

# Negotiating Tradition and Modernity: Parenting Practices and Moral Ethics among Generation Y in Pakistan

Fareeha Firdous<sup>1</sup>, Sahira Zaman<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Gender Studies, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Gender Studies, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Correspondence: [firdousfareeha26@gmail.com](mailto:firdousfareeha26@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** This study “Negotiating Tradition and Modernity” analyzes the parenthood, moral ethics and gendered practices of raising children of Generation Y parents in collaboration with Judith Butler’s conceptualization of gender performativity.

**Methodology:** The research is qualitative and was conducted through 20 semi-structured interviews with ten male and ten female parents from the rural and the urban areas of Rawalpindi.

**Findings:** Results indicate that Generation Y parents straddle traditional and modern paradigms with discipline, moral responsibility, and emotional connection. Parents, of course, continue to stress *achhi parwarish* (a good upbringing) as a moral and social imperative but they are also providing rationales, engaging in explanations, having conversations, offering emotional support, and otherwise displaying a selective modernization of the more authoritarian style of parenting they were themselves brought up under. Urban parents were somewhat more accommodating, while rural parents were under more social pressure, showing differences of degree rather than kind within a shared moral matrix. Education acted as a buffer, making parents more informed and thoughtful without completely challenging mainstream values. There were slow but incipient changes in involvement of fathers in the home and in childcare responsibilities.

**Conclusion:** In general, Generation Y parenting is a balancing act between tradition and modernity, full of emotional attunement, moral regulation, and gendered social expectations realized in attempts to provide children with a well-rounded upbringing that reconciles cultural obligation with modern aspirations.

**Keywords:** Generation Y, Parenthood Practices, Gender Performativity, Urban-Rural Differences.

## Article History

Received:  
March 27, 2026

Revised:  
June 19, 2026

Accepted:  
June 26, 2026

Online:  
June 30, 2026

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Parenthood is an essential component of influencing children's personality, behavior, and life choices. Parenting in the context of Pakistan is not just a private family matter but is permeated by culture, religion, tradition, family honor and gender (Sultana, 2012; Zaman & Shahid, 2023). Parents of Generation Y, born roughly between the years 1981 and 1996, find themselves raising children in a culture of dualities where on one hand they are very traditional and on the other hand very modern. These parents, in contrast to their predecessors, were raised in a world that gave them more access to global media, education and social networks and also shaped their notions disciplining, caring and moral guidance (Dimock, 2019; Malik, 2019). Parenting in Generation Y produces children that have a sense of family honor, fit the norms of society, and are able to find their own way within contemporary social constructs. Values like modesty, obedience, discipline, and traditional gender roles in childrearing remain influential, although many Generation Y parents are adopting more pliable and emotionally attentive strategies (Shaheed, 2010; Qureshi, 2018). Girls are still often raised to help with housework, dress modestly, and not walk alone outside, while boys are taught to be assertive, take leadership positions, and go out. Behaviors such as these are not natural, but rather acquired through reiterative social and cultural practices consistent with Butler's gender performativity, which conceptualizes gender as being performed in ways repeatedly, not simply as a fixed point of identity (Butler, 1990; Lorber, 1994; Noor, 2015). Generation Y parents produce and reinforce gendered behaviors through multiple instructions, tasks, and expectations. For example, daughters are told to stay home, do housework, or moderate their behavior for moral propriety and sons are given more social latitude and authority to make decisions. These habits, accumulated over time, become understood as "natural," and serve to reinforce gendered divisions and hierarchies across family and society (Ahmed, 2016; Bhatti, 2018). In Pakistan reproductive behaviors remain influenced by patriarchy, family honor, economic burden, and marital stability (Hassan, 2009; Qadri, 2017). There are still lingering traditional ideas about parenting – with fathers being the main decision-makers and mothers engaging in emotional and home-based work (Chodorow, 1978; Hochschild, 1989). Yet, Gen Y parents are more prone towards participative, democratic, and flexible approaches when raising children. Influenced by exposure to education, urban settings and media, parents are provided room to negotiate cultural tradition and emerged parenting styles (Kagitcibasi, 2007; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; Jabeen, 2015). However, there are still plenty of deep-rooted cultural expectations. Take the example of the educated daughter who ~might~ be encouraged to get an education but is expected to maintain her modesty and help out around the house, whereas the son is being prepared for a life in the public eye, financial independence and also possibly a leadership role (Khan, 2018; Shaheed, 2010). The parenting style of Generation Y are also influenced by macrosocial elements. In so doing they reproduce patriarchal and classed norms (Bourdieu, 1977; Walby, 1990; Farooq & Iqbal, 2015) through the gendered division of labor, role allocation and moral instruction. Mother typically undertakes emotional labor--nurture, care and guidance-- foregrounding women's obligation to the family's welfare, and father offers authority and note on decision-making, reaffirming male leadership in the home (Chodorow, 1978; Hochschild, 1989; Aslam & Farooq, 2017). Even in modern or democratic forms, such as consulting with children on decisions, or allowing input on educational options, these processes feed into an ongoing performance and reinforcement of gender norms. Moral and ethical considerations also shape Generation Y parenting. Parents supervise children's conduct to make sure that it conforms with social, religious and familial expectations, and daughters are frequently subject to tighter controls than sons. Urban-rural contrasts are also clear: urban parents may give daughters more latitude with regard to education and recreation, while rural parents are subject to more intense community scrutiny and are expected to conform to a stricter moral code (Shah & Qureshi, 2021). The influence of technology, media and social networks has further altered parenting, equipping parents with new tools with which to interact with children but also as sources of friction when children take on values different than those of the family (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; Jameel, 2016). By applying Butler's theory of gender performativity, this research highlights the ongoing performance, production and negotiation of gender among Generation Y parents. Gendered expectations is also reinforced by

Performances such as the distribution of chores in the home, the monitoring of behavior, the regulation of education and the guidance of moral development. This treatment provides perspective analysis about how Gen Y parents reconcile the competing influences of tradition and modernity in preparing children for socially sanctioned activities, both in the home and in the world.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Parents in Pakistan are also experiencing a transformation in their parenting styles as Pakistan itself is making brisk progress on social, education, economic and technological fronts. Generation Y mothers and fathers are more commonly balancing traditional cultural, religious values and beliefs with contemporary parenting styles that stress children's independence, emotional well-being and gender equality (Bradley, 2007). That poses problems for adapting to evolving societal norms while maintaining core moral ethics. While existing studies have focused on parenting styles and family dynamics, researches concentrating on how Pakistani Generation Y parents manage tradition-modernity tensions in their routine parenting and moral decision-making are relatively scarce. This lacuna limits our insights into how parents of today maintain cultural values amid the demands of a changing society. As such, this research is set out to understand the way Generation Y parents negotiate the opposing forces and the implications of these negotiations for their parenting practices and moral ethics.

### **1.2 Significance of the Study**

This study is unique as it adds to the emerging area of parenting and family research in Pakistan with the phenomenological gaze focused on Generation Y parents. It sheds light on how these parents balance traditional cultural and religious beliefs with modern day parenting behavior models in a rapidly evolving culture. The results contribute to a better understanding of the influence of parenting styles on moral, ethical and social change in the context of Pakistan.

The study is also important from practical point of view. The results could provide insights for parents, educators, family therapists, researchers, and policy makers on potential challenges for Generation Y parents, in a way that guides the development of parent support programs and family policy which acknowledge cultural values while addressing contemporary demands. In addition, this study bridges a critical gap in the existing literature on tradition, modernity, parenting practices and moral ethics with Generation Y parents in Pakistan and potentially beyond, offering a gateway for future research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Parenting as a practice is embedded in social contexts and cultural values, which in turn influence children's developmental pathways, their moral values, gender roles and their future roles in society. In Pakistan, a patriarchal society in which collective family honor, religion, and cultural norms heavily influence every aspect of life, parenting mirrors entrenched societal norms (Jeong et al., 2018; Morawska, 2020). This literature review draws together international and contextual research on parenting styles, gendered socialisation, value transmission across generations, and influence of modernization, education, and technology – to situate Generation Y parenting in wider social and theoretical understandings. Parenting is, in essence, a socialization process that results in children absorbing cultural norms, values, and role expectations. Rossi and Rossi (1990) characterize parenting as a lifelong connection in which values are passed down from one generation to the next within the framework of daily ties and caregiving activities. This view stresses that parenting is not an unchangeable collection of actions but a dynamic interpretive activity that has been previously affected by historical experiences and existing situations. In psychological and sociological terms, parents are interpreters of cultural dictates as well as agents for socialization. Leerkes et al. (2015) outline the way in which children's psychosocial outcomes are shaped by parents' emotional regulation and caregiving behaviours, identifying that parental sensitivity, discipline and emotional support are key predictors of child development. When considering gender, Katz and Gottman (1997) and Rosen and Schulman (1998) illuminate the gender-differentiated nature of discipline and emotional support, at least along the parent-child gender lines, as a contributor to

differentiated gendered trajectories in childhood. There is a rich literature which shows that parenting is a gendered activity and parents socialize their children into gendered roles. West and Zimmerman (1987) contend that gender is not an identity but it is a performance that is a practice of everyday life—what Butler later conceptualized as gender performativity (Butler, 1990). Persistent parental admonitions about how to behave, what to do, where to go, and what to play at serve to constitute gender differences as normal. Endendijk et al. (2018) observed that although some parental behavior is alike in relation to both sons and daughters, a more fine-grained examination pointed to subtle gendered expectations that could have implications for children's social adjustment. Johnson and Younger (2001) highlight that parents say they believe in treating their children equally, but they differentiate in discipline, autonomy, and encouragement according to cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. In Pakistan, these divergences are further solidified by honor culture and patriarchal social structure in which the importance of daughters' modesty, obedience, and protective seclusion is underscored (Ali & Gavino, 2008; Shaheed, 2010). This gendered socialization is not fixed; it transforms as societies meet modernizing stimuli but sometimes maintains its original cultural logic. A key issue in parenting research is the intergenerational transmission of values and practices. Simons et al. (2003) provide evidence that the way people are raised and family prescriptions about child rearing influence how one parents, but this is not a one-to-one translation—it is filtered through personal contemplation, societal transformation, and situational forces.

Already today Generation Y parents are also talking about the strict discipline they were raised with and that they want to “loosen up” a bit (Navarro & Jensen, 2026; Domoff et al., 2020). They do not simply discard traditional norms, they modify their ones and that way hold on to moral frameworks while making space for communicative and emotional sensibilities (Chen et al., 2024). This is consistent with research that suggests parents are motivated to maintain cultural continuity and, at the same time, improve their children's emotional environments, using self-critical reflection and corrective motivations. Parenting today is also shaped by broader social changes including expansion of education and digital media. Education is considered an important determinant of parental attitudes and, consequently, of child life course. Gupta and Singh (2017) articulate gendered parental expectations in education, which are often aligned with wider societal norms, yet also reveal shifting hopes and aspirations for both boys and girls. Technology adds an extra layer of complexity to parenting. Steinberg et al. (2023) and Jeffery (2020) demonstrate that digital devices/media exposure have potential benefits (information access, educational tools) and risks (screen time management, exposure to inappropriate content). These technological aspects compel parents to develop new approaches to watching and managing children, introducing new layers of regulation and bargaining that are specific to current parenting situations. In fact, there is a tradition to family structure in many non-Western contexts, especially Pakistan, that encompasses joint family participation in childrearing. Mothers-in-law and older family members can hold considerable power to dictate parenting styles and cultural norms. Goodman and Silverstein (2006) and Suitor et al. How extended family members impact children, parenting decisions, and values and practice adherence is further discussed under ‘socialisation across the lifecourse’ surrounding social pressure and hierarchical authority. This is consistent with research showing that parenting is not something parents do as individuals but as a collective and relational practice within family hierarchies. A recurrent theme in gender and parenting literature is the differential treatment of sons and daughters in education and future aspirations. Bergqvist (2020) shows that parental expectations frequently align with socially constructed gender roles, which lead to differing educational and occupational trajectories. In Pakistan, cultural norms often privilege sons' professional careers while restricting daughters' aspirations, emphasizing marriage and domestic roles instead (Farid & Rehman, 2017; Noor et al., 2025). This reflects broader social control and community monitoring where parents feel responsible not only for their children's success but also for family honor and social acceptance.

## 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is mainly based on Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity and offers a critique on the way in which Pakistani parenting practices shape and which are shaped by gender dynamics. Butler (1990) contends that gender is not a stable or inherent identity; instead, it is constituted through the repetition of acts, practices, and social norms. These reiterative acts how we dress, speak, behave and interact produce the illusion of an abiding gender identity (Butler, 1990; Ahmed, 2016). In relation to parenting, this is of particular importance as parents are the primary facilitators of such recurring gendered actions in children's day-to-day life (Bhatti, 2018). For Generation Y parents, gender performativity is on display in the everyday parenting rituals of childrearing that socialize children into gendered roles. Thus daughters are socialized toward modesty, domestic roles, and regulated mobility, and sons are socialized to be independent, assertive, and participated in the public domain. These are not biologically based but socially constructed through daily repetition and reinforcement (Lorber, 1994; Noor, 2015). Eventually these repeated actions become ingrained in children, making them believe that these roles are natural and something they should do as per their gender (Butler, 1990; Zaman & Shahid, 2023). The results of this study further show Generation Y parents are both performing and negotiating these gendered performances. While they still stress *achhi parwarish* as a moral duty that rests on discipline, obedience and respect, they are also incorporating aspects of communication, emotional comprehension and explanation (*samjhana*). This is an indicative of a re-modelling of parenting presentation. Yet, with all these shifts, the gendered foundation of expectation still holds strong. Daughters continue to be more tightly controlled, especially when it comes to mobility, education and preparing for marriage, while sons are groomed for financial independence and roles as leaders (Khan, 2018; Shaheed, 2010). Hence, parenting is a space where gendered expectations are challenged as well as reinforced. Along with Butler's conceptualization, this research employs the lens of IPA to explore the lived experiences of Generation Y parents. IPA is concerned with how people make sense of their lived experiences and attend to both what is said and what is left unsaid (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This perspective is especially appropriate when looking at the emotional and psychological aspects of parenting, such as the parent's inner struggle over balancing respect for elders with their own parenting preferences. For example, participants' reluctance and talk of "*ghar ka mahaul*" reveal implicit pressures and constraints that influence parenting decisions. IPA enables such subtle meanings and tensions to be interpreted in their cultural context (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Rizvi & Jamil, 2020). In addition, the study also addresses the intergenerational transmission of parenting, which refers to the process by which parenting values and behaviors are transferred from one generation of parents to the next. Yet, in Generation Y the transmission is not merely replicated but selectively translated. Parents think about their own childhoods often marked by a harsh regime of discipline—and seek to change course, by treating children with less corporal punishment and more emotional care. Statements like "*meri koshish hai k main utni skhti na kru*" are reflective of this negotiation within and through oneself. Nevertheless, these changes must be understood within the context of enduring cultural expectations and social limitations, which constrain parenting to a certain extent, resulting in an amalgamation of both traditional authoritative and contemporary emotionally sensitive parenting (Kagitcibasi, 2007; Jabeen, 2015). The lens also includes wider societal dynamics like patriarchy, family hierarchy and community monitoring that shape parenting in Pakistan. Parenting is not a lone enterprise but takes place within the context of extended family networks and societal norms. The mothers-in-law role in joint families, for example, shows how parenting is subject to collective surveillance and control. In the same way, the insistence on *purdah*, modesty and moral conduct show the impact of community gaze and the need to protect family honour (Hassan, 2009; Qadri, 2017). These systems perpetuate gendered parenting, especially in daughter rearing where protection is frequently conflated with limitation (Shaheed, 2010; Farid & Rehman, 2017). Factors such as education and technology are also included within this model as determinants. Education brings awareness and provides different options for parenting like communicating and bonding emotionally but it cannot entirely unravel the traditional norms (Khan, 2018; Rizvi, 2020). In a related way, technology introduces different challenges for parenting as parents must now regulate their

children's access to digital material with an eye towards its potential educational value (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). As a result, Generation Y parents participate in new combinations of parenting styles, mixing traditional discipline with contemporary approaches such as supervision and coaching. Thus, by bringing together the notion of gender performativity from Butler's theory with IPA and intergenerational transfer, this research framework offers a unique insight into Generation Y parenting in Pakistan. It demonstrates how parenting is a dynamic process of performing, negotiating and reproducing gender roles, moral values and social structures between generations.

## **2.2 Study Objectives**

1. To analyze the understandings and practices of Parenthood among Generation Y in Pakistan
2. To examine the shifts and continuities in how Generation Y parents negotiate between tradition and modernity in their everyday parenting practices.
3. To explore how Generation Y parents define and practice *achi parwarish* and how it shapes the socialisation of children in contemporary Pakistani society.
4. To investigate the parenting roles and decision-making of Generation Y mothers and fathers regarding the upbringing of sons and daughters, discipline, authority, and emotional involvement.
5. To examine the influence of family structure (joint and nuclear families), elders (particularly mothers-in-law), education, and the rural–urban context on parenting decisions.
6. To explore how Generation Y parents adopt, modify, or reject the parenting practices they experienced during their own childhood.
7. To examine how gendered expectations of motherhood and fatherhood are produced, reinforced, and modified through everyday parenting practices, including discipline, communication, children's mobility, education, and future planning.
8. To analyse Generation Y parenting practices through Judith Butler's Gender Performativity Theory by examining how gender is performed in everyday parenting, including regulating daughters' behaviour, encouraging sons' independence, and assigning gender-specific responsibilities.
9. To investigate how Generation Y parenting both reproduces and challenges broader social structures, particularly patriarchy.

## **3. METHODS**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The research is qualitative and concerned with understanding the nature of lived experiences, which personal interpretations and emotions of the people experiencing the phenomenon are brought to bear (Bryman, 2008) and in this case were expressed by Generation Y parents. Parenting is a private and personal experience, but is inflected by culture, and a qualitative methodology allowed participants to share their opinions, emotions and thoughts about their approach to parenting. This is a very useful methodology, especially for interrogating the hidden meanings, thinking and feeling, and tacit dimensions of parenting that are difficult to "catch" quantitatively. The qualitative design facilitates a deep understanding of the ways Generation Y parents interpret their roles, responsibilities, and daily parenting choices in an evolving social milieu. Generation Y parents, unlike previous generations, find themselves at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, and as such, their experiences need to be understood through a methodology that encompassed complexity, contradiction, and nuance. The study was carried out applying the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) that deals with the investigation of how people understand the lived experiences (Smith, 2008). This study is especially appropriate for IPA, as it facilitates an in-depth analysis of how Generation Y parents perceive *parwarish* (upbringing), balance

discipline and emotional care, and make sense of gendered expectations in the home. It also enables the researcher to probe explicit expressions alongside implicit meanings, such as conflicts between personal values and social norms. Through the IPA, the study investigates how parents think about their own upbringing and make selective adaptations or modifications of those practices in parenting their children. It shows that parenting is not just a series of acts but a process of meaning making that is influenced by culture, family structures, education and social change. Hence, this qualitative study design enabled an in-depth exploration of parenting as lived, mediated and contextually specific experience for Generation Y in a Pakistani context.

### **3.2 Participants**

The respondents of this research were Generation Y parents usually considered to be born between the early 1980s and mid-1990s who have at least three children and are actively involved in day today parenting. In contrast to Generation X parents, who were generally at the end of their parenting journey, Generation Y parents are actively raising their children, and thus represent the most up to date example of parenting practices and negotiations between tradition and modernity. Participants were living in rural and urban areas and represented a variety of cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify participants who were eligible for the study: Generation Y parents actively parenting their children. Purposive sample also deemed appropriate to enable researcher to pick cases that are information rich and helps in providing full and deep answers to the research questions (Kamarudin, 2013). The sample consists of 20 couples (40) participants, 10 from rural and 10 from urban background. Rural participants were selected from village tehsil of Gujar Khan, and urban couples from city of Rawalpindi. This separation allow us to contrast parenting practices in different social and physical environment. The participants hailed from both rural and urban backgrounds and were representative of various cultural, social and economic backgrounds. Among the rural participants, mothers and father were both moderately educated overall and many were involved in small business, local jobs, or teaching, and a large number of these participants resided in joint family systems. These respondents frequently had 2 to 4 children and were so shaped by extended family members, mainly mothers-in-law, in their ways of parenting. The city residents, by contrast, were relatively well educated, many of them working in government or private enterprise, a few as independents. Most of the urban respondents lived in nuclear family system, but few had close proximity with joint family. They also had on average 2-3 children and were privileged to a more varied social milieu that included education, media, and technology. The general age of participants, who were actively parenting, was mid-20s to mid-40s. Each participant was instead an experienced, active parent and contributed a level of depth and detail around parenting practices, decision-making, and how gender roles, familial expectations, and social norms influence their day-to-day parenting. Their narratives reflected a holistic view of how Generation Y parents define parwarish, mediate discipline and emotional care, and contextualize traditional practices in contemporary social environments.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The data for this study were collected by an interview schedule constructed for the research. The questions related to perception of achhi parwarish (good parenting), parenting practices, and the influences on the parenting philosophy of parents of Generation Y. Special attention was paid to discipline, communication, emotional bonding and gender in child rearing, and the influence of modern-day factors, such as education and technology, on the parenting styles of these parents.

### **3.4 Procedure and Study Ethics**

The present study has been granted ethical approval by the 120th AS&RB of Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi in 2026. This study is qualitative in nature and was conducted under the ethical principles of APA 7th edition and COPE guidelines. The aim of this study was explained to the participants and their participation was voluntary. They were at liberty to withdraw from the study any time. Written and verbal consents were secured before the start of every interview. No identifying data

of the participants was recorded to achieve confidentiality and privacy. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants. Participants were informed that the study would be used for academic purposes only. The interviews were conducted in environments that were both secure and comfortable for the participants. Care was taken to ensure that no sensitive or distressing topics were broached and the participants were allowed not to answer any question they did not wish to. Data were gathered through in-person and phone interviews with Generation Y parents that lasted approximately 30–45 minutes. The interviews were held in Urdu, Punjabi and very plain English. Notes and recordings were taken.

#### 4. RESULTS

This research investigated the significations and practices of parenthood among Gen Y parents in rural and urban contexts in the vicinity of Rawalpindi, in relation to the performativity of gendered norms and their enactment, reproduction, and negotiation. Twenty semi-structured interviews were carried out with ten male and ten female parents. The results suggest that Gen Y parenting is a balancing act between traditional and modern values and that parents are both perpetuating and challenging gendered upbringing. In light of Butler's conceptualization of gender performativity, these findings reveal that everyday parenting routines are repeated gendered acts that mould children's identities.

**Table 1: Profile of the Respondents**

| Characteristics   | Category          | No of respondents |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Generations       | Generation Y      | 20                |
| Gender            | Mother and father | 10                |
|                   |                   | 10                |
| Family structure  | Joint family      | 10                |
|                   | Nuclear family    | 10                |
| Residence         | Urban             | 10                |
|                   | Rural             | 10                |
| Total respondents |                   | 20                |

##### 4.1 Achi Parwarish (Tarbiyat) as the Ethics of Parenting

All ten rural and ten urban Gen Y parents agreed that raising children is largely a matter of respect and manners. Parents stressed that children should learn to respect their parents, obey, not be stubborn, and maintain freindly relation with siblings. One of the rural mother said; the thing above all else for us is our kids respecting their brother and listening to us. They never argue or are stubborn and they have to get along well." Similarly, a rural father explained *"It's just we want our children to conduct themselves properly, respect us, and not fight with one another. Good upbringing, that's what we want for our kids."*

urban parents expressed similar hopes but also focused on social recognition for having good children. One of the urban mother said *'for us the good tarbiyat means that our kids respect everyone be kind and gentle and live in harmonious way so that people around us appreciate them'*. Another urban father added good parents teach children to respect their parents and get along with one another. *"They should be integrated and have a good image of themselves towards others in society."* As for gendered instruction, rural and urban parents had similar expectations. Mothers and fathers stressed that daughters should be taught modesty, shyness and good behavior, and sons to respect their parents. Overall, For Gen Y parents, achi parwarish boiled down to respect for elders, good relations among siblings, appropriate social behavior and gendered moral education. In rural areas, there was a stronger emphasis on obedience and family honor, but urban parents added social praise as another dimension, rather revealing that traditional values continue there, even as they are being shaped by social visibility and modern ideals.



#### **4.2 Sentiment Support and Selective Transmission in Generation Y**

All of the 10 women and nine men from the rural and urban Gen Y samples indicated that they were aware of the strict parenting they endured as children. Their awareness They tend to acknowledge that they have adopted some practices from their parents, but with more awareness of emotional impact and with more discernment. One of the rural mother explained her approach *"When I was young, my parents were very strict, but I didn't want to be as strict with my kids. I tell them things instead of just punishing them."* This is indicative of the employment of the term *koshish* (try) as a conscious mediator between the traditional discipline and the contemporary, emotionally soothing mode of parenting. One of the rural mother remarked *"When we were children, we were beaten up a bit, but now the times have changed. I still have rules, but I try to be gentle and explain instead of yelling."* In the same way, urban fathers articulated a mix of traditional and modern values *"I listen to my child first. Physical punishment is a thing of the past. I tell them why something is right or wrong before I do anything."* Across participants, the observance was that Gen Y parents renegotiate, rather than unproblematically inherit, parenting values. Certain aspects of the rules and disciplinary techniques from their own upbringing are retained, but softened by explanation and discussion. One of the urban mother emphasized *"I do observe some of the teachings of my parents, but I always consider the emotional impact on my child. I don't want to repeat all the strictness I lived through."* In rural homes, holding to the cultural norms was occasionally at odds with these desires. Fathers frequently retained decision-making authority, especially with respect to gender roles and future obligations, while mothers attempted to make discipline less harsh. As one of the rural father remarked: *"Some traditions we have to respect because its society that expects us to respect it, but we try not be as harsh as our parents were."* In general, Gen Y seems to straddle two worlds: they have emotional memories of a highly authoritarian upbringing that drives them to modify their approaches, and yet structural and cultural constraints also shape their parenting. This bargaining process reveals how parenting values are selectively inherited, mixing lessons from the past with modern parenting values.

#### **4.3 Mother in law influence on parenting practices: Feeling pressured and not Speaking up**

Many Gen Y parents, especially urban mothers stated that the mother-in-law was a strong influence on their parenting, and they felt pressured although they did not have any direct confrontation. Though the parents put up a show of compliance, the air was thick with tension and emotional turmoil. One of the urban mother explained *"I used to raise my child alone but my mother-in-law took the full charge at that time in all the works and there mother's atmosphere was such at that time."* The sentence "at that time, the atmosphere in the house was like that" represents an implicit pressure parents were pressured by what they could not say explicitly. The mother's ability to parent was constrained by the family context, which itself discouraged and limited what could be done in terms of parenting without explicit disputation. One of the rural mother said *"my mother in law helped me but she interfere alot in children decision and even in every matter and i had very liitle authority at home"* The phrase "very little authority" hints at the underlying emotional pressure and restrictions on the mother, despite the fact that her primary caregiver. Parents spoke of a sense of negotiation between taking the help of others and following their own instincts and preferences, this was a negotiation that played itself out daily basis. These stories indicate that Gen Y parents are frequently subject to a limited scope of power, especially within the context of multigenerational homes. Parenting is a terrain of negotiation, where individual maternal impulses are moderated by cultural demands and the voices of older members.

#### **4.4 Sex differences between Movement and Liberty**

Ten men and nine women, from both rural and urban backgrounds within Generation Y, stated that daughters were provided with less freedom of movement when compared to sons, who are afforded more independence. The participants uniformly related this distinction to the future duties and gendered division of labour within the family. A rural mother said, *"We don't allow our daughters much freedom but our sons have more because boys have to run the house in the future"* This indicates that freedom is

not equal but contingent on anticipated future roles. Sons are accorded freedom because they are considered future providers, while daughters are confined to protect family honor. A few parents further compared their practices to those of past generations, describing a degree of change. One of the urban father explained, *“i let my daughter to go outside for education but still have to keep an eye on her”*. This is conditional freedom, where daughters are given space for mobility for education but under strict supervision. Parents recognized that times have changed, but they do not give them complete freedom. Mothers were especially clear on the fact that they controlled the daughters’ behavior. One of the participant said, *“It is a mother’s responsibility to teach her daughter modesty and shame.”* This, in turn, shows that mothers are accountable for daughters adhering to cultural norms. They are the ones who watch them, guide and discipline daughters by the norms of society.” Such responses show that while Gen Y parents are somewhat more flexible than past generations, there are still strong gendered differences in mobility and liberty. Sons still have more freedom; daughters’ freedom is regulated and surveilled, traditional gender roles remain firmly entrenched within parenting practices.

#### **4.5 Parents self-expectation as Mother and Father**

Ten women and eight men from rural and urban Generation Y backgrounds agreed that their parenting is informed by reflection and the wish to overcome the deficits of the parenting they received. Participants often discussed their childhood and were more self-critical of themselves as parents in their efforts to improve their parenting. One of the urban mother said, *“my mother was a strict lady but i expect and try to b gentle with my daughter”*. This is a deliberate effort to be less harsh and infuse the content with a gentle emotional tone. Another participant stated, *“when i was a kid my parents didnt give much time so i want to give more time to my children”*. It suggests that parents are attempting to compensate for emotional voids they suffered in their own childhoods, implying that parenting functions as a intergenerational therapeutic process. Rural Generation Y mothers also commented on shifts in discipline. One of the mother said, *“Before, we used to hit children, but now we anticipate that we will decrease this practice and explain things with love.”* It represents a move from harshness to dialogue, as corporal punishment is softened with verbal explanation and emotional empathy. These replies suggest that Generation Y parents are balancing discipline with an emotional sensitivity. They retain moral authority, but they are consciously softening the tone. As a result, parenting is not about the recitation of traditional methods, but rather, a process of emotional regulation and active self-improvement.

#### **4.6 Managing Technology**

Ten women and nine men, from rural or urban Generation Y, shared their experiences of parenting in the digital age, and agreed that parenting is now a matter of managing the increasing intrusion of technology including mobile phones, television and the internet. Participants reported someone or ambivalent feelings towards technology in general and children’s use of technology in particular. One of the urban mother stated that *“technology espically the internet helps children in their study but too much use is not good”*. This indicates that parents recognize the educational benefits of technology, but they also have concerns about overuse. Another participant shared, *“A mobile phone is good for children as they can learn lot of things but its negative impact are also very much.”* This seems to be a technology dualism, a term used for technologies simultaneously being conceived as positive and negative. These responses indicate that Generation Y parents are still evolving in their parental role. They recognize the avenues that technology opens up, especially with regard to education and learning, but they also worry about its deleterious effects on behavior and on how people use their time. So for parents, it’s a matter of balancing access and control, being sure kids are getting the benefits of technology but aren’t exposed to its risks.

#### **4.7 Gendered Limitations on the Education and Career Goals of Daughters**

Ten men and eight women from Generation Y, from rural and urban backgrounds shared that education and career decisions for daughters are constrained by family customs, cultural values, and expectations within the community. Although numerous parents accepted that their daughters possessed aspirations for further study and professional careers, such aspirations were often formed or curtailed by what was

deemed socially acceptable. One of the rural father stated *“my daughter really wanted to join the army but i didn't allow her because its against our family values”* It suggests that parental choices don't just take into account a child's interests or abilities, but also are informed by cultural concepts of what are appropriate gender roles. Traditional areas of work such as the military are seen as masculine, and so daughters in the traditional mold are not allowed to pursue them. Another participant articulated the restricted nature of their educational ambitions *‘my daughter said she wanted to study further but i refused her and told her that its enough’* This is because education for daughters is normally only permitted to a certain level, after which it is deemed unnecessary. To say “this is enough” points to a measure of education against prospects of marriage, domestic roles, and family honor more than it does in relation to individual development. A couple of rural respondents also highlighted the role of community pressure in these matters. Parents worried about what relatives and neighbors would say if their daughters went on to higher education or took jobs considered unconventional. Although somewhat more lenient, city parents recognized these same pressures. These replies suggest that the decisions about parenting daughters are not simply a matter of individual choice but influenced by larger social structures and cultural expectations. Parents tend to be answerable for family honor and cultural norms during this process and this ends up limiting the possibilities for girls. Yet several parents commented that daughters today are increasingly expressing a desire for education and careers, indicating a slow change in societal attitudes. Nevertheless, even as these changes appear on the horizon, traditional expectations still hold sway, constraining the full flowering of one's daughters' dreams and aspirations.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study imply that Generation Y parents in Pakistan signify a site of negotiation between tradition and modernity rather than a break from traditional practices of parenting. Parents are not opposed to traditional values, rather they revise and pick and choose those values that best fit their own experiences, needs and the realities of the society of today. This result is in line with the assertion of Kağıtçıbaşı (2007) who stated that in the families of the collectivist societies, the adoption of modern parenting practices does not mean the replacement of the traditional family values with the modern ones. At the same time, Bornstein (2012) observed that parenting practices change with the tides of social and cultural transformations, yet these changes are “anchored in local culture-specific values”. With reference to Judith Butler's (1990) Gender Performativity Theory, the results reveal parenting is a social practice and gendered performance which parents are continuously engaged in. Routine behaviours like allowing sons more freedom, limiting daughters movement, placing moral responsibility largely on mothers, and having different expectations for boys and girls—aid these norms in being maintained through practices that keep being replicated. These results substantiate Butler's claim that gender is a matter of social performances that are rearticulated rather than being rooted in biology. It also confirms West and Zimmerman's (1987) notion of "doing gender," attesting that gender inequalities are perpetuated in and through everyday social practices. Another key result is the prominence of *ach\_hi parwarish* (good upbringing) as a moralizing discourse employed in Generation Y parenthood. Parents considered good upbringing as bringing up children who are respectful, morally responsible and socially acceptable instead of taking good care of their physical needs only. This is in line with Pakistani studies, which emphasize the significance of moral and religious principles in parenting and child socialisation (Niaz, 2004; Ali et al., 2021). However, Generation Y parents stressed emotional support, open lines of communication, and being understanding along with discipline, signaling a slow movement towards more authoritative parenting, as characterized by Baumrind (1991). It also suggests that Gen Y parents actively think about their childhood experiences as children and make an effort not to be too strict with their own children. A large number of respondents dissociated themselves from the excessive severity and corporal punishment, opting instead for dialogue and emotional accompaniment. This supports the research of Gershoff (2013), who found that harsh discipline is gradually being substituted for supportive parenting due to greater understanding of children's psychological well-being. However, the turnaround is not complete as many traditional norms still influence the decisions parents make. This research reveals that gendered parenting still is a core element of parenting. While parents are more likely to value

education for both their sons and daughters, daughters still face more limitations on their mobility, (in)appropriate behaviour and career options in the future. These results echo research carried out in South Asian contexts where girls receive a conditional autonomy and are under more scrutiny by family and community (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001). Butler's (1990) theory also helps to elucidate how these recurring parenting behaviors serve to regenerate gender inequality from one generation to the next. Family background also constituted a significant determinant of parenting. Especially mothers who living in a joint family system gave the account that they made parenting choices after also negotiating with senior family members such as mothers-in-law. This supports previous findings which suggest that parenting in collectivist family systems is influenced by intergenerational authority and family hierarchy, rather than mere individual preferences of parents (Kağitçibaşı, 2007). Ultimately, technology has played a pivotal role in Generation Y parenting. Parents recognized the educational value of digital media and were concerned about online risks, and were monitoring children's digital activity. This finding is in line with Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2020), who stated that parents today increasingly harmonize children's digital opportunities with concerns for safety and moral development. Technology is not supplanting classic parenting principles, it has become just another domain in which parents debate between protecting, monitoring and allowing children freedom.

### **5.1 Limitations**

Despite its many strengths, this study is not without its limitations. The present study has some limitations that should be taken into consideration. Firstly, the study involved a limited number of participants, twenty in total, which affects the representativeness of the results. While qualitative research does not aim for large numbers of participants, a relatively bigger sample size could enhance the studies on parenting practices by capturing more diversities within Pakistan. Second, this study is constrained geographically to rural and urban settings in the vicinity of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. In fact, it is highly possible that the parenting style prevalent here will contrast dramatically with what is found in other provinces such as Sindh, or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or in other cultural settings, where social norms and traditions are unique. Third, bias may be introduced through use of self-reported data. Participants may portray their parenting practices in a socially acceptable way, particularly when addressing sensitive topics, such as gender discrimination, discipline, or authority in the family. "Experts suggested that some parents may have altered their responses to appear as 'good parents' when answering gender discrimination or discipline.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study argues that a better way to understand Generation Y parenting in Pakistan is through the lenses of negotiation, adaption, and selective transformation. Parents are neither replicating traditional methodologies, nor wholly embracing new age parenting frameworks. Rather, they find themselves in liminal space as they straddle the lines between traditional values and modern sensibilities. The idea of "achi parwarish" is maintained as a core tenet of parenting and positions parenting as a responsibly moral and cultural activity. Yet Gen Y parents reimagine this principle with emotional bonding, dialogue and compassion which show movement for more compassionate style of parenting. Parallel with this, the research reveals that parenting practices in everyday life are (re)producing gendered norms. Restricted and over-regulated are daughters while sons are groomed for the public sphere and economic responsibility. Such patterns are evocative of the continuing power of patriarchal forms, which remain despite social change. The results also underline that parenting is not a private matter but is structured by family, community and cultural norms. Decisions about children's education, mobility, and discipline are influenced not just by parents, but by extended family and societal norms. Notably, parents of Generation Y appear to be more self-aware and reflexive, especially in their attempts to "make up" for what they view as emotional deficits and coldness in their childhoods. That suggests the possibility of incremental change underway, as parenting is viewed as an object of conscious reflection and improvement.

In summary, Generation Y parenting embodies nascent trends toward emotional care and adaptability, but at the same time it functions within the constraints of enduring cultural and gendered scripts. Hence, social transformation in parenting is mediated, not immediate or revolutionary in nature. Although parenting continues to be a significant place for the reproduction of gender norms, it can also provide a basis for intergenerational, slow and meaningful change.

## Acknowledgements

None.

## Conflict of Interest

Authors declared NO conflict of interest.

## Funding Source

The authors received NO funding to conduct this study.

## ORCID iDs

Fareeha Firdous<sup>1</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2402-5207>

Sahira Zaman<sup>2</sup>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7513-3807>

## REFERENCES

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society*, 4(2), 139–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002>
- Ahmed, S. (2016). *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373377>
- Ali, N., Ullah, A., Khan, A. M., Khan, Y., Aziz, T., Ahmad, M., & et al. (2023). Academic performance of children in relation to gender, parenting styles, and socioeconomic status: What attributes are important. *PLOS ONE*, 18(11), e0286823. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0286823>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). *The forms of capital*. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press. ISBN: 9780313230183
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780199202959
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203824979>
- Chandel, M., & Shanwal, V. K. (2024). Gender and parenting: The possibilities in gender-neutral upbringing. *South India Journal of Social Sciences*, 22(2), 117–127. <https://doi.org/10.62656/SIJSS.v22i2.292>
- Chen, I.-J., Wang, Y., Sun, Z., Song, Y., & Yang, M. (2023). The influence of parental child-rearing gender-role attitude on children's social adjustment in single- and two-parent families: The mediating role of intergenerational identity. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10, Article 676. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02184-x>
- Chen, I.-J., Wang, Y., Sun, Z., Song, Y., & Yang, M. (2024). Intergenerational transmission of parental child-rearing gender-role attitudes and its influence on gender roles in single-parent families. *BMC Psychology*, 12, Article 96. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-01594-z>
- Chodorow, N. (1978). *The reproduction of mothering*. University of California Press. ISBN: 9780520912502

- Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). University of California Press. ISBN: 9780520246980
- Ghanbarian, A., & Yeilaghi, N. (2024). Online discourse and gender roles in parenting: Evidence from Mothering.com forums. *Child & Youth Services*, Early View, Article 10664807241292059. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807241292059>
- Jeffery, C. P. (2020). Parenting in the digital age: Between socio-biological and socio-technological development. *New Media & Society*, 23(5), 1266–1283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820908606>
- Jejeebhoy, S. J., & Sathar, Z. A. (2001). Women's autonomy in India and Pakistan: The influence of religion and region. *Population and Development Review*, 27(4), 687–712. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2001.00687.x>
- Jeong, J., Siyal, S., Fink, G., McCoy, D. C., & Yousafzai, A. K. (2018). His mind will work better with both of us: a qualitative study on fathers' roles and coparenting of young children in rural Pakistan. *BMC Public Health*, 18, Article 1274. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-6143-9>
- Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), 435–464. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00125>
- Kagitcibasi, C. (2007). *Family, Self, and Human Development across Cultures*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. ISBN: 9780805854858
- Leerkes, E. M., Su, J., Calkins, S. D., O'Brien, M., & Lange, G. (2015). Pathways by which mothers' physiological arousal and regulation while caregiving predict sensitivity to infant distress. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 29(1), 29–39. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000050>
- Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. (2007). Gradations in digital inclusion: Children, young people and the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, 9(4), 671–696. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444807080335>
- Mason, K. O. (1986). The status of women: Conceptual and methodological issues in demographic studies. *Population and Development Review*, 12(3), 495–508. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1972333>
- Morawska, A. (2020). The effects of gendered parenting on child development outcomes: A systematic review. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 23(4), 553–576. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-020-00321-5>
- Navarro, J. L., & Jensen, M. (2026). Styles of digital parental mediation: A multi-group person-centered approach. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 35, 481–501. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-025-03229-2>
- Noor, M., Saba, I., & Nasir, N. (2025). Comparative study of gender differences in parenting style, emotional self-efficacy, and life satisfaction. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 9(4), 88–101. [https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2025\(9-IV\)08](https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2025(9-IV)08)
- Peng, Y. (2022). Gendered division of digital labor in parenting: A qualitative study in urban China. *Sex Roles*, 86(5–6), 283–304. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-021-01267-w>
- Ridgeway, C. L. (2011). *Framed by gender: How gender inequality persists in the modern world*. Oxford University Press.
- Risman, B. J. (2004). Gender as a social structure: Theory wrestling with activism. *Gender & Society*, 18(4), 429–450. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204265349>
- Scott, J. W. (1986). Gender: A useful category of historical analysis. *American Historical Review*, 91(5), 1053–1075. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1864376>

- Sindhura, B. K. S., & Kumar, G. (2025). Parenting and gender socialization in children: A scoping review. *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, 23(4), 199–217. <https://doi.org/10.9734/arjass/2025/v23i4672>
- Smith, J. A. (2008). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis*. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 53–80). <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470776278.ch4>
- Steinberg, H., Mollborn, S., & Pace, J. (2023). “Mature enough to handle it?” Gendered parental interventions and adolescents’ reactions to technology use during the pandemic. *Journal of Family Issues*, 45(1), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X221150979>
- Sultana, A. (2012). Patriarchy and women’s subordination. <https://doi.org/10.3329/afj.v4i0.12929>
- Wang, I. Y., & Cheung, R. Y. M. (2023). Parents’ gender role attitudes and child adjustment: The mediating role of parental involvement. *Sex Roles*, 89, 425–441. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-023-01386-6>
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 1(2), 125–151.
- Zhang, S., Wang, P., Wang, W., Su, H., & Zhang, X. (2026). The relationship between parenting styles and children’s prosocial behavior: The mediating role of children’s emotional intelligence. *Behavioral Sciences*, 16(1), 155. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs16010155>