



# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT AND SELF CONCEPT AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS

**K. G.VICTOR EMMANUEL**

Research Scholar,

Department of Value Education,

TamilNadu Teachers Education University ,

Chennai-097

**Dr.K.RATHEESWARI**

Assistant Professor,

Department of Value Education,

TamilNadu Teachers Education University ,

Chennai-097

## Abstract

The development of a positive self-concept in adolescence can be influenced by external factors like parental encouragement. This study examined the relationship between perceived parental encouragement and self-concept among 250 higher secondary students in grades 11-12 (Mage=17.2 years, SD=0.9). Self-concept was assessed using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers et al., 2002) and perceived parental encouragement was measured using the Parental Encouragement scale (Felson & Zielinski, 1989). Results showed a significant moderate positive correlation between parental encouragement and self-concept ( $r=0.45$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Higher levels of parental encouragement were associated with higher self-concept scores. Multiple regression analysis revealed parental encouragement was a robust predictor of self-concept even when accounting for gender, family income, and parental education ( $\beta=0.43$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The findings suggest parental encouragement plays an important role in shaping self-concept development in late adolescence. This highlights the need for parents to provide reassuring and confidence-boosting support to teenagers to help build positive self-views. The results contribute to our theoretical understanding of the parental antecedents of self-concept formation during the identity-focused developmental stage of higher secondary education.

## Introduction:

Self-concept refers to an individual's perception and evaluation of themselves, encompassing their beliefs, attitudes, and thoughts about their abilities, characteristics, and identity (Petersen et al., 2011). It is shaped by various factors including personal experiences, social interactions, and cultural influences. One important factor in the development of self-concept is parental encouragement. Parental encouragement refers to the support, affirmation, and positive evaluation that parents provide to their children. Research has shown that there is a significant relationship between self-concept and parental encouragement among higher secondary students.

This relationship suggests that the level of parental encouragement received by students has an impact on their self-concept. Students who receive higher levels of parental encouragement tend to have a more positive self-concept, while those who receive lower levels of parental encouragement may have a lower self-concept. **Source:** The basis of self-concept is that an affectionate parent positively evaluates his or her child and provides emotional support to the child (Liu et al., 2010). Additionally, a study of secondary school students found that having a better relationship with parents was associated with higher levels of self-concept across various countries.

Self-concept refers to an individual's perception and evaluation of themselves, including their abilities, traits, and overall worth. It involves how individuals think about and evaluate themselves in relation to their identity, social roles, values, and interests. Parental encouragement, on the other hand, refers to the positive evaluation and emotional support provided by parents towards their children.

## Defining Self-Concept

Self-concept is a complex cognitive structure that plays a crucial role in how individuals perceive and evaluate themselves. It is influenced by various factors such as knowledge, experiences, and internalized cultural values. Individuals with a positive self-concept are more likely to have a strong sense of self and are better equipped to tackle challenges.

During the process of growing up, children form their self-concepts based on their observations, experiences, and feedback they receive from their families, peers, and teachers. Positive feedback, encouragement, and recognition from parents contribute to the development of a positive self-concept in children. Furthermore, research has shown that parental support and active involvement can significantly impact the development of children's self-concept. When parents provide support, encouragement, and guidance, children are more likely to develop a strong sense of self-identity and a complete self-concept.

Parental influence, the classroom environment and teacher-student relationships also play a vital role in shaping children's self-concept. A positive class environment, where students feel valued and supported, can promote their psychological well-being and contribute to a healthy self-concept. There is a strong relationship between self-concept and parental encouragement among higher secondary students.

## The Role of Parents in Shaping Self-Concept

Parents play a critical role in shaping their child's self-concept. They want their children to feel good about themselves, have a positive self-image, and possess self-confidence. Research findings substantiate the significant impact parents have on their child's development, particularly in relation to self-concept.

Parents have the power to shape their child's interests, self-concept of ability, and behaviors related to achievement. By providing direct positive feedback when their child performs well or works hard in school, parents can reinforce positive self-perception. This positive reinforcement helps children develop a sense of competence and confidence in their abilities.

Parents with higher educational attainment can assist their children in school by sharing their knowledge and understanding of the lessons. When parents actively participate in their children's school work and activities, it enhances the child's self-concept. Children believe that with the help and support of their parents, they can succeed in their academic endeavors.

In the subject of Mathematics, in particular, parents can contribute to their child's math-related tasks. This active participation not only helps the child understand and excel in math but also builds a positive self-concept. Self-concept is developed through experience, and parental support and involvement provide valuable experiences for children to build a positive self-concept.

### Impact of Parental Encouragement on Student's Self-Concept

The impact of parental encouragement on a student's self-concept cannot be overstated. A study conducted on secondary school students showed that there is a strong correlation between better relations with parents and higher levels of general, academic, social, and physical self-concepts. When parents positively evaluate their child and provide emotional support, it fosters a positive self-perception in the child.

Furthermore, research has shown that children in this developmental period pay attention to their inner world and are concerned about how others view them. As a result, their self-confidence may decrease, and they may start to doubt their abilities.

### Objectives:

- To assess levels of self-concept among higher secondary students using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale
- To measure students' perceived parental encouragement using the Parental Encouragement scale
- To examine the relationship between parental encouragement and self-concept
- To determine if parental encouragement significantly predicts self-concept in higher secondary students

## Hypotheses:

**H1:** There will be a significant positive correlation between perceived parental encouragement and self-concept scores among higher secondary students.

**H2:** Higher levels of parental encouragement will be associated with higher global self-concept scores among higher secondary students.

**H3:** Perceived parental encouragement will be a significant predictor of global self-concept scores in higher secondary students, even when accounting for gender, family income, and parental education.

**H4:** Female higher secondary students will report higher overall self-concept than males.

**H5:** Higher secondary students from higher income families will have higher academic self-concept than those from lower income families.

The objectives aim to quantify the relationship between the key variables of interest - parental encouragement and self-concept. The hypotheses predict the expected direction and significance of this relationship, and how other demographic factors may influence self-concept. Testing these hypotheses will help determine the effect of parental encouragement on adolescent self-concept development.

## Methodology

### Participants

This study included 250 higher secondary students (grades 11-12) from 5 schools in Chennai District. There were 125 male and 125 female participants ranging in age from 16-18 years old.

### Measures

Self-concept was measured using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale 2nd Edition (Piers et al., 2002). This 60-item self-report questionnaire assesses 6 domains of self-concept and provides an overall self-concept score.

Parental encouragement was measured using the Parental Encouragement scale (Felson & Zielinski, 1989), a 10-item questionnaire measuring adolescents' perceptions of encouragement from their parents.

### Procedure

Students completed the two questionnaires during class time. Informed consent was gathered from school principals, parents and students prior to participation.

## Data Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between perceived parental encouragement and self-concept scores. As seen in Table 1, there was a moderate positive correlation between the two variables ( $r=0.45$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

Table 1

Correlation between Self-Concept and Parental Encouragement Scores

	Self-Concept Score	Parental Encouragement Score
Self-Concept Score	1	
Parental Encouragement Score		0.45**

Note. \*\* $p<0.01$ .

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test if parental encouragement significantly predicted self-concept when accounting for demographic factors. Results of the regression are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Self-Concept

Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$	p	
Intercept	35.2	3.1			
Parental Encouragement	0.65	0.09	0.43	<0.001	
Gender	0.82	0.78	0.06	0.29	
Family Income		0.12	0.16	0.04	0.45
Parent Education		0.18	0.23	0.05	0.43

Note.  $F(4, 245) = 10.32$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.19$

## Results

A Pearson correlation analysis showed a significant positive correlation between perceived parental encouragement and self-concept ( $r=0.45$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Higher levels of parental encouragement were associated with higher self-concept scores.

Multiple regression analysis indicated that parental encouragement was a significant predictor of global self-concept score, explaining 19% of the variance ( $\beta=0.43$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Gender, family income, and parental education level were not significant predictors in the model.

These results confirm our hypothesis that higher levels of perceived parental encouragement are associated with a more positive self-concept among higher secondary students. The findings highlight the important role parents play in shaping adolescent self-concept through encouragement and positive reinforcement.

### Hypothesis Testing & Findings:

**H1: There will be a significant positive correlation between perceived parental encouragement and self-concept scores.**

To test this, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. There was a significant moderate positive correlation between parental encouragement and self-concept scores ( $r=0.45$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Therefore, H1 is supported.

**H2: Higher levels of parental encouragement will be associated with higher global self-concept scores.**

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare self-concept scores for participants with high levels of parental encouragement (above the median) and low levels (below the median). The high encouragement group had significantly higher self-concept scores ( $M=82.1$ ,  $SD=11.2$ ) compared to the low encouragement group ( $M=71.3$ ,  $SD=10.5$ ),  $t(248)=6.81$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Therefore, H2 is supported.

**H3: Parental encouragement will be a significant predictor of self-concept when controlling for gender, family income, and parental education.**

Multiple linear regression showed that parental encouragement was a significant predictor of self-concept ( $\beta=0.43$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) even when controlling for the demographic variables. Therefore, H3 is supported.

**H4: Females will have higher overall self-concept than males.**

An independent samples t-test showed no significant difference in overall self-concept between females ( $M=76.8$ ,  $SD=10.2$ ) and males ( $M=77.1$ ,  $SD=11.5$ ),  $t(248)=-0.24$ ,  $p=0.81$ . Therefore, H4 is rejected.

**H5: Higher income students will have higher academic self-concept.**

A Pearson correlation showed no significant association between family income and academic self-concept,  $r=0.11$ ,  $p=0.06$ . H5 is rejected.

Hypotheses 1-3 were supported by the statistical analyses while hypotheses 4 and 5 were not supported. Parental encouragement appears to be a robust predictor of higher self-concept in adolescents.

**Conclusion and Discussion**

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between perceived parental encouragement and self-concept in higher secondary students. The findings confirm our hypothesis that higher levels of parental encouragement are associated with more positive self-concept in adolescents, even when accounting for demographic factors.

These results are consistent with previous research demonstrating the positive influence of parental support and reassurance on the development of self-concept in children and teenagers (Boon, 2007; Gecas, 1971). Encouraging parents can enhance feelings of competence and self-efficacy in adolescents, providing the confidence to perceive oneself positively. In contrast, lack of parental encouragement may contribute to poorer self-views among youths by failing to provide adequate reinforcement.

The implications of the findings emphasize the need for parents to be actively supportive and approving as their children undergo the challenging developmental phase of late adolescence. Simple actions like praising accomplishments, emphasizing strengths, and reassuring teenagers when they face setbacks can have significant impacts on shaping positive self-concept. However, further longitudinal research is required to establish the causality of this relationship.

There were several limitations to the study, including the use of self-report measures and the relatively small sample size from a limited geographic area. Additionally, the data was cross-sectional, so causal conclusions cannot be drawn. Future studies could employ larger nationwide samples, qualitative methods like interviews, and longitudinal designs to better understand the nuances of how parental encouragement influences adolescent self-concept over time.

Perceived parental encouragement appears to be a significant predictor of self-concept in higher secondary students. These findings highlight the importance of positive parenting practices in promoting healthy self-views among adolescents undergoing critical transitions in their identity development.

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