

**The relationship between authoritative parenting styles, sense of autonomy, and self-esteem in adolescents**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the association between authoritative parenting styles, autonomy, and self-esteem of adolescents. It is hypothesized that the positive relation between authoritative parenting and self-esteem in adolescents is mediated by autonomy in adolescents. The data was obtained through self-evaluation surveys conducted among adolescents for the constructs of autonomy and self-esteem, and through observation of parent-child interactions for the construct authoritativeness. Participants were Dutch (96.7%), adolescents (50% girls and boys;  $M_{Age} = 11.5$ ), in transition from primary to secondary education, and their parents (85% mothers,  $M_{age} = 44$ ). Although the mediation analysis shows a significant positive relationship between autonomy and self-esteem, such is not the case for the hypothesized positive relation between authoritativeness and self-esteem and authoritativeness and autonomy. There was also no indirect effect found in this research, and thus no mediation. For practitioners in the field of youth care, insights into the relation between autonomy and self-esteem can be useful in improving treatment protocols for adolescents with autonomy and self-esteem issues. It is recommended that future research takes this study further over a longer time to obtain longitudinal data.

*Keywords:* autonomy, self-esteem, authoritativeness, parenting styles

## Introduction

### Parenting style and Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is an overall assessment of individuals' value towards themselves. Individuals with high self-esteem have an overall positive evaluation of themselves, respect themselves and consider themselves at least equal in worth to others (Rosenberg, 1979). Individuals who feel accepted and valued by others often demonstrate a high level of self-esteem (Jun et al., 2013). For children, the relationship with their parents forms an important interpersonal bond, and parental warmth is directly related to a child's closeness to others, feelings of satisfaction in relations, and acceptance by peers (Liu & Kuo, 2007).

A meta-analysis of 116 studies by Pinquart & Gerke (2019) showed that parenting style and self-esteem are related. Proponents claim that authoritative parenting is most beneficial for a child's and an adolescent's development across contexts and cultures (Sanvictores & Mendes., 2021). Pinquart & Gerke (2019) indeed found small to moderate positive associations between authoritative parenting with self-esteem in adolescents.

Authoritative parents are highly responsive to their children's needs but also set reasonable limits and demand mature behavior. Parental responsiveness refers to "the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands" (Baumrind, 1991, p. 62). Parental demandingness refers to "the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys" (Baumrind, 1991, pp. 61-62). To determine the level of authoritativeness, this study uses the dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness. To measure each dimension, insights from interpersonal theory were used (Jacobsen, 1955). Kiesler (1996) proposed that much of the most important variation in the way people treat each other occurs along two underlying, dimensions. When persons interact, they continually negotiate two major relationship issues: how friendly or hostile they will be with each other, and how much in charge or control each will be during their transactions. (Kiesler & Auerbach, 2003). Responsiveness in this study is measured by friendly versus hostile behavior. Demandingness is measured by dominant versus submissive behavior.

### Parenting Style and Autonomy

Autonomy is the ability of an individual to make their own decisions without being controlled by anyone else. Autonomy has many definitions and facets; however, two

conceptualizations of autonomy have dominated recent research in the context of adolescence. Firstly, notion of autonomy as “detachment from parents,” and secondly, as “freedom from social (largely parental) influence.” (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005, pp 589). These conceptualizations are linked because the notion of independence and separation is present in both.

Parenting styles differ with respect to autonomy. Several studies show that an authoritative style is related to a greater sense of autonomy in adolescents. For instance, a quantitative study by Karavasilis et al. (2003) among 202 children and 2012 adolescents, found that authoritative parenting contributes to a greater sense of autonomy in children. Cross-sectional and quantitative research among 381 adolescents by Szkody (2021) stated that supportive parenting with appropriate autonomy granting is a defining characteristic of authoritative parenting. This is in line with the conceptualization of the concept of autonomy by Bortz et al. (2019), who stated that authoritative parenting distinguishes itself from other parenting style by its promotion of adolescent autonomy. Steinberg (2001) stated that the combination of parental responsiveness and demandingness helps children develop self-regulation skills and fosters cognitive and social competence. In line with this, a cross-sectional study among 633 Chinese adolescents, (Bi et al., 2018) has shown that an authoritative parenting style is the most beneficial to youth, regarding fostering a healthy development of autonomy. Research from Kudo et al. (2012), where data from 245 adolescent boys and a few girls was collected, found that one of the main significant outcomes of authoritative parenting is the production of emotional autonomy in children.

### **Autonomy and Self-esteem**

The interrelation between autonomy and self-esteem is explained by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012). It considers a set of basic and universal psychological needs, namely those for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Fulfillment of these needs is considered necessary and essential to vital, healthy human functioning regardless of culture or stage of development (Ryan, 2009). Consequently, it argues that autonomy is essential for optimal development and functioning in adolescents (Pinquart & Gerke, 2019). Satisfying this need is also suggested to promote self-esteem because self-esteem is based on a solid inner (autonomous) sense of self rather than being dependent on whether or not one meets some external standards (Chirkov and Ryan, 2001; Deci and Ryan, 1995). This is in line with research by Kocayörük et al. (2015), who conducted a study among 500 Indonesian adolescents and found that autonomy is one of the most crucial

psychological needs regarding adolescent wellbeing (Kocayörük et al., 2015). Quantitative research from Alonso-Stuyck et al. (2018), among 567 Spanish adolescents, showed that if an adolescent is 'autonomous in making decisions' this is associated with higher levels of self-esteem. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that autonomy and self-esteem are closely related.

### **Authoritative Parenting, Autonomy, and Self-Esteem**

Research has demonstrated that authoritative parenting, autonomy, and self-esteem are related. According to a quantitative cross-sectional study among 20,748 students, authoritative parenting results in children who are confident, responsible, and able to self-regulate. (Pong et al., 2010). This is confirmed by cross-sectional quantitative research by Chirkov and Ryan (2001) among 236 high school students from Russia and the United States. They also observed that the highest level of self-esteem among children and adolescents is achieved by an authoritative parenting style.

However, the meta-analysis by Piquart & Gerke (2019), that provided results from 53,762 children and adolescents, concluded that correlations between parenting styles and child self-esteem cannot be interpreted as a pure effect of parenting styles and that this relation should be further researched. Other factors might explain the mechanism by which parenting-child relations influence a child's feeling of self-esteem. For instance, a cross-sectional study among 540 Iranian university students by Zakeri & Karimpoer (2017) suggests that parents who interact with their children in ways that support their feelings of autonomy, may be particularly effective in supporting an adolescent's self-esteem as well. This is also in line with three longitudinal studies by Duineveld et al. (2017), who conducted a quantitative study among 760 middle school students, 214 high school students and 858 post high school students. They also found perceived parental autonomy support was positively related to self-esteem.

### **Relevance**

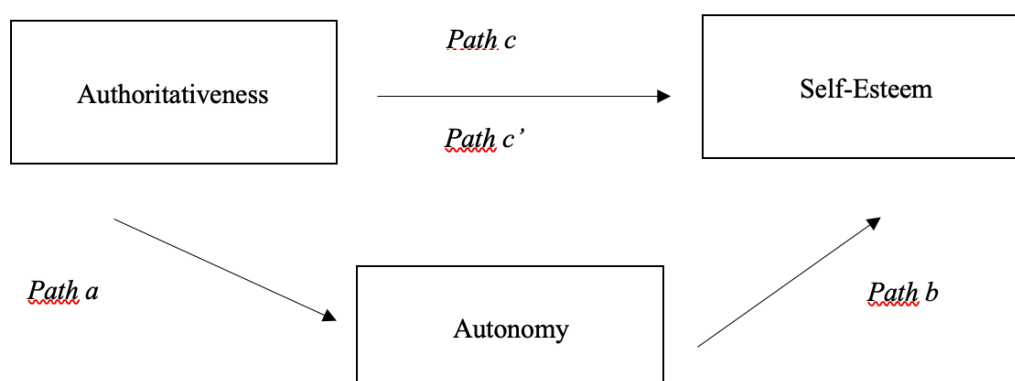
Possessing high self-esteem is often seen as a positive quality, and is associated with better mental health, academic success, proactive coping with stressors, and low levels of externalizing problems (Piquart & Gerke, 2019). It is also connected with a "feeling of self-appreciation" and good adaptation to society (Hosogi et al., 2012). Children with low self-esteem, on the other hand, are at risk of developing psychological and social problems such as anxiety and depression (Keane & Loades, 2017; Sowislo & Orth, 2013). Because of the positive consequences of high self-esteem and the negative consequences of low self-esteem,

a good understanding of the concept is of great importance. This is especially relevant for adolescents, because adolescence is an important developmental stage, with dynamic change across multiple systems. As adolescents neural, biological, and psychosocial functioning mature, they are highly sensitive to both negative and positive experiences (Sisk & Gee, 2023). Therefore, well-being is of great importance for a healthy development of adolescents, and a cohort study among 11,231 adolescents found that self-esteem can contribute to an adolescent's subjective sense of well-being (Katsantonis et al., 2023). This underlines the practical relevance of this study, as knowledge about the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem can provide youth workers and other practitioners that work with adolescents with more extensive protocols and frameworks to help increase an adolescent's self-esteem.

The scientific relevance is mediated by the fact that possible mediators of parenting styles and self-esteem have not yet been extensively researched, and thus there is still a lot of uncertainty with regards to the mediation of the relation between authoritativeness and self-esteem (Pinquart & Gerke, 2019). As a result, the research question "Is there a relationship between an authoritative parenting style and self-esteem, mediated by autonomy in adolescents?" was drafted (figure 1).

### Figure 1

*A visual representation of the hypothesized effects*



This study examined the association between authoritative parenting styles, autonomy and self-esteem. It was expected that there would be a positive relation between authoritative

parenting and autonomy in the adolescent (path a), a positive relation between autonomy and self-esteem in the adolescent (path b), a positive effect of authoritative parenting on self-esteem in the adolescent (path c), and lastly an indirect effect of autonomy in the adolescent (path c'). Therefore, a positive relation between authoritativeness and self-esteem, mediated by autonomy, was expected.

## Methods

### Design and participants

The study was conducted with data from the study InTransition, a study that was conducted between 2019 and 2021 (thus including the COVID-19 period). For this study, only data from the first wave (obtained in autumn 2019), was used. Data from this wave were chosen, as these were not influenced by the pandemic and lockdown imposed by the Dutch government. Within this study, 250 adolescents were followed during their transition from primary to secondary school. Besides the adolescents, data was also obtained from a parent, a spouse or partner of the participating parent and (best) friends of the adolescent. As a result, a comprehensive view of the adolescents and their environment was obtained.

The average age of the participants at the start of the study was 11 years. Of the participants, most were of Dutch descent (96.7%), the other 3.3% were mainly divided over Antillean, Moroccan or Surinamese origin. With regards to gender, 50% of the participants identified as girl, and 50% identified as boy. Socioeconomic status (SES) was measured by asking participants to compare themselves to rest of the country, on a scale from 1 (much worse) to 10 (much better) The result was relatively high, as they gave their SES an average of 7.7.

During Wave 1, parents were on average 44.2 years old. Of the participating parents, 85% were mothers. Most adolescents (80.4%) reported living with both parents, whereas 12.9% reported not living with both parents (6.7% missing). Most fathers (90.4%), and mothers (89.2%) were born in the Netherlands (Donker et al., 2021).

### Procedure

This research was conducted with data from the scientific study InTransition from Utrecht University. The study was aimed at better understanding how young people fare when they transfer from primary to secondary school, how and why these experiences differ between young people. The main aim of the study is to learn more about how to help young

people with this transition, if necessary. Before conducting the study, approval was asked by the and granted by Faculty Ethics Review Committee (FETC) of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Utrecht University.

Dutch primary schools were contacted to recruit adolescents. If schools were interested in participating, information was sent to the adolescents and their parents, and the project was pitched at the school. Adolescents were asked to contact the researchers if they were interested in participating. In 85% of the cases, there were five or less participants per school, and when there were more these participants were mostly from different classes (Bernasco et al., 2023). Before the research was conducted, informed consent of the parents and adolescents was obtained. After this, questionnaire and video data were collected in person from adolescents and their parents. The survey and video data were collected in a home setting, as the researchers visited the participants at home to collect data. For the InTransition research, participants filled out questionnaires on background, personality, behavior and emotions, social relationships and COVID. To make sure the data was handled ethically, a thesis agreement was also signed.

## **Measures**

### *Authoritativeness*

To assess parenting style, adolescents and their parents were observed during a conflict task. They had to discuss a conflict they recently had and find a solution together in 5 minutes. This task was videotaped at home. A researcher was present to explain the task but left the room while the participants discussed the conflict. This observational method was used because of the objectivity. Examples of dominant behavior include directing the interaction, speaking forcefully, and telling the other person what to do. Examples of more submissive behavior include following the other person, yielding to the other person's demands, and expressing helplessness. Examples of responsive behavior include approaching (literally or figuratively), making eye contact, laughing, supporting, or complimenting the other person. Examples of cold or unfriendly behavior include looking away, turning away, not responding when asked to do something, and verbal communication such as mean and sarcastic remarks.

After the conflict task, the videos of the tasks were analyzed and coded by 3 researchers, focusing on the behavior of the parents. For this, a figure with friendly and unfriendly behavior on the X-axis and dominant and submissive behavior on the Y-axis was used (figure 2) (Lizdek et al., 2012), so the researchers could continuously indicate what

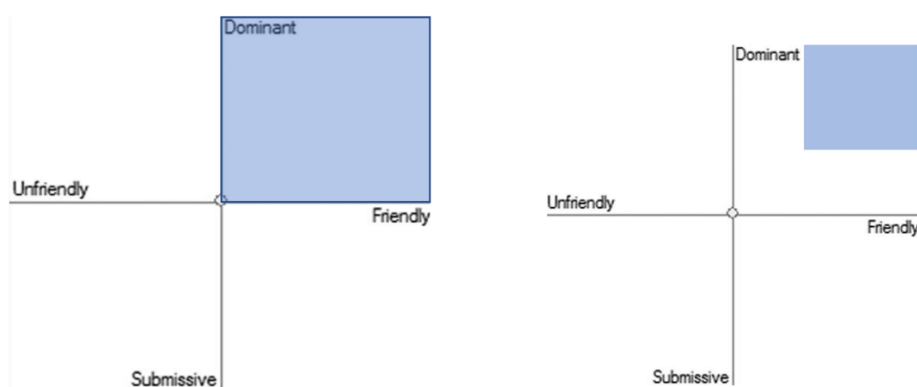


behavior occurred. With regards to reliability, for moment-to-moment responsiveness and demandingness, interrater reliabilities that vary from .60 to .77 were found in previous research. And for the mean overall level of responsiveness and demandingness, this varied from .78 to .92. (Lizdek et al., 2012). However, for  $N=13$  of the parents, the scores differed to the point it compromised the interrater reliability and resulted in a negative Cronbach's alpha for the videos. Thus, these scores were removed from the study. For the other parents in this study, this resulted in Cronbach's alpha of .58 for the scores on the Y-axis and .59 for the scores on the X-axis.

When the behavior of the parents falls into the quadrant that combines friendliness & dominance, this is interpreted as an authoritative parenting style. The final score is the percentage of time the behavior of the parent falls into this quadrant. However, as the participating parents scored high on authoritativeness, if the whole quadrant was used, this would result in a mean of 89%. Meaning that approximately 89% of the behavior of the parents would fall into the quadrant. To avoid the lack of spreading of scores, the amount of time in percentage that parents scored in the right upper quadrant was used to conduct the analysis was reduced to a smaller area as can be seen in demonstrated in figure 2. This area is 16% of the first right upper quadrant. This results in a maximum possible score of 100 and minimum possible score of 0.

## Figure 2

*A visual representation of authoritativeness in this study*



## *Autonomy*

Adolescents filled out the Perceived Choice and Awareness scale (Sheldon, 1995) to assess feelings of autonomy. This scale includes five items addressing the extent to which

individuals feel they have influence over their own choices and have a conscious view of themselves. These items are answered on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always). Example items are “I always feel in charge of choosing the Things I do.” and “I choose to do what I need to do.”. The scale has good internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .85 to .93 in numerous samples) and adequate test-retest reliability ( $r = .77$  over an eight-week period) (Sheldon et al., 1996). For this sample the Cronbach’s alpha for autonomy is .84.

### ***Self-esteem***

To measure self-esteem, adolescents filled out the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 2012; Treffers et al., 2004; Wichstrøm, 1995). This scale includes 20 items to address the amount of self-esteem the adolescent has, which are answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (completely not true) to 5 (completely true). The scale has 4 subcategories that all consist of 5 items: global self-esteem, physical self-esteem, social acceptance, and close friendships. Examples of items are “I am often disappointed in myself”, “I am not satisfied with the way I live” and “I am quite satisfied with myself”. Items that measure a negative sense of self were recoded. Scores on all 20 items were combined to an average score. With regards to reliability, research from Harter et al. (2012), shows a Cronbach’s alpha differing between .74 and .92 for four samples and good face validity, factorial validity, and construct validity. For this research, the Cronbach’s alpha was .85.

### **Analysis**

This research knows three variables, the independent variable is authoritativeness (ratio level), the dependent variable is self-esteem (interval level), and the mediator is autonomy (interval level). Within this study, it was measured if there was a full mediation in place, because there is a hypothesized direct and indirect effect in place. To establish a full mediation, there are four conditions that need to be met (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Firstly, the independent variable must be significantly related to the dependent variable, so it was assessed if the direct effect between the predictor variable *authoritativeness* and outcome variable *self-esteem* is significant. Secondly, the independent variable must be related to the mediator, so it was assessed whether the link between *authoritativeness* and *autonomy* is significant. Thirdly, the mediator should remain a significant predictor of dependent variable, so the effect of *autonomy* on *self-esteem* was assessed on significance. Lastly, the independent variable should no longer significantly predict dependent variable. So, lastly the

indirect effect of *authoritativeness* on *self-esteem* via mediator variable *autonomy* was checked (Uedufy, 2022). If all four conditions are met, full mediation is supported. In the case of partial mediation, an authoritativeness has both direct and indirect effects on self-esteem. These associations were tested by conducting a data mediation analysis with PROCESS (Hayes, 2017), in SPSS (IBM Corp., 2020). PROCESS uses bootstrapping methods to determine estimate indirect effects and estimates quantities about a population by averaging estimates from multiple small data samples. To examine both direct and indirect effects in the mediation model, bootstrapped intervals of the mediation models were used. For this, 5000 bootstrap -samples and 95% confidence intervals were used (Field, 2018). The effect size ( $R^2$ ) is determined according to the following thresholds,  $R^2 = 0.01$  is a small effect,  $R^2 = 0.06$  is a medium effect;  $R^2 = 0.14$  is a large effect. A  $p =$  value of  $<.05$  was used to assess significance. (Field, 2018). To conduct a mediation analysis, the variables must be continuous, so mean total scores were used.

### Assumptions

The first assumption that needed to be met was that the data were obtained randomly and thus everyone in the population had an equal chance to participate in the sample. This was met; however, schools and adolescents could opt not to participate.

The assumption of multicollinearity was met. This was shown by the *Tolerance* = 1.00 and *VIF* value of 1.00. The *VIF* value is  $< 10$  and the *Tolerance*  $> 0.10$ , which means that there is no multicollinearity. Also, the residuals must be uncorrelated. This is measured by the Durbin Watson test, where the result must be  $> 1$  or  $< 3$ . In this study, this value is 2.51, so this assumption is also met. The histogram shows that the data are relatively normally distributed. There are also no unexpected outliers with regards to self-esteem and autonomy scores in the scatterplot. Therefore, scores did not need to be removed and the assumption of homoscedasticity was fulfilled for these factors. With regards to authoritativeness, scores with a negative Cronbach's alpha were removed. Finally, linearity was also confirmed by making a scatter plot. Thus, all assumptions were met, and the mediation analysis could be performed.

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics are portrayed in table 1. Table 1 shows that adolescents scored high with regards to self-esteem, as the mean is 4.1 out of 5. The participating

adolescents also score quite high with regards to autonomy. The descriptive statistics also show that approximately half of the behaviors of the parents were coded as authoritative.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Adolescents' Autonomy, Self-Esteem and Authoritativeness*

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Autonomy	238	5.6	0.9	2.0	7.0
Self Esteem	240	4.1	0.5	2.6	5.0
Authoritativeness	218	49.7%	27.6	0	100

### **Authoritativeness, Autonomy, and Self-Esteem**

To examine the relationship between authoritativeness, self-esteem and the possible mediating role of autonomy, a mediation analysis using PROCESS was conducted (Hayes, 2017). The relationships are shown in Figure 3. Authoritativeness and autonomy explained 5.1% of the variance in self-esteem,  $R^2 = .05$ ,  $F(2,205) = 5.52$ ,  $p < .005$ . This indicates a small effect. A significant  $F$ -test entails that it can be concluded that  $R^2$  does not equal zero, and the correlation between the combination of authoritativeness and autonomy with self-esteem is statistically significant. The effect of authoritativeness on self-esteem (path  $c$ ), was not statistically significant,  $b = -.002$ ,  $t(208) = -0.03$ ,  $p = .98$ , 95% CI [-0.002,0.002]. Also, the direct effect of authoritativeness on self-esteem, not corrected for autonomy as a mediator (path  $c'$ ), was not significant,  $b = .00$ ,  $t(208) = 0.01$ ,  $p = .99$ , 95% CI [-0.002,0.002]. This means that higher levels of authoritativeness were not associated with lower levels of self-esteem.

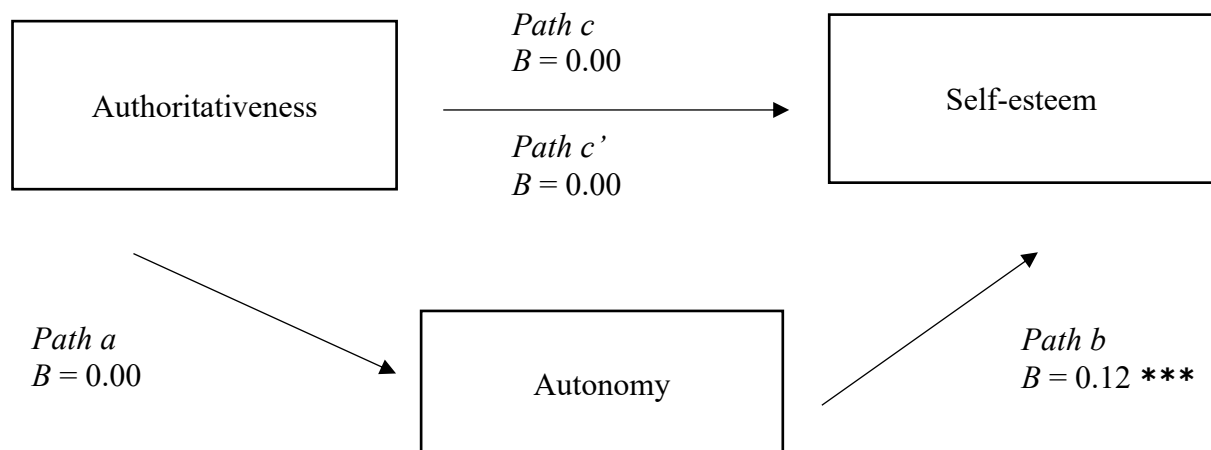
There was also no significant relationship between authoritativeness and autonomy,  $b = .01$ ,  $t(208) = 0.16$ ,  $p = .88$ , 95% CI [-0.004,0.004]. The association between autonomy and self-esteem was statistically significant and positive,  $b = 0.23$ ,  $t(208) = 3.32$ ,  $p < .005$ , 95% CI [-0.05,0.19] was found. This means that higher levels of autonomy are associated with higher levels of self-esteem.

The indirect effect of authoritativeness on self-esteem through autonomy was not statistically significant, as BootLLCI = -.001 and Boot ULCI = .001. This means the indirect effect of authoritativeness on self-esteem is not significant because the bootstrap confidence

interval does include zero. This means that the relationship between authoritativeness and self-esteem is not mediated by autonomy.

### Figure 3

*The total, direct and indirect effect of Authoritativeness on Self Esteem mediated by Autonomy.*



\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Discussion

### Findings

In this study, the question “Is there a relationship between an authoritative parenting style and self-esteem, mediated by autonomy in adolescents?” was researched. The sub-questions were whether there would be a positive relation between authoritativeness and autonomy, a positive relation between autonomy and self-esteem, a positive effect of authoritativeness on self-esteem, and lastly, if there would be an indirect effect of autonomy. The scientific aim of the study was to bridge the gap in knowledge surrounding possible mediations of the relation between parenting styles and self-esteem in adolescents. The practical aim of the study was helping practitioners in youth care get more insight in possible ways to address low self-esteem in adolescents.

The first sub-question hypothesized that there would be a positive relation between authoritativeness and autonomy. However, in this research, this is not the case. This is not in line with already existing literature about this relation (Milevsky et al., 2006; Pinquart &

Gerke, 2019; Bortz et al., 2019; Szkody, 2021). A possible explanation for this could be that adolescence is an important developmental stage with regards to autonomy. Autonomy is a complex and dynamic process that involves various levels of interaction and growth. As a result, adolescence is the time when autonomy is negotiated. Because autonomy involves acts of cognition and making independent choices, adolescents need to go through the process of identity formation and eventual emancipation to become autonomous (Spear & Kulbok, 2004). The participants of this study are still relatively young ( $M_{age} = 11.5$ ). Therefore, their level of autonomy may change substantially over the next years, as the adolescents grow further into adolescence and young adulthood.

The findings are in line with the literature for the second sub-question that hypothesized that there would be a positive relation between autonomy and self-esteem. A significant positive relation between autonomy and self-esteem was also found in this research (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Bi et al., 2018; Kudo et al., 2012). This substantiates the claim that self-esteem is based in a solid inner (autonomous) sense of self rather than being dependent on whether one meets external standards (Chirkov and Ryan, 2001; Deci and Ryan, 1995).

The third sub-question hypothesized that there would be a significant positive relationship between authoritativeness and self-esteem, but no significant relationship was found. A possible alternative explanation for this can be that the data was collected at the transition from the adolescents from Dutch primary education to secondary education. Previous research has indicated that changes in the school and classroom environments, can influence an adolescent's self-esteem (Wigfield et al., 1991). It was also found that structural and curricular changes in the school can affect parent-child relationships (Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). Therefore, this transition period could have influenced the results of this study.

Lastly, the fourth sub-question hypothesized that there would be an indirect effect of autonomy on the relation between authoritativeness and self-esteem, but no such effect was found. Regarding this, the findings of this study are not in line with the literature (Zakeri & Karimpoer, 2017; Duineveld et al., 2017). A possible explanation could be that the population was too homogenous, as the parents all scored in the authoritativeness quadrant, were of Dutch descent and had a high average SES. Regarding authoritativeness, an argument could be made that above a certain level, the consequences of authoritativeness on adolescents remain the same or have a smaller effect. This is related to the concept of good enough parenting (Winnicott, 1973), which argues it is unhelpful and unrealistic to demand perfection of parents, and to do so undermines the efforts of most parents who are in all

practical respects “good enough” to meet their children’s needs (Ramaekers et al., 2011). Therefore, a higher level of authoritativeness may not always be necessary to fulfill the needs of the adolescents. An explanation for the high score on authoritativeness could be, that an authoritative parenting style encourages self-assertion and autonomy, which are both highly valued in Western, individualistic societies (Pinquart et al., 2019).

### **Implications**

The positive relation between autonomy and self-esteem that was found has several practical implications. Practitioners in youth care can focus more on increasing autonomy in adolescents in treatments aimed at increasing self-esteem, and more on autonomy supportive parenting in interventions with regards to self-esteem. The findings can be used to further develop their protocols. It can also be used in risk assessments, as low self-esteem and low autonomy are closely related in adolescents.

### **Strengths and limitations**

A strong point of the research was that authoritativeness was measured through the joystick method. This method is useful for capturing moment-to-moment changes in behavior and interactions. Even subtle changes can be considered. Therefore, it can give a good indication of the interaction style of the parent and how they conduct themselves when looking for a solution to a conflict.

There were also several limitations to this research. Firstly, for this research only the first wave of data of the longitudinal InTransition research was used. As this data focused on one point in time, claims about causality cannot be made. For instance, it could also be the case that self-esteem influences autonomy. Adolescence is also an important developmental stage, with a lot of changes regarding neural, biological, and psychosocial functioning within the adolescent (Sisk & Gee, 2023). Therefore, it would be valuable to monitor changes in self-esteem and autonomy over a longer period.

Secondly, a limitation of the study was that both self-esteem and autonomy were measured with self-evaluations. Self-evaluations are related to more socially desired answers, which influences the reliability of the outcomes (Ross, 2006). Therefore, the real mean score of self-esteem and autonomy could be different from the score that was found in the study. A possible alternative could be to measure these constructs by observing a task that requires both self-esteem and autonomy. That way, it could be better indicated if a change in feelings of autonomy, influences an adolescent’s self-esteem.

**Future research**

The first recommendation is to repeat the research over a longer time period. A lot of changes take place during adolescence, so a longitudinal study on authoritativeness of parents and autonomy and self-esteem in adolescents could give valuable insights in how the relations develop over time. As a result, this would also make the findings more generalizable, as different developmental stages and context are also considered.

Secondly, it would be valuable to see whether the findings of this study are also applicable to other cultures. Important aspects of authoritative parenting are also highlighted in more western and individualistic cultures, which results in a high level of parental authoritativeness. This may result in “good enough” parenting, and consequently it would be valuable to research whether in different cultures, the relations between authoritativeness, autonomy, and self-esteem are different. This can be done by repeating the research in a country with a more collectivistic culture, or in cities and neighborhoods that have a more diverse population.

**Conclusion**

In short, the findings of this study show that there is no relation between authoritativeness and autonomy, a positive relation between autonomy and self-esteem, and no relation between authoritativeness and self-esteem. An indirect relation between authoritativeness and self-esteem, when mediated by autonomy was also not found. Therefore, this study concludes that there is no positive relation between authoritativeness and self-esteem, and no mediation by autonomy. The fact that authoritativeness was not linked to any of the expected concepts, could be due to the overall high level of authoritativeness of the participating parents. Future researchers should focus on finding out if from a certain level of authoritativeness, the effects on self-esteem and autonomy stabilize, and whether the findings of this study are also applicable to other cultures. In conclusion, self-esteem remains important in the development of adolescents, and the possible underlying mechanisms should be further uncovered.



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