

Perceived Parental Autonomy Support as Predictor of Psychological Well-Being among Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

One of the key developmental challenges for university students as emerging adults is developing their sense of autonomy. For the sake of their children's psychological wellbeing, parents must create an environment that supports students' autonomy and encourages them to act on their own initiative. Keeping this in view, the present study aims to explore the predictive role of perceived parental autonomy support on psychological well-being among undergraduate students. The sample for the study comprised of 200 undergraduate students (100 males and 100 females) randomly selected from Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India. Perception of parents scale (POPS) developed by Robert J. Robbins (1994) and well-being manifestation measure scale (WBMMS) developed by Masse et al. (1998) were used to collect the data. The data was analyzed using SPSS -20. A cross-sectional, exploratory study survey method was used to collect and analyze results; descriptive statistics, t-test, correlation, and multiple regression analyses were done. Results found that perceived parental autonomy support is a significant predictor of psychological well-being among undergraduate students. However, no significant difference was found in perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being among undergraduate students with respect to their gender.

Keywords: *Perceived parental autonomy support, psychological well-being, undergraduate students.*

Psychological well-being is necessary for an individual to live a healthy life, making it an important element of one's life throughout college. College life is sometimes chaotic and full of psychological stress. Over the past ten years, stress among college students has significantly increased. Many research revealed that college students had higher rates of psychological issues. Comparatively to the overall population, students experience distress at a greater rate (Sarokhani et al., 2013). Insecurity about future employability and success, academic stress, and being separated from their main support system for e.g., parents etc. are some of the reasons that contribute to student distress (Ibrahim et al., 2013; Sarokhani et al., 2013). Students who have parental and others support can more successfully manage psychological issues. The level of social support that students receive

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from their parents and significant others can have a direct influence on how well they are able to handle the demands of college life (Cage et al., 2021; Mishra, 2020) and is linked to more positive educational experiences (Maymon et al., 2019; McCoy et al., 2014; Scanlon et al., 2020). Students who received less support from their parents and significant others were more likely to participate in harmful behaviors such as smoking, using illegal substances, consuming excessive amounts of alcohol, being sedentary, and improperly utilizing social media. Students who receive less help also have a history of life unhappiness and even suicidal ideation.

When a student enrolls or enters to a college, he or she encounters a various challenge, including adjusting to a new social environment, accepting new roles and responsibilities, coping with the separation of friends and family, and choosing a career etc. These difficulties can lead to high levels of stress, emotional issues, and lack of adjustment, which in turn affects a student's psychological well-being. According to self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), satisfying of the three psychological needs i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness plays important role in improving psychological well-being and decreasing ill-being among youth. Moreover, self-determination theory also propose parents as socializing agencies that play a significant role in fulfilling these needs which in turn helps in promoting the psychological well-being of their children. Child's perception about their parents as autonomy supportive or controlling may differ depends upon the environment in which they live. Those children who are living in an surrounding where they feel parental autonomy support, are more skilled, confident and independent in comparison to those living in a restricted surrounding, which in turn leads to positive development among children. Kocayoruk et al. (2015) suggests that the atmosphere giving by parents to their adolescents in whom there is a growth of autonomous-self, lead to strong and healthy well-being of adolescents.

It can be difficult for parents to adjust accordingly to their child's changing needs as they develop towards adolescence and adults and change the amount of support in their college years.

Perceived Parental Autonomy Support

Parental autonomy support is described as a complex notion in which the parents behave and interact in ways that promote the development of their children's autonomy (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Parental autonomy-supportive actions include speaking openly and unobtrusively, responding to their children's questions and comments, and applauding and praising their children when they make autonomous decisions. In order to help their children to discover their worth and interests with little control and pressure and to satisfy their psychological needs, parents who are children's autonomy supported frequently provide them with insightful feedback and consequential options. Thus, promotes the psychological wellbeing of their children (Vansteenkiste and Ryan, 2013). Also, those who get autonomy support have improved self-control abilities and make greater strides towards achieving their goals, which lowers the likelihood of experiencing negative feelings (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ntoumanis et al., 2021). Lan et al. (2019) recommends that those who experience greater parental support for their autonomy also report better levels of psychological well-being. Similar to this, Akram et al. (2022) also argued that college students' psychological well-being is highly predicted by their perception of their parents' support for their autonomy. In contrast, parents who are too controlling, compel their children to think or act in way that conforming to their expectations, show little regard for the best interests of the children.

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Even they frequently use rewards and punishment to curb actions that go against their expectations and to encourage actions that are in line with their plans, which has a detrimental effect on their child's psychological health. Schiffrin et al. (2014) also suggest that children's with considerably higher levels of sadness and lower life satisfaction had over controlling parents. In addition, Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2005) claim that children who perceived parental autonomy support manage their environment with a greater sense of competence, as seen by their increased academic performance, peer relationships, and job-seeking conduct. Vasquez et al. (2016) also observed that autonomy is a fundamental psychological need that promotes healthy growth and psychological functioning, which in turn, leads to greater academic accomplishment, increased motivation, and enhanced psychological well-being. The perception of parental autonomy support predicts thriving in emerging youth, whereas parental control throughout their formative years makes them more prone to behaviour issues, despair, and anxiety (Sheikh & Shafi, 2022; Smokowski et al., 2015; Folobor et al., 2015; Kocayoruk, 2012).

Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being is defined as being content with life, exhibiting pleasant emotional states, and absence of psychopathology, correlated with improved academic performance, strong social skills, and a positive outlook on the future. But it does not imply that person feel happy all the time, the experience of painful affects (such as failure, sorrow, and dissatisfaction) is a necessary part of life, and being able to control these unpleasant and painful emotional states is important for long-term psychological well-being. Yet, when these adverse affective states are not under control, last for a longer period of time, and get in a way with a person's capacity to function in daily life, psychological well-being is compromised. Physical morbidity, shortened life spans, and higher use of medical services are all highly connected with psychological discomfort (Lahey, 2009).

In addition to pleasant emotional experiences, the idea of having optimal psychological well-being also includes feelings of assurance, curiosity, engagement, and attachment. The degree to which people believe they have considerable control over their lives, have a purpose in life, and have meaningful connections with other people is sometimes also referred to as psychological well-being. Nonetheless, undergraduate students' psychological health has been in decline, and they even have more psychological issues than the overall population (Sarokhani et al., 2013). Academic pressure, intense competitiveness, failure dread, changes in family and friend relationships, high parental expectations, the effort to build an identity, and adjusting to a new institution are the frequent issues faced by undergraduate students. These issues have a serious detrimental effect on undergraduate students' psychological health. Understanding the element that predicts college students' psychological health is crucial. Perceived parental autonomy support appears to be a crucial viewpoint for the growth of long-term psychological well-being.

Keeping this in view, the present study was designed to determine the role of perceived parental autonomy support as predictor of psychological well-being among undergraduate students.

Objectives

- To examine the gender difference on perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being among undergraduate students.

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- To examine the relationship of perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being among undergraduate students.
- To assess the predictive relationship of perceived parental autonomy support with psychological well-being among undergraduate students.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The sample for the study comprised of 200 students studying in Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, UP, India. Out of 200 students, 100 were girls and 100 were boys selected through the convenient sampling technique. The participants within age range of 17 to 20 years were selected for the study.

Measures

Perception of Parent Scale (POPS)- Perception of parent scale (POPS) developed by Robert J. Robbins in 1994. It consists of 42 items on a 7-point likert scale ranging from “not at all true” to “very true”. It is self-report questionnaire that is designed to measure the perception about parents from the college student’s perspective. But as per the necessity of the study, only one of its dimensions was selected for the study i.e., parental autonomy support. Due to which, for measuring the parental autonomy support 18 items were selected in which 9 items were used for measuring the mother autonomy support and other 9 items were used for measuring the father autonomy support. The overall cronbach’s alpha for parental autonomy support is .851 and the cronbach’s alpha for the mother autonomy support and father autonomy support is .796 and .709 respectively.

Well-Being Manifestation Measure Scale (WBMMS)- Well-being manifestation measure scale was developed by the Masse et al. (1998) for measuring the psychological well-being. It is a self-report questionnaire, comprised of 25 items on a 5 point likert scale ranging from “never” to “almost always”. The overall cronbach’s alpha for the well-being manifestation measure scale is .880.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was done by using SPSS 20.0 version. The mean, SD of both the scales were calculated, t-test was calculated for assessing the difference between male and female on both variable i.e., perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being. Further, correlation was calculated to find out the relationship between perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being. Lastly, regression analysis was employed to examine the predictive relationship of perceived parental autonomy support with psychological well-being among undergraduate students.

RESULT

Table-1: Showing mean, SD, & t-value of male and female undergraduate students on measures of perceived parental autonomy support and its dimensions i.e. mother autonomy support and father autonomy support and psychological well-being.

VARIABLES	Male		Female		t(200)	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Perceived parental autonomy support	84.90	16.53	84.82	16.21	0.35	.972
Perceived mother autonomy support	42.66	9.53	43.02	9.26	-.271	.787
Perceived father autonomy support	42.24	8.74	41.80	8.28	.365	.715
Psychological well-being	93.59	12.76	93.07	14.64	.265	.791

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Table 1- reveals that there is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students on perceived parental autonomy support and its dimensions and psychological well-being.

Table 2- Showing the Correlation of perceived parental autonomy support and its dimension i.e. perceived mother autonomy support and perceived father autonomy support with psychological well-being among undergraduate students.

VARIABLES	Psychological well-being r	p
Perceived parental autonomy support	.492	.000
Perceived mother autonomy support	.395	.000
Perceived father autonomy support	.509	.000

Table-2 reveals that there is a significant positive correlation of perceived parental autonomy support ($r=.492$, $p=.000$), and its dimensions i.e., perceived mother autonomy support ($r=.395$, $p=.000$) and perceived father autonomy support ($r=.509$, $p=.000$) with psychological well-being among undergraduate students.

Table-3 Showing the predictive relationship of perceived mother autonomy support and perceived father autonomy support with psychological well-being among undergraduate students.

VARIABLE	B	β	SE
Constant	57.21***		4.46
Perceived mother autonomy support	.144	.099	.120
Perceived father autonomy Support	.712	.443***	.133
R ²	.264		

Table 3 revealed that perceived mother autonomy support did not significantly predicted psychological well-being ($\beta=.099$, $p=.231$) but perceived father autonomy support significantly predicted the psychological well-being ($\beta=.443$, $p=.000$). Both the construct together added significantly to the variance accounted for psychological well-being ($R^2=.264$, $p=.000$).

DISCUSSION

The first objective of the study was to examine the significant difference on perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being between male and female undergraduate students and for this purpose, the t-test was used. Through statistical analysis it was found that there exists no significant difference on perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being between male and female undergraduate students. The similar result were also found from the previous study carried out by Sheikh and Shafi (2022) who examine the significant difference on perceived parental autonomy support between male and female undergraduate students. In a study, they found that there exists no significant difference on perceived parental autonomy support between male and female undergraduate students. Waghmare (2016) investigated the significant difference on psychological well-being between male and female college student. In a study, it was reported that there exists no significance difference on psychological well-being between male and female college students. Similarly, Kantaria (2017) also reported the insignificant difference on psychological well-being between male and female undergraduate students.

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In India, where gender biases are still prevailing, the outcomes are quite shocking. One of the reasons for the result could be that parents are accepting their child wholeheartedly irrespective of their gender. Girl child are given the same amount of rights and opportunities as male child and their parents are raising them equal amount of love, autonomy and support as they are given to their boy child. **The government has also taken various steps and providing various scholarships for female students. Over the past few decades, the societal views toward women empowerment and education have also changed thus indicating that gender biases are decreasing slowly in the country. It's another reason may be that gender biases present in the society but does not have any significant impact on perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being of individuals.**

The second purpose of the study was to examine the association between perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being among undergraduate students and for this purpose, the correlation analysis has been used. Through statistical analysis it was found that there exists a significant positive correlation between perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being. Previous research that supports the present finding conducted by Lan, Ma and Radin (2019) to investigate the relationship between perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being among emerging adult. Through the finding, it was observed that perceived parental autonomy support had significant positive relationship with psychological well-being. Similarly, Chirkov and Ryan (2016) conducted a study on the association between parental autonomy support and well-being among school students. Result of the study showed that students with higher parental autonomy support also had higher level of well-being.

Perception of having parent autonomy support makes the child feel empowered. Children feel that they value their point of view and choice. Children can talk and share their problems with their parents without any hesitation. Parents guide and encourage their children to handle various problems effectively. This strengthens the parent child bond and enhances self-worth, competence and life satisfaction which in turn affecting the psychological well-being of the adolescents.

The third objective of the study is to assess the predictive relationship of perceived parental autonomy support with psychological well-being among undergraduate students. Through statistical analysis, it was observed that perceived parental autonomy support significantly predicted the psychological well-being of undergraduate students. Similar result was also found in previous study conducted by Akram et al. (2022) to examine the predictive relationship of perceived parental support with psychological well-being among college students. In a study, they found perceived parental autonomy support significantly predicted psychological well-being.

Concerning the basic developmental needs and psychological functioning of the growing adult, it is important for parents to provide autonomy support. Although, during college year children become more self-dependent and distance themselves from the parents, still parents are continued to be a source of autonomous support and exerting a huge effect on the psychological well-being of growing adult. Emotional, financial support from the parents and establishing good relationships with parents is important for the psychological well-being of the growing adult.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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