

Perceived Parental Autonomy, Peer Influence and Perceived Self-Concept in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The study aims to explore the relationship between perceived parental autonomy, peer influence and perceived self-concept in young adults. It was conducted with the individuals between the age ranges of 18 to 25 who were Pakistani nationals.

Method: The correlational research design was used to collect data from 200 university students through self-report questionnaire. The measures that were employed in conducting this research were Perceived Parental Autonomy Support Scale (PPASS) (Mageau et al., 2015), Perceived Peer Pressure Scale (PPPS) (Palani & Mani, 2016), Self-concept Clarity Scale (SCCS) (Campbell et al., 1996).

Findings: The results of the study revealed that there is a positive correlation between perceived maternal autonomy and perceived self-concept, a negative correlation between perceived paternal autonomy and peer influence, also negative correlation between peer influence and perceived self-concept. The prediction analysis through hierarchical regression revealed that gender, perceived paternal autonomy and perceived maternal autonomy doesn't predict self-concept. But peer influence negatively predicts self-concept. There is significant gender difference in case of perceived parental autonomy, both for mother as well as for father, and peer influence. However, no gender differences were reported in case of perceived self-concept.

Conclusion: The study attempted to fill the gaps in literature highlights the importance of youth empowerment projects and the need to further study these constructs among different age groups and culture.

Keywords: Perceived Parental Autonomy, Peer Influence, Perceived Self-Concept.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Young adults transitioning from adolescence experience a phase of exploration of their self-concepts, during which they begin perceiving themselves as an individual. Self-Concept is an individual's self-perception or a sense of self, encompassing the emotions, values and various attributes that one perceives about oneself, which evolve over time through personal experiences and social interactions (Savitha &

Nachammai, 2022). The process of self-exploration is affected by perceived parental autonomy which is actually the degree to which parents provide autonomy to their children to think independently and make decisions, which enhances their self-regulation and enables them to internalize values (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Parental autonomy support shows an approach that minimizes the use of pressure and control, considers the child's point of view, and encourages the discovery of their own interests (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Soenens et al., 2007). Open communication with children, answering their queries, providing them with remarks, and congratulating and encouraging them when they make their own decisions are characteristics of parental autonomy-supportive behaviors (Silk et al., 2017).

Peer influence, which is a type of influence that occurs when someone acts or thinks differently than routine which might be because of their interactions with friends and acquaintances (Laursen, 2018), also plays an important role in formation of self-concept. Young adulthood is a period of uncertainty, self-discovery and limitless possibilities, an individual may feel lost in this transitional period from adolescence towards young adulthood (Arnett, 2003). Formulating a cohesive sense of self also involves the act of establishing oneself as a group member within a larger social environment (Grotevant, 1992; Josselson, 1994). For this purpose, individuals try to relate themselves with peers and experience peer influence. Peer influence is an important element that affects how young adults build their sense of self. People may embrace group ideals or behave in ways that initially contradict their personal convictions out of a desire to conform or be accepted by their peers (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007), one's concept of self might be shaped over time by internalizing these outside influences. Perceived parental autonomy is also linked with young adulthood. The way individuals perceive parental autonomy support predicts their prosperity during the emerging youth era and parental control throughout a child's early years make them prone to behavioral problems, hopelessness, and anxiety (Kocayoruk, 2012; Sheikh & Shafi, 2022; Smokowski et al., 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review would provide an overview of the related research done in past. Chen et al. (2024) conducted the study to find how self-concept of a child and parenting that aids supportive autonomy is related; it was examined in the context of fundamental needs related to psychology from perspective of theory of self-determination. The findings showed that self-concept of children and autonomy supportive parenting are somewhat mediated by underlying needs in the context of psychology. Researchers Wang and Kaufman (2024) looked at the longitudinal relationships between resistance towards peers, autonomy, and parental autonomy support. The findings demonstrated that, at the within-person level, shifts in adolescence's peer resistance and parental autonomy support were linked to shifts in their overall autonomy.

Chan and Chan (2008) examined relationship between adolescents' emotional autonomy from parents and their relationships with parents and how vulnerable they are to peer influence. The findings indicated that vulnerability of adolescents towards peer pressure in positive and negative ways is predicted by mothers' psychological and behavioral control, respectively. The study conducted in Hong Kong by Nagar and Nagar (2020) undertook a correlational study to examine how negative pressure and positive peer pressure peer is related to self-concept, and how performance in academia relates to self-concept. The findings of the study suggests that while those with a self-concept that is low, typically give low performance in academia and are more likely to give in to the pressure from peers that is negative, those individuals who are impacted by peer pressure that is positive and also perform better academically have self-concept that is high.

Jabeen et al. (2024) investigated how parenting styles relate to adolescents' self-concept and decision-making. The findings indicate a negative relationship between self-concept and pessimistic and authoritarian parenting style; however, authoritative parents who provide children with autonomy have a strong favorable association. The study done by Ashraf et al. (2019) examines how peer pressure, parental behavior, and juvenile delinquent behavior are related along with moderating role of religious devotion

and cultural values. According to findings, peer pressure has a large positive correlation with juvenile delinquent behavior, whereas parental behavior has a significant negative correlation.

Najam and Bhutto (2023) did the study to determine how a daughter's body image and self-conception were influenced by her relationship with parents. The findings of the study lead to the discovery that daughters' self-concept was significantly impacted by their relationship with parents, but their body image was not. Furthermore, a significant effect of the maternal relationship was found on self-concept and body image but there was no apparent impact of the relationship with father to the daughter's self-concept as well as body image. The review of literature provided valuable insights into the research that were related to the current study.

2.1 Rationale of the Study

Research that investigates current study variables are few in number. International data is even scarce, so consequently indigenous data from Pakistan is also less. The study on aspects of identity or self in relation to parental relationship is a new paradigm that has been hardly studied in Pakistani context (Naqvi, 2012). Reviewing the literature revealed that the linking between these variables were mostly studied in adolescents, mainly self- concept variables as adolescent is considered to be an important period for exploration of one's sense of self. According to Arnett (2007), exploration of identity or self is not restricted to adolescence and now is extended to young adulthood, so there is high need to study these variables in young adults. So, the purpose of conducting the study is to cover the literature gap concerning sparse research on link between current study variables, less studies in Pakistani context and very rare research on these variables in young adults. The research outcome of the study would enable individuals to check how peer influence is impacting their self-concept. It would also help parents in seeking the impact of their autonomy provision or restriction on perceived self-concept of their child.

2.2 Objectives of the Study

- To explore the relationship among perceived parental autonomy, peer influence and perceived self-concept in young adults.
- To determine perceived parental autonomy and peer influence as a predictor of perceived self-concept in young adults.
- To explore gender differences in perceived parental autonomy, peer influence and perceived self-concept in young adults.

2.3 Hypotheses of the Study

- There is likely to be a relationship among perceived parental autonomy, peer influence and perceived self-concept in young adults.
- Perceived parental autonomy and peer influence are likely to predict perceived self- concept in young adults.
- There are likely to be gender differences among perceived parental autonomy, peer influence and perceived self-concept in young adults.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The theory that attempts to explain the relationship between these variables is Erikson Psychosocial Development Theory. According to Erikson's (1968) theory, a process of exploration and commitment to significant identity domains of a larger self-concept leads to development. Perceived parental autonomy and exploration are linked as exploration is the process of trying out various roles, values, and beliefs. Young adults may push limits and seek independence in the parental context as they feel free to experiment with different roles without undue control when they believe their parents to be very autonomous. Peer influence and exploration are related because peers provide a setting for trying out

various social roles and norms. The choice to uphold certain concepts regarding self or ideals following the exploratory phase is known as commitment. It is also related to perceived parental autonomy and Peer influence. High parental autonomy provides individuals with confidence so that they can acquire an appropriate sense of self. Peers can encourage conformity, which results in flimsy commitments, or they can encourage self-discovery, which aids people in establishing a genuine sense of who they are (Erikson, 1968). Achieving a strong Self-concept requires striking a balance between the two influences.

The Theory of Erikson has immensely contributed in providing a comprehension for giving the idea of how self-concept develops through psychosocial stages (Hamachek, 1988), the commitment and exploration linking with Self- Concept development occurs at the fifth stage that is marked by the important era of transition from adolescence to Adulthood. Perceived parental autonomy is the independence that young adults feel from parental supervision, and it encourages self-exploration, which is essential for Self-Concept formation. Parental autonomy would enable them to explore different roles and resultantly achieve a consolidated self and only through the process of exploration can individuals come to a resolution regarding a particular Self-Concept. The term peer pressure or influence describes the pressure that individual feel when others push or pressure them to think or act in a particular manner (Clasen et al., 1986). When individuals feel such pressure while making decisions or while thinking how to behave in certain social settings, it gradually formulates their sense of self.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A correlational research design was used in conducting the research. The sample consist of 200 Young Adults (male and female) aged between 18 to 25 years (Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, 2017) from Pakistan. It was collected using non-probability purposive sampling strategy from undergraduate students enrolled in two government universities. The sample includes 120 females and 80 males. Individuals who have spent significant portion of their lives with their parents were included in the research. Only Unmarried individuals who are Pakistani nationals were included in the research. Individuals with any sort of psychological or physical illness were excluded from the research.

3.1 Demographic Characteristics

The following demographic sheet includes personal as well as family information of participants. It includes gender, age of the participant, birth order, number of siblings, family type and socio-economic status etc.

Table 3.1: Demographic characteristics of sample (N=200)

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>M (S.D)</i>	<i>f (%)</i>
Age	21.87(.852)	
Gender		
Male		80 (40)
Females		120 (60)
Birth Order		
First Born		45 (22.5)
Middle Born		97 (48.5)
Last Born		50 (25.0)
Only Child		8 (4.0)
Number of siblings		
Family Type		
Nuclear		140 (70)
Joint		45 (22.5)
Extended		15 (7.5)
Socioeconomic Status		
Upper-Class		10 (5)

Middle-Class	189 (94.5)
Lower-Class	1 (.5)
Current Employment Status	
Student	152 (76)
Part-Time Job	39 (19.5)
Full-Time Job	9 (4.5)
Income	
Unemployed	152 (76)
5,000 - 10,000	13 (6.5)
10,000 - 30,000	13 (6.5)
30,000 - 50,000	13 (6.5)
50,000 above	9 (4.5)

Note: *M*= Mean; *SD*=Standard Deviation; *f*=Frequency; %=Percentage

3.2 Assessment Measures

The following are the assessment measures that were used while conducting this study:

3.4.1 Perceived Parental Autonomy Support Scale (PPASS)

Perceived Parental Autonomy Support Scale (Mageau et al., 2015) is used to measure the extent to which parents provide their children with autonomy. It includes items related to three controlling behaviors i.e. criticism that induce guilt, pressure to perform and punishment threats, and three behaviors that support autonomy i.e. reasoning, choice and feelings acknowledgement. The scale consists of 24 items with 4 items associated with each of the six behaviors. Its score ranges from 24 to 168. Every item is rated on a 7-point scale that goes from 1 (Do not agree at all) to 7 (Very strongly agree). The scale is valid as well as reliable for people of different ethnic origins. The scale predicts overall self-efficacy and exhibits strong internal consistency.

3.4.2 Perceived Peer Pressure Scale

Perceived Peer Pressure Scale (Palani & Mani, 2016) measure the extent to which individuals are vulnerable to pressure from peers. This scale consists of 30 items and three dimensions i.e. Resistance towards peer pressure with 13 items, Peer pressure yielding with 11 items and encouragement by peer with 6 items. The items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree associated with five scores to strongly disagree associated with one score. In this regard, higher scores indicate a greater level of peer pressure, and lower scores indicate lower level of peer pressure. Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for this scale was 0.94. The value for validity and reliability for this scale predicts that the scale is valid in terms of application.

3.4.3 Self-concept Clarity Scale

Self-Concept Clarity Scale (Campbell et al., 1996) measures if a person's perceptions about their own characteristics are consistent internally, stable across time, and clearly defined. This scale evaluates self-concept clarity as a component of how people organize, perceive, and maintain their self-concept. It is a 12-item scale in which higher scores indicate a clearer and more stable sense of self. These items are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 indicating strongly disagree to 5 indicating strongly agree. The alpha reliability coefficient of this scale on average is .86. Examination of psychometric properties provided strong evidence for high internal consistency and factorial integrity suggest that the scale measure single characteristic.

3.5 Procedure

After analyzing the importance of the current study topic, it was selected with the help of supervisor. Permissions were taken from the author of every scale that was going to be used in the study. Purposive sampling strategy was used, according to which, only young adults aged 18-24 and only Pakistani

individuals were included in the research. Permissions were taken from all the relevant authorities. Initially, pilot study was done using a sample of 6 participants. The concerns that were raised by the participants during pilot study were noted and which were further addressed in the main study. The data obtained from pilot study was entered into SPSS and reliability of all scales was generated to check if these scales are reliable to use in the main study. After conducting pilot study, the main study was initiated. Data was collected after explaining the exclusion and inclusion criteria to participants. The purpose of the research was explained to the participants. Participants were ensured that the data he/she provides will only be used for study purposes and no confidentiality of participant will be breached in the research process. After collecting data, it was entered into SPSS and further quantitative analysis was done which led to the results of the study.

4. RESULTS

Current research was conducted to explore the relationship between Perceived parental autonomy, Peer Influence and Perceived Self-Concept in Young Adults. The data was analyzed through following inferential statistical analysis. First of all, reliability analysis was administered to figure out psychometric properties of scales that were employed in the current research. In second step, Pearson product moment correlation was run to examine the relation among study variables i.e. Perceived parental autonomy, Peer Influence and Perceived Self-Concept and also the demographic variables that were assumed to be correlated with the study variables. After that, an independent sample t-test was run to see any gender differences. Lastly, Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted.

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 1: Psychometric properties for the Scales used in the study

Scales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Cronbach's α
Perceived Parental Autonomy Support Scale (Mother)	116.66	20.51	55-160	.862
Perceived parental Autonomy Support Scale (Father)	115.59	20.49	55-160	.857
Perceived Peer Pressure Scale	91.53	14.47	44-130	.793
Self-concept Clarity Scale	35.24	9.11	19-56	.868

Note. α =reliability coefficient; *M*= Mean; *SD*=Standard Deviation

Reliability coefficient of the scales as well as descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, actual and potential range are reported in table 4.1. Findings through reliability analysis propose that these scales are reliable measures for assessing perceived parental autonomy, peer influence and perceived self-concept in young adults.

4.1 Correlation Analysis of Study Variables

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables (N=200)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	21.87	.85	—				
2. Perceived Parental Autonomy (Mother)	116.66	20.51	-.060	—			
3. Perceived Parental Autonomy (Father)	115.59	20.49	-.123	.895**	—		
4. Peer Influence	91.53	14.47	.139*	-.119	-.141*	—	
5. Perceived Self-Concept	35.24	9.11	-.003	.165*	.137	-.334**	—

Note. *M*=Mean; *SD*= Standard Deviation * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Results revealed that perceived parental autonomy from mother does not significantly co-relate with peer influence but correlates positively with perceived self-concept. The perceived paternal autonomy found to

be not correlated with perceived self-concept, however, it is negatively correlated with peer influence. There was a noteworthy negative correlation between peer influence and perceived self-concept.

4.3 Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Table 3: Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Study Variables (N=200)

Variables	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R ²	ΔR^2
		LL	UL				
Step 1						.004	.004
Constant	33.47***	29.13	37.81	2.20			
Gender	1.11	-1.49	3.70	1.32	.06		
Step 2						.029	.025
Constant	26.62***	18.87	34.37	3.93			
Gender	.44	-2.28	3.16	1.38	.02		
TPPASM	.098	-.04	.23	.07	.22		
TPPASF	-.03	-.17	.11	.07	-.07		
Step 3						.131	.102***
Constant	48.61***	36.95	60.27	5.91			
Gender	-.62	-3.23	1.99	1.32	-.03		
TPPASM	.10	-.03	.23	.07	.23		
TPPASF	-.05	-.18	.09	.07	-.10		
TPPS	-.21***	-.29	-.12	.04	-.33***		

Note: CI=Confidence Interval; LL= Lower Limit; UL; Upper Limit; TPPASM= Total Perceived Parental Autonomy Scale (Mother); TPPASF=Total Perceived Parental Autonomy Scale (Father), TPPS= Total Peer Pressure Scale *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Findings reveal that step 1 explained 0.4% variance on perceived self -concept. As the result of step 1 is non-significant, this suggests that gender doesn't significantly predict perceived self-concept in young adults. Perceived parental autonomy from mother and perceived parental autonomy from father were introduced into the model in Block 2. The model fit is enhanced a bit by this inclusion, which is explained by 2.9% of the variance on perceived self-concept. This suggests that perceived parental autonomy from mother as well as from father does predict perceived self-concept but, it is not the significant predictor. Peer Influence is added into the model in step 3 which is other independent variable of our research apart from perceived parental autonomy. The model fit is enhanced greatly by this new addition, which is explained by 13.1% of the variance on perceived self-concept. Peer influence is a substantial and strong negative predictor in this block suggesting that lower levels of peer influence are associated with higher perceived self-concept.

4.4 Independent Sample t-test

Table 4: Independent sample t-test exploring gender difference across study variables

Variables	Males		Females		t(198)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Perceived Parental Autonomy (mother)	110.14	19.39	121.01	20.15	-3.79***	.000	.55
Perceived Parental Autonomy (father)	107.74	18.32	120.83	20.25	-4.65***	.000	.68
Peer Influence	95.09	15.55	89.15	13.24	2.895**	.004	.41
Perceived Self-concept	34.58	9.62	35.68	8.77	-.84	.401	.12

Note. M=Mean; SD= Standard Deviation *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Results of the independent sample t-test revealed that there is significant gender difference in perceived maternal autonomy as well as perceived paternal autonomy with women experiencing higher level of autonomy from mother as well as from fathers as compared to the men. There is also significant gender

difference in peer influence, revealing that men experience higher level of peer influence than women. However, in case of Perceived Self-concept, non-significant difference was found between men and women.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to explore the relationship between perceived parental autonomy, peer influence and perceived self-concept in young adults. The study result revealed that the perceived autonomy from mother is related to self-concept in young adults, however, perceived paternal autonomy is not related with perceived self-concept. This was consistent with the research findings of Najam and Bhutto (2023), which revealed that a significant effect of the maternal relationship was found on self-concept but there was no apparent impact of the relationship with father to the self-concept. The second finding of our study is that there is a significant negative relationship between perceived paternal autonomy and peer influence which is again consistent with previous findings that individuals who reported greater parental autonomy support were also more likely to resist peer influence (Wang & Kaufman, 2024). The next result of the study is that there is likely to be a significant negative relationship between peer influence and perceived self-concept in young adults, coinciding with existing literature suggesting that those with a self-concept that is low, are more likely to get influenced by negative peer pressure (Nagar & Nagar, 2020).

The result of prediction indicating that the independent variable, i.e. peer influence negatively predicts self-concept, also concurs with already conducted research by Sultan et al., (2023) that relationships with peers is 6% predictor of and individual's self-concept revealing that self-concept has a negative relation with peer relationships. The results of perceived parental autonomy not being a predictor of perceived self-concept was also in accordance with previous study conducted on a similar topic which suggests that parent child interaction played no observable role in the self-concept of young adults (Khalid et al., 2024). Next result revealed that gender of the participant doesn't significantly predict perceived self-concept in young adults which is consistent with the research conducted by Waghmare (2018) indicating that male and female's self-concepts are not different significantly.

The next result indicates that parental autonomy both from mother and father are perceived more by females as compared to perceived by males which are again in accordance with research conducted by Imam and Singh (2019) which reveals that males perceive higher level of rejection from parents i.e. less autonomy as compared to females. Next, we can see our research results reveal that there is significant gender difference in peer influence with males experiencing higher level of peer influence as compared to females that concur simultaneously with existing literature that boys exhibit higher level of peer attachment as compared to women (Safdar & Zahrah, 2016). The result for self-concept states that there is no significant gender difference in perceived self-concept, showing consistency with previous research which indicates that there is no gender difference in self-concept (Ostgård-Ybrandt & Armelius, 2004). Overall, the study contributes to existing studies by highlighting the important role of perceived parental autonomy and peer influence in shaping the view of how a person perceives his self-concept. It helped understanding gender differences in several phenomenon, also providing insights for developing such interventions that could enable individuals to maintain their self-concept at certain level despite the outward influences.

6. CONCLUSION

The outcomes of the current study indicate that there is a positive correlation between perceived maternal autonomy and perceived self-concept, but it doesn't correlate with peer influence. There is a negative correlation between perceived paternal autonomy and peer influence, but it doesn't correlate with perceived self-concept. The peer influence and perceived self-concept also have a correlation that is negative. The prediction analysis through hierarchical regression revealed that gender, perceived paternal autonomy and perceived maternal autonomy doesn't predict self-concept. But peer influence does predict self-concept but negatively. The research study revealed that there is significant gender difference in case

of perceived parental autonomy, both for mother as well as for father, and peer influence. However, no gender differences were reported in case of perceived self-concept.

6.1 Limitation

- The data was also collected during Ramzan and fasting could have influenced participant's responses.
- Participants reported that questionnaire was too long, this reaction indicates that they might get fatigued while filling out it which could have also influenced their response.
- The scales were designed by non-natives so the scale might include certain points that are not congruent to Pakistani culture.
- Most of the participants were from urban backgrounds who have more autonomy in making decisions from parents and are more exposed to several peer groups as compare to those from rural backgrounds. So, findings might not be generalizable to more rural communities.

6.2 Recommendations

- The two scales of the study were very long that might reduce motivation for completing the questionnaire. Such scales need to be designed that are relatively shorter in length and are able to maintain the interest of the participant till the end.
- The research that compares the response from a collectivist culture of Pakistan and individualistic culture of USA could also be conducted to unveil cultural difference.
- In-depth interviews with focused groups can provide insights into young adults' perceptions of parental autonomy, peer influence, and self-concept in daily life.
- Future longitudinal research could be done to track changes that might occur in perceived parental autonomy, peer influence and perceived self-concept over the period of time.

The study indicates that as peer influence increases with age, such strategies should be designed that serve to develop resilience among individuals moving towards young adulthood. As the study indicates gender difference regarding perceived parental autonomy, this would make parents more aware of employing strategies in parenting style that leads to reduction in such differences. This study informs about developing such programs that empowers youth in educational institutions that help in management of maintaining peer relationships and self-concept at certain levels. This would also provide basis for studying these study variables in the subcultures of Pakistan or other cultures and also for additional longitudinal studies

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Conflict of Interest

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