Pro-social Behaviour of Lower Secondary Students and Their Parenting Styles

Khin Hnin Nwe[1], Khine Cho Min[2]

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to investigate pro-social behaviour of lower secondary students and their parenting styles. Survey method was used in this study. Data were collected through questionnaires. In order to collect the data, two questionnaires were constructed: pro-social personality battery (PSB) for student's pro-social behaviour (consists of social responsibility scale, empathy scale, moral reasoning scale, and self-reported altruism scale) and parenting style questionnaire (consists of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) for their respective parents. The total number of 630 (315 males and 315 females) Grade 9 students and their respective parents from Yangon Region were participated. The required sample was selected by using random sampling technique. According to this study, there were no significant differences in pro-social behaviour and parenting styles according to student gender. Independent sample t-test pointed out that there was no significant difference in pro-social except empathy ($p<0.05$) behaviour between rural and urban. However, there were significant differences in authoritative parenting styles by region ($p<0.01$) and parent gender ($p<0.05$). Pearson correlation revealed that authoritative parenting style was positively significantly correlated with students' pro-social behavior ($p<0.01$). Based on the effect of parenting style on students' pro-social behavior, contributions were given in this study not only for parents but also for teachers.

Key Words: **Pro-social Behaviour, Parenting Style, Authoritative Parenting Style, Authoritarian Parenting Style, Permissive Parenting Style**

Introduction

Children are most valuable resource, as they are the leaders of the future. In this regard, children must be trained and nurtured not only to be educated but also to be morally developed. Parents play a large role in fostering their children's growth and development. Many researchers have acknowledged that broad pattern of parenting is important in predicting

[1] Lecturer, Dr., Department of Educational Psychology, Yangon University of Education
[2] Senior Teacher, BEHS, Min Gon, Hle GooTownship.

child well-being. Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviours that work individually and together to influence child outcomes. **Parenting** is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Parents play a very important role in the upbringing of children. They are the first and earliest teachers for the children. Parents have the capability of influencing and leading the child from the first day they are born until the age of eighteen by being a role model. In other words, parents are the best teachers. One specific behavioral outcome linked to supportive and strict parenting is pro-social behavior (Davis, 2012). Pro-social behavior is central to human social functioning. Pro-social behaviors are defined as positive actions that are intended to benefit others (Carlo & Randall, 2002). These positive behaviors include actions such as helping others, comforting others when they are upset, volunteering, and donating time or resources (Carlo & Randall, 2002). These actions are the opposite antisocial conduct, such as selfishness and aggression. These actions may be motivated by empathy and by concern about the welfare and rights of others (Santrock & John, 2007) as well as for egoistic or practical concern.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate pro-social behaviour of lower secondary students and their parents' parenting styles.

Scope and Procedure

A study on pro-social behaviors of lower secondary students and their parenting styles was conducted by survey method with survey questionnaires. Recent research suggests that pro-social behaviours are complex and multidimensional and should not be examined as a unidimensional construct (Davis, 2012). Penner (2002) developed pro-social tendencies measure based on theories and prior research and identified four types of pro-social tendencies: social responsibility, empathy, moral reasoning and self-reported altruism. In this study student's pro-social behaviors were examined by Pro-social Personality Battery (PSB) is developed by Penner, L. A.(2002). The instruments to collect the relevant data of the study were two sets of questionnaire; one for measuring pro-social behaviour of students and the other for measuring parenting styles of their respective parents. Questionnaire for students (See

Appendix A) had two sections. First section elicited students' personal data such as name, age and gender while the second was pro-social personality battery (PSB) scale that is composed of 28 items. Items 1-6 are for social responsibility scale, items 7-14 are for empathy, items 15- 18 are for moral reasoning scale , and items 19-28 are for self reported altruism scale. Among them, items 1,2,4,5,6,7,10,11, and 12 are negative.

Questionnaire for parents was a 41- item instrument. In this instrument, items 1-18 are for authoritative parenting, items 19-32 are for authoritarian parenting, and items 33-41 are for permissive parenting. Both instruments had a Likert rating scales of 1-5 in an ascending order for positive items and reverse for negative items.

The participants for the study were chosen five Basic Education High Schools and one Education Middle School from Yangon Region. Hence, a total of 630 (315 males and 315 females) Grade 9 students and their respective parents are participated in this study.

Definitions of Key Terms

Pro-social Behaviour. Pro-social behaviour or "voluntary behaviour intended to benefit another"(Eisenberg et al., 2007) is a social behaviour that benefits other people or society as a whole, such as helping, sharing, donating, co-operating, and volunteering (Arthur & Stephan, 1986).

Parenting Style. The concept parenting style is viewed as a characteristic of a parent that changes the effectiveness of family socialization practices and children's receptiveness to such practices (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Parenting styles are broad patterns of childrearing practices, values, and behaviours. It is the way parents take care of their children which can have impact on the children's personality development and the ways of interacting with social and close relations (Akhtar, 2012).

Authoritative Parenting Style. Authoritative parenting refers to a balance of control and nurturance. This style of parenting encourages a verbal "give and take" which shares the reasoning behind policy. The authoritative parent is able to support the child's present qualities, while at the same time setting standards of expectation (Baumrind, 1991).

Authoritarian Parenting Style. The authoritarian parent attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the attitudes and behaviors with a set standard

of conduct (Baumrind, 1991). This type of parenting seeks high control with low nurturance and support.

Permissive Parenting Style. The permissive parent is high in nurturance and support, but low in control. This type of parent allows for excess of autonomy (Baumrind, 1991).

Social Responsibility. Social responsibility is defined as a moral obligation to fulfill the justified expectations of others and to adhere to social norms (Bandura, 2002).

Moral Reasoning. Moral reasoning is defined as the ability or tendency to think about and make decisions in situations in which there may be conflicting values, norms, rules or laws, needs, or desires (Carlo et al., 2011).

Empathy. It can be defined an affective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and which is identical or very similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel (Eisenberg, 2007).

Altruism. A common definition of altruism is "intrinsically motivated voluntary behavior intended to benefit another" acts motivated by concern for others or by internalized values, goals, and self-rewards rather than by the expectation of concrete or social rewards or the avoidance of punishment (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989).

Review of Related Literature

One specific behavioral outcome linked to supportive and strict parenting is pro-social behavior (Davis, 2012). Pro-social behavior is central to human social functioning. Pro-social behaviors are defined as positive actions that are intended to benefit others (Carlo & Randall, 2002). These positive behaviors include actions such as helping others, comforting others when they are upset, volunteering, and donating time or resources (Carlo & Randall, 2002). These actions are the opposite antisocial conduct, such as selfishness and aggression. These actions may be motivated by empathy and by concern about the welfare and rights of others (Santrock & John, 2007) as well as for egoistic or practical concern.

Studies have demonstrated that those who engage in more pro-social behavior also engage in fewer aggressive and antisocial behaviors, succeed in academics,   participated in positive extracurricular activities, and

experienced more acceptance by their peers (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura & Zimbardo, 2000; Chen et al., 2002; Crick, 1996; McGinley & Carlo, 2007; Uggen, & Janikula, 1999).

The presence of pro-social behaviors in children is generally viewed as desirable (Eisenberg, 1982) and has been linked with positive outcomes such as better mental and physical health in adults (Schwartz, Meisenhelder, Ma, & Reed, 2003). Pro-social behavior in adolescents has been linked with academic achievement (Caprara & Barbaranelli, 2000), greater intrinsic work values (Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer & Snyder, 1998), and higher grade point average (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Furthermore, pro-social engagement in adolescents may serve as a protective factor against development of delinquent behaviors (Carlo, Crocket, Wilkinson & Beal, 2011; Eccles & Barber, 1999, Ludwig & Pittman, 1999). These and other benefits make it worthwhile to evaluate parenting behaviors that may contribute to children's pro-social behaviors.

The benefits of engaging in pro-social behavior for children have been established empirically. Research has shown that adolescents who behave pro-socially are more likely to be well-adjusted during adolescence and later in life (Eisenberg, 1982; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006). Adolescent pro-social behavior is also linked to better academic performance (Wentzl, 2003). Eccles and Barber (1999) found that adolescents' engagement in pro-social activities (church and volunteer activities) was negatively correlated with incidence of risky behaviors (drug and alcohol use), and positively correlated with grade point average in school. Eisenberg, Fabes, and Spinrad (2006) found that adolescent altruism is correlated with moral reasoning, perspective taking and fewer aggressive behaviors. Thus, children who engage pro-social behavior can benefit not only for themselves but also for society.

The pro-sociality in an individual is very important during the development stage. Adolescence is a period during which both pro-social (Eisenberg & Morris, 2004) and antisocial (Zapert et al., 2002) behavior increase and therefore an important period in which to examine correlates of both positive and negative development. There is a huge variation in age factor of adolescents from one society to another. However, age is not determined by the society (Okpako, 2004) but rather by biological compositions (Ezeh, 2005). Ezeh noted that the biological changes are the driving force behind all adolescents' behaviour.

In the development process of child, a majority of parents feel that adolescents are the most difficult ones for childrearing because adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood or from dependence on adult direction and protection to self direction and self determination. It is a period of physical and psychological maturity, when an individual is expected to establish his or her own identity and to develop necessary skills for socially responsible behaviour.

Early adolescence is a particularly important age period for understanding pro-social development because many young people are presented with new opportunities for engaging in pro-social behaviors (Carlo, Fabes, Laible, & Kupanoff , 1999). For example, a large number of children become engaged in voluntary activities once they enter adolescence, and there is evidence that the number of adolescents who volunteer in charity organizations has increased substantially in the past decade (Independent Sector, 1999). However, although much is known with regard to the development of pro-social behaviors in young children, relatively less is known with regard to the development of those behaviors during adolescence.

Parents are typically viewed as one of the most significant socializing agents in a child's life (Bengston, 1975; Hartup & Rubin, 2013, Hoffman, 2000). Studies have shown that parents play a significant role in the development of pro-social behavior in adolescent children (Eberly & Montemayer, 1999). Observational learning from nurturing models may help produce the internalization of pro-social values (Clary & Miller, 1986).

Most of the environmental research on individual differences in pro-social behavior has focused on parental influences. Children's pro-social behavior is longitudinally predicted by parenting style (Knafo & Israel, 2008). Gadeyne, Ghesquiere and Onghena (2004) asserted that parenting is an important determinant which affects the whole child. Research over many years has confirmed over and over that parenting style has a direct effect on how children grow and thrive (Darling, 2007). Parenting styles affect the way children function as they grow older (Greenwood, 2014). Different parenting styles produce different characteristic traits of children. In general, children do better in life if they come from a home in which there is positive (authoritative) parenting (Darling, 2007).

Many parents create their own style from a combination of factors, and these may evolve over time as the children develop their own

personalities and move through life's stages. Parenting style is affected by both the parents' and children's temperaments, and is largely based on the influence of one's own parents and culture. Most parents learn parenting practices from their own parents — some they accept, some they discard. It's the overall pattern of interactions rather than one single act that shapes parental responsiveness and parental demandingness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parenting style captures two important elements of parenting: parental responsiveness and parental demanding (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parental responsiveness refers to "the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands" (Baumrind, 1991). Parental demanding refers to "the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys" (Baumrind, 1991).

Martin Hoffman's (1970, 1982, 1984, 1991) theory of the effects of parental discipline on children's pro-social behavior has been influential for a quarter of a century. Hoffman's theory takes as established that inductive discipline is linked to pro-social behaviour (and more generally, moral internalization) and accounts for this relation by positing that empathy plays a key role. Alternative discipline styles, love withdrawal and power assertion, are not positively associated with children's pro-social behaviour because they do not elicit children's empathy. Indeed, power assertions such as coercion or threats of punishment are posited to promote self- focus concerns with external consequences, which can in turn reduce pro-social behavior (Krevins & Gibbs, 1996).

Parenting has been playing very crucial roles in adolescents' transition to adulthood. Parenting has been recognized as a major vehicle in socializing the child; Parenting according to Okapko, 2004 and Ofoegbu , 2002 is the act of parenthood, the child upbringing, training rearing or child education. Harsh and inconsistent parenting is the main cause of conduct disorders. The persistence aspects of parental rearing styles of children which are strong discipline; parental disharmony; rejection of the child and inadequate involvement in the child's activities cause delinquency among adolescents (Okorodudu & Okorodudu, 2003).

Some research reports have shown that a large percentage of all juvenile delinquents come from homes that lacked normal parental love and care. Attention, love and warmth go a long way in assisting the child's emotional development and adjustment. Children at adolescence stage require parental love, care, warmth and serious attention to adjust adequately, in the environment in which he/she finds him/herself. Parents have major roles to play in the adjustment process of adolescent. The behavioural problems of most deviants are rooted in their homes. Otuadah (2006) noted that when the relationship between the parents and the adolescent is warm, it creates a healthy environment for the development of the adolescent. Adolescents exhibiting traits of friendliness, cheerfulness, positive emotions and good maturity traits, show evidently, that such adolescents come from homes where they are accepted and loved (Otuadah, 2006).

Reports had shown that authoritarian parenting styles has negative connotation in literature because of the negative behaviour outcomes of adolescents and children. However, on the same, note outcome of some researches revealed that authoritarian parenting yield positive effects on Asian and Indian adolescents. Some found that authoritative parenting style has more positive effects on the adolescents" behaviour. Ang, Groh, and Utti, (2006) reported that permissive parenting without well defined or clear-cut goals and such parents play a passive role in the rearing of children.

Umukoro, (1997, 1977) found that adolescents who are exposed to higher level of warmth, induction and monitoring parenting background would less likely be delinquents. Demanding and responsive are classified as authoritative parents whose children are expected to perform better in social competence than children whose parents are authoritarian (demanding but not responsive, permissive/laissez-fair responsive but not demanding (Ang et. al, 2006; Chen, et. al, 2005; Utti, 2006). Authoritative parenting (positive parenting) has positive effects on the adolescents' behaviour while authoritarian and laissez-faire (negative parenting) have negative effect. Darling (2007) reported that parenting style predicts child well-being in the domains of social competence, academic performance, psychosocial development and problem behaviour. Children and adolescents whose parents are authoritative rate themselves and are rated by objective measures as more socially and instrumentally competent than those whose parents are non-authoritative.

Based on these claims the study wants to examine the parenting style that will enhance adequate adjustment of the adolescents in the society. The current study is important because it helps shed more light on what parents can do to promote pro-social behaviors in their children.

Gender is seen as one of the most consistent correlates of pro-social behavior. Across many studies, girls and women have been found to be more pro-social than boys and men. Thus, apparent gender difference in the frequency of showing concern for others may be as much a function of perception as reality. It is generally believed that females are more frequent in helping. Specifically, it was found that women placed more importance on the social psychological value of pro-social behavior than did men. This means that the difference could be due to the differences in socialization of men and women. Women are socialized to have concern for others and to take care of one another, while men are mainly socialized to be in . competition with each other. Therefore, in this study, to know whether there would be differences in pro-social behaviour by gender.

In addition, People who are originally from rural areas tend to have different personal characteristics than people who are from urban areas. Urban areas have larger populations and are more likely to be exposed to many different cultures and socioeconomic status. Rural participants did not demonstrate more helping behavior in comparison with urban participants. Another aspect of our study would examine the differences in pro-social behavior between rural and urban.

Method and Procedure

A survey method was used in this study with quantitative perspective.

Participants

A total of 630 (315 males and 315 females Grade 9 students) were selected as the subjects of this study by using stratified random sampling technique in Yangon Region. Among them, 38 students from B.E.H.S (2) Pabedan, 80 students from B.E.H.S (3) Kyimyindine, 81 students from B.E.H.S (2) Thingangyun, 110 students from B.E.H.S (4) Mingalardon, 153 students from B.E.H.S (2) Mhawbi, and 168 students from B.E.H.S Mingon were selected respectively.

Instruments

The instruments to collect the relevant data of the study were two sets of questionnaire; one for measuring pro-social behaviour of grade 9 students and the other for measuring parenting styles of their respective parents. In this study student's pro-social behaviours were examined by Pro-social Personality Battery (PSB) developed by Penner, L. A. (2002). Questionnaire for students had two sections. First section elicited students' personal data such as name, age and gender while the second was Pro-social Personality Battery (PSB) scale that is composed of 28 items. Items 1-6(6 items) are for social responsibility scale, items 7-14 (8 items) are for empathy, items 15- 18 (4 items) are for moral reasoning scale , and items 19-28 (10 items) are for self- reported altruism scale. Among them, items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7,10,11,12, and 14 are negative (this need to be reverse).

Then, empathy scale is subdivided into perspective taking scale, empathic concern scale, and personal distress scale. Items 7, 9, 10, and 13(4 items) are perspective taking scale, items 8, 11, and 12(3 items) are empathic concern scale, and item 14 is personal distress scale. And, moral reasoning scale is subdivided into other oriented reasoning scale and mutual moral reasoning scale. Item 15 is other oriented reasoning scale, and item 16, 17, and 18 are mutual moral reasoning scale.

Questionnaire for parents was a 41- item instrument developed by Robinson, C., Mandleco, B., Olsen, S.F., and Hart, C.H. (1995). In this instrument, items 1-18 (18 items) are for authoritative parenting, items 19-32 (14 items) are for authoritarian parenting, and items 33-41 (9 items) are for permissive parenting. Both instruments had a Likert rating scales of 1-5 in an ascending order for positive items and reverse for negative items. The internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for individual scales of Pro-social Personality Battery (PSB) ranged from 0.50 to 0.78. The internal consistency of responses to authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative styles was acceptable (0.79, 0.61, and .08, respectively).

Findings

By using the descriptive procedure with the data obtained from Pro-social Personality Battery and Parenting Style Questionnaires, social responsibility, empathy, moral reasoning, self-reported altruism, authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style, and permissive parenting style were investigated.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Pro-social Behavior of Lower Secondary Students

Pro-social Behaviour	M	M%	SD
Social Responsibility	19.70	65.66	3.50
Empathy	28.60	71.49	2.91
Moral Reasoning	15.06	75.32	2.36
Self-Reported Altruism	26.32	52.65	6.15
Total (Pro-social Behaviour)	89.68	63.99	10.11

Note: M = Mean, M % = Percentage of Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Among pro-social behaviour variables: social responsibility, empathy, moral reasoning, and self-reported altruism, the mean score of moral reasoning was the highest (M% = 75.32%, SD = 2.36).

Table 2 Mean Comparison for Parenting Styles

Parenting Styles	M	SD	M%
Authoritative	64.73	11.20	71.92
Authoritarian	33.72	8.10	48.17
Permissive	23.97	5.76	53.27

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, M% = Percentage of Mean

Among parenting styles variables: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive, the mean score of authoritative parenting is the highest (M% =71.92%, SD = 11.20). It means that most of parents involved in authoritative parenting style for children's rearing in this study (See Table 2).

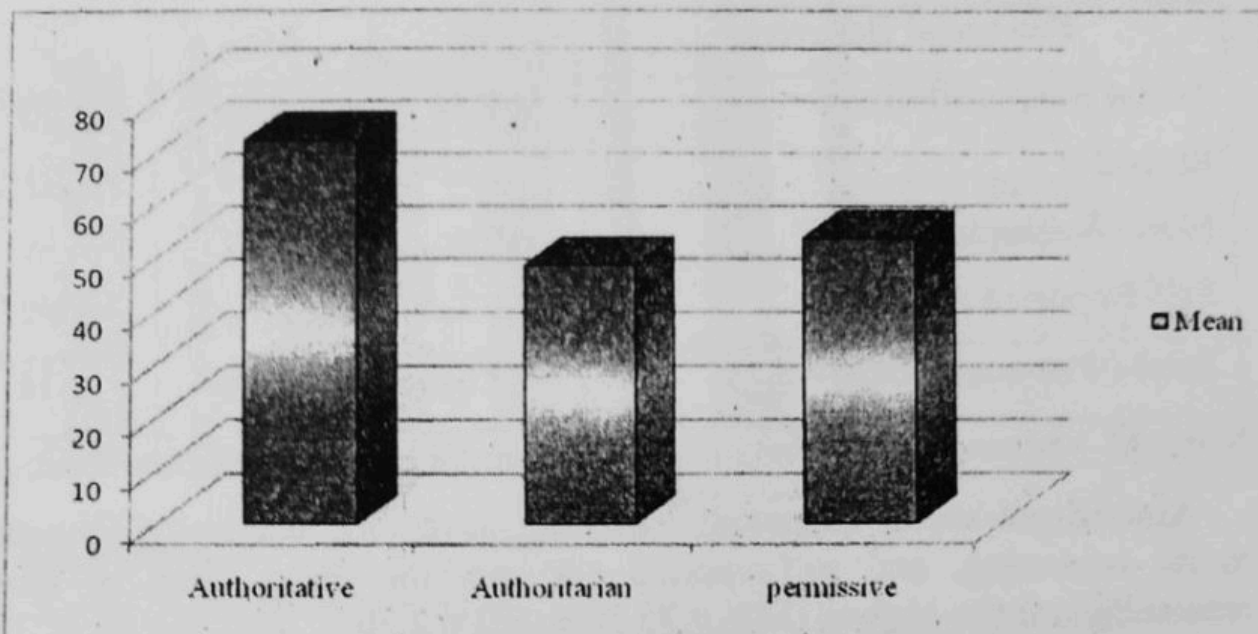To be more clearly, the following figure was drawn out (See Figure 1).

Figure. 1 Mean Comparison for Each Subscale of Parenting Style

Then, to obtain more detailed information on each subscale of pro-social behaviour, independent sample t-test was conducted and it become apparent that boys and girls differed significantly at 0.05 level in empathy scale (See Table 3). According to the results, it may be said that the girls were more empathic than boys.

Table 3 The Result of Independent Sample t-test for Each Subscale of Students'Pro-social Behaviour by Gender

Pro-social Behaviour	t	df	p	Mean	
				Male	Female
Social Responsibility	1.29	628	0.20	66.25	65.06
Empathy	-2.17*	628	0.03	70.87	72.12
Moral Reasoning	0.64	628	0.52	75.62	75.02
Self-Reported Altruism	1.56	628	0.12	53.41	51.89

Note: * The mean difference is at the 0.05 level.

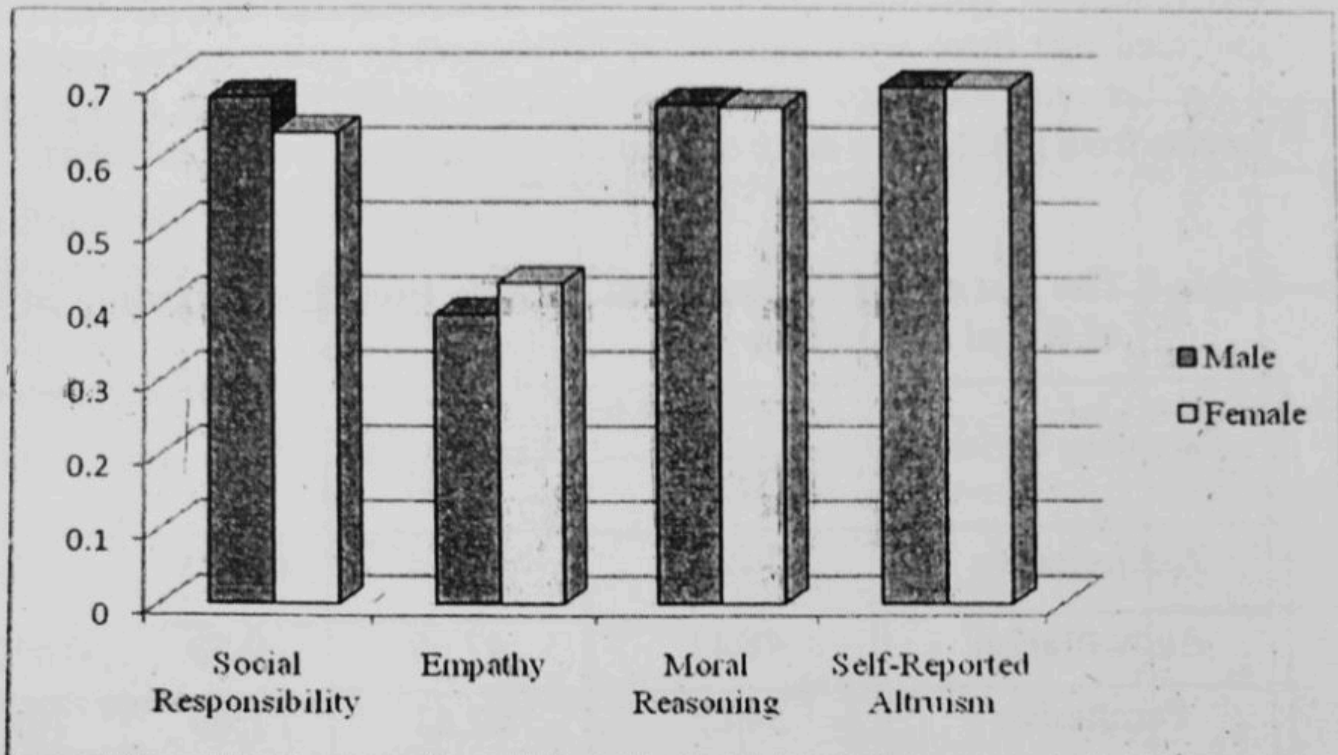To be more clearly, the following figure was drawn out (See Figure 2).

Figure. 2 Mean Comparison for Each Subscale of Lower Secondary Students' Pro-social Behaviour by Gender

Then, the independent sample t-test result revealed that there was significant difference in authoritative parenting styles by parent gender. It can be said that mothers are more authoritative than fathers (See Table 4).

Table 4 The Results of Independent Sample t-test for Parenting Styles by Parent Gender

Parenting Styles	Mean		t	p
	Father	Mother		
Authoritative	70.90	72.96	-2.08*	0.03
Authoritarian	48.45	47.90	0.60	0.55
Permissive	53.63	52.90	0.71	0.48

Note: * The mean difference is at the 0.05 level.

Next, an independent sample t-test was used to determine the mean score differences in parenting styles between rural and urban. The analyses indicated that there were significant differences in authoritative parenting styles between rural and urban [t(630)=4.35, p<.001]. It can be said that parents from urban were more authoritative than those from rural areas.

Table 5 The Results of Independent Sample t-test for Parenting Styles of Rural and Urban

Parenting Styles	Mean		t	p
	Urban	Rural		
Authoritative	74.09	69.84	4.35***	0.000
Authoritarian	48.41	47.95	0.50	0.617
Permissive	54.05	52.53	1.49	138

Note: *** The mean difference is at the 0.001 level.

To find out the relationship between pro-social behaviour of lower secondary students and their parenting styles, Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were conducted.

Table 6 Intercorrelations Among Parenting Styles and Students' Pro-social Behaviour

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Prosocial Behaviour	1							
2.Social Responsibility	.54**	1						
3.Empathy	.60**	.27**	1					
4.Moral Reasoning	.61**	.26**	.33**	1				
5.Self-Reported Altruism	.78**	.11**	.26**	.34**	1			
6.Authoritative	.23**	.05	.12**	.18**	.23**	1		
7.Authoritarian	.02	.02	-.03	.04	-.02	.02	1	
8.Permissive	.05	-.04	.000	.05	.12**	.21**	.04	1

Note: ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

The results in Table 6 showed that pro-social behaviour subscales were also positively associated with one another. Pro-social behaviour was positively associated with social responsibility, empathy, moral reasoning, and self-reported altruism.

Next, correlations demonstrated that there was significant relationship between pro-social behaviour and authoritative parenting style. Authoritative parenting style had positive and significant relationship with pro-social behaviour of lower secondary students ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$). The results, however, did not show any relationship between other parenting styles and pro-social behaviour (See Table 6).

In this study, it can be meaningfully interpreted that authoritative parenting style has a strong relationship with the pro-social behaviour of

lower secondary students. Specifically, authoritative parenting style can support their children to increase pro-social behaviour. This finding supports the previous study showed that the mothers' authoritative parenting style was positively correlated with pro-social behaviours (Öğretir, 1999; Yağmurlu et al., 2005).

Conclusion

The study revealed that a disproportionate chunk of parents of the children adopt authoritative style of parenting by showing responsiveness, warmth and caring behaviour at home. Children of such parents may be able to avoid negative peer influence and risky behaviours as they would confide in the parents as well as discussing their problems and plans with them. Parental demanding and responsiveness play crucial role in adequate parenting of adolescent. Adequate monitoring, control, supervision irrespective of the gender, school location and age are paramount factors in positive and effective child rearing. Adequate parental love, warmth, care, attention are factors for effective parenting. Dialogue, communication, explanations and establishment of good and cordial relationships between parents and adolescents could enhance positive and effective parenting. The study also revealed a relationship between parenting styles and children's pro-social behaviour. Children of authoritative parents were graded as socially competent. Implicit in this finding is that, the way and manner children are brought up affect their social development.

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