

PARENTAL SUPPORT AND AUTONOMY IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

Rehana Mushtaq^{*1}, Samia Rani², Laraib Javaid³

^{*1}PhD Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Professional Psychology, Bahria University Lahore Campus, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

²PhD Assistant Professor, Department of Professional Psychology, Bahria University Lahore Campus, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

³Lecturer, Department of Clinical Psychology, School of Professional Psychology, University of Management and Technology Lahore Campus, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

^{*1}rehanamushtaq93@yahoo.com

Corresponding Author: *
Rehana Mushtaq

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15487134>

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
29 March, 2025	29 April, 2025	14 May, 2025	22 May, 2025

ABSTRACT

The current study explored the relationship between parental support and autonomy in university Students. It was hypothesized that there would be a relationship between parental support and autonomy among university students. Co-relational research design was used, and the sample was drawn using non-probability purposive sampling. The sample consists of 100 students from different departments of Punjab University of Lahore. Self Determination Scale (Sheldon et al. 1993) and The College-Student Scale (Robbins, 1994) were administered to each participant. The findings of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showed a relationship between father warmth, mother warmth, and perceived choice. However, there was no relationship between mother involvement, mother autonomy support, father involvement, father autonomy support, and perceived choice. This research provides insight to the students for parental involvement and helps to understand the individual for counselling services.

Keywords: Father Support, Mother Support, autonomy, university students.

INTRODUCTION

University students are in the age of transition from college life. In this transition, they experience many problems related to education and adjustment so they need a support system for becoming independent or self-reliant individuals (Worsley et al., 2021). There is diversity in the area of parental support, especially in students. The research is important with respect; to how parental support is important for students to become autonomous or to improve their academic performance. Similarly, Parents who encourage autonomy support self-determined behaviors and family participation (Wei et al.,

2022). Students require a sense of progress and continuous encouragement, along with praise for their good performance, as any accomplishment motivates them. Parents have the potential to motivate their children and help them acquire, even if they only have an initial level of understanding of the English language. Parents can positively influence their children's attitudes towards language learning and other cultures by sharing and incorporating English language and activities into their daily lives. It is now widely accepted that people develop most of their

lifelong attitudes by the age of eight or nine (Pedersen, 2017).

Moreover, children tend to be more challenging and demanding towards their parents on days when they have experienced problems with their peers such as being teased or feeling excluded. Similarly, they may also display such behavior when facing academic issues like getting poor grades or struggling with schoolwork (Deng et al., 2022). It highlighted the three core dimensions of parenting as support, psychological control, and behavioral control. All three of these dimensions have been linked constantly to either positive or negative signs of adolescent functioning. However, despite a vast amount of research on this topic, there has been little focus on the effects of these dimensions and most of the research has been limited to Western families. For students, obtaining an education is crucial. However, those who manage to get into college face higher pressure to work hard in the labour market and incur more debt. This can create additional social and psychological pressure on families and their relationships. (Kiswantomo & Theofanny, 2021).

According to Berg, certain assumptions complicate matters for all parties involved. Research indicates that parental involvement has a significant influence on the educational evaluations of young people, and parents play a crucial role in raising educational standards. (Utami, 2022). However, when parents actively participate and show interest in their children's education, their children are more likely to excel academically. The conception that parental involvement has a beneficial impact on student's academic performance is attractive to policymakers, teachers, parents, and students themselves (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Parental involvement aims to improve the quality of parenting at home. This includes providing a safe and stable environment, promoting intellectual stimulation, and encouraging parent-child discussions. Additionally, parents are expected to set good examples of practical educational and social values and foster great goals for individual growth and good citizenship. (Kelty, & Wakabayashi, 2020).

Literature review

Research suggests that parents who are involved and provide autonomy support to their children

tend to have children with better academic performance (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Parental involvement refers to how much parents are interested in, informed about, and willing to actively participate in their children's day-to-day activities. On the other hand, parental autonomy support refers to the degree to which parents value and employ methods that help their children solve problems independently, make choices, and develop self-determination. It has been found that higher levels of perceived parental involvement are linked with better-standardized attainment scores, higher ratings of competence by teachers, and better school grades (Kong & Yasmin, 2022).

Parental involvement refers to the degree to which parents show interest, possess knowledge, and take an active role in their children's lives. It encompasses participating in children's school and extracurricular activities, providing stimulation for their further development, and monitoring their regularly organized learning activities both at home and outside. (Sengonul, 2022). Self-determination theory has been used to study how different parenting styles affect performance, children's health, and well-being. According to the theory, individuals have three essential needs: to feel independent (in control of their behavior), to be related to others, and to be capable. When these desires are met, youngsters may develop a positive attitude toward success and reveal a high level of intrinsic motivation. Additionally, significant people in a youth's social environment, such as parents or teachers, can either enrich or undermine a child's self-determined inspiration by their actions. These actions can either facilitate or undermine a child's perception of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Tenenbaum & Eklund, 2007).

Autonomy refers to the ability to govern oneself, even if the choices made are immoral or devoid of moral values. However, it is not clear whether the principles of respect for persons and rejection of paternalism are still applicable in such cases. To deal with this issue, we must acknowledge that decision-making capacity is intrinsically valuable, regardless of the specific choices that are being made. Otherwise, we risk relying on a subjective and biased notion of autonomy, which could undermine our respect for others. The concept of autonomy is crucial to debates on education policy, ethics, legal freedoms and rights, and

moral and political theory. However, the idea of autonomy is often disputed and contrasted with alternative frameworks (Wermke & Salokangas, 2015).

Autonomy is the basis for treating individuals equally from a moral perspective. However, if autonomy varies across individuals in terms of abilities, it becomes difficult to maintain equal moral status. Personal autonomy has intrinsic value and is an element of well-being (Sengonula, 2022). Autonomy which refers to the ability to make decisions for oneself, can be viewed as a fundamental value or an important component of personal well-being. Embracing autonomy allows individuals to adopt a consequentialist moral framework while recognizing the significance of self-governance in leading a fulfilling life. Autonomy is a theoretical concept that signifies the internal endorsement of one's actions, indicating that an action is voluntarily initiated and comes from within oneself (Deci & Ryan, 2004).

Autonomy is the freedom to identify one's uniqueness, self-determination, and the autonomy to act. It determines one's perspective and purpose in life. Older people's autonomy is influenced by socio-demographic factors, health status, physical abilities, anxiety levels, coping ability, self-image, social support, and attitudes toward life. (Mageau, 2016). Moreover, involving parents in their children's schooling increases engagement in teaching and learning processes. Research shows that parents' educational attitudes and behaviors significantly impact their children's educational attainment. Providing a motivating home environment, involvement in children's lives, and high opinions and desires for their children are important factors that affect their educational achievement Deng et al., (2022). Autonomy is universally important for better outcomes, according to self-determination theory. Autonomy-supportive parenting and teaching are significantly linked to self-determination, which is positively associated with better adjustment in life domains (Soenens & Vansteenkiste 2010)

Moreover, Self-determination was found to be a useful way of measuring autonomy. The study also suggests that self-determination is an intermediary variable in the relationship between interpersonal environments and adolescent adjustment (Li et al., 2018). Similarly, Hasse et al.

(2008) revealed that the timing of early young behavioral autonomy development is critical. The study used data from two national surveys in Germany. The results indicated that premature restriction autonomy led to developmental hazards in early young adulthood. This autonomy was linked to maladjustment in some developmental challenges of early young adults, including higher deviant behavior, lower disclosure, higher identity diffusion, and lower painfulness. Bacikova-Sleskova et al. (2010) investigated the impact of parental support on adults' health about parental job status. Results found that when one parent was unemployed, support from the other parent appeared to be more important for the well-being of the children. Specifically, the study found that when the father was unemployed, his support was more frequently perceived as low. In contrast, in the case of an unemployed mother, the father's support was strongly linked with the autonomy of the individual. Ratelle, et al, studied perceived parental involvement and support as a significant predictor of autonomy and emphasized parental contribution to students' life (Wei et al., 2022).

To sum up the literature, it was concluded that parental contribution in their life is important. The present study is important in different aspects, especially in the educational area. By exploring this research, students will come to know how parental support is necessary for them to become autonomous and they're a good academic life. Student's autonomy will be flourished when they have parental support and consequently their academic performance will be improved. The consequences of this research will help other researchers in their research work.

Aims and Objectives

The current research was conducted to find the relationship between parental support and autonomy among university students. Research aims to find out how much parental support is important for students to become more autonomous or self-determined.

Method

Correlational research design was used to study the relationship between parental support and autonomy among university students.

Sample

The sample was selected through a Non-probability purposive sampling technique. A sample of university students (Masters and BS.Honours) 100 male (37) and female (63) students with an age range of 19-23 years ($M=20.61$, $SD=1.13$) was selected. Single-parent students were not included in the present research criteria.

Measures

Demographic form

Demographic form was developed by the researchers and it includes an individual's basic personal information (i.e., age, gender, educational level, institution, and family system).

The College-Student Scale

The College-Student Scale was developed by Robbins (1994), to assess the perception of an individual of their parents' autonomy support, and involvement. As well as warmth provided by parents. It has 42 items 21 related to the mother and 21 related to the father with six subscales of *mother autonomy support*, *mother involvement*, *mother warmth*, *father autonomy support*, *father involvement*, and *father warmth*. First, scores on the following items must be reversed: items no. 2, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 23, 27, 33, 34, 36, and 41 were scored reverse. The subscale scores by averaging the scores of the items on that subscale.

The Self-Determination Scale (SDS)

The Self-Determination Scale (SDS) was developed by Sheldon et al. (1996), to measure aspects of an individual's personality which reveals being more aware of their feelings and their sense of self and feeling a sense of choice concerning their behavior. It has 10-item scale and two 5-item subscales. named *awareness of oneself*, and *perceived choice in one's actions*. Items no. 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 were scored reverse, and higher scores indicate a higher level of self-determination. To reverse score an item, subtract the item response from 6 and use that as the item score. Then, calculate the scores for the Awareness of Self subscale and the Perceived Choice subscale by averaging the item scores for the 5 items within each subscale. For the present study, the perceived choice sub-scale was used.

Procedure

Firstly, the research topic was approved by the department committee A sample of 100 students was taken from different departments of the university. The permission of the scale was also taken from the author. Permission was also taken from the concerned department authorities to collect data from that department. Informed consent was taken and the nature and purpose of the study were also explained to the participants. The data was collected through questionnaires by the researchers to collect the data with ensuring confidentiality and privacy. Statistical analysis is done using SPSS. Correlation was used to find out the relationship between parental support and autonomy among students.

Descriptive analysis

Table 1

Descriptive of demographics

Variable	f	%
Age M(SD)	20.61(1.13)	
Gender		
Male	37	37
Female	63	63
Family System		
Nuclear	70	70
Joint	30	30
Class		
Bs	25	25
Msc	75	75

Note. f=Frequency, %=percentage.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to find a correlation between parental support and autonomy among university students.

Table 2
Correlation between Parental Support and Autonomy (N=100)

Variables	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.MI	29.65	6.27	.70	-	.60*	.57***	.31**	.22**	.41***	.12
2.MAS	43.49	7.94	.68	-	-	.52***	.17	.37***	.41***	.09
3.MW	32.31	6.84	.74	-	-	-	.18	.36***	.44***	.20*
4.FI	26.15	5.13	.83	-	-	-	-	.41***	.37***	.19
5.FAS	41.35	8.94	.82	-	-	-	-	-	.73***	.16
6. FW	29.95	8.16	.74	-	-	-	-	-	-	.22*
7. PC	16.20	4.55	.82	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. $p^* < .05$, $p^{**} < .01$, $p^{***} < .001$ MI= Mother Involvement, MAT= Mother Autonomy Support, MW= Mother Warmth, FI= Father Involvement, FAS= Father Autonomy Support, FW= Father Warmth, PC= Perceived Choice

Table 2 shows that the students who receive their mother's warmth are more independent in their choices. As the students who got their father's warmth, they are also more autonomous. Mother involvement and father involvement are also necessary for students. Mother involvement and father autonomy support are also highly correlated with each other. Mother involvement and father warmth have also a significant relationship with each other. Mother involvement, mother autonomy support, father involvement, and father autonomy support have no relationship with perceived choice.

Discussion

The present research aimed to investigate the relationship between parental support and autonomy among university students. It was hypothesized that there is a relationship between parental support and autonomy among university students. The present study also shows that parental support and autonomy or perceived choice are positively correlated. Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2010); Zhang and Smith (2015) researched the relationship between parenting and autonomy in adolescence, which produced inconsistent results. This study proposes self-determination as an alternative approach to exploring the concept of autonomy. The current study showed that students who received father

warmth are more autonomous and independent in their perceived choice.

In the current study, there is no significant relationship between parental autonomy support and autonomy. According to Roth, et al. (2007), autonomy support predicts perceived choice. Results of this study suggest that parental involvement and support play a critical role in predicting self-processes and achievement. However, this finding contradicts the results of a previous study.

The finding of the perceived choice It was found that there is no significant correlation between mother autonomy support and perceived choice. It shows that the students are not autonomous in their choices. This finding doesn't support the previous findings.

The current study found that there is no significant correlation between perceived choice and father autonomy support. According to Bacikova-Sleskova, et al. (2010) investigated the effect of parental support on adolescents' health within the context of parental employment status. This study results suggest that in the case of unemployment of one parent, support from the other parent may be more important for children. The results of the current study do not support the previous study. Perhaps in a previous study, the researcher investigates also the effect of parental support on adolescence.

Chirkov et al. (2001) examined whether father autonomy support would have a positive effect on self-motivation and well-being. The current study found that there is no significant correlation between perceived choice and father autonomy support. So, these findings do not support the

current findings. The reason for the insignificant result of the findings in the current study may be that the sample size was very small (n=100). It may be possible that by increasing the sample size result may be significant.

The result of the present study shows a highly significant correlation between mother involvement, mother warmth, and mother autonomy support and father involvement, father warmth, and father autonomy support. However, there is no high correlation between parental support and the perceived choice of the students. But mother warmth and father warmth and perceived choice of students are significantly correlated. Before generalizing the results must keep in mind that the scales used in the present research don't have any norms. The scales were not standardized because the authors had not provided the reliability of the scales. The scales are still under the process of standardization.

Limitations:

The research is based on the data of 100 students. The sample study in the present study is not large enough to provide dependable results. The sample size was small. The reason being in fact that the time was very short and there were limited resources. Thus an extensive study with an expended time factor was not feasible. The sample size must be large so that the results can be generalized. The information provided by the respondents is not very verifiable. There was no direct method to verify the responses given by the respondents. The reliability of the scales used in the present research was not good because the scales were not translated and there were also cultural differences. Sample size should increase the validity and reliability of the results. The results of the current study have important implicit for researcher educators and counselors, social psychology researchers can replicate this study.

References

Bacikova-Sleskova, M., Madarasova Geckova, A., van Dijk, J. P., Groothoff, J. W., & Reijneveld, S. A. (2011). Parental support and adolescents' health in the context of parental employment status. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34(1), 141-149.

Bunijevac, D., & Bunijevac, M. (2017). Parental involvement as an important factor for successful education. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 7(3), 137-153.

<https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.291>

Chirkov, V. I., & Ryan, R. M. (2001). Parent and teacher autonomy-support in Russian and U.S. adolescents. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 32(5), 618-635.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022101032005006>

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (Eds.). (2004). *Handbook of self-determination research*. University Rochester Press.

Deng, Y., Cherian, J., Khan, N. U., Kumari, K., Sial, M. S., Comite, U., Gavurova, B., & Popp, J. (2022). Family and academic stress and their impact on students' depression level and academic performance. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 13, 869337.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.869337>

Haase, C. M., Tomasik, M. J., & Silbereisen, R. K. (2008). Premature behavioral autonomy: Correlates in late adolescence and young adulthood. *European Psychologist*, 13(4), 255-266.

Kelty, N. E., & Wakabayashi, T. (2020). Family engagement in schools: Parent, educator, and community perspectives. *SAGE Open*, 10(4), 2158244020973024.

Kiswantom, H., & Theofanny. (2021). Effect of neuroticism to subjective well-being in faculty of psychology students. In *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Emerging Issues in Humanity Studies and Social Sciences*.

<https://doi.org/10.5220/0010752500003112>

Kong, C., & Yasmin, F. (2022). Impact of parenting style on early childhood learning: The mediating role of parental self-efficacy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 928629.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.928629>

- Li, J., Deng, M., Wang, X., & Tang, Y. (2018). Teachers' and parents' autonomy support and psychological control perceived in junior-high school: Extending the dual-process model of self-determination theory. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *68*, 20-29.
- Mageau, G. A., Bureau, J. S., Ranger, F., Allen, M. P., & Soenens, B. (2016). The role of parental achievement goals in predicting autonomy-supportive and controlling parenting. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *25*, 1702-1711.
- Pedersen, D. E. (2017). Parental autonomy support and college student academic outcomes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *26*, 2589-2601.
- Robbins, R. J. (1994). *An assessment of perceptions of parental autonomy support and control: Child and parent correlates* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Rochester).
- Roth, G., Assor, A., Niemiec, C. P., Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2009). The emotional and academic consequences of parental conditional regard: Comparing conditional positive regard, conditional negative regard, and autonomy support as parenting practices. *Developmental Psychology*, *45*(4), 1119-1142.
- Şengönül, T. (2022). A review of the relationship between parental involvement and children's academic achievement and the role of family socioeconomic status in this relationship. *Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction*, *12*(2), 32-57.
- Sheldon, K. M., Ryan, R., & Reis, H. T. (1996). What makes for a good day? Competence and autonomy in the day and in the person. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *22*(12), 1270-1279.
- Soenens, B., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2005). Antecedents and outcomes of self-determination in three life domains: The role of parents' and teachers' autonomy support. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *34*, 589-604. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-005-8948-y>
- Tenenbaum, G., & Eklund, R. C. (Eds.). (2007). *Handbook of sport psychology* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Utami, A. Y. (2022). The role of parental involvement in student academic outcomes. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, *2*(1). <https://doi.org/10.55885/jerp.v2i1.156>
- Wei, S., Teo, T., Malpique, A., & Lausen, A. (2022). Parental autonomy support, parental psychological control and Chinese university students' behavior regulation: The mediating role of basic psychological needs. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 735570. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.735570>
- Wermke, W., & Salokangas, M. (2015). Autonomy in education: Theoretical and empirical approaches to a contested concept. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, *2015*(2), 28841.
- Worsley, J. D., Harrison, P., & Corcoran, R. (2021). Bridging the gap: Exploring the unique transition from home, school or college into university. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *9*, 634285. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.634285>
- Zhang, P., & Smith, W. L. (2015). The transition from high school to college: Parents' and students' perceptions of parents' helpfulness. *Virginia Social Science Journal*, *50*.