

Introduction

- Prosocial behavior has gained increasing global recognition in recent decades (Pfattheicher et al., 2022), likely due to its benefits to both others and the individual engaging in it.
- Engaging in prosocial behavior during emerging adulthood, a developmental stage of identity formation and social challenges, predict positive adjustment over the next three decades (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013).
- **Children learn about emotions in the family environment:** Caregiver's emotional socialization involves how they communicate and express emotions to their children, teach them to understand and manage their own emotions (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1994), and is linked with higher levels of prosocial behavior (Eisenberg et al., 1996).
- The mechanisms underlying how perceived caregiver's emotional socialization influences prosocial behavior in emerging adults remain to be fully elucidated.
- **Potential mechanism 1 "Social learning theory":** Parents who are warm and supportive provide role models for empathy by taking into account their child's perspective and displaying concern for their feelings (Barnett, 1987).
- **Potential mechanism 2 "Attachment theory":** Caregiver's supportive responses to their children's distress build social trust (Gross et al., 2017), and the internal working model suggests that interpersonal trust forms a prototype for future relationships (Rotenberg, 2010).
- Empathy and interpersonal trust are recognized as antecedents of prosocial behavior and thus expected to mediate the link between caregivers' emotional socialization and young adults' later prosocial behavior.
- **Study Aims**
 - **Aim 1:** To examine if caregiver's emotional socialization predicts prosocial behavior in emerging adults
 - **Aim 2:** To investigate how empathy and interpersonal trust mediate the longitudinal link between a caregiver's emotional socialization during childhood and prosocial behavior in emerging adults

Method

Participants: 435 Korean college students (50.7% female, aged 20-29 years old; $M_{age} = 23.78$)

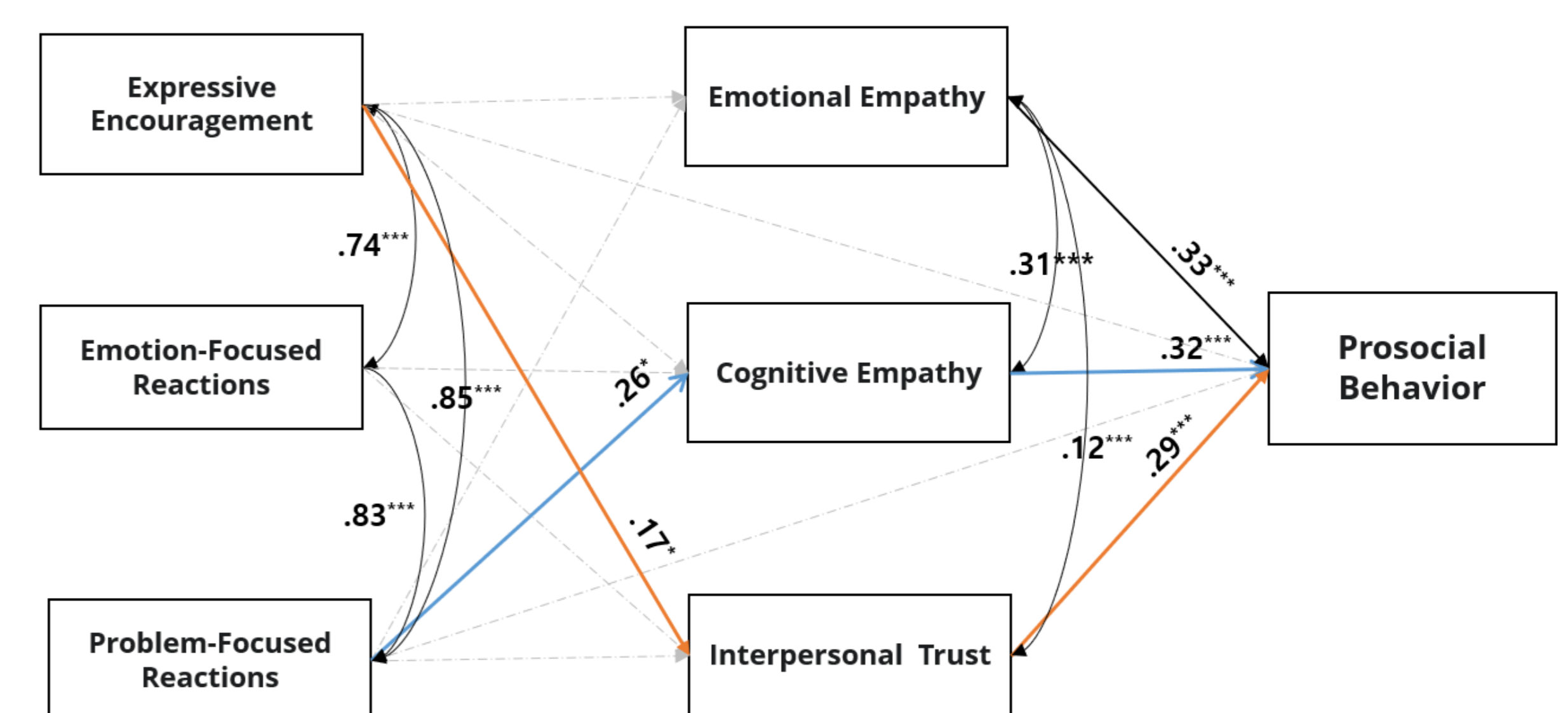
Measures

- **Prosocial Behavior** : Prosocialness Scale for Adults (Caprara et al., 2005); 12 items, $\alpha = .91$
- **Caregiver's Emotion Socialization** : A retrospective version of Coping with Children's Negative Emotion Scales (CCNES; Fabes et al., 1990); Expressive Encouragement ($\alpha = .904$, 8 items), Emotion Focused Reactions ($\alpha = .885$, 8 items), Problem Focused Reaction ($\alpha = .828$, 8 items)
- **Empathy** : Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1980); Emotional empathy (6 items, $\alpha = .829$), Cognitive empathy (5 items, $\alpha = .637$)
- **Interpersonal trust** : Questions from Competence and Context longitudinal study (Buchman et al., 2001); 2 items, $\alpha = .64$

Results

- SPSS 26 and Mplus 8.2 were used and child gender and SES were included as control variables
- None of the three types of supportive reactions directly predicted PB, but only indirectly through trust and cognitive empathy:
 - 1) Expression Encouragement → Interpersonal Trust → Prosocial behavior ($\beta = 0.05$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [.003, 0.08]).
 - 2) Problem Focused → Cognitive Empathy → Prosocial behavior ($\beta = 0.08$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [0.013, 0.146]).
 - 3) Emotional empathy predicted prosocial behavior independent from the effects of caregivers' supportive reactions in childhood

Figure 1. A path model examining the influences of childhood emotion socialization on adulthood prosocial behavior through empathy and interpersonal trust ($N = 435$).



Note. Standardized coefficients are presented controlling for gender (male = 1, female = 2) and SES (1 = low through 5 = high) (not depicted for clarity). Dashed lines indicate nonsignificant paths. Model fit index: $\chi^2(10) = 36.14$, $p < .001$; CFI = 0.983; TLI = 0.939; RMSEA = .078 (confidence interval: .051 – .106); SRMR = .061. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

- This study identifies pathways through which parents' supportive reactions to child negative emotions contribute to later prosocial behavior in adulthood via trust and cognitive empathy.
- These findings contribute to our understanding of long-term effect of parents' emotion socialization on children's social functioning and offer insights for family-centered intervention strategies aimed at promoting prosocial behavior through adulthood.
- Interventions targeting parents' responses to children's negative emotions may cultivate a caring and supportive family environment, which can potentially promote their next generation to develop into more prosocial members of a society.

References

- Barnett, M. A. (1987). Empathy and related responses in children. *Empathy and its development*, 146-162.
- Eisenberg, N., Cumberland, A., & Spinrad, T. L. (1998). Parental Socialization of Emotion. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli0904_1
- Eisenberg, N., & Fabes, R. A. (1994). Mothers' reactions to children's negative emotions: Relations to children's temperament and anger behavior. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly (1982-)*, 138-156.
- Eisenberg, N., Fabes, R. A., & Murphy, B. C. (1996). Parents' reactions to children's negative emotions: Relations to children's social competence and comforting behavior. *Child development*, 67(5), 2227-2247.
- Gross, J. T., Stern, J. A., Brett, B. E., & Cassidy, J. (2017). The multifaceted nature of prosocial behavior in children: Links with attachment theory and research. *Social Development*, 26, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12242>
- Nelson, L. J., & Padilla-Walker, L. M. (2013). Flourishing and floundering in emerging adult college students. *Emerging Adulthood*, 1(1), 67-78.
- Pfattheicher, S., Nielsen, Y. A., & Thielmann, I. (2022). Prosocial behavior and altruism: A review of concepts and definitions. *Current opinion in psychology*, 44, 124-129.
- Rotenberg, K. J. (2010). *Interpersonal trust during childhood and adolescence*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

