

Parental Support and Adolescent Self-Esteem: Examining Their Association among Secondary School Students in Patiala District, Punjab, India

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the association between parental support and adolescent self-esteem and investigated gender differences in parental encouragement and self-esteem among secondary school students in Patiala District, Punjab, India. A descriptive-correlational design was employed with 200 adolescents from Classes IX and X, comprising 100 male and 100 female students. Data were collected using the Agarwal Parental Encouragement Scale and the self-esteem measure used in the original study. Pearson's product-moment correlation and independent-samples t-tests were used for analysis. The reported results indicated a statistically significant positive association between parental encouragement and self-esteem ($r = .47, p < .01$). The gender difference in parental encouragement was not statistically significant (reported $t = 1.56, p = .11$), and the gender difference in self-esteem was not statistically significant ($t = 0.06, p = .95$). The findings suggest that adolescents reporting greater parental encouragement also tended to report higher self-esteem in this sample. However, the correlational design does not establish a causal relationship. The findings highlight the relevance of constructive parent-school collaboration, supportive communication, and developmentally appropriate parental encouragement during adolescence.

Keywords: parental support; parental encouragement; adolescent self-esteem; secondary school students; gender; Punjab; India

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a developmental period in which young people experience substantial changes in self-evaluation, social relationships, emotional regulation, academic expectations, and identity. Family relationships remain an important social context during this period because parents can provide emotional reassurance, guidance, encouragement, and opportunities for responsible decision-making. Contemporary research continues to examine how family processes and social support relate to adolescents' self-evaluations and psychosocial well-being.

Recent evidence indicates that parental and family processes are relevant to adolescent development, although findings are not uniformly causal or longitudinal. Choe (2020), using data from 6,370 adolescents and their parents in South Korea, found that adolescents' perceptions of parental support were associated with self-regulated learning and that parent and adolescent reports did not necessarily show identical patterns. Research in Vietnam similarly found associations among parent-child relationships, self-esteem, resilience, life satisfaction, and mental well-being among adolescents (Trong Dam et al., 2023). A 2024 meta-analysis of 51 studies involving 52,253 Chinese adolescents reported a moderate positive association between family functioning and self-esteem (Liang et al., 2024).

At the same time, contemporary evidence cautions against assuming that all aspects of the family environment automatically produce prospective changes in self-esteem. Krauss and Orth (2024), in a four-wave replication and extension involving 451 families, did not find evidence for prospective effects of the examined family-environment characteristics on adolescent self-esteem. This suggests that the relationship between parental support and self-esteem may depend on the specific form of support, measurement approach, developmental context, and study design.

The present study therefore focuses specifically on parental support operationalized through parental encouragement and its statistical association with adolescent self-esteem. It also examines whether parental encouragement and self-esteem differ by gender among secondary school students.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Understanding the relationship between parental encouragement and adolescent self-esteem has relevance for educational psychology, teacher education, school counselling, and family–school partnerships. Adolescents encounter academic pressure, peer expectations, identity development, and changing family relationships. Constructive encouragement may provide adolescents with recognition and guidance without replacing their autonomy. Schools can use evidence from such research to strengthen communication with families and to design parent-education activities that distinguish supportive encouragement from excessive pressure.

The present study is also relevant because recent literature shows that family functioning and parent–adolescent relationships are associated with psychosocial outcomes, while replication evidence indicates that these associations should be interpreted carefully and not automatically as causal effects (Krauss & Orth, 2024; Liang et al., 2024).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Parental Support and Adolescent Self-Esteem: Examining Their Association among Secondary School Students in Patiala District, Punjab, India

Operational Definitions

Parental Support: In this study, parental support refers to encouragement, guidance, approval, assistance, and constructive involvement provided by parents in adolescents' educational and personal development. For statistical analysis, parental support is operationalized through the parental encouragement score obtained from the Agarwal Parental Encouragement Scale.

Adolescent Self-Esteem: Adolescent self-esteem refers to an adolescent's overall evaluation of personal worth and adequacy. In the present study, self-esteem is represented by the score obtained on the self-esteem instrument administered to the participants.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the relationship between parental support and self-esteem among adolescents.

To examine the significance of the difference in parental support between male and female adolescents.

To examine the significance of the difference in self-esteem between male and female adolescents.

Hypotheses

There is no significant relationship between parental support and self-esteem among adolescents.

There is no significant difference in parental support between male and female adolescents.

There is no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female adolescents.

METHOD

Research Design

A descriptive-correlational research design was used because the study examined the statistical association between parental support and self-esteem and compared the two variables across gender groups without manipulating the study variables.

Sample

The sample consisted of 200 adolescents studying in Classes IX and X in government schools, with 100 male and 100 female students. The present manuscript identifies Patiala District, Punjab, as the study setting. The exact school list, rural–urban allocation, and sampling procedure should be verified from the original field records before submission.

Tools Used

Parental Support

In the present study, parental support refers to encouragement, guidance, approval, assistance, and constructive involvement provided by parents in relation to the adolescent's educational and personal development. The construct is operationalized through the parental encouragement measure used in the study.

Adolescent Self-Esteem

Adolescent self-esteem refers to the individual's overall evaluation of personal worth, adequacy, and competence. In the present study, it is represented by the score obtained on the self-esteem measure administered to the adolescents.

Data Analysis

Mean, standard deviation, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and independent-samples t-test were used. Statistical significance was interpreted at the .05 level, while the reported correlation was described as significant at the .01 level. Because the study is correlational and cross-sectional, the association should not be interpreted as evidence of causality.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1 Association between Parental Support and Self-Esteem

Variable	Sample group	Mean	SD	r
Self-esteem	Adolescents	.035	.58	.47**
Parental encouragement	Adolescents	5.62	3.58	

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

The Pearson product-moment correlation showed a statistically significant positive association between parental encouragement and self-esteem, $r = .47$, $p < .01$. Thus, the first null hypothesis was rejected at the .01 level. The association represents a moderate positive relationship in the study sample; however, the cross-sectional correlational design does not establish that parental encouragement causes higher self-esteem.

Table 1 Gender Difference in Parental Encouragement

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p
Parental encouragement	Male adolescents	100	292.98	37.82	1.56	.11 NS
Parental encouragement	Female adolescents	100	291.35	33.64		

Note. Not significant

The mean parental encouragement score was 292.98 (SD = 37.82) for male adolescents and 291.35 (SD = 33.64) for female adolescents. The reported independent-samples t-test was not statistically significant, $t = 1.56$, $p = .11$. Because $p > .05$, the second null hypothesis was not rejected. The observed difference is therefore described as statistically non-significant in this sample.

Table 2 Gender Difference in Self-Esteem

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p
Self-esteem	Male adolescents	100	28.47	6.29	0.06	.95 NS
Self-esteem	Female adolescents	100	28.42	5.34		

Note. Not significant

The mean self-esteem score was 28.47 (SD = 6.29) for male adolescents and 28.42 (SD = 5.34) for female adolescents. The reported independent-samples t-test was not statistically significant, $t = 0.06$, $p = .95$. Because $p > .05$, the third null hypothesis was not rejected. The observed difference between male and female adolescents was therefore statistically non-significant.

DISCUSSION

The principal finding was a statistically significant positive association between parental encouragement and adolescent self-esteem ($r = .47$, $p < .01$). This result is consistent with recent literature emphasizing the relevance of family relationships and social support for adolescent psychosocial development. A 2024 meta-analysis combining 51 studies and 52,253 adolescents found a moderate positive association between family functioning and self-esteem, although the relationship varied across moderators including gender and only-child status (Liang et al., 2024). The present result therefore contributes a school-based Indian context to a broader literature linking supportive family processes with adolescents' self-evaluations.

The finding is also compatible with evidence that parent-child relationships, self-esteem, and family support are associated with adolescent well-being. In a study of 1,023 adolescents, Trong Dam et al. (2023) reported

associations among parent–child relationships, self-esteem, resilience, life satisfaction, and mental well-being. However, the present study should not be interpreted as demonstrating a causal pathway because it used a cross-sectional correlational design.

The absence of a statistically significant gender difference in parental encouragement is also noteworthy. The observed means were very similar, and the reported p-value exceeded .05. This indicates that, within the present sample, the study did not detect a statistically significant gender difference. It does not demonstrate that gender is unrelated to parental support in all settings. Recent meta-analytic evidence suggests that gender can moderate associations between family functioning and self-esteem in some populations, illustrating why gender findings should be interpreted in relation to context and measurement (Liang et al., 2024).

Similarly, the self-esteem means for male and female adolescents were almost identical, and the reported p-value (.95) indicates no statistically significant difference. This finding is compatible with a cautious interpretation that gender differences were not evident in this particular sample. It should not be generalized beyond the population and sampling frame actually studied.

Recent replication evidence further strengthens the need for cautious interpretation. Krauss and Orth (2024) found no prospective effects between several family-environment characteristics and adolescent self-esteem in a four-wave replication study. Thus, the present finding is best described as an observed association within the study sample rather than evidence of a universal or causal effect of parental support.

Educational Implications

Schools can strengthen structured parent–teacher communication so that families receive practical guidance on constructive encouragement, realistic expectations, and adolescents' increasing need for autonomy.

Parent-education programmes can emphasize supportive communication, recognition of effort, active listening, and non-coercive academic guidance rather than excessive performance pressure.

Teachers and school counsellors can incorporate self-esteem-supportive practices into classroom and pastoral programmes, including constructive feedback, opportunities for responsible participation, and recognition of individual strengths.

Teacher-education programmes can include family–school collaboration and adolescent socio-emotional development so that future teachers can communicate effectively with parents.

School-based interventions should be evidence-informed and sensitive to cultural and family contexts rather than assuming that the same form of parental involvement benefits every adolescent equally.

Schools should treat parental encouragement as one potential correlate among several factors influencing adolescent development; peer relationships, school climate, socioeconomic circumstances, parenting style, and individual characteristics should also be considered.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the association between parental support, operationalized through parental encouragement, and adolescent self-esteem among 200 secondary school students. The reported results showed a statistically significant positive association between parental encouragement and self-esteem. No statistically significant gender differences were found in parental encouragement or self-esteem in the study sample. The findings support the educational relevance of constructive parent–school collaboration and supportive family interactions while emphasizing that correlational evidence should not be interpreted causally.

Limitations of the Study

The sample was limited to 200 adolescents from government schools; therefore, the findings should not automatically be generalized to all adolescents in Punjab or India.

The cross-sectional correlational design does not establish causal direction.

The study examined a limited set of variables and did not include peer relationships, school climate, socioeconomic status, parenting style, or academic achievement.

The validity of the conclusions depends on the exact instrument versions, scoring procedures, and reliability/validity evidence used during data collection.

The exact district, rural–urban distribution, sampling procedure, and self-esteem instrument should be verified against the original field records before submission.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies should use larger, multi-district samples and include government and private schools to improve external validity.

Longitudinal studies should examine whether changes in parental support precede changes in self-esteem across adolescence.

Future research may test mediation or moderation models involving school climate, peer support, resilience, academic stress, socioeconomic status, and parenting style.

Mixed-method studies combining standardized scales with interviews or focus groups could clarify how adolescents interpret parental encouragement.

Future Indian studies should examine rural–urban and regional differences using transparent, comparable sampling procedures.

Replication studies should preregister hypotheses and analysis plans where feasible and report complete psychometric information for all instruments...

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