

## The Role of Permissive Parenting and Peer Relationships in Substance Use Tendency Among Men: The Mediating Role of Social Support

<sup>۱</sup> Maryam Eskandari Hassari ، Farnaz Abaharzanjani <sup>۲</sup>

Master of Psychology, Iqbal Lahori Institute of Higher Education <sup>۱</sup>

Assistant Professor, Psychology Department, Iqbal Lahori Higher Education Institute (Corresponding Author) <sup>۲</sup>

### Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the role of permissive parenting and peer relationships in the tendency toward substance use among men, considering the mediating role of social support. Methods: This applied and descriptive-correlational study was conducted on a statistical population of men referred to two addiction treatment clinics in Mashhad, Iran. Using convenience sampling, ۱۲۰ men were selected as the sample. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires on permissive parenting, peer relationships, social support, and substance use tendency. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling (SEM) with SPSS and Smart PLS software. Results: The results showed a significant relationship between permissive parenting and substance use tendency ( $\beta = ۰,۲۹۰$ ,  $p < ۰,۰۵$ ). Social support had a significant negative relationship with substance use tendency ( $\beta = -۰,۲۸۵$ ,  $p < ۰,۰۵$ ). The mediating role of social support in the relationship between permissive parenting and substance use tendency was confirmed ( $\beta = ۰,۰۸۲$ , Sobel test = ۲,۴۵۸). However, no significant direct relationship was found between peer relationships and substance use tendency. The overall model fit indices indicated a good fit (GOF = ۰,۳۹۱). Conclusion: Permissive parenting style is a critical risk factor for substance use tendency among men. Social support acts as a protective mediator, mitigating this risk. Interventions aimed at strengthening family management skills and enhancing social support networks are essential for prevention programs.

**Keywords:** Permissive Parenting, Peer Relationships, Substance Use Tendency, Social Support, Mediating Role, Men.

## Introduction

Substance use disorder remains one of the most complex social, psychological, and public health challenges globally and in Iran, with significant implications for individual health, family dynamics, and societal well-being (Valentino et al., ۲۰۲۴; Noroozi et al., ۲۰۲۴). Men are particularly vulnerable to substance use due to a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors, including societal pressures, economic stressors, and gender norms that often discourage emotional expression and help-seeking (Jackson, ۲۰۲۳; Jones et al., ۲۰۲۳).

Family environment, particularly parenting style, is a foundational factor in shaping behavior and vulnerability to high-risk behaviors. Baumrind's (۱۹۹۱) parenting typology identifies permissive parenting—characterized by low demands, high responsiveness, and a lack of clear boundaries—as a significant predictor of poor self-regulation, impulsivity, and susceptibility to negative peer influence (Bamrind, ۲۰۲۱; Sherafi et al., ۲۰۲۱). Adolescents raised in such environments often lack the necessary skills to resist peer pressure, making them more likely to engage in substance use (Smetana, ۲۰۲۰).

Peer relationships become increasingly influential during adolescence and young adulthood. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, ۱۹۷۷) posits that individuals learn behaviors through observation and imitation. Peer groups can normalize substance use, creating powerful social pressure to conform (Watts et al., ۲۰۲۴; Graham, ۲۰۲۲).

However, the quality of these relationships and the individual's broader social context are crucial. Social support, encompassing emotional, informational, and instrumental aid from family, friends, and community, is a well-established protective factor. It buffers against stress, enhances resilience, and provides alternative sources of identity and belonging, reducing the need to seek acceptance through maladaptive behaviors like substance use (Cohen, ۱۹۸۵; Rogers et al., ۲۰۲۳). The Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, ۱۹۷۹) further emphasizes that support from multiple system levels (micro, meso, exo) can compensate for deficits in any single area, such as a dysfunctional family.

While numerous studies have examined parenting styles and peer influence separately, few have integrated them within a framework that includes social support as a mediator, particularly focusing on a male clinical population in Iran. This study addresses this gap by proposing and testing a model where social support mediates the relationship between permissive parenting, peer relationships, and substance use tendency among men.

## Hypotheses

۱. Permissive parenting has a significant direct relationship with substance use tendency.
۲. Peer relationships have a significant direct relationship with substance use tendency.
۳. Social support has a significant direct relationship with substance use tendency.
۴. Social support mediates the relationship between permissive parenting and substance use tendency.
۵. Social support mediates the relationship between peer relationships and substance use tendency.

## Materials and Methods

**Study Design and Participants:** This applied, descriptive-correlational study utilized structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population consisted of all men ( $N=310$ ) referred to two addiction treatment clinics in Mashhad (Golshahr and Maslah) in the summer of ۲۰۲۴. A convenience sample of ۱۲۰ men was selected based on guidelines for SEM sample size (۱۰-۲۰ times the number of observed variables). **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:** Inclusion criteria were being male, attending the selected clinics, being in various stages of treatment/recovery, and willingness to participate. Exclusion criteria included unwillingness to participate or providing incomplete questionnaires.

## Instruments

۱. Permissive Parenting Scale: From the Parenting Style Inventory-II (PSI-II) by Darling & Toyokawa (۱۹۹۷). ۱۰ items rated on a ۵-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha in this study was ۰,۷۵۱.
۲. Peer Relationships Questionnaire: By Hudson (۱۹۹۲). ۲۰ items. Cronbach's alpha was ۰,۹۶۷.
۳. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS): By Zimet et al. (۱۹۸۸). ۱۲ items rated on a ۷-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha was ۰,۸۸۴.
۴. Substance Use Tendency Questionnaire: By Mosavi et al. (۱۹۹۹). ۱۶ items rated on a ۵-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha was ۰,۷۰۶. The overall reliability of the combined questionnaire was excellent ( $\alpha = ۰,۹۳۰$ ). Content and face validity were confirmed by experts and supervisors.

## Procedure

After obtaining necessary permissions, participants were selected conveniently from the clinics. They were informed about the study's purpose, confidentiality was ensured, and informed consent was obtained. Questionnaires were administered in person. Data collection took approximately two weeks. **Data Analysis:** Data were analyzed using SPSS-۲۲ for descriptive statistics and Smart PLS (Partial Least Squares) for structural equation modeling (SEM). The analysis included assessing measurement model (convergent and discriminant validity, composite reliability) and structural model (path coefficients, t-values,  $R^2$ , GOF). The Sobel test was used to confirm the significance of mediation effects.

## Descriptive Statistics

The mean age of participants was ۳۸,۰۷ years ( $SD=۸,۲۱$ ). Most participants were between ۳۱-۴۰ years old (۴۸,۳%). The means and standard deviations for the main variables were: Peer Relationships ( $۲,۷۰ \pm ۱,۲۷$ ), Permissive Parenting ( $۲,۶۹ \pm ۰,۵۵$ ), Social Support ( $۲,۱۸ \pm ۰,۷۱$ ), and Substance Use Tendency ( $۳,۲۶ \pm ۰,۸۲$ ). Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests indicated non-normal data distribution ( $p < ۰,۰۵$ ), justifying the use of PLS-SEM. The model demonstrated good reliability and validity. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs were above ۰,۵, and Composite Reliability (CR) values were above ۰,۷, confirming convergent validity. Discriminant validity was established as the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its correlations with other constructs. **Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing:** The model explained ۱۹,۹% of the variance in Substance Use Tendency ( $R^2 = ۰,۱۹۹$ ) and ۱۶,۴% in Social Support ( $R^2 = ۰,۱۶۴$ ). The Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) index was ۰,۳۹۱, indicating strong model fit.

· H<sup>۱</sup>: Supported. A significant positive direct path was found from Permissive Parenting to Substance Use Tendency ( $\beta = ۰,۲۹۰$ ,  $t = ۲,۵۰۶$ ,  $p = ۰,۰۱۲$ ). ·

H<sup>۲</sup>: Not Supported. The direct path from Peer Relationships to Substance Use Tendency was not significant ( $\beta = ۰,۰۴۲$ ,  $t = ۰,۳۹۱$ ,  $p = ۰,۶۹۲$ ). ·

H<sup>۳</sup>: Supported. A significant negative direct path was found from Social Support to Substance Use Tendency ( $\beta = -۰,۲۸۵$ ,  $t = ۲,۸۹۷$ ,  $p = ۰,۰۰۳$ ). ·

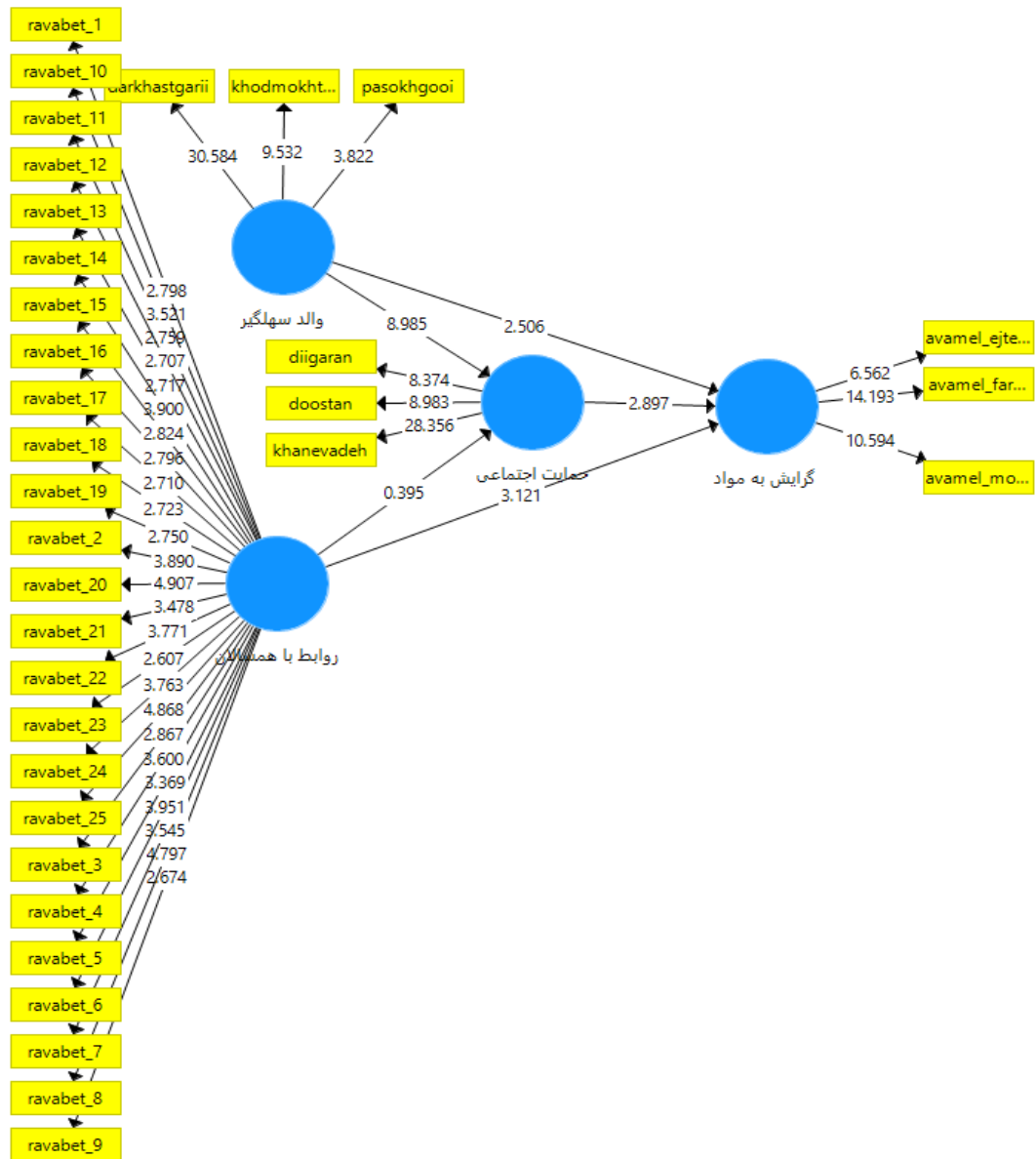
H<sup>۴</sup>: Supported. Social Support significantly mediated the relationship between Permissive Parenting and Substance Use Tendency ( $\beta_{\text{indirect}} = ۰,۰۸۲$ , Sobel z-value =  $۲,۴۵۸$ ). ·

H<sup>۵</sup>: Not Supported. The mediating role of Social Support between Peer Relationships and Substance Use Tendency was not significant, as the direct effect of peer relationships was non-significant.

### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
gerayesh_mavad	۱۲۰	۱,۰۰	۴,۸۹	۳,۲۵۷۹	.۸۱۶۸۱
ravabet	۱۲۰	۱,۱۹	۷,۰۰	۲,۷۰۳۲	۱,۲۶۵۹۱
sabk	۱۲۰	۱,۰۷	۵,۰۰	۲,۶۸۸۹	.۵۴۸۲۱
hemayat	۱۲۰	۱,۰۰	۴,۰۰	۲,۱۸۴۰	.۷۰۹۹۰
Valid N (listwise)	۱۲۰				

Measurement Model Assessment: After gathering data using valid and reliable tools, the researcher proceeds to analyze them in order to examine the research hypotheses and reject or confirm them based on the results. In this study, two statistical levels were used for data analysis. At the first level, descriptive statistics, including the preparation and organization of tables, drawing graphs, and presenting measures of central tendency and data dispersion, were employed. At the second level, analytical and inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation tests, calculation of correlation coefficients, regression, and other related methods, were used to examine the relationships between variables. Furthermore, to investigate the mediating role of social support in the relationship between the predictor variables—including permissive parenting style and peer relationships—and the dependent variable, namely the tendency to use drugs, the software packages SPSS, AMOS, and Smart PLS were used to ensure a comprehensive and accurate data analysis.



The fitted conceptual model in the case of parameter significance

## Discussion

This study investigated a model linking permissive parenting, peer relationships, social support, and substance use tendency among men undergoing addiction treatment. The key finding is the confirmation of permissive parenting as a significant direct predictor of substance use tendency. This aligns with Baumrind's theory and previous research (Smith et al., ۲۰۲۰; Ahmadi Daremian et al., ۲۰۲۲), suggesting that a lack of parental monitoring, clear

rules, and consistent discipline undermines the development of self-control and increases vulnerability to high-risk behaviors. Contrary to expectations and some previous literature (Watts et al., ۲۰۲۴), peer relationships did not show a significant direct effect on substance use tendency in this specific sample. This unexpected result could be attributed to the nature of the sample (men already in treatment, possibly reflecting on deeper issues beyond current peer influence) or the possibility that the effect of peers is fully mediated by other factors like social support or is more salient in adolescence than in the broader age range of this study.

Within the framework of developmental and social psychology theories, the permissive parenting style is considered a significant factor contributing to risky behaviors such as substance abuse. Characterized by weak supervision, a lack of clear rules, and excessive freedom, this style fosters the development of adolescents with low self-control, emotionally-driven decision-making, and poor coping skills (Baumrind, ۱۹۹۱). Based on Social Learning Theory (Bandura, ۱۹۷۷), in the absence of an effective supervisory model, adolescents tend to gravitate more towards peers to fulfill needs such as belonging and identity formation, thereby increasing their exposure to peer pressure for risky behaviors like substance use. Within this context, social support plays a protective mediating role and can mitigate the negative effects of dysfunctional parenting and unhealthy peer relationships. By bolstering self-esteem, providing coping resources, and reducing stress, this support enhances an adolescent's resistance to social pressures. The Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, ۱۹۷۹) also emphasizes that dysfunctional operations within one influential system (e.g., family) can be compensated for by effective social support at other levels, thereby preventing behavioral deviations.

Environmental and social theories of risk-taking behavior, such as Jessor's Problem Behavior Theory, posit that parental approaches within the family core play a crucial role in determining adolescent involvement in risky behaviors. Adolescents who receive sufficient support from their parents and have close relationships with them show less tendency to abuse substances. These theories also address the role of peers. Adolescence is a period of individuation from the family and greater affiliation with peer groups. It appears that peer groups play a significant role in adolescents' tendency to use drugs (Rahmani et al., ۲۰۱۶). Social support was expected to act as a mediating variable, moderating the negative effects of these factors by enhancing resilience. The hypothesis of this study was that a permissive parent and unhealthy peer relationships increase the tendency towards substance use in men by reducing social support. The data analysis indicated a significant relationship between the role of the permissive parent and peer relationships in the tendency towards substance use in men, considering the mediating role of social support.

The findings of the present study are consistent with those of Rashidian et al. (۲۰۲۲), who demonstrated a significant positive correlation between positive outcome expectations and tendency to use substances, and a significant negative correlation between resistance to peer influence, parental monitoring, parental control, and parental demands with the tendency to use substances. Garcia and Martinez (۲۰۱۷), in a study, concluded that association with substance-using peers can increase the risk of use, but social support can mitigate this effect. Furthermore, the findings of this research are somewhat aligned with those of Khodadadi Sangdeh et al. (۲۰۱۳), who found significant differences between boys and girls in terms of substance use risk, parental monitoring, and association with deviant peers. Therefore, it can be concluded that the permissive parenting style, due to its weaknesses in supervision, lack of clear boundaries, and granting of excessive freedom, can create a conducive environment for

the development of risky behaviors like substance abuse. Under such conditions, males, particularly adolescents and young adults, become increasingly dependent on peer group interactions to experience a sense of belonging, acceptance, and identity formation. Peer relationships, if associated with unhealthy patterns, can be an accelerating factor in the formation of risky behaviors, including substance use.

Ghotbzadeh and Moulaei Rad (۲۰۲۰) concluded that the permissive parenting style influences adolescents' susceptibility to addiction, which aligns with the findings of the present research. Therefore, it can be concluded that the permissive parenting style is one of the factors increasing the likelihood of a tendency toward substance use in men, especially during adolescence and young adulthood, which is accompanied by identity crisis and the need for independence. The absence of clear parental monitoring and behavioral frameworks can pave the way for high-risk decisions. One such decision is the inclination to experiment with drug use as a means of escaping psychological pressures, gaining peer attention, or proving independence. This finding highlights the necessity of paying attention to proper parenting methods, educating parents about effective control and monitoring, and establishing healthy emotional relationships with their children.

The significant negative relationship between social support and substance use tendency underscores its role as a crucial protective factor. This supports the buffering hypothesis of social support (Cohen & Wills, ۱۹۸۵) and is consistent with findings by Karimi Majin et al. (۲۰۲۲) and Rogers et al. (۲۰۲۳). Feeling supported by family, friends, and significant others provides emotional resources, reduces stress, and decreases the reliance on substances as a coping mechanism. Most importantly, the study found that social support mediates the relationship between permissive parenting and substance use tendency. This means that the detrimental effect of a permissive upbringing on substance use is partly explained by the lower levels of social support experienced by individuals from such backgrounds. This highlights a potential mechanism of action: permissive parenting may lead to poorer social skills and weaker social networks, which in turn increases the risk of substance use. Strengthening social support can thus mitigate the risks imposed by ineffective parenting.

Based on developmental and social psychology theories, peer relationships during adolescence and young adulthood are of particular importance due to the increased need for belonging, social acceptance, and the identity formation process. During this period, individuals gradually distance themselves from the family and rely more than ever on the approval, support, and modeling of their peer group. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, ۱۹۷۷) emphasizes that through observing and imitating peer behaviors—especially in environments where substance use is considered acceptable or normal—adolescents might resort to substance use without having an intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, to avoid social rejection or gain acceptance within the group, adolescents may engage in behaviors like substance use purely due to peer conformity. These interactions can intensify in the absence of healthy and adequate social support, particularly from family, teachers, or educational institutions, leading individuals toward high-risk choices. Conversely, the presence of effective social support can play a moderating role, strengthening coping skills, self-confidence, and self-control, thereby making the individual more resilient to peer pressure. Therefore, the quality of peer relationships and the level of social support received are two factors that, interacting with each other, can play a decisive role in either preventing or exacerbating the tendency to use substances (Dishion, ۲۰۱۱). The hypothesis of this study was that unhealthy peer relationships directly increase the tendency towards substance use in men. The results of the

data analysis indicated that the significance level is greater than  $0.05$ , and the t-statistic value is less than  $1.96$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that the research hypothesis is rejected, and there is no significant relationship between peer relationships and the tendency to use drugs in men.

The results of the present study are not aligned with those of Watts et al. (۲۰۲۴), who in their research showed that adolescents adjust their substance use behavior to match the perceived or actual use of their peers. Adolescent substance use is influenced by peer influence processes on various substance use behaviors, both directly and indirectly through perceived norms. Also, Gholami and Gerami (۲۰۲۴), in a study, found that the most effective coping strategy was the use of time perspective in the dimensions of career, education, health, and fear of drug addiction. Almassi and Rezaei (۲۰۲۴), in a study, concluded that familial, psychological, and peer factors play a very important role in the tendency towards drugs, which aligns with the results of this research.

The results of Tabatabaei Shoorijeh's study (۲۰۲۳) are also consistent with the findings of this research. In a study, they found that peer groups influence the entrapment of youth and adolescents in addiction. Therefore, it can be concluded that peer relationships are one of the most influential social factors in shaping an individual's behaviors and attitudes during adolescence and young adulthood. Males in this stage of life, due to psychological characteristics such as the need for social acceptance, a sense of striving for independence, and the search for identity, are significantly influenced by their peer group. During adolescence and young adulthood, based on Erikson's (۱۹۶۸) psychosocial theory, the individual is in the stage of "Identity vs. Role Confusion," where the need for belonging, approval, and social acceptance becomes critically important. Under these circumstances, if sufficient supportive resources from the family or community are unavailable, the adolescent might turn to behaviors such as substance use to gain acceptance within a peer group. Bandura (۱۹۷۷), in his Social Learning Theory, explains that individuals learn behaviors like substance use through observing and modeling the behavior of others, particularly their peers. Meanwhile, the social support model, with its mediating role as proposed by Cohen and Wills (۱۹۸۵), emphasizes that social support can mitigate the negative effects of stressors or high-risk environments and enhance an individual's adaptive functioning. Effective social support, by increasing feelings of security, self-worth, and connection, reduces the adolescent's need to seek approval through maladaptive behaviors. Furthermore, in Bronfenbrenner's (۱۹۷۹) Ecological Systems Theory, the interaction between the individual and multi-layered systems (family, school, peer group, social institutions) plays a decisive role in their behavioral and social development. This theory stresses that the quality of relationships within these layers can have a direct or indirect impact on the emergence or prevention of high-risk behaviors.

If social support within key layers, such as family and school, is effective and consistent, the likelihood of engaging in harmful behaviors decreases significantly. Consequently, social support acts not just as a moderating variable, but as a key protective factor that can guide adolescents and young adults towards healthier paths of identity formation, social affirmation, and psychological adaptation, thereby preventing outcomes like substance use. Therefore, investigating the role of social support in the tendency towards substance use among men, especially during the sensitive period of adolescence and young adulthood, holds high theoretical and practical importance. Understanding how family support, healthy friendships, and social institutions can prevent the tendency to use substances aids in developing prevention programs and targeted interventions. Thus, strengthening and expanding social

support networks should be considered a key strategy in mental health and addiction prevention policies (Cohen & Wills, ۱۹۸۵). The hypothesis of this research was that social support, by strengthening resilience and coping skills, reduces the tendency towards substance use in men, while its absence increases this tendency.

Within the framework of developmental and social psychology theories, the permissive parenting style is recognized as a child-rearing pattern characterized by a lack of assertiveness, insufficient supervision, absence of clear behavioral boundaries, and excessive freedom granted to children (Baumrind, ۱۹۶۷). Numerous studies have shown that such a parenting style can be associated with negative outcomes in the emotional and behavioral development of adolescents, including weaknesses in self-regulation, low capacity for independent decision-making, and a greater tendency toward high-risk behaviors such as substance abuse (Darling & Steinberg, ۱۹۹۷). Amidst this, variables with protective roles, such as social support, hold a key place in theories of social psychology, mental health, and resilience. Social support refers to an individual's perception of the presence of emotional, informational, and instrumental supportive resources from others (Cohen & Wills, ۱۹۹۷).

This support can moderate the negative effects of risk factors, including ineffective parenting styles, and play a mediating role in the process of forming maladaptive behaviors. According to resilience theory, although some adolescents grow up in environments with risky parenting styles or inadequate family structures, the presence of adequate social support from family, friends, or social institutions can lead to more desirable psychosocial adaptation and reduce the inclination toward high-risk behaviors. Therefore, investigating the relationship between the permissive parenting style and the tendency to use substances, while considering the mediating role of social support, can contribute to a more precise explanation of the psychological and social processes affecting high-risk behaviors in young men and play an effective role in designing more effective preventive interventions based on strengthening support resources (Cohen, ۱۹۹۰).

The hypothesis of this research was that the permissive parenting style increases the tendency towards substance use in men by reducing social support. The results of the data analysis indicated a significant relationship between the permissive parent and the tendency to use substances in men, considering the mediating role of social support. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Velovi and Talabzadeh Shoushtari (۲۰۲۳), who in a study showed that the tendency to use substances has a significant negative correlation with resilience and the authoritative parenting style. The relationship between the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles with the tendency to use substances is positive, but this relationship is not statistically significant. Rashidi et al. (۲۰۲۳) found that family emotional atmosphere, perception of parenting style, family communication patterns, and perception of social support (family) are good predictors for predicting the abuse of synthetic psychoactive substances among university students. Liu et al. (۲۰۲۲) in a study found that poor parenting styles are a risk factor for substance abuse among adolescents. Furthermore, social support plays a mediating role between parenting styles and the identification of substance abuse, which is completely aligned with the findings of the present study from this perspective. In other words, even if an individual has grown up in a family with a permissive parenting style, but receives effective social support in other environments (such as school, university, healthy peer groups, or social settings), the likelihood of a tendency to use substances decreases.

Based on theories of developmental psychology, social psychology, and the sociology of deviance, peer relationships during adolescence and young adulthood play a central role in

processes of socialization, identity formation, and the determination of individual behavior. During this critical period, adolescents seek social acceptance, a sense of belonging, and to solidify their position within the peer group, needs which increase their sensitivity to social approval or rejection (Sullivan, ۱۹۵۳; Erikson, ۱۹۶۸). Bandura's Social Learning Theory (۱۹۷۷) emphasizes that adolescents learn and imitate behaviors observed in their peers, especially when these behaviors are associated with social rewards, such as acceptance or enhanced social status. Furthermore, Social Pressure Theory posits that adolescents, contrary to their own values and beliefs, might adopt behaviors like substance use under group pressure to conform to collective norms and avoid social rejection. Conversely, social support, as a mediating and protective variable, can reduce the destructive effects of unhealthy peer relationships. According to the Social Support Model in health psychology (Cohen & Wills, ۱۹۸۵), an individual's perception of available emotional, informational, and practical support resources from family, friends, and educational or religious institutions enhances psychological resilience, self-esteem, and coping skills. This social support strengthens the adolescent's resistance to negative peer pressure and enables them to make independent and healthy decisions. Thus, social support acts as a psycho-social shield that protects the adolescent or young adult from the harmful consequences of destructive peer relationships (Seidman, ۱۹۹۵). In summary, the theoretical framework of this perspective is based on the premise that unhealthy peer relationships may predispose individuals to substance use, but this relationship is weakened or even negated in the presence of strong social support. The hypothesis of this research was that unhealthy peer relationships increase the tendency towards substance use in men by reducing social support.

The results of the data analysis showed that the significance level for the variable is greater than ۰,۰۵, and the t-statistic value is less than ۱,۹۶. Therefore, it can be concluded that the research hypothesis is rejected, and there is no significant relationship between peer relationships—considering the mediating role of social support—and the tendency to use drugs in men. The results of this study are not consistent with those of Rogers et al. (۲۰۲۳), who in their research found that young adults with childhood trauma histories reported more problematic alcohol and drug use during adolescence compared to those without such histories. Their findings indicated that social support in high school may mitigate the effects of childhood trauma on problematic substance use over time. Henneberger et al. (۲۰۲۱), in a study, concluded that most studies reported peer socialization effects on adolescent alcohol use. However, relatively few studies reported socialization effects on tobacco use. Sheikholeslami and Javadi Zare (۲۰۱۹), in a study, found a significant negative correlation between support resources and their components (family support, friend support, and support from others) and students' tendency to use substances. Among the components of support resources, family support and friend support were able to predict students' tendency to use substances, which from this perspective aligns with the findings of the aforementioned study. Therefore, it can be concluded that men, especially during adolescence and young adulthood, are at a stage of psychosocial development where the need for acceptance, belonging, and social approval from their peer group intensifies. Under such conditions, the quality of these relationships significantly impacts their lifestyle and behavioral choices.

Therefore, it can be concluded that permissive parents usually do not set clear boundaries for their children, perform poorly in supervising and guiding their behaviors, and are generally reluctant to enforce rules and behavioral consequences. This parenting style causes children, especially boys, to lack self-control skills, independent decision-making, and resistance to peer pressure when facing high-risk situations. These conditions can expose them to substance

use. The variable of social support can play a determining role in this context. Having social support can play a protective role and reduce the negative effects of the permissive parenting style. The findings from the data analysis showed that the relationship between social support and the tendency to use substances has an indirect effect at a ۹۵% confidence level, with the intensity of this effect being ۰٫۲۸۵. This means that as social support increases, the variable of tendency to use substances decreases, and as it decreases, the tendency increases. Therefore, it can be concluded that the research hypothesis is confirmed, and there is an inverse relationship between social support and the tendency to use substances in men. The results of this research are consistent with the findings of Karimi Majin et al. (۲۰۲۳), who in a study found a significant negative relationship between social support and the tendency to use substances. Also, Ahmadi et al. (۲۰۲۴), in a study, concluded that there was a significant difference between the group with unsuccessful quitting experience and the group with successful experience in the total score of social support and its components (friends, family, and significant others). Aqdaki and Sedghi Orfati (۲۰۲۳), in a study, found that perceived social support and anger together could significantly predict ۴۸% of the variance in adolescents' tendency towards addiction, which aligns with the results of this research. Additionally, a lack of communication skills, low self-confidence, and weakness in independent decision-making can increase an individual's dependence on the peer group and, consequently, reinforce the likelihood of following unhealthy behavioral patterns. This risk is greater in males who have weak family relationships or insufficient social support, as the peer group replaces the supportive role of the family and community. The importance of this issue lies in the fact that substance use often occurs not due to a biological or psychological need, but rather because of social pressure and the desire to belong to a group.

### Limitations and Future Research

This study has limitations. The cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences. Convenience sampling from two clinics limits the generalizability of findings. Self-report measures are susceptible to biases. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, more diverse and larger samples, and include qualitative interviews to explore the nuanced nature of peer influence in this population. Examining other potential mediators, such as self-esteem or coping styles, would also be valuable.

### Conclusion and Implications

Despite limitations, this study offers significant theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it integrates developmental and social support theories within the context of substance use. Practically, the findings emphasize the necessity of:

۱. Parenting Education: Implementing community-based programs to educate parents about the long-term risks of permissive parenting and promote authoritative parenting styles characterized by warmth and appropriate control.
۲. Strengthening Support Systems: Clinical interventions for individuals at risk of or recovering from substance use should actively focus on building and enhancing their social support networks through family therapy, support groups, and community engagement programs.
۳. Holistic Prevention Strategies: Public health policies should move beyond individual-focused prevention and adopt an ecological approach that strengthens supportive structures within families, schools, and communities to build resilience against substance use.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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