

Is Parental Support or Parental Involvement More Important for Adolescents?

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of parents in adolescent students' academic well-being. We hypothesized that parental support and parental involvement would each predict unique variance in both self-esteem and academic self-efficacy. There were 250 participants (99 male, 151 female) between sixth through twelfth grade from various counties across Kentucky. Students were given a packet consisting of different surveys and questionnaires to complete relating to the study. The results of a regression analysis revealed that parental support and involvement positively predicted both academic self-efficacy and self-esteem. These results suggest that both parental support and parental involvement are equally important to a student's academic well-being.

Key Words:

self-efficacy, self-esteem, parental involvement, and parental support

Parents play an important role in the development of children as they grow into adulthood and learn how to navigate through life. One of the main roles that a parent plays to their child is an influence on how academics should be pursued and accomplished throughout a lifetime. Academic well-being is very important to a child's outcomes in life, as it governs how successful one could be later in life, such as in college and future career opportunities. Parents shape the way that children regard their academic works, as parents can be motivators to succeed or push children away from high academic attainment by a lack of concern for academics. Many children succeed in various aspects of life, while others seem to lose sight of who they are and what is important. To find out why this happens to some children and not others, it is important to look at what makes an impact in children's well-being, especially academically. Academics are a very important factor of an adolescent's life. Many studies today look at ways to increase academic performance, especially in adolescents because of their upcoming decisions on college and career choices. One of the main influences on an adolescent's academic choices and well-being is

the role that parents play. One theory that drives this study is the Parent Development Theory. This theory examines the role of the parents as a child grows up, and how the way the parent interacts and evolves as a parent affects a child's well-being (Mowder, 2005). This theory focuses on how a person defines his/her own parenting role, and how this definition influences how a parent interacts with his/her child or children. A parent's role can be shaped by many factors, some of which can include a parent's background and their own childhood experiences. The purpose of this study is to look at how parental involvement and parental support each contribute to adolescents' academic well-being, namely academic self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Contextualized forms of self-esteem may be more accurate indicators of well-being within given domains. For example, global self-esteem and academic self-esteem are distinct constructs (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995). In addition, academic self-esteem has a strong direct effect on school performance, whereas global self-esteem has very little direct effect on it (Rosenberg et al., 1995). It was also found that raising specific, academic self-esteem could have a positive influence on academic

performance (Rosenberg et al., 1995). Thus, self-esteem is important in all aspects of life, but academic self-esteem has a more direct association with outcomes in school. As a result, we focus on academic self-esteem as an indicator of academic well-being.

Self-esteem is commonly studied by researchers because of its impact on social and emotional development through childhood, adolescence, and into adulthood. Academic self-esteem is defined as how an individual feels his/her abilities are in an academic setting. For example, having low self-esteem in childhood and adolescence can predict depressive symptoms in adulthood (Steiger, Allemand, Robins, & Fend, 2014). Low economic status, poor mental health, and poor physical health are also factors in adulthood that stem from low self-esteem in adolescence (Trzesniewski et al., 2006). Along with positive influences on a student's general well-being, self-esteem also has a positive influence on academic success and school related behaviors, although the association is indirect. High levels of self-esteem are related to increased skills, resources, and general happiness in a school setting, which in turn leads to academic success (Whitesell, Mitchell, & Spicer, 2009).

Another key component of adolescent development is academic self-efficacy. Academic self-efficacy is the strength and belief in an adolescent to achieve and reach goals on academic tasks, which is a valuable skill to attain during adolescence. Academic self-efficacy is a strong predictor of academic success and goal attainment, as well as respect for others and involvement in the classroom (Hoigaard, 2014), which demonstrates that efficacy not only predicts achievement outcomes but also predicts prosocial outcomes.

An adolescent's life is very much influenced by academic self-esteem and self-efficacy; it is important to determine which factors contribute to them. This could change as they progress into different stages in life, but for this research, it is crucial to look at the factors that affect adolescents' levels of academic self-esteem and efficacy. Past research has identified several social factors that contribute to academic

well-being, such as positive interactions with peers (Cakar & Karatas, 2012), with teachers (Martin, Marsh, McInerney, Green, & Dowson, 2007), and during extra-curricular activities (Kort-Butler & Hageman, 2011).

It is also important to look at the role that parents play on these two elements of academic well-being. The role of parents on an adolescent's academic well-being is looked at in the current study because parental involvement and support positively predict academic well-being and engagement at all age levels, especially through adolescence (Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013). Peer, teacher, and environmental factors can constantly change throughout childhood and adolescence, while the role of the parent is constant, for the most part (Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013). When parents are involved with their child's academics and activities at home, those children have higher levels of self-esteem and academic achievement. This is compared with children whose parents only invested funding in their child's school (Ho, 2003). Also, children of parents that regularly attend events with the child and volunteer at the child's school show increased levels of academic performance (Blair, 2014). These studies reflect the importance of parental involvement on certain areas of academic well-being, specifically higher engagement in activities and higher academic performance. The Parental Development Theory can also bring importance into how a parent is involved with his/her child, as how a parent views his/her own role as a parent can determine how involved her/she becomes in a child's life. It is very important for a parent to view him/herself as an involved parent in order to become one. This research shows the importance of parental involvement on both adolescent self-esteem and efficacy.

Adolescents who have supportive parents also tend to have high levels of academic self-efficacy and self-esteem. Parental support is commonly defined as being emotionally present and consistently dependable for the child in times of need. It is also important to an adolescent's well-being; it has positive effects on children's self-efficacy, and this is especially apparent among girls (Felson, 1989). In contrast,

low parental support results in low self-esteem and depressive symptoms among adolescents (van Roekel, 2011). Also, parental support fosters motivation and persistence in academics, which in turn leads to improved academic performance (Mih, 2013). From these studies, it is shown that parental support fosters certain aspects of academic well-being, such as motivation, positive self-efficacy in academics, and more emotional stability. Not only does parental support produce higher self-esteem and self-efficacy, but the lack of it can have negative consequences on an adolescent's well-being.

Parental involvement and parental support have an important influence on adolescents' self-esteem and efficacy. In accordance with the Parental Development Theory, the parents must view themselves as supportive and involved in order to be just that for their child. It is important to note that this theory brings light to how a parent becomes involved and supportive to a child. It is important to note, however, that these two factors are distinct and they likely contribute to esteem and efficacy in unique ways. Parental involvement is characterized by the presence of a parent in one's daily life and school activities. Parents who are involved in the student's life participate and make an effort to attend their child's events, school activities, and be involved in the student's academic pursuits. In contrast, parental support incorporates the emotional role parents play in their children's lives. Supportive parents provide encouragement and emotional warmth to their child throughout adolescence. In short, parental support focuses on the feelings of the child and helping them by listening, whereas parental involvement focuses on spending time with the child and taking interest in what is going on in his/her life (Ratelle, Larose, Guay, & Senecal, 2005). There is also evidence to suggest that parental support is a more important factor than parental involvement in influencing academic success and persistence in school (Ratelle et al., 2005). Although these factors seem to help adolescents in similar ways, parental support and parental involvement are not redundant constructs and likely contribute to self-esteem and efficacy in unique ways. To

date, however, no one has examined how each of these constructs uniquely contribute to academic outcomes.

There are some confounding variables that could influence how much parental support or involvement influences a student's well-being. One of these confounding variables is gender. Whether a child is male or female could influence the amount of support or involvement the parent gives or has with a child. On average, girls receive more support from their parents and thus feel it is easier to succeed academically (Kristjánsson & Sigfúsdóttir, 2009). For this reason, it is important to account for gender differences while investigating the association between perceptions of parents and academic well-being.

The current study is unique in that parental support and involvement are rarely included in the same study, possibly due to a misconception of their redundancy. When they are examined together, only zero-order associations have been examined, but to date no one has examined how much each of these two parental variables uniquely contribute to the two academic outcome variables. It is important to know how an adolescent's academic esteem and academic efficacy are each influenced by the two parental variables. Therefore, the current study will expand upon the past research by showing how an adolescent's academic esteem and academic efficacy are uniquely predicted by both parental involvement and support. We hypothesize that parental support and parental involvement will each predict unique variance in both academic self-esteem and academic self-efficacy.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The participants in this study consisted of students in grades 6-12 from four different schools across Kentucky. These schools were chosen to have a representation of schools in Kentucky from both urban and rural areas. They also came from a variety of family environments and socio-economic backgrounds. There were a

total of 250 (99 male, 151 female) participants in this study. All 250 students' questionnaires were answered fully and all were found to be valid.

Table 1

Age Distribution of the Sample

| Age | <i>n</i> | % |
|-----|----------|------|
| 11 | 20 | 8.0 |
| 12 | 38 | 15.2 |
| 13 | 24 | 9.6 |
| 14 | 40 | 16.0 |
| 15 | 56 | 22.4 |
| 16 | 32 | 12.8 |
| 17 | 25 | 10 |
| 18 | 15 | 6.0 |

Race and ethnicity was mostly Caucasian. Ages ranged from 11-18 years old, as shown in Table 1. After entering the data in the computer, all identifying information was destroyed.

In addition to school districts' administrative approval, consent from school principals was also obtained. Once we received permission from the schools, a date and time was set to meet with the students to pass out parent permission forms. After parental consent and student assent were received, the subjects were given a questionnaire packet. The packet contained several different surveys and questions about demographic information. On average it took students 30 minutes to complete the packet. Once the students returned their completed survey, they were thanked, given a debriefing form, and sent back to class.

Materials

The descriptive and reliability statistics for each scale are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

| Variables | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>a</i> |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Parental Support | 2.43 | 0.36 | 0.94 |
| Parental Involvement | 4.49 | 1.05 | 0.78 |
| Academic Efficacy | 3.38 | 0.48 | 0.87 |
| School-based Self-Esteem | 3.86 | 0.74 | 0.85 |

Parental Support. The original version of the Social Provision Scale was developed in 1978

to assess perceived social support (Cutrona, 1984). This study used the source specific (parent) social provision scale. This scale has 12 items designed to assess perceived parental support. Responses are scored on a 3-point scale (1 = *no*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *yes*). Some example items from this scale are, "Can you depend on your parents to help you, if you really need it," "Does your relationship with your parents provide you with a sense of emotional security and well being," and "Do you feel your parents do not respect your skills and abilities."

Parental Involvement. The Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (Malecki, Demaray, Elliott, & Nolten, 1999) was designed to measure the frequency and importance of students' perceived social support, but for the purpose of this study it was used as a measure for parental involvement. The items on this scale are more tied to involvement than how support is defined in this study. For this study we used the Parental Social Support scale. This scale has 12 items that are scored on a 6-point scale (1 = *never*, 6 = *always*). Some example items from this scale are, "My parents help me solve problems by giving me information," "My parents get me many of the things I need," and "My parents help me practice my activities."

Academic Efficacy. The Morgan Jinks Student Efficacy Scale was designed by Morgan and Jinks (1999) to gather information related to student efficacy beliefs about school success. The instrument is a 30 item scale that are scored on a 5-point scale (1= *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Some example items from this scale are, "I could get the best grades in class if I tried hard enough," "I am one of the best students in my class," and "I will quit school as soon as I can."

School-Based Self-Esteem. The school based self-esteem scale is an adaptation of The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (*RSES*; Rosenberg, 1965). This scale was originally designed to measure adolescents' global feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. The scale is made up of 10 items that are scored on a 5-point scale (1= *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-esteem. For this study we used the original items from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale and prefaced them

with “When I’m at school...” Some of the items on our adapted measure of self-esteem are, “When I’m at school I feel that I have a number of good qualities,” “When I’m at school I feel I do not have much to be proud of,” and “When I’m at school I take a positive attitude toward myself.”

Results

Preliminary Analyses

To test the associations among the variables, a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted including all variables from the current study (see Table 3). The results of this analysis revealed that academic self-esteem was positively correlated with parental support and positively correlated with parental involvement. Parental support and parental involvement were also positively correlated with each other. Results also revealed that academic self-efficacy was positively correlated with parental support and positively correlated with parental involvement. Academic self-efficacy and academic self-esteem were also positively correlated with each other.

Table 3

Bivariate Correlations among Study Variables

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--------------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Parental Support | --- | .70** | .33** | .52** |
| Parental Involvement | | --- | .33** | .47** |
| Academic Efficacy | | | --- | .61** |
| School-based Self-Esteem | | | | --- |

** $p < .01$

The Role of Parental Support and Involvement in Predicting Academic Well-Being

To test the hypothesis that parental

support and parental involvement would predict unique variance in both academic self-esteem and academic self-efficacy, a linear regression analysis was conducted with parental support and parental involvement entered as the predictor variables and academic self-esteem entered as the outcome variable. The results revealed that parental support positively predicted academic self-esteem, and parental involvement also positively predicted academic self-esteem. A second linear regression analysis was conducted with parental support and parental involvement entered as the predictor variables and academic self-efficacy entered as the outcome variable. The results revealed that parental support positively predicted academic self-efficacy, and parental involvement also positively predicted academic self-efficacy (see Table 4). The data was normally distributed, and multicollinearity did not exceed the recommended threshold in either analysis (*Tolerance* = .51, *VIF* = 1.95). The overall significance for esteem as the outcome was $F(2,243) = 50.53, p < .01, R^2 = .29$. The overall significance for efficacy as the outcome was $F(2,244) = 18.09, p < .01, R^2 = .13$.

Due to the potential influence of gender and age differences on these effects, another series of linear regression analyses were conducted controlling for age and gender. The results did not change while accounting for gender and age. Therefore, the hypothesis that parental support and parental involvement would predict unique variance in both academic self-esteem and academic self-efficacy was supported, even while controlling for gender and age.

Table 4

Linear Regression Results of Parental Support and Involvement Predicting Efficacy and Esteem

| Predictor Variables | Outcome Variables | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|-----------|----------|
| | Academic Efficacy | | | School-Based Self-Esteem | | |
| | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>b</i> | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>b</i> |
| Parental Support | 0.25 | 0.11 | .18* | 0.74 | 0.16 | .36** |
| Parental Involvement | 0.10 | 0.04 | .21* | 0.16 | 0.05 | .22** |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Discussion

The results confirmed the hypothesis that parental support and parental involvement both contribute to academic self-esteem and academic self-efficacy. This suggests that parental involvement and support are both important to a student's academic well-being

This study looked at parental involvement and parental support and how they uniquely contribute to adolescents' self-efficacy and self-esteem. Research has shown that students have higher self-esteem and self-efficacy in the academic setting when parents provide support (Felson, 1989). Our findings confirm that parental support has a positive association with a student's self-esteem and self-efficacy in the classroom. Our findings also replicate Ho (2003) by showing the importance of parental involvement on a student's academic self-efficacy and self-esteem. Past research has also found that parental involvement and parental support are both equally as important to both male and female academic success (Kristjánsson & Sigfúsdóttir, 2009). The current study confirms that student gender was not associated with academic outcomes. Thus, our study confirms the importance of both parental involvement and support on an adolescent's academic well-being.

Although this study replicates some findings that are evident in past research, there are some findings that the current study refutes and/or expands upon. Research has also previously shown that parental support had a more direct influence on a student's academic successes and persistence than parental involvement did (Ratelle et al., 2005). This is contrary to our findings in that our results indicated that both parental support and parental involvement are equally important in self-efficacy and self-esteem. A factor that could account for this difference in findings is the fact that Ratelle et al.'s (2005) study focused more on academic success in science, whereas our study focused on academic well-being in general. Parental support could have a more direct relationship with science-related academics than general academic well-being. It is important to

look at a broader view of academic well-being concerning these parental factors because it will have a variety of outcomes related to academics, not just performance. The current study has implications for adolescents more generally, rather than just a small group of students in one academic area. The current study refutes past research by finding evidence that parental support and parental involvement are equally as important to academic success.

Past research has shown how parental involvement is associated with academic self-esteem and self-efficacy in positive ways (Ho, 2003), and how parental support has positive effects on both academic self-esteem and self-efficacy (Felson, 1989), but the current study is the first to examine all of these variables together. The current study takes this research a step further by showing how parental involvement and support differ from one another, and how they both contribute to self-esteem and self-efficacy. Although parental involvement and parental support are significant factors in positive academic self-efficacy and self-esteem, one is not more important or stronger than the other.

There are many practical and a few theoretical uses for these results. Teachers and parents can benefit greatly from being made aware of their influence on their child's academic self-esteem and self-efficacy. Programs could be designed to help parents foster involvement and support in order to improve the academic well-being of their child. These programs could also inform teachers on how to help parents stay involved and supportive of their child in order to improve academic self-efficacy and self-esteem. For theoretical implications, it is important to relate back to the Parental Development Theory, which describes how a parent learns what their parental role will be based off of prior experiences and childhood background. The current study describes how a parent's role in the child's life can influence how the child performs academically and feels about academics, which expands upon the Parental Development Theory. The current study provides implications in how a parent views his/her own role as a parent, either supportive

or involved, and how that can affect the child. With this research, it can be possible to see how parents view their role as parents and how they can alter that role to better work with their children, based off their own background and experiences. These implications provide many theoretical and practical uses for future research to study and expand upon.

Limitations & Future Research

There are a few limitations to this study. This study was only concerned with the perspective of the student on the surveys. This could lead to a self-report bias in the study. Future research could also use surveys from parents and/or teachers to gain different perspectives on the involvement of support of parents and the self-esteem and self-efficacy of the student in school. Another limitation would be that the adolescents taking the adapted Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale may not have had academics in mind the entire time. In future research, it could be ensured that all questions in the scale are academically based specifically. One other limitation is that an interaction between age or gender and the parent variables was not examined. In future research, these interactions could be examined to find if gender and age interactions are present with the parent variables. One last limitation is that little information was gathered about the household of the adolescents in the study. In future research, more information could be gathered about household income, parent gender, and parent education attainment to better understand the background information of the adolescents.

Another idea for future research could be an experiment that uses a program or intervention to discover if students show positive improvements in academic self-esteem and self-efficacy in response to parental involvement and support. Differing levels of parental support and involvement could be used to identify if increased parental support and involvement causes heightened levels of academic self-efficacy and self-esteem. These ideas for future studies can be used to further

investigate the role that parents play on an adolescent's academic well-being.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has both theoretical and practical implications in the role that parents play on the academic self-efficacy and self-esteem of their adolescent. Parental support and parental involvement are unique constructs that both predict an adolescent's academic self-efficacy and self-esteem. Receiving emotional support and active involvement from parents are equally important to a child's confidence, perceived worth, and self-sufficiency in school.

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