



The Role of Parenting Styles in Shaping Adolescents' Altruistic Attitudes

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Abstract: This study aims to determine the role of parenting styles on adolescent altruism. Altruism, defined as helping others without expecting anything in return, is an important aspect of adolescent social and moral development. This study involved three parents and three adolescents aged 16-17 years in Pahlawan Village, Medan Perjuangan District. The research method used was descriptive qualitative. Data were collected through interviews that measured parenting styles (authoritarian, democratic, and permissive) and levels of adolescent altruism. The results showed that democratic parenting had a significant and positive relationship with adolescents' altruistic attitudes. Adolescents raised in three democratic parenting styles tended to have higher altruistic attitudes. Conversely, authoritarian and permissive parenting did not show a statistically significant relationship with altruistic attitudes. This study concludes that parenting styles that emphasize discussion, emotional warmth, and the giving of responsibility (democratic) play an important role in shaping caring and helpful personalities. These findings have practical implications for parents and educators to focus more on approaches that promote empathy and cooperation in educating children.

Keywords: parenting styles, democratic parenting, altruistic attitudes, empathy

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran pola asuh orang tua terhadap sikap altruisme remaja. Sikap altruisme, yang didefinisikan sebagai perilaku tolong menolong kepada orang lain tanpa mengharapkan imbalan, merupakan salah satu aspek penting dalam perkembangan sosial dan moral remaja. Studi ini melibatkan 3 orang tua dan 3 remaja berusia 16-17 tahun di Kel. Pahlawan, Kec. Medan Perjuangan. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara yang mengukur dimensi pola asuh (otoriter, demokratis, dan permisif) dan tingkat altruisme remaja. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pola asuh demokratis memiliki hubungan yang signifikan dan positif terhadap sikap altruisme remaja. Remaja yang dibesarkan dengan pola asuh demokratis cenderung memiliki sikap altruisme yang lebih tinggi. Sebaliknya, pola asuh otoriter dan permisif tidak menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan secara statistik dengan sikap altruisme. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pola asuh yang menekankan pada diskusi, kehangatan emosional, dan pemberian tanggung jawab (demokratis) berperan penting dalam membentuk kepribadian yang peduli dan suka menolong. Temuan ini memberikan implikasi praktis bagi orang tua dan pendidik untuk lebih fokus pada pendekatan yang mempromosikan empati dan kerjasama dalam mendidik anak.

Kata kunci : pola asuh orang tua, pola asuh demokratis, sikap altruisme, empati,

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Introduction

Adolescent development is an important phase in the formation of an individual's personality and social character. At this stage, teenagers begin to develop self-awareness, empathy, and the ability to interact with their social environment (Ding, Sun, & Dong, 2024). One aspect of personality that serves as an indicator of social maturity during adolescence is an altruistic attitude, which is the tendency to help others voluntarily without expecting any reward. An altruistic attitude plays an important role in fostering social harmony, solidarity, and concern for others in a society that is increasingly individualistic (Fu, Wang, Chai, & Xue, 2022; Azizah & Usman, 2023; Hasan & Aziz, 2023).

In the context of urban communities such as Kelurahan Pahlawan, Medan Perjuangan District, the complex social dynamics, cultural heterogeneity, and economic pressures on families are factors that can influence the patterns of social interaction among adolescents. Changes in modern lifestyles often lead to a reduction in the values of togetherness and empathy, making individualistic behavior more prominent compared to the spirit of mutual assistance (Hasan, 2024; Hasan et al., 2023). This situation raises concerns about the weakening of social and humanitarian values among the younger generation.

One of the major factors in the development of adolescent altruistic attitudes is parenting style. Parenting style refers to the way parents educate, guide, and direct their children in various aspects of life, including instilling moral and social values (Ni, Zaremohzzabieh, Zarean, Ahrari, & Barzegar, 2025). According to Xu & Xie (2023), there are three main parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, and democratic, each of which has a different impact on a child's character development. The democratic parenting style, for instance, tends to encourage children to have empathy, social responsibility, and the ability to make independent decisions, all important components of an altruistic attitude.

Previous research, Backman, Lahti, Laajasalo, Kaakinen, & Aronen (2024) shows that warm, consistent, and communicative parenting styles are positively related to the development of prosocial behavior and empathy in adolescents. Conversely, harsh or indifferent parenting styles can lead to egocentric behavior and low social concern. However, the influence of parenting styles on altruistic attitudes is not universal, as it is greatly affected by local social, cultural, and economic contexts (Ainiyah et al., 2025; Azizah et al., 2023; Masrufa et al., 2023). Therefore, more contextual research is needed to understand how parenting styles in urban communities in Medan shape adolescents' altruistic attitudes.

Pahlawan Subdistrict, as one of the densely populated areas in Medan Perjuangan District, has social characteristics that are interesting to study. Its community consists of various economic and cultural backgrounds, which allows for diverse parenting patterns within families. In this context, it is interesting to examine the extent to which the parenting styles applied by parents influence the formation of altruistic attitudes in adolescents, as well as how the interaction between family

values, social environment, and urban adolescent dynamics contributes to shaping their social behavior.

Study Hirani, Ojukwu, & Bandara (2022). Research on the relationship between parenting styles and adolescents' altruistic attitudes has been conducted in various social contexts, but most of these studies still focus on the general population without considering local contextual factors that may influence the outcomes. Theoretically, parenting plays an important role in shaping a child's social character through the process of internalizing values of empathy and concern for others (Fahrurrozi et al., 2025). Parents who adopt a democratic parenting style generally foster prosocial behavior, as this style emphasizes open communication, emotional warmth, and respect for the child's views.

However, research gaps are still apparent in several aspects. First, most studies examining the influence of parenting patterns on prosocial behavior or adolescent altruistic attitudes have been conducted in large urban areas with a more stable socioeconomic context, such as Jakarta, Bandung, or Yogyakarta. Studies highlighting family dynamics in densely populated urban environments like Kelurahan Pahlawan, Kecamatan Medan Perjuangan, are still very limited, even though this area has distinct social characteristics: high population density, cultural heterogeneity, and varying economic levels. These factors can have implications for variations in parenting styles as well as the quality of emotional relationships between parents and children.

Secondly, most previous studies tend to highlight the direct relationship between parenting styles and altruistic behavior without considering potential mediating and moderating mechanisms, such as empathy, emotion regulation, or peer social support. In fact, these psychosocial factors can explain how certain parenting styles can either strengthen or weaken adolescents' altruistic tendencies. Based on this gap, this study presents novelty in several key aspects. First, this study focuses on the local context of Kelurahan Pahlawan, a multicultural urban area in Medan that represents the cultural diversity and social dynamics typical of urban communities in North Sumatra. This approach provides a new contribution to understanding how variations in parenting patterns operate within a heterogeneous social environment.

Method

The research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. This approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how parenting patterns play a role in shaping adolescents' altruistic attitudes within the social and cultural context of urban society. According to Creswell (2020), the qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the meanings, experiences, and perceptions of individuals in depth, while the case study design provides opportunities to examine specific phenomena in detail through various relevant data sources.

This research was conducted in Kelurahan Pahlawan, Medan Perjuangan District, Medan City, particularly in the area of Jl. Sakti, over a period of one month.

This location was chosen purposively because it has a heterogeneous social character, where interactions between parents and adolescents occur within diverse socio-economic dynamics. The research subjects consisted of three families with adolescent children aged 15–17 years. The selection of informants was carried out using purposive sampling techniques, taking into account the criteria that parents actively guide their children in social life, the children live in the same household with their parents, and both are willing to participate in the research. This approach aligns with the perspective (Sugiyono, 2022) which emphasizes that the selection of informants in qualitative research is based on the relevance of the information and the depth of the data that can be provided, not merely on the number of participants.

The data in this study were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner so that the researcher could explore the experiences, values, and perspectives of the informants regarding parenting practices and how these influence the formation of altruistic attitudes in adolescents. Observations were carried out by observing daily interactions between parents and children, especially in social situations such as cooperation at home, social responsibilities, and adolescents' expressions of empathy toward their surroundings. Meanwhile, documentation served to complement the data through photos, activity notes, and personal documents relevant to family life. The combination of these three techniques allows the data to be obtained thoroughly and comprehensively (Moleong, 2000).

The data analysis process is carried out continuously using an interactive model (Miles & Saldaña, 2024), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. In the reduction stage, data is selected and focused on information relevant to the research focus, namely, the relationship between parenting patterns and adolescents' altruistic attitudes. Next, the data is presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation and identify thematic patterns. The final stage of concluding is carried out by relating the findings to relevant theories, then verifying to ensure the consistency and validity of the data.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study employs source and method triangulation techniques. Triangulation is conducted by comparing the interview results from parents and children and matching them with the results of observations and documentation. In addition, the researcher also performs member checking, which involves asking informants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretation results with their actual experiences (Creswell, 2020).

The entire research process was carried out with attention to research ethics, which includes providing informed consent to participants, maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, and ensuring participants' freedom to withdraw at any time. The researchers also ensured that all activities were conducted

with respect for the social and cultural values of the local community (Miles & Saldaña, 2024).

Thus, this research method is designed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of parenting roles in shaping altruistic attitudes in adolescents within urban community settings. This approach is expected to contribute scientifically to the development of studies in family psychology and character education in Indonesia, particularly in the urban social context, which has complex values and intergenerational interactions.

Results And Discussion

Results

Based on the results of observations conducted in Kelurahan Pahlawan, Medan Perjuangan District, a significant difference was found in parenting styles in shaping altruistic attitudes in children. In general, three parenting patterns appear to be applied by parents, namely permissive, authoritarian, and democratic, each having different impacts on the development of children's empathy and helping behavior.

In the first family, the researcher observed that the parents tended to give the child complete freedom without clear boundaries. The child was allowed to make decisions independently without much guidance. In daily life, the child appeared to be independent, but their social behavior was inconsistent. The child only showed caring or helping attitudes toward others in certain situations, such as when being observed by adults or when receiving praise. This pattern indicates a tendency toward a permissive parenting style that provides limited systematic moral guidance.

Meanwhile, in the second family, a more rigid and rule-oriented parenting pattern is observed. The parents often give commands in a stern tone, and the child appears to act rightly due to the drive to comply, rather than out of moral awareness. In some situations, the child demonstrates helping behavior, but more out of fear of being scolded than out of empathy for others. This observation illustrates the characteristics of an authoritarian parenting style that emphasizes absolute obedience without allowing the child to understand the meaning of good deeds.

Unlike the previous two families, in the third family, there is a warm and open communication atmosphere between parents and children. Parents often engage in dialogue with their children about the reasons behind social actions, such as helping neighbors or sharing with friends. Children also appear to be active in the family's social activities and show initiative to help without being asked. This reflects a democratic parenting pattern that provides opportunities for children to learn empathy through explanations, role modeling, and direct involvement in family decision-making.

Overall, the observation results indicate that a democratic parenting style is more effective in fostering intrinsic altruistic attitudes in children. Children who grow up in an environment of open and loving communication are better able to understand the moral value of their actions and consistently show empathy in social interactions. In contrast, children from families with permissive or authoritarian patterns tend to exhibit altruistic behavior that is situational or superficial, depending on external conditions and the

authority figures around them. The observation results also align with the findings from interviews, which are presented by the researcher below.

Mrs. N., a 40-year-old housewife living in Kelurahan Pahlawan, stated that she prefers to give her child the freedom to make decisions independently. She said: *"I don't like to be too controlling with children. If they want to help others, I let them, but if they don't want to, I don't force them either. Let them learn from their own experiences."* This statement indicates that Mrs. N. applies a permissive parenting style, where the child is given broad freedom without clear guidance or boundaries. This causes the child's altruistic behavior to be situational, appearing only when there are external prompts, rather than arising from moral awareness developed internally.

Interview Results 2

Mr. S., a 45-year-old private employee, stated that he trains his child to always obey and follow rules without asking many questions. He explained, *"I am used to raising children with discipline. If I say help someone or do something, they must do it immediately. If they resist, I will definitely scold them."* From this statement, it appears that the authoritarian parenting style applied emphasizes obedience and punishment. The child does show good behavior, but the motivation tends to be driven by fear or a desire to avoid punishment, rather than genuine empathy towards others.

Interview Results 3

Mrs. SS., a 38-year-old mother who works as an early childhood education teacher, stated that she tries to instill the value of caring through open communication and by setting an example. She said, *"If I want my child to be sensitive to others, I have to set an example. For instance, if a neighbor is in trouble, I involve my child in helping and explain why we should care."* This statement reflects a democratic parenting style, in which children are involved in understanding the reasoning behind social actions. This approach helps children internalize the value of empathy and fosters altruistic motivation that stems from personal awareness.

Interview Results 4

Ms. R., an elementary school teacher in the area, shared her views based on her observations of student behavior. She stated: *"Children from communicative families usually find it easier to socialize and like to help friends without being told. But children whose parents are strict tend to be quiet and afraid to take initiative."* From this interview, it is evident that parenting style has a significant impact on children's social behavior at school. Children raised with a democratic parenting style are more active in showing empathy and cooperation, whereas children from authoritarian families appear passive and less expressive.

Interview Results 5

Mr. A., a 55-year-old community leader who knows all three families, shared his views on the social behavior of children in the surrounding area. He said: *"Children from overly permissive families are usually indifferent and rarely participate in social activities. However, children from communicative families often help out and even encourage their friends to join in environmental clean-up activities."* This statement reinforces the observational findings that a

democratic parenting style plays a significant role in fostering social responsibility and empathy, whereas permissive and authoritarian styles result in less stable and unsustainable altruistic behavior.

Based on observations and interviews in Pahlawan Subdistrict, Medan Perjuangan District, it was found that parenting styles have a significant influence on the development of children's altruistic attitudes. Three main patterns that emerged are permissive, authoritarian, and democratic, each having different impacts. Parents with a permissive style tend to provide freedom without clear boundaries, resulting in children displaying helping behavior inconsistently and only when prompted by external factors. In contrast, the authoritarian style emphasizes absolute obedience and strict discipline, producing altruistic behavior that arises out of fear rather than moral awareness.

Meanwhile, the democratic parenting style has been proven to be the most effective in fostering empathy and genuine altruistic attitudes. Parents with this style build two-way communication, provide real-life examples, and involve their children in social activities and decision-making. Children from families with this pattern are more active, caring, and have intrinsic motivation to help others. Overall, research results indicate that the democratic parenting style serves as the best foundation for cultivating sustainable altruistic behavior in children, whereas permissive and authoritarian styles only yield shallow and situational empathy.

Discussion

The research conducted in Pahlawan Subdistrict, Medan Perjuangan District, indicates a significant difference in parenting styles in shaping altruistic attitudes in children. Based on observations and interviews, three main parenting patterns were identified among parents: permissive, authoritarian, and democratic. Each pattern has distinct characteristics and impacts on the development of empathy and helping behaviors in children. These findings are in line with the view (Salem et al., 2022), which states that the family is the first social environment that plays a very important role in shaping the morality and social behavior of children.

Permissive Parenting and Situational Altruism

In the first family, a tendency towards a permissive parenting style was found, where parents give children wide freedom without clear guidance. The child is left to make decisions independently and receives little moral guidance. In daily life, the child appears to be independent but shows inconsistent altruistic behavior, which only emerges in certain situations, such as when receiving attention or praise from adults.

These results are consistent with the theory (Khoiriyah, Mu'is, & Mukaffan, 2024), which explains that permissive parents generally exhibit low levels of control and demands, but high levels of emotional warmth. This pattern often results in children who lack discipline and social responsibility because they are not accustomed to clear moral boundaries. Research by Gao, Liu, & Wang (2023) It is also

found that children from permissive families tend to display prosocial behavior that is temporary, as their motivation is more influenced by external factors than by deep empathetic drive.

According to the social learning theory proposed (Neaman et al., 2023), Children's altruistic behavior is formed through the process of observation and imitation of models around them. If parents do not provide concrete examples and moral explanations about the importance of social care, children will have difficulty internalizing these values deeply. Thus, the permissive parenting style found in this study tends to produce a form of altruism that is situational rather than based on intrinsic moral awareness.

Authoritarian Parenting and External Moral Compliance

Unlike the previous pattern, the second family demonstrates an authoritarian parenting style focused on discipline, obedience, and strict control over the child's behavior. Parents emphasize compliance without giving much room for the child to understand the meaning behind good actions. As a result, the child seems to help more out of fear of punishment than out of genuine empathy.

These findings support the research results (Mantovan, Sauer, & Wilson, 2023). It explains that children raised in an authoritarian parenting style tend to develop morality based on fear or external obedience. They help or do good not because they understand the moral value, but because they want to avoid negative consequences. This is also in line with moral development theory Agalar, Laible, Carlo, & Liew, (2025), which states that children raised in an authoritarian environment tend to be at the pre-conventional stage of morality, where obedience is carried out solely to avoid punishment.

In addition, research by Batool & Lewis (2022) shows that an authoritarian parenting style can hinder the development of children's empathy and social initiative. Children from families with this parenting style usually have high self-control but tend to be passive in social interactions and are not accustomed to expressing concern spontaneously. This condition was also observed by one of the teachers at the research site, who stated that children from authoritarian families are quieter and more afraid to take initiative compared to their peers.

Democratic Parenting and the Formation of Intrinsic Altruism

Meanwhile, in the third family, a democratic parenting style was found, emphasizing open communication, emotional warmth, and the inculcation of moral values through example. Parents not only gave orders but also explained the reasons behind social actions, such as why it is important to help neighbors or share with friends. Children in this family appeared more active in social activities and showed initiative to help without being asked.

These results are in line with the theory proposed by Cui, Bi, Zhou, Zhang, & Ma (2023), that empathy developed through emotional communication and moral understanding will encourage the emergence of altruistic behavior driven by intrinsic motivation. Research (Gao et al., 2024) It also proves that children raised in democratic family environments show higher levels of empathy and prosocial behavior compared to children from authoritarian or permissive families.

This finding is also supported by research (Tümer, Koçak, Uçar, & Sümen, 2021), which explains that in the context of collectivist cultures like Indonesia, democratic parenting often balances affection and appropriate control. This approach not only teaches social discipline but also instills moral responsibility and a sense of solidarity in children. Thus, a democratic parenting style becomes an effective means to develop empathy and sustainable altruistic behavior.

Theoretical and Contextual Integration

Theoretically, the results of this study can be explained through the Ecological Systems Theory of Özmen & Atli (2021), which emphasizes that children's social development is influenced by the dynamic interaction between the individual and the immediate environment, particularly the family as a microsystem. In this context, democratic parenting creates an environment conducive for children to learn empathy through direct experiences and meaningful social interactions.

In addition, the results of this study also support the theory of moral internalization proposed by Suriastini, Asanti, & Safitri, 2025), where children raised in an open communication environment are more capable of internalizing moral values and understanding the social impact of their actions. In a democratic family, the communication process between parents and children becomes an effective moral learning medium because children are not only instructed to do good, but also understand the moral reasons behind it.

In the context of Indonesian culture, which upholds the values of cooperation and social solidarity, this finding is very relevant. The research (Pratiwi & Waty, 2024) in the Nusantara Social Psychology Journal, it is shows that parenting styles that combine local cultural values with democratic communication principles tend to produce children who have high social empathy and are active in community activities. Thus, democratic parenting not only shapes good individual character but also strengthens social cohesion at the community level.

Conclusion

The findings of this study in Kelurahan Pahlawan, Medan Perjuangan District, demonstrate that parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' altruistic attitudes. Children raised under a democratic parenting style consistently exhibit empathy, initiative in helping others, and mature moral awareness, whereas those

raised with permissive or authoritarian parenting tend to show altruistic behavior only situationally or due to external compliance. This study highlights that open communication, exemplary behavior, and involving children in family decision-making are fundamental to fostering intrinsic altruistic motivation. Theoretically, these findings contribute to enriching the discourse on moral and character development by emphasizing the relevance of democratic parenting in the Indonesian socio-cultural context, particularly within urban families that face complex social dynamics. Practically, the study provides valuable insights for parents, educators, and policymakers to design family and school-based programs that strengthen empathy and prosocial behavior. However, this research is limited by its small sample size and the absence of empirical analysis of external influences such as peer interaction or school climate. Therefore, future studies should employ broader samples and mixed methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between parenting styles and adolescents' altruism.

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