



The role of Parental Support in Enhancing Self-Efficacy and Self-Concept of Adolescents

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Abstract:

Even though adolescence is marked by a growing sense of self, parental support is a valuable asset, particularly during the early stages of adolescence. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this multi-informant study looked at how parental self-efficacy affected their ability to provide emotional and practical support to their early adolescents who were partially learning at home. We investigated the impacts of parental self-efficacy on early adolescents' reports of self-regulated learning (SRL), learning self-efficacy, and positive emotions. These effects were mediated by the problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies of the early adolescents, and were based on a resources model of coping.¹ A total of 263 Austrian parent-child dyads had their assumptions examined. We found strong correlations between emotional support and SRL, problem-focused coping and SRL, learning self-efficacy, and good emotions, even if the mediation assumption was disproved. Instrumental support had a negative relationship with SRL, indicating that emotional support is preferable.

The scientific community has been called upon to look into pro-social behaviours and mental, emotional, and physical states of people during the COVID-19 epidemic. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how adolescents' perceptions of their gender and the kind and quantity of physical exercise or sports they participate in before and during a lockdown period. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a decrease in teenagers' overall self-concept, which was positively correlated with emotional well-being. Peers and family are crucial for the formation of a healthy self-concept in adolescents. Moreover, throughout the lockdown, girls' self-concept—particularly their academic self-concept—was higher than boys'. Before the COVID-19 lockdown, guys had a higher self-concept than girls, both physically and emotionally, yet there were no differences throughout the lockdown. The results show a good correlation between self-concept and physical activity both before and during the COVID-19 lockout.²

Keywords: Parental Support, Self-Efficacy, Self- Concept

1. Introduction

Globally, the COVID-19 epidemic and its related restrictions have had a profound effect on people's psychological health. Young people who are in a particularly pivotal stage of life in terms of their personal and academic development are an especially vulnerable demographic. However, it is currently unknown what effect the epidemic will have in the long run on the mental health and prospects of adolescents. Research show that young people's strategies for managing pandemic-related stress and for learning under COVID-19 settings have differed. Previous study has mainly looked at the individual features of adolescents, such as markers of their financial resources, and aspects of the distant learning environment in order to explain these interindividual disparities.³ Nonetheless, parents' impact on teenagers' learning and well-being has grown in importance as schools have closed and learning has moved from the classroom to the home. This is especially true for early adolescents, in whose life's parents play an even greater role compared to later stages of adolescence.

Because of the pandemic, parents had to provide their kids with emotional and academic support to help them adjust to the new circumstances. Less research has been done, nevertheless, on the importance of parental support for teenage wellbeing and, in particular, learning during COVID-19. The current study focuses on parents' perceptions of their own abilities to provide both practical and emotional support. In order to investigate the relationship between early adolescents' self-regulated learning (SRL), learning self-efficacy, and positive emotions—both directly and indirectly through early adolescents' coping styles—parental self-efficacy on these two aspects of parental support is studied in parent-child dyads.⁴

Teenagers, the elderly, and those with disabilities are the primary demographic groups that are considered to be at-risk in any nation that has been adversely affected by a pandemic or disaster. The coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 infection, which causes the COVID-19 virus, sparked a worldwide epidemic and an international state of health emergency. Elderly people are directly impacted by respiratory infections, which is a hallmark of this disease. However, adolescents are indirectly influenced due to social distancing, educational and recreational policies adopted by the government. Both social unrest and economic effects have been brought on by the pandemic. Furthermore, because COVID-19 worsens stress, anxiety, despair, and poor social behaviour, it endangers people's mental health globally. Pandemics and calamities therefore carry a risk of having detrimental effects on the emotional and physical health of adolescents. Similar to how it is influencing social, recreational, and educational areas of daily life, COVID-19 also poses emotional and familial issues. Furthermore, after physiological and security needs are satisfied, psychological wants—like self-fulfillment, self-esteem, and affective relationships—become more significant.⁵

2. What is parental self-efficacy

Parental self-efficacy, or PSE, is the conviction that one can successfully carry out the responsibilities of parenthood. This idea is explained in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Parental self-efficacy (PSE) “Describes a parent’s belief in their ability to perform the parenting role successfully. Higher PSE levels have been linked to enhanced parent-child interactions, more warmth and responsiveness from parents, greater parental participation and supervision of adolescents, more supportive parenting, and less ineffective discipline, according to research. Among the variables that could affect PSE are: Lingua familial According to a study, parents who were born and raised in the US and spoke English had better PSE than parents who were immigrants or spoke Spanish at home. Education level According to US research, parents who are immigrants, low-income parents, or parents with less education may have poorer PSE. Enhancing PSE⁶ is the goal of many parenting programmes.

3. Parental Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the conviction that one can manage difficult situations and demonstrate self-assurance in one's own skills. A person's degree of self-efficacy influences their propensity to act in certain ways, such as whether or not they take on a task, how much effort they put into it, and how long they endure when faced with challenges and unpleasant experiences. It is well known that self-efficacy is domain-specific, meaning that beliefs change according to the operating domain. Consequently, the belief that parents have in their power to shape their child's surroundings and promote success and growth is known as parental self-efficacy. Positive parenting practices are typically displayed by parents who have high self-referent assessments of their own parenting abilities.⁷

Parental self-efficacy has been found to play a critical influence in the functioning and adjustment of children in numerous empirical research. In this sense, the word "parental self-efficacy" serves as a catch-all to describe a range of features, varying from study to study, of parental role- and task-fulfillment. Moreover, the broader generalised parenting domain or specific tasks within it may be referred to by parental self-efficacy. The latter is used in this study, which focuses on parental self-efficacy in terms of giving assistance to their children.

4. What is parental self-concept

A feeling of self as a parent might result from the intricate process of developing a parental self-concept, which combines cognitive and emotive elements. It's a really intricate psychological process that gives both parents a feeling of self as parents.⁸

A mother or father develops a sense of self as a parent during the extremely complicated emotions and cognitive process of psychologically becoming a parent. A definition is put out, some relevant literature is evaluated, and the theoretical underpinnings of the notion of the parental self are examined.

5. Parental Support

The term "describes a parent's belief in their ability to perform the parenting role successfully" is parental self-efficacy, or PSE. Numerous parenting and child outcomes have been repeatedly demonstrated to be connected with higher levels of PSE. As a result, raising PSE is the goal of numerous parenting strategies.¹⁰

6. In the midst of covid-19, parental support and self-efficacy

The transition of schools to remote learning coupled with a strong restriction on non-family peer interactions deprived young people of vital resources for their personal growth. Extant research on the high secondary costs associated with school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic indicates a significant risk to the good development and well-being of adolescents. A heightened risk of anxiety and sadness as well as a deficiency in the resources and services that schools normally offer are a couple of these. Scholars have emphasised the importance of parents as important resources in times of COVID-19, both with respect to adolescent learning and well-being. This is based on research conducted prior to the pandemic, which identified parental support as one of the most significant protective factors for adolescent resilience during challenging times. There are, however, little empirical investigations on the function of parental support and self-efficacy during COVID-19. Furthermore, as far as we are aware, no studies have addressed parental self-efficacy with reference to offering parental assistance. Regarding parental self-efficacy in general, an Italian study found that parents' perceptions of their ability to handle day-to-day obligations during a quarantine acted as a mediating factor in the relationships between their psychological discomfort and their emotional regulation self-efficacy with their children's emotional regulation.¹¹

Regarding the function of parental support during COVID-19, a diary study including adolescents from the United States of America revealed that parents' social support was linked to increases in adolescents' positive affect on the same and next day, as well as decreases in their negative affect on the same day. In a different study of Chinese students, teenagers who said they had discussed the pandemic with their parents expressed greater contentment with their lives at the moment and were less likely to reach the threshold for symptoms of stress, worry, and depression. Also, an Israeli study found links between teenagers' well-being and their perceptions of their families' and peers' social support. However, the study's social support measurement tools did not differentiate between peer and parental support. Furthermore, it is unclear how different forms of assistance are differentiated in the research on parental support and teenage wellbeing during COVID-19.¹²

Comparably, not much study has been done on how parental support affects teenage learning during COVID-19. Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge, no research has been done on how parental self-efficacy affects teenagers' learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The relationship between perceived parental support and academic motivation varied for online and face-to-face teaching days in a Dutch study that was carried out when the school alternated between online and in-person instruction. When compared to in-person instruction, adolescents with less parental support expressed less academic motivation on online school days. The difference in academic motivation between in-person and online school days was less noticeable among teenagers with higher levels of parental support, indicating a potential mitigating influence of parental support. In a similar vein, mastering self-regulated distance

learning was found to be positively correlated with parental behaviour at home being understood and viewed as supportive, according to a study conducted with an Austrian sample.¹³ Setting objectives and organising one's learning process, or self-regulated learning (SRL), is a particularly pertinent skill to manage the less clearly controlled learning environment during COVID-19 and to sustain intrinsic learning motivation. Based on the theoretical premise that parents serve as role models for self-regulation and that children learn from them to take control of their thoughts and behaviours, Berger et al. (2021) found that parental support had a significant impact on SRL. This suggests that parents' crucial support, particularly when it comes to helping their children with their homework, may help to foster adolescents' self-regulated learning.

7. Coping strategies' function in the covid-19 era

Studies on the health and education of teenagers during the COVID-19 pandemic have frequently brought up the topic of how teenagers handled the pandemic. Most of them use more generic language when they say this, referring to adjusting to the circumstances. Less research has been done on the particular coping mechanisms used by young people and how this has impacted their feelings and behaviour. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as a person's reaction to stress and classified coping techniques into two main categories: active coping, also known as problem-focused methods, and avoidance coping, also known as emotion-focused strategies. Emotion-focused coping is regarded as maladaptive since it has been linked to psychological risks like anxiety and depression, whereas problem-focused coping is typically thought to be good for mental health.¹⁴ However, empirical evidence indicates that these correlations need to be taken into account in a more nuanced manner. Consequently, problem-focused coping techniques were linked to less externalising issues and good social and behavioural functioning in teenagers in response to stresses that are under their control, according to a meta-analysis of 40 research. However, adolescents who employed problem-focused coping techniques were more prone to display behavioural issues when it came to uncontrollable stresses. It is therefore not appropriate to promote active, problem-focused coping without taking stressor controllability into account. Accordingly, research on African American and Latinx teenagers coping with uncontrollably violent situations found that emotion-focused avoidant coping approaches had good benefits on mental health, suggesting that specific avoidance strategies could occasionally be adaptive.¹⁵

In the COVID-19 epidemic, teenagers have encountered factors that are both uncontrollable and controllable. Even while teenagers have little control over the severity of infection rates, the occurrence of variants, or similar events, they may still actively influence how they live their daily lives under the "new normal." This is particularly true in the context of learning, as distance education has made it possible for students to take a highly customised approach to their education, which presents excellent chances for students to practice, assess, and broaden their knowledge at their own pace. This suggests that problem-focused coping strategies would have been helpful in the learning environment, whereas emotion-focused strategies might have been more suited for managing the unpredictability of the broader circumstances and preserving psychological well-being in the form of pleasant feelings.¹⁶

8. Conclusion

Positive functioning and overall well-being in adolescents have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic. We looked at the effects of parental self-efficacy in providing emotional and instrumental support on early adolescents' reports of SRL, learning self-efficacy, and positive emotions during a time when young people have had to spend a lot of time at home and where the home has also become the place of learning. These effects were mediated through early adolescents' problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. We found favourable relationships between parental self-efficacy for emotional support and SRL, problem-focused coping and SRL, learning self-efficacy, and good emotions, even though the mediation assumption was disproved. The significant negative correlation between early adolescents' SRL and parents' self-efficacy regarding instrumental assistance is an intriguing discovery that begs for more investigation. In light of this, it would be particularly fascinating

to look into whether this effect is always detrimental or if parents may also serve as some sort of role models for SRL in order to anticipate benefits down the road.

The substantial percentage of explained variation suggest the relevance of parental self-efficacy for early adolescents' coping mechanisms and the provision of parental support for behavioural and emotional outcomes throughout COVID-19, even though not all hypotheses were supported. The current study makes a significant contribution to the identification and differentiation of protective factors for youth resilience in times of crisis by confirming the advantages of problem-focused over emotion-focused coping and by highlighting the benefits of parents' beliefs in their abilities to provide emotional over instrumental support.

Teenage self-perception in relation to gender and physical activity both before and during the lockdown. Thus, it can be inferred that before to the lockdown, teenagers had a higher self-rate and self-concept than they had during the COVID-19 epidemic, and this is positively correlated with their emotional self-concept. Furthermore, before and throughout the lockdown, peers and family were crucial for the formation of a healthy emotional self-concept. Moreover, academic self-concept was higher during the lockdown than it was prior to it.¹⁷

It should be noted that during the isolation, women's self-concept was greater than men's. In particular, girls' academic self-concept was higher in both cases, whereas males' academic self-concept was impacted by their emotional control and their connections with classmates and family. Prior to the lockdown, males had a greater physical and emotional self-concept than females, but these differences did not persist.

In terms of physical activity, before to the lockdown, those who did not engage in any sports or physical activity had a poorer self-concept. In contrast to individuals who did not engage in any physical exercise during the isolation, those who engaged in prior physical activity had better academic, social, familial, and physical self-concepts. On the other hand, abstaining from physical activity was positively correlated with academic self-concept. Teens who participated in solo, non-contact sports during the lockdown had better emotional and general self-concepts.¹⁸ Finally, teens who engaged in physical activity before to the lockdown reported having a better perception of their bodies.

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