>		.05		2.22
Previous class grade	.17*			
Type of school	-.15			
Family System	-.001			
<b>Block 2</b>		.14	.10	4.7**
Authoritative Parenting	.27**			
Authoritarian Parenting	-.16			
Permissive Parenting	.18			

Note. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$

Data was further analyzed to detect difference in leadership traits across gender, type of school (private and public), and family system (Nuclear and Joint). We hypothesized that apart from parenting, schools also contribute in raising good leadership characteristics and behaviors. Children of private schools would have shown more leadership characteristics and behaviors than the children of public schools. Independent sample t-test was conducted to see the mean differences. Results supported our research hypothesis, indicating that private school children significantly scored high on leadership behaviors as compared to public school children, with Cohen's d showing small effect size (see Table 5).

Table 5  
*Independent Samples t-Test showing Leadership Traits in Private and public schools (N=133).*

Variables	private		Public		<i>t</i> (131)	<i>p</i>	95%CL		Cohen <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			LL	UL	
Leadership traits	44	11.64	40.9	9.58	1.64	.04	-.626	6.6	0.28

Note. *M*= mean, *SD*= standard deviation, *LL*= lower limit, *UL*= upper limit

Independent samples t-test was also conducted to find the difference among leadership traits and family systems. We were interested if children coming from joint family systems had more leadership traits than the children from nuclear family system. Results indicated no significant difference between the

two-family systems. However, children from joint families tend to do slightly better on leadership behaviors (see Table 6).

Table 6  
Independent Samples t-test showing Leadership Traits in adolescents from Nuclear and joint family Systems (N=133).

Variables	Nuclear		Joint		t(131)	p	95%CL		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Leadership traits	42.36	11.05	43	10.6	-.08	.93	-3.9	3.6	0.01

Note. M= mean, SD= standard deviation, LL= lower limit, UL= upper limit

Again, independent samples t-test was conducted to find the differences, if any, in gender. Given the Pakistani culture, it was hypothesized that male students would show more of leadership behaviors as compared to female students. Contrary to our hypothesis and previous literature, results indicated non-significant differences on gender and leadership. Rather, female adolescents scored slightly high on leadership characteristics and behaviors (see Table 7).

Table 7  
Independent Samples t-test showing Leadership Traits in male and female adolescents (N=133).

Variables	Male		Female		t(131)	P	95%CL		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Leadership traits	41.3	10.24	43.5	11.30	-1.15	.26	-5.7	1.57	0.1

Note. M= mean, SD= standard deviation, LL= lower limit, UL= upper limit

Results overall showed that parenting style was one important and strong predictor, which alone, after controlling for other potential predictors, accounted for 10% of the variance in the emergence of leadership in adolescents, which is small but real. Authoritative parenting positively predicted leadership, whereas authoritarian parenting found to have negative relationship with leadership emergence. It was also worth noting, that majority of the parents had authoritarian parenting styles.

## Discussion

The current research explored the links between leadership traits in adolescents and parenting styles of their parents. The main goal of the research was to assess the levels of leadership emergence in young

adolescents, and how/if parenting styles are contributing to it. Results overall indicated that our adolescents exhibited low levels of leadership traits and behaviors (far below the cutoff point on the leadership scale). Parenting styles (authoritative style) positively predicted leadership traits and behaviors, whereas authoritarian parenting style predicted negatively. Permissive parenting style did not predict leadership traits in adolescents, which is consistent with the previous research.

Previous research does highlight the importance of early childhood experiences (Gardner, 2011) and parenting (McClelland, 1975) and how they can help to form the motivation and reason for later leadership in children. Research also suggests that parents play a significant role in shaping leaders from an early age. Adolescents with authoritative parents are given independence, so they explore more freely and make their own choices and decisions. Thus, these children tend to be more mature and socially competent and self-reliant as compared to children with other parenting styles (Santrock, 2005). They encourage children to be independent and autonomous. They set and monitor clear standards for their children's conduct, give priority to children's needs and offer democratic climate and are attentive and forgiving (Shahamat, Sabeti, & Rezvani, 2010). Parents with this approach are assertive and at the same time reasonable. Thus, when parents let their children decide and provide them with a base environment of creative activities (Asaadi, et al., 2006), children develop more creative and leadership skills and behaviors. Results of the study are consistent with the previous literature suggesting that authoritative parenting style has a direct relationship with leadership qualities (Aunola, Stattin & Nurmi, 2000; Santrock, 2005; Turner, Chandler, & Heffer, 2009).

If we look closely at parenting styles most commonly used in the East, as pointed by this research as well, is authoritarian parenting style. This means that the boundaries of the children are defined. The boundaries describe and explain what the children can or cannot do. This affects their creativity, independence and their own thinking style and individuality (Mehrinejad, Rajabimoghadam, & Tarsafi, 2015). This concludes that majority of the parents here are developing followers and not leaders. They want their children to follow whatever they want and define for them even if they are adolescents and/or in early adulthood. Research has shown negative relationship between leadership emergence and authoritarian parenting styles, which is also evident from this current study. Authoritarian parents esteem dutifulness and instruct their children on what they believe are correct and what they believe is the standard for appropriate behavior (Baumrind, 1971). They not only exercise control over their children, but they also serve as role model, so children learn exercising authority by following their parents as role models.

Thus, latter in their lives, they adapt more as authoritarian managers and exercise power rather than being transformational leaders.

Research on leadership has mainly focused on leadership in adulthood (e.g. leadership in organizations) and ignoring the leadership development at early age. More research is needed that focus on early developmental factors that shape leaders over time, for example, genetics, parenting styles, peers, and early learning experiences including sports, schools, and values. Most leadership developmental studies that have been conducted are mainly done in western culture, where parenting, social agents, and learning environments are totally different. It is very important that future research focus on these environmental, social, emotional, and cultural factors, that set the stage for future leadership, in our own cultural context.

Implications of the study highlight an important but neglected area of early leadership development. More research is needed, with more rigorous and diverse samples at different age levels, to identify/examine the nature of relationship between early age experiences and leadership development over time. Identifying attributes and characteristics that are important toward future leadership, would help in designing training programs for parents and teachers and children themselves for developing them into future leaders.

Training and guidance programs for parents, to help them raise their kids in a way where they can identify and enhance their behaviors that are promising and reflecting their leadership potential. As authoritative parenting style is helpful in flourishing leadership behaviors and traits in children, one implication of the study is to design training programs for parents, teaching them how and when parenting could be more fruitful and enjoyable, and how parenting could help them in raising good kids and future leaders.

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