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From Cradle to Connection: Parenting Styles as Predictors of Need to Belong and Perception of Love in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the relationships between perceived parenting styles, need to belong, and perception of love among young adults in committed romantic relationships in Pakistan. A correlational cross-sectional research design was employed, and data were collected from a purposive sample of 174 adults recruited from Lahore, Karachi, Hyderabad, and Mirpurkhas. Participants completed the Revised Perceived Parenting Styles Scale, the Need to Belong Scale, and the Perception of Love and Sex Scale. Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression, and hierarchical regression analyses with Sobel z-test were conducted. Results indicated that authoritative parenting was positively associated with need to belong and perception of love, whereas authoritarian parenting demonstrated significant negative associations with both outcomes. Permissive parenting was not significantly associated with either variable. Need to belong emerged as a full mediator of the relationships between both authoritative and authoritarian parenting and perception of love. Findings underscore the enduring influence of early caregiving experiences on adult relational functioning within the Pakistani cultural context.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, Need To Belong, Perception Of Love, Young Adults, Pakistan, Mediation

Introduction

The family unit is the major socialization environment where individuals first discover themselves, other people, and the social world. One of the most powerful influences on adult psychological functioning is the quality and style of parenting that a person has been exposed to in childhood and adolescence. Parenting styles, broadly characterized as the habitual patterns of attitudes, behaviors, and emotional climates that parents employ in raising their children, have consistently been associated with quite a number of developmental outcomes including emotional regulation, self-esteem, attachment security, and interpersonal functioning (Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). As



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adults, people use the relational templates they had with their caregivers from an early age in their daily lives, including how they perceive love, look for a connection, and satisfy their basic need to belong.

The need to belong is one of the most widespread and fundamental human motivations. Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggested that human beings have an intrinsic drive to form and maintain stable, lasting, and caring interpersonal relationships. This need is not simply a preference but rather a psychological necessity: its satisfaction is associated with greater well-being, health, and psychological stability, while its frustration leads to loneliness, depression, and lower life satisfaction. However, it remains unclear to what extent early parenting experiences determine how much people feel that their need to belong has been met and, more importantly, how these early experiences affect adults' perceptions of being loved and worthy of love.

Love perception, the feeling that one is loved, valued, and cared for by important persons, has been a subject of psychological research for many years. It is a construct closely connected to and yet different from attachment security and self-worth. Adults who perceive themselves to be genuinely loved tend to experience higher relationship satisfaction, greater emotional resilience, and a more secure sense of self (Feeney & Noller, 1990). On the other hand, individuals, who as children, had emotionally unavailable or inconsistent parents may internalize feelings of being unlovable, remain fixated on relational anxiety, and persistently feel they are chronically misunderstood even when social support is objectively available (Bowlby, 1982; Collins & Read, 1990). While the literature on these constructs highlights their theoretical relevance to one another, it remains somewhat scattered as researchers focus on different parts of the pathway that connects parenting styles to adults' need to belong and perception of love. Only a few studies have explored parenting and attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978), attachment and belonging (Leary & Cox, 2008), or belonging and romantic love (Murray et al., 2001). On the other hand, no study has attempted to explain how different parenting styles can simultaneously predict the need to belong and the perception of love in adulthood. This study fills that gap by discussing and analyzing the methodological and theoretical literature on the studied constructs and their mutual influence.

The main goal of this paper is to bring together what is known about how different parenting styles authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful may lead to different adult experiences of belonging and perceived love. First, the paper will look at the theoretical basis of parenting styles and their developmental consequences, then it will discuss the psychological concept of the need to belong, the idea of love perception in adulthood, and lastly, it will combine these three areas to show how they mutually influence one another.

Knowing how these factors relate to one another can be very helpful for therapists, those involved in preventive interventions, and those who want to promote healthy adult relationships.

Literature Review

The systematic study of different parenting styles can be traced back to the work of Diana Baumrind (1966, 1971), who introduced a typological model that identified three primary styles of parenting: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. In her study, Baumrind considered how parental demandingness (the extent to which parents impose expectations and require compliance) and parental responsiveness (the extent to which parents are warm, accepting, and sensitive to their children's needs) interact to create different socialization milieus. Subsequently, Maccoby and Martin (1983) broadened the



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tripartite model of Baumrind to a two-dimensional one, thus, brought in a fourth category, neglectful or uninvolved parenting, where parents are low in both demandingness and responsiveness.

Authoritative parenting is characterized by a mixture of warmth, clear expectations, and autonomy support (Baumrind, 1991). These parents are very responsive to their children's emotional needs, at the same time, they hold on to behavioral standards that are firm, consistent, and appropriate for the child's developmental level. The style is always associated with the best developmental outcomes even in different cultural contexts, such as higher self-esteem, better social competence, less anxiety and depression, and more secure attachment patterns (Steinberg et al., 1994; Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The warmth and emotional availability that is typical of authoritative parenting are thought to send the message to children that they are loved, valued, and worthy of care, which become internalized as working models of self and others.

Authoritarian parenting, on the other hand, is a style of parenting where parents demand a lot and at the same time are low on being emotionally supportive. Authoritarian parents put a lot of focus on obedience and conformity, they scare their kids with punishment, and they show very little warmth or emotional understanding to their kids (Baumrind, 1966). Generally, children growing up in authoritarian families are more anxious, have lower self-esteem, and find it harder to make friends. This may be the case because the strict and unemotional way the parents behave in this style communicates that acceptance is conditional, not unconditional (Barber, 1996; Rohner, 2004). When they become adults, people who have come from authoritarian families show greater relational anxiety, have trouble trusting others, and feel less like they are being loved (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Permissive parenting is when a parent is very loving but does not set many rules or limits. Permissive parents are extremely warm and receptive but they hardly set any limits to behavior, they avoid confrontation, and they even let their kids decide to a large extent what is right and wrong for them (Baumrind, 1991). Although permissive parenting transmits a strong bond between the child and the parent emotionally, without structure and consistent guidance, children might be less capable of self-regulation and tolerating frustration (Baumrind, 1966). Studies demonstrate that individuals who were brought up with a permissive parenting style may have problems with impulse control and always crossing boundaries in their adult relationships, however, they usually still have good feelings about the love they received from their parents (Strage & Brandt, 1999).

Neglectful or uninvolved parenting is actually the worst kind of parenting that can be given to a child as it combines lack of both responsiveness and demandingness. Children of neglectful parents hardly get any supervision, emotional support, or guidance, thus their developmental environment is characterised by emotional deprivation and relational unpredictability (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). This parenting style has been most closely linked with the worst outcomes in various areas, such as insecure attachment, difficulties in emotional regulation, delinquency, and increased risk for psychopathology (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994). The covert communication of neglectful parenting, that a person is not worthy of care and attention, may have far-reaching effects on adults' need to belong as well as their belief that love is there for them.

Attachment Theory and Its Relationship to Parenting

Bowlby's (1969, 1982) attachment theory is a powerful conceptual framework which can be quite effectively used to analyze the impact of parenting on one's adult relational



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quality. According to Bowlby, humans are innately programmed to seek the company of their caregivers in situations of threat or distress. The nature of the interaction with the caregiver in the times of need, therefore, leads to the formation of internal working models (i.e., mental and emotional images of the self, others, and relationships). A child who is fortunate enough to have a stable, sensitive, and responsive caregiver develops a secure attachment which is basically a positive working model of self ("I am worthy of love") as well as others ("others can be trusted and are available"). Conversely, when the caregiver is inconsistent, rejecting, or frightening, the child develops insecure attachment styles, anxious, avoidant, or disorganized (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Importantly, Bowlby (1973) maintained that childhood internal working models generally endure into adulthood, determining how people get involved in and make sense of their intimate relationships. To prove this extension of attachment theory into adult romantic relationships, Hazan and Shaver (1987) showed that attachment patterns of secure, anxious, and avoidant in adult people correlated with the infant attachment patterns and were predictive of different ways of interacting with the romantic partners. Securely attached adults tend to enjoy more fulfilling relationships, have more trust between their partners, and have a clearer realization of being loved. Anxious adults are most often caught up with thoughts about getting the relationship confirmed and thus, live in constant dread of being left, whereas avoidant adults tend to deny the significance of love relationships and claim to feel discomfort when it comes to intimacy (Brennan et al., 1998). Numerous studies have now documented the relationship between different parenting styles and adult attachment. Karavasilis et al. (2003) reported that teenagers whose parents exercised an authoritative style of parenting were much more likely to be securely attached than those whose parents were either authoritarian or permissive. Likewise, Berant et al. (2008) showed how a mother's sensitivity, a feature of an authoritative style of parenting, was the strongest predictor of the young adult's secure attachment. Taken together, these results indicate that one of the mechanisms through which parenting styles impact adult psychological functioning is via the attachment representations that they engender and which subsequently define the capacity of the individual to feel loved and to meet the need to belong.

The Need to Belong in Adulthood

Baumeister and Leary (1995) have formulated the belongingness hypothesis which states that the need to belong is a basic human motivation that affects one's emotions, thoughts, and actions on a large scale. The hypothesis points out that this need is characterized by two main aspects: first, human beings need to have frequent, positive interactions with others and second, these interactions need to be within the context of a stable, caring, and lasting relationship. The need to belong goes beyond merely being physically near others; it entails the individual's experience of feeling connected, valued, and genuinely integrated in a relational setting.

Research has clearly proven that not feeling of belonging to a group can lead to serious psychological and physical health problems.

For instance, Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) found that chronic loneliness, which is the main symptom of frustrated belongingness, is linked to higher levels of cortisol, weakened immune system, poor sleep, and higher risk of death. Leary et al. (2006) came up with the idea of self-esteem as a "sociometer", a person's internal monitor of social acceptance, therefore, experiencing social exclusion would be the most direct attack on self-worth.



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The need to belong, based on these results, can be seen not just as a wish socially but as a core psychological need.

It is noteworthy that early social experiences may largely explain individual differences in the feeling of belongingness. Those who have experienced secure and responsive parenting generally have fewer problems with social rejection and carry with them throughout their lives a greater sense of relational security and more stable sense of belonging (Leary & Cox, 2008). In contrast, growing up in emotionally neglectful or rejecting families could lead to a sense of belonging that is always frustrated. Social rejection becomes such a big issue then, along with anxiety and difficulty in establishing intimacy (Rao et al., 2014).

Moreover, parental acceptance-rejection theory (Rohner, 2004) argues that perceived childhood parental rejection leads to the development of dependency, low self-esteem, emotional instability, etc., which are universal and persistent throughout the life.

Perception of Love in Adulthood

Love is probably one of the most complicated and diverse topics in the field of psychology. Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love suggests that love consists of three parts: intimacy (the feeling of closeness and emotional bonding), passion (the motivational drives and physical arousal), and commitment (the decision to keep the relationship for a long time). Even though Sternberg's work concentrates on the building blocks of love, the issue of individuals' subjective experience of being loved has hardly been discussed. This subjective experience refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they are really cared for, cherished, and valued by their significant others.

Love perception is a complex concept that is psychologically related to, yet quite distinct from, attachment insecurity and low self-esteem. When individuals look at their partners as more thoughtful and loving ones, they not only report higher satisfaction in their relationship, but they also feel more secure, and they are more willing to take risks in the relationship, as testified by Murray et al.'s (2001) study. What is even more important, Murray and his research team demonstrated that the perception of love from the partner was not a neutral assessment of one's significant other but that it was modulated by the individual's own self-views: people who had a lower self-esteem were prone to underestimate the amount of their partner's love, an example of an internalized working model introduced by Bowlby (1982). This process of self-verification implies that the influence of early parenting on the shaping of one's self-esteem as well as the formation of relational expectations could, therefore, have lasting consequences on how love is perceived in the context of adult relationships.

In this sense, Rohner's (2004) parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) can be considered as a valuable conceptual tool for tracing the impact of the first experiences with love on the perception of love in adulthood. Inspired by PARTheory, it could be said that all children have a fundamental need for warm and affectionate relationships with their parents and, thus, the absence or withdrawal of this love, or parental rejection, will elicit a similar set of negative reactions in the child. What is furthermore crucial is that PARTheory puts forward the idea that the rejection that a child experiences from the parents should not be considered just as an event that has happened in the past but rather as an internalized prototype of a relationship, which determines the way the person sees love ever after. Individuals who in their childhood have not experienced the love of parents are more likely to give the harshest interpretation to the signals of their partners and see these signals as signs of rejection; they find it hard to believe and accept that



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their partners love them, and at the same time, they have a deep and persistent feeling of being unlovable (Rohner et al., 2005).

Empirical studies demonstrate how parenting behavior may predict children's perception of love later in life. In the research by Feeney and Noller (1990), it was observed that attachment style, which is one of the things that early parenting influence, was able to explain different adults' reports of love experiences. Thus, secure individuals disclosed more positive and loving experiences compared to anxious or avoidant people. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) article is a thorough review that, among other things, brings to light the fact that securely attached people have a positive view of their romantic partner and can keep it even when their relationship is under stress. They are more likely to interpret their partner's behavior in a favorable light and experience love as a consistent and reliable factor in their close relationships.

Integrating Parenting Styles, Need to Belong, and Perception of Love

The theoretical and empirical evidence mentioned above agrees that parenting styles strongly and lastingly affect adults' need to belong and their perception of love. Various key mechanisms mediate these relationships. First, parenting styles determine the models and attachment representations that individuals develop and thus carry into their adult relationships. These internal working engaging them in closeness and interpreting others' are, thus, a function of their past parental relationships. Second, parenting affects the development of self-esteem and self-image, which thus influence the individual's views on being lovable and belonging. Third, parenting influences the acquisition of emotional and relational skills, such as emotional control, trust, and communication skills, which influence the character of adult relationships and thus the satisfaction of the need for belonging within them.

Authoritative parenting, characterized by a balance of warmth and suitable control, is the most appropriate way to develop a secure sense of belonging and a positive view of love in adulthood. Adults grown up with authoritative parents generally have reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction, deeper social bonds, and a more stable perception of being loved (Steinberg et al., 1994). On the other hand, authoritarian and neglectful parenting may cause the individual to experience a chronic lack of belonging and have distorted perceptions of love: adults who experienced such parenting may continue to desire closeness while simultaneously fearing the vulnerabilities that come with it, being in a relational state of ambivalence as described by Bowlby (1973) in the case of insecure attachment. Permissive parenting is somewhere in the middle, it may result in positive perceptions of love but the person may lack the necessary skills to handle the reciprocal nature of adult relationships.

Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence reviewed above, the following hypotheses were formulated for the present study:

- H1. Authoritative parenting style will have a significant positive relationship with the need to belong in young adults in romantic relationships.
- H2. Authoritarian parenting style will have a significant negative relationship with the need to belong in young adults in romantic relationships.
- H3. Permissive parenting style will have a significant positive relationship with the need to belong in young adults in romantic relationships.
- H4. Neglectful parenting style will have a significant negative relationship with the need to belong in young adults in romantic relationships.



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H5. Authoritative parenting style will have a significant positive relationship with perception of love in young adults in romantic relationships.

H6. Authoritarian parenting style will have a significant negative relationship with perception of love in young adults in romantic relationships.

H7. Permissive parenting style will have a significant positive relationship with perception of love in young adults in romantic relationships.

H8. Neglectful parenting style will have a significant negative relationship with perception of love in young adults in romantic relationships.

H9. Need to belong will have a significant positive relationship with perception of love in young adults in romantic relationships.

H10. Parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful) and need to belong will significantly predict perception of love in young adults in romantic relationships.

H11. There will be significant gender differences in parenting styles, need to belong, and perception of love in young adults in romantic relationships.

Method

The current study included the design of research, strategy of collecting the sample, the criteria, the assessment measures, procedure for conducting research, and ethical considerations that were used for data collection.

Research Design

A correlational study with cross-sectional research design was used to investigate the relationship of perceived parenting styles, need to belong, and perception of love in young adults having romantic relationships. This design was selected because it allows for the examination of naturally occurring associations among variables without experimental manipulation, and is well-suited to the assessment of individual differences in psychological constructs across a diverse community sample (Kazdin, 2003). The cross-sectional nature of the design enabled the efficient collection of data from a broad sample at a single time point, facilitating the identification of concurrent associations among the study variables.

Sample

For drawing an appropriate sample size, G*Power formula was used. The sample size was calculated for eight predictors with an effect size of 0.15, alpha level of .05, and power of 0.95 (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). This resulted in a sample size of 172 adults. The sample was recruited by non-probability purposive sampling from Lahore, Karachi, Hyderabad, and Mirpurkhas via online and in-person modes of data collection from men and women in the age group of young and middle adulthood.

Sample Strategy

In the research, the group under consideration was adults of both genders residing in Lahore, Karachi, Hyderabad, and Mirpurkhas. Purposive sampling was the most suitable non-probability sampling technique that not only ensured data collection with authenticity but also helped in getting the right results from the units of the population of this study, i.e., adults in committed romantic relationships (Etikan et al., 2016). Besides, this method saved the budget and was time-friendly which helped the respondents to cooperate during the survey with relative ease.



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A strict standard was used that helped to clarify the overall alignment between the research question and sample thus, the overall validity of the findings was increased. In detail, the participants were selected because of their real experience in a romantic relationship, therefore, their answers about belonging needs and love perceptions were based on the fact of being in a loving relationship. The participants' characteristics were precisely in line with the research question of this study.

Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria of the non-probability purposive sample included: (a) age of 21 years and above, (b) currently in a committed romantic relationship of six months' duration or longer, and (c) identification as male or female. These criteria ensured that participants had sufficient relational experience to provide informed, contextually grounded responses to the study measures.

Assessment Measures

The following assessment measures were used in the present study.

Personal Information Sheet

A demographic information sheet was used to gather background information from participants. The sheet included items pertaining to gender, age, relationship status, and family system. This information was used to describe the sample and to examine potential demographic differences in the study variables.

Revised Perceived Parenting Styles Scale

The Perceived Parenting Style Scale (Divya & Manikandan, 2013) is a tool that helps depict how a person sees the way his parents brought him up. The scale basically helps reveal the perception of the participants regarding the parenting styles of their parents from the four recognized parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful.

The scale comprises of 30 statements using five-point Likert scale where the response categories range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Each subscale shows a good level of internal consistency reliability. The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) values found by the scale authors were: authoritative style $\alpha = .79$, authoritarian $\alpha = .81$, and permissive $\alpha = .86$. The scale has shown the face validity as provided by the original writers (Divya & Manikandan, 2013).

Need to Belong Scale

The Need to Belong Scale (Leary et al., 2013) essentially deals with how much people want to be free from rejection, to be included, and to have a feeling of belonging in their social surroundings. The scale was created with the idea of capturing how strongly different individuals are driven by the need for acceptance and to belong on an interpersonal level.

It's a 10-item short form on a point 5-Likert scale and evaluates how much people are driven by wanting to be accepted by other people or, on the other hand, to avoid being left out socially. Need to Belong Scale has been able to prove its psychometric quality in consistency across various samples with the Cronbach's alpha values typically being over .80 (Leary et al., 2013).



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Perception of Love and Sex Scale

The Perception of Love and Sex Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2002) was designed to assess individuals' conceptions of how love and sex are connected within their romantic relationships. The scale consists of four subscales: Love is Most Important, Sex Demonstrates Love, Love Comes Before Sex, and Sex is Declining. It contains 27 items, each rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Hendrick and Hendrick (2002) demonstrated the scale's utility for studying the interrelationship of love and sex as integrated rather than isolated relational constructs, reporting satisfactory internal consistency and construct validity across their investigative samples.

Procedure

Participants were adults involved in romantic relationships recruited from universities, homes, and neighborhoods in Lahore, Karachi, Hyderabad, and Mirpurkhas. Data collection involved the use of both online and physical questionnaires. Before the questionnaires were administered, all participants gave written informed consent, and they were fully briefed on the study's nature and aim. They were also reassured about the confidentiality of their responses and that the data would not be used for any purpose other than research. Participants were also made aware of their right to discontinue their participation in the study at any time without penalty. Responses were collected through the personal information sheet, the Revised Perceived Parenting Styles Scale, the Need to Belong Scale, and the Perception of Love and Sex Scale. Each set of questionnaires took about 30, 35 minutes to complete. Participants were thanked for their time and cooperation at the end of the study. Once data collection was done, all responses were coded, entered, and analyzed using SPSS (Version 26).

Ethical Considerations

The study consistently adhered to human research ethical standards to maintain the validity and ethical integrity of the findings. The researchers first secured permissions from the respective institutional authorities before conducting the research and also made arrangements to get the authorization of the scale developers. Participants signed informed consent forms after they were informed that they could discontinue their participation at any time without any consequences.

The researchers explained the nature of the research and its importance to all the respondents and also answered their queries before and during the research. Confidentiality and privacy of the information provided by the participants was guaranteed and it was made clear to them that only the research team would have access to the information provided and that they would not share it with anyone else. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, data collection, data entry, and reporting stages were done in such a way that there was no disclosure of the participants' identity. No personal information was attached to the completed questionnaires, and only aggregate data were used for reporting the findings of the research. These measures were in line with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017).

Results

Data in this study was analyzed to examine the relationship between perceived parenting style, need to belong and perception of love and sex in adults. Data was analyzed using SPSS.



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Sample Descriptive

This section covers the description of sample with reference to the perceived parenting style, need to belong and perception of love in adults reported in table 1.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of adults (N=174)

Variables	M	SD	f	%
Age	29.14	6.63		
Relationship status				
Committed			78	44.80
Noncommitted			96	55.20
Family System				
Nuclear			85	48.90
Joint			87	50.10
Gender				
Male			89	51.10
Female			83	47.70

The frequency and percentage of continuous demographic characteristics of the Participants were showed in table 1. Most of the participants belong to age of 24 years with non-committed people mostly male and belong to joint family system.

Psychometric Properties

In the current section, the reliability, mean standard deviation and range of the parenting style, need to belong and perception of love and in adults. Results are reported in table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive and psychometric properties of parenting style, need to belong and perception of love in adults (N = 174)

Scale	M	SD	Range	A	Skewness	Kurtosis
Authoritative Parenting	32.75	14.79	11–54	.96	.08	-1.44
Authoritarian Parenting	25.11	12.86	10–50	.95	.57	-1.03
Permissive Parenting	25.08	11.87	9–45	.96	.60	-.95



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Need To Belong	26.85	10.31	10–50	.93	.05	-1.18
Perception of Love	24.29	8.35	9–45	.90	.36	-.83

Note. α =CronbachAlpha

Table 2 shows psychometric properties for the scales. The Cronbach's α value for study variables indicated high consistency within the data set. Moreover data was also normally distributed.

Preliminary analysis

This session examines the relationship between perceived parenting style, need to belong and perception of love in adults.

Table 3

Correlational analysis (N=174)

Variable	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	.48	.50	.08	.16*	-.02	.12	-.06	-.07	.02	.01	.18*
2. Relationship status	.55	.49	-	-.05	.47**	-.06	-.04	-.04	-.05	-.08	-.05
3. Family system	.50	.50	-	-	-.06	-.03	-.08	.08	.05	-.01	.06
4. Age	29.14	6.63	-	-	-	.01	-.10	-.08	.00	-.14	
5. Authoritative Parenting	32.75	14.79	-	-	.15*	-	-.42**	-.27**	.63**	.55**	.71**
6. Authoritarian Parenting	25.11	12.86	-	-	-	-	-	-.35**	-.53**	-.40**	-.44**
7. Permissive Parenting	25.08	11.87	-	-	-	-	-	-	.07	-.09	-.07
8. Need to Belong	26.85	10.31	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.70**	.74**
9. Perception of Love	24.29	8.35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.74**

Pearson product moment correlation analysis was conducted to analyze the relationship between perceived parenting style, need to belong and perception of love in committed adults. Results indicated that relationship status, gender, family system and age were non-significantly related to perception of love. It was hypothesized that there would be a relationship between perceived parenting style, need to belong and perception of love in adults. Results indicated that adults with authoritative parenting had better perception of love. Adults with authoritarian parenting had poor perception of love. Adults with permissive parenting exposure did not affect their perception of love. Adults with better need to belong had better perception of love.

Mediation analysis

Mediation analysis was executed to analyze the mediating role of need to belong between perceived parenting style and perception of love in adults using Sobel z test.



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Table4 Predicting role of perceived parenting style and need to belong(N=174)

Predictor	B	SE	t	P	95% C.I
(Constant)		3.80	4.16	.00	[8.3,23.3]
Authoritative Parenting	.56	.04	8.12	.00	[.3,.5]
Authoritarian Parenting	-.25	.05	-3.40	.00	[-.3,-.1]
Permissive Parenting	.13	.05	2.04	.04	[.0,.2]

Multiple linear regression analysis was executed to illustrate the predicting role of perceived parenting styles and need to belong. Assumptions were fulfilled there was no multicollinearity (tolerance>.02) and there were independence of errors Durbin Watson = 1.36. Overall model was significant F= 55.98, p < .00. Results indicated that authoritative, and permissive parenting style was positively predicting need to belong in adults. Results also indicated that authoritarian parenting style was positively predicting need to belong in adults. Model explains 50% variance. Multiple hierarchical regression analysis was run to find the moderating role of need to belong for perceived parenting style, perception of love.

Table5

Multiple hierarchical regression for perceived parenting style, need to belong and perception of love in adults (N = 174)

Predictor	B	95% C.I		SE	β	R ²	ΔR ²
		UL	LL				
Step I						.01	.01
(Constant)	22.83	16.41	29.25	3.25			
Gender	.80	-1.86	3.46	1.34	.04		
Relationship status	-1.95	-4.95	1.05	1.52	-.11		
Family system	-.21	-2.86	2.44	1.34	-.01		
Age	.09	-.13	.31	.11	.07		
Step II						.34***	.33***
(Constant)	18.29	8.02	28.55	5.19			



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Gender	-.68	-2.90	1.53	1.12	-.04
Relationship status	-2.05	-4.53	.41	1.25	-.12
Family system	-.17	-2.38	2.03	1.11	-.01
Age	.15	-.03	.34	.09	.12

Multiple Hierarchical Regression analysis was run to find the mediating role of need to belong on perceived parenting style and perception of love. Assumptions of

Authoritative Parenting	.25	.15	.35	.04	.44***
Authoritarian Parenting	-.15	-.26	-.04	.05	-.22**
Permissive Parenting	-.04	-.16	.07	.05	-.06
Step III				.53***	.20***
(Constant)	11.34	2.40	20.29	4.52	
Gender	-.15	-2.05	1.74	.96	-.01
Relationship status	-1.67	-3.79	.43	1.07	-.10
Family system	-.76	-2.65	1.12	.95	-.04
Age	.11	-.04	.28	.08	.09
Authoritative Parenting	.06	-.03	.16	.04	.11
Authoritarian Parenting	-.06	-.15	.03	.04	-.09
Permissive Parenting	-.09	-.19	.00	.05	-.13
Need To Belong	.47	.35	.60	.06	.57***

multicollinearity were checked by tolerance value that was within the acceptable range that is above .2 indicating no multicollinearity in variables. For independence of observation the Durbin-Watson value (Durbin-Watson = 1.81) was noted that was in the acceptable range of 1-3. In Step 1, model was significant and the R^2 value explained the variance of model of covariate predicting perception of love. $F(4,156) = .48, p > .05$. Findings revealed that age, gender, family system and status of relationship were not predicting perception of love. In step 2, the model explained 34% variance $F(7,153) = 11.41, p < .00$. Result indicated that authoritative parenting was positively predicting perception of love; authoritarian parenting was positively predicting perception of love. Permissive parenting was not predicting perception of love in adults. In step 3, the model was significant and explained 53%



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variance with $F(8,152) = 20.98, p < .00$. The result indicated that need to belong significantly moderating between authoritative (Sobel $t = -2.93, S.E = .03, p < .00$), authoritarian parenting styles (Sobel $t = 1.93, S.E = .03, p < .05$) and perception of love in adults.

Emerged model of perception of love Model I

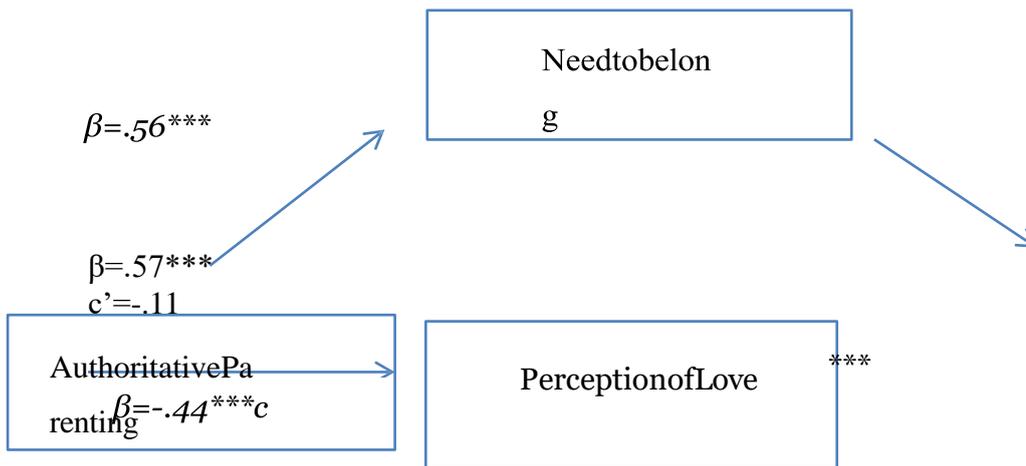


Figure 7: Emerged model of mediating role for authoritative parenting need to belong and perception of love. **Model II**

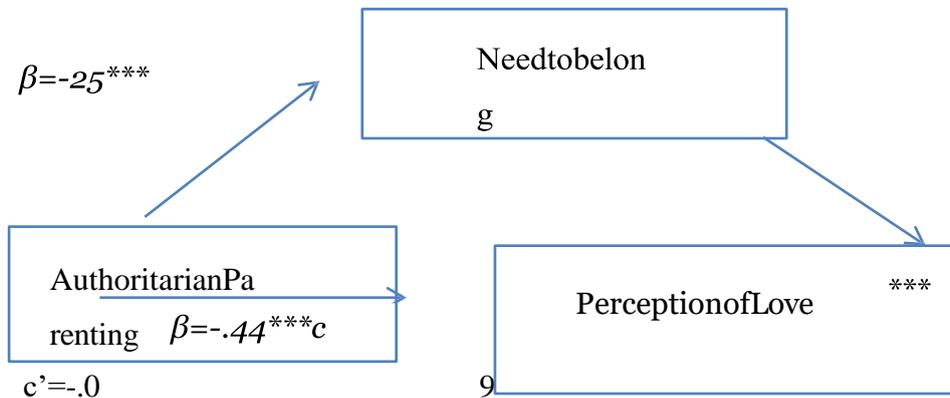


Figure 8: Emerged model of mediating role for authoritarian parenting need to belong and perception of love.



Model III

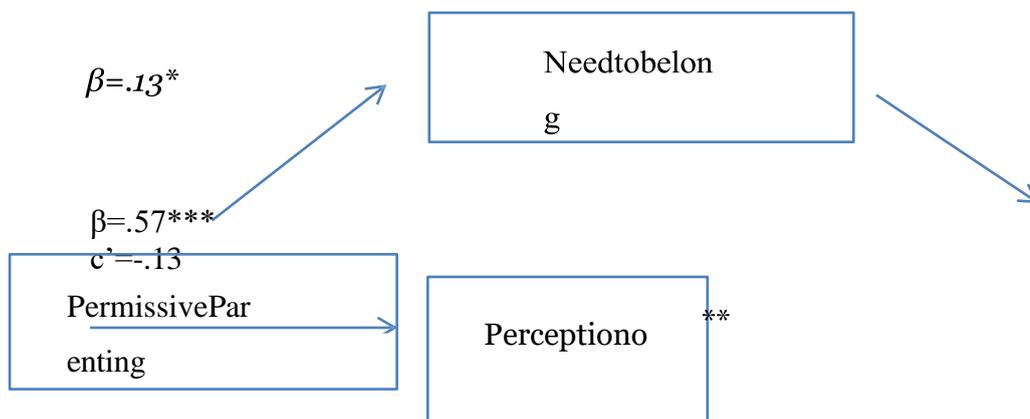


Figure 9: Emerged model of mediating role for Permissive parenting need to belong and perception of love.

Discussion

This study investigated the interplay between perceived parenting styles, the need to belong, and perception of love among young adults romantically involved in Pakistan. The results mostly agree with the statement that the way we were cared for in early childhood influences the way adults feel belonging and experience love in their intimate relationships, the need to belong playing the role of a bridge between parenting history and adult relational functioning.

Authoritative parenting was positively and significantly related to the need to belong and perception of love among adults. Those adults who saw their parents as loving, responsive, and moderately strict experienced a stronger sense of belonging and a more positive view of love in their romantic relationships. This result accords with Bowlby's (1982) internal working models theory, which suggests that a child who receives constant affection and support from parents is told, through parental behavior, that he or she is worthy of love and connection, an idea that the child internalizes and later brings to adult relationships. This is an important and insightful finding in the context of Pakistani culture.

Parents who engage in authoritative parenting in Pakistani families can be generally described as emotionally warm and clearly setting relational expectations based on values such as mutual respect, loyalty, and care for one another (Jabeen et al., 2013). These values, which are the result of warm and well-structured parenting, may instill in the child such a strong sense of belonging that it will accompany him or her into the adult romantic relationship and make it possible for the individual to fully experience and trust love. The collectivistic nature of Pakistani society, where relationships are at the center of one's identity and happiness, may increase the beneficial impact of authoritative parenting on belonging and perception of love as it situates these early relational experiences in a wider cultural framework that emphasizes the significance of care and connection.



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Authoritarian style of parenting showed a significant negative correlation with need to belong and perception of love at the 0.01 level. Adults who saw their parents as controlling, demanding and emotionally unavailable reported lower sense of belonging and their perception of love in romantic relationships was more guarded or negative. This finding supports Rohner's (2004) parental acceptance-rejection theory which states that perceived parental rejection through punitive, emotionally cold parenting leads to internalized feelings of unlovability that continue throughout life.

In Pakistani culture, authoritarian parenting is somewhat common and has been often normalized as an expression of parental authority and concern for children's moral and social compliance (Azhar et al., 2014). Parents who use an authoritarian style may be trying to help and protect their children sincerely, but the emotional coldness and conditional acceptance typical of this style might be seen as rejection by the children, no matter the parental intention. Once conditional acceptance becomes the dominant relational pattern, adults may struggle to trust their partner's love, feel genuinely welcomed in their relationships, or believe that they are deserving of love without having to prove it. These patterns are very likely to be Pakistani romantic relationships where talking about love and emotional needs has been traditionally indirect and controlled by cultural norms of modesty and emotional control making the perception of love even more complicated to handle.

Permissive parenting, surprisingly, did not have any significant association with need to belong or perception of love in the present study. This unexpected finding appears to resonate with the inconsistencies in the conceptualization of permissive parenting, which is regarded as a combination of warmth and lack of structure and consistent guidance. In Pakistan, permissive parenting is quite rare and may, thus, be perceived by children as parental indifference or a lack of fulfillment of parental duties rather than emotional freedom. (Riaz & Riaz, 2018).

No provision of parental guidance or authority, both of which are considered very important elements of parental role in the Pakistani family system, may have a letting effect on parental warmth alone, thus, giving rise to relational outcomes, which are neither clearly positive nor negative. Such a situation would explain the failure of permissive parenting to show a significant link to belonging or love perception in this study. Referring to the need to belong as being very strongly and positively linked with the perception of love and that it served as a full mediator between both parenting styles, authoritative and authoritarian, and love perception, is one of the key findings of this research.

This mediation indicates that parenting styles do not directly determine how adults perceive love; rather, they first shape the degree to which adults feel a fundamental sense of belonging and relational worthiness, and it is this sense of belonging that subsequently enables or constrains their capacity to perceive love within their romantic partnerships. In the Pakistani cultural context, where belonging to family and intimate relationships is a cornerstone of psychological identity, this finding underscores the profound importance of early parenting in laying the groundwork for healthy adult romantic functioning.

Demographic variables including gender, age, family system, and relationship status did not significantly predict perception of love, suggesting that the influence of parenting on belonging and love perception operates relatively consistently across different demographic subgroups in this sample. Limitations include the cross-sectional design, retrospective self-report measurement of parenting, and a non-probability sample drawn from select Pakistani urban centers. Future longitudinal and cross-cultural research is needed to further establish the directionality and boundary conditions of these



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developmental pathways.

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