

THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARENTAL CONTROL ON ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SELANGOR

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Abstract. The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between parental control, specifically paternal control and maternal control, and academic self-efficacy among secondary school students in Selangor, Malaysia. The level of parental supervision and influence over their children's academic pursuits was defined as parental control. Academic self-efficacy related to students' belief in their academic abilities. Utilising Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the study explores the intricate dynamics within microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems to comprehend how parental control influences adolescents' academic self-efficacy. Focusing on the secondary school context in Malaysia, the study gathered data from at least 400 students in Selangor through self-assessed questionnaires. Two instruments, the Parental Control Scale (PCS) and the General Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (GASE), were employed to measure perceptions of parental control and academic self-efficacy, respectively. The findings, analysed using SPSS version 29.0, revealed a moderate level of paternal and maternal control, with a majority exhibiting moderate academic self-efficacy. Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated a significant negative relationship between both paternal ($r=-.18^{**}$) and maternal ($r=-.16^{**}$) control and academic self-efficacy, indicating that higher parental control correlates with lower academic self-efficacy, the hypotheses were met. Addressing the study's limitations, recommendations for future research were included. This research contributes valuable insights for educators, parents, and policymakers to enhance students' academic self-efficacy within their ecological systems, considering the unique cultural and educational context of Selangor.

Keywords: *parental control, academic self-efficacy, Malaysian secondary school, quantitative study*

Introduction

Asian families place significant importance on parental control in order to inculcate discipline and assure their children's scholastic and career success (Lim, 2019). Parental control refers to the level of oversight and authority that parents have to manage and regulate their children's behaviour and decision making, and it has been shown to have a major impact on adolescents' academic self-efficacy (Yau et al., 2022; Pérez et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2021). Academic self-efficacy is a student's belief in their ability to succeed in academic assignments and is regarded as an important component in predicting academic success. Respect for authoritative people, such as parents, is highly valued in Asian cultures, leading to greater authoritarian parental control (Bedford and Yeh, 2021; Haslam et al., 2020). This type of parental control is defined as parents'

involvement in a child's growth (Touloupis, 2021). In contrast, the Western society values individualism and independence, which leads to less stringent parental supervision and greater autonomy for children as they grow (León-del-Barco et al., 2019). In this context, excessive control may be interpreted as manipulation (Engler et al., 2021; León-del-Barco et al., 2019).

Besides, differences in parental control between fathers and mothers are impacted by cultural, societal, and personal factors (Jafarov, 2015). Authoritarian fathers frequently emphasise discipline and academic accomplishment (Cardenas et al., 2022; Lucassen et al., 2015). On the other hand, mothers are more loving and supportive, focused on their children's emotional ties (Samutri et al., 2023). In Asian societies, fathers are often seen as breadwinners and mothers as caregiver (Pinho and Gaunt, 2023). However, prior research has frequently generalised 'parents' without taking into account the various roles of fathers and mothers (Tan et al., 2021; Barger et al., 2019; Lara and Saracostti, 2019). Moreover, the association between parental characteristics and student academic achievement has been extensively researched in Western countries, while research in Malaysia is limited (Sulaiman and Hassan, 2019). For instance, in Malaysia, collectivism and respect may impact parental control practices which prioritise compliance and rule adherence (Masiran, 2022). In contrast, Western countries encourage more autonomy and independence in children, thereby influencing the level and type of parental supervision (Cheung and Pomerantz, 2011). Overly control seems to be manipulation in western context (León-del-Barco et al., 2019). A study conducted in Hong Kong (Xiao and Song, 2022), showed that authoritative parenting was connected with academic performance, while authoritarian parenting possessed no effect. Conversely, a study in China (Yang et al., 2020) discovered that authoritarian parenting affects academic achievement positively with parents prioritising discipline and attentiveness in class.

Furthermore, according to Sangawi et al. (2015), increasing discipline has a positive impact on academic growth. Nwune et al. (2021) found a negative association between authoritarian parenting methods and children's academic achievement due to a lack of responsiveness, honest communication, and confidence in the children. In order to address this comparative gap, the goal of this study is to identify the level of perceived paternal and maternal control among secondary school students in Selangor. Besides, also focusing on the relationship between parental control and students' academic self-efficacy in Selangor, Malaysia-a state recognised for its development and active family involvement in education. The study will look at how different parenting styles affect adolescents' academic self-efficacy. The findings may have implications for educational policy and treatments with the goal of improving students' well-being and academic performance. To examine the relationship between the variables, here are the research objectives:

RO1: To identify the level of perceived paternal control among secondary school students in Selangor;

RO2: To identify the level of perceived maternal control among secondary school students in Selangor;

RO3: To study academic self-efficacy level among secondary school students in Selangor;

RO4: To examine the relationship between paternal control on the perception of students' academic self-efficacy in Selangor;

RO5: To examine the relationship between maternal control on the perception of students' academic self-efficacy in Selangor;

RO6: To investigate the correlation between paternal control levels and average exam scores of secondary school students in Selangor; and

RO7: To investigate the correlation between maternal control levels and average exam scores of secondary school students in Selangor.

Therefore, this research generated five hypotheses to address the relationship between the variables:

H1: The level of perceived paternal control among secondary school students in Selangor is significantly low.

H2: The level of perceived maternal control among secondary school students in Selangor is significantly high.

H3: The academic self-efficacy level among secondary school students in Selangor is significantly high.

H4: Paternal control has a significant negative relationship with academic self-efficacy among secondary school students in Selangor.

H5: Maternal control has a significant negative relationship with academic self-efficacy among secondary school students in Selangor.

H6: There is a significant relationship between the level of paternal control and average exam scores of secondary school students in Selangor.

H7: There is a significant relationship between the level of maternal control and average exam scores of secondary school students in Selangor.

This study underscores the significance of parental control in shaping adolescents' academic success, aligning with contemporary research emphasizing its pivotal role in academic performance (Tan et al., 2021). Focusing on the collectivist culture of Selangor, distinct from previous Western-centric studies, this research contributes unique insights into the nuanced relationship between parental control and children's academic self-efficacy. Notably, it distinguishes between maternal and paternal control, shedding light on their differential impacts on secondary students' academic self-efficacy. The study's Asian context extends its relevance, providing a valuable reference for future research, particularly as it addresses a gap in prior studies that predominantly explored general parental involvement. The findings carry practical implications for parents, suggesting the need for adjustments in parenting approaches to foster positive academic self-efficacy in adolescents.

This study employs Belsky's model (1984) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) to explore the relationship between parental control and academic self-efficacy among secondary school students in Selangor, Malaysia. Belsky's model highlights the significance of balancing parental control and warmth, emphasizing the impact of psychological control on adolescents' academic self-efficacy. Cultural and socioeconomic factors influence how teenagers respond to parental supervision. Additionally, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) frames the study within multiple environmental systems, including the microsystem (family interactions), mesosystem (family-educational system connections), exosystem (broader social contexts), and macrosystem (cultural, economic, and political factors). The study delves into how these systems shape parental control practices and, consequently, adolescents'

perceptions of their academic abilities. Specifically, it examines the interplay of parental control in family and educational settings, the influence of social and cultural contexts, and the broader impact of cultural, economic, and political factors on academic self-efficacy. The research provides valuable insights for educators, parents, and policymakers seeking to enhance students' academic self-efficacy by understanding the intricate dynamics between parental control and the diverse environmental systems.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a quantitative research method, with participants completing self-assessed questionnaires. Two questionnaires were utilised. Firstly, the Parental Control Scale (PCS), comprising 13 items assessing individuals' perceptions of parental control. The scale employed a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 13 to 52, where lower scores indicated lower control and higher scores indicated strict control. Secondly, the five-item General Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (GASE) was employed to evaluate adolescents' academic self-efficacy levels, utilising a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree. A correlational research methodology was used to investigate the relationship between parental control and adolescents' academic self-efficacy. Purposive sampling was employed to collect data for the study, which targeted specific individuals. The study focused on secondary schools in Selangor, which accounted for a significant portion of Malaysia's adolescent population. With 466 thousand adolescents out of a total population of 3.44 million, the study covered a significant and appropriate proportion given the state's size (Eq. (1)).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad \text{Eq. (1)}$$

Where, N means population size; n means sample size; and e means sampling error which refer as confidence interval= $\pm 5\%$ $e = 0.05$. Thus;

$$\begin{aligned} n1 &= \frac{466368}{1 + 466368 (0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{466368}{1166.92} \\ &= 399.66 \\ &\approx 400 \end{aligned}$$

A pilot test was conducted to assess method, survey instrument, and research design reliability, addressing ambiguities or logistical challenges. Based on *Table 1*, using 50 responses, high Cronbach's Alpha values were observed for both Parental Control Scale versions (Father: $\alpha=.86$, Mother: $\alpha=.87$), while for General Academic Self-Efficacy Scale ($\alpha=.78$), confirming their reliability.

Table 1. Reliability of measurements.

Measurements	Nuber of items	Pilot study (N=50)	Actual study (N=453)
Parental contol scale: Dather version	13	.97	.86
Parental control scale: Mother version	13	.98	.87
General academic self-efficacy scale	5	.84	.78

Results and Discussion

The study analysed 453 responses meeting inclusion criteria. *Table 2* showed the demographic information of the participants. A normality test was conducted for Parental Control Scale (Father and Mother versions) and General Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, *Table 3* confirmed that skewness and kurtosis values fell within an acceptable range (-2 to +2), satisfying normality assumptions. Based on *Table 4*, the level of perceived paternal control among secondary school students in Selangor was moderate, followed by low control and firm control. Only 5 respondents were experiencing strict paternal control. Based on *Table 5*, the level of perceived maternal control among secondary school students in Selangor was moderate, followed by low control and firm control. 15 respondents were experiencing strict maternal control

Table 2. Demographic profile of the participants (n=453).

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	145	32.00
Female	308	68.00
Ethnicity		
Malay	43	9.50
Chinese	364	80.40
Indian	44	9.70
Others	2	0.40
Religion		
Islam	45	9.90
Buddhist	284	62.70
Hindu	36	7.90
Christian	80	17.70
Others	8	1.80
Family household income		
≤RM3000	36	8.00
RM 3001-RM5000	89	19.60
RM5001-RM7000	116	25.60
RM7001-RM10000	112	24.80
≥RM10000	100	22.10
Average exam score		
≤30	6	1.30
31-50	46	10.20
51-70	235	51.90

71-90	157	34.60
≥90	9	2.00

Table 3. Normality test for data distribution.

Variable	Univariate normality	
	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parental control scale: Dather version	.22	-.51
Parental control scale: Mother version	.21	-.53
General academic self-efficacy scale	-.52	-.11

Table 4. Level of parental control.

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Low control (13-26)	187	41.20
Moderate control (27-39)	226	49.90
Firm control (40-45)	35	7.70
Strict control (46-52)	5	1.10

Table 5. Level of maternal control.

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Low control (13-26)	132	29.10
Moderate control (27-39)	250	55.30
Firm control (40-45)	56	12.30
Strict control (46-52)	15	3.20

The three-sigma rule was applied to establish the ranges for different categories of General Academic Self-Efficacy, with mean and standard deviation of 19.55 and 3.55, respectively. *Table 6* indicated that the majority (55%) of respondents exhibited moderate academic self-efficacy, followed by 106 with high academic self-efficacy and 98 with low academic self-efficacy. *Table 7* showed a significant negative correlation ($r=-.18^{**}$, $p<.001$) between paternal control and academic self-efficacy, supporting the hypothesis that increased paternal control is associated with decreased academic self-efficacy. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. *Table 8* showed a significant negative correlation ($r=-.16^{**}$, $p<.001$) between maternal control and academic self-efficacy, supporting the hypothesis that higher maternal control is associated with lower general academic self-efficacy. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. *Table 9* showed that there was no statistically significant difference at the $p>0.05$ level in average exam scores of secondary school students: $F(7,445)=1.02$, $p=0.42$. Paternal control did not directly influence secondary school students' average exam score. Therefore, the hypothesis was to be rejected. *Table 10* showed that there was no statistically significant difference at the $p>0.05$ level in the correlation between maternal control and average exam scores of secondary school students: $F(7,445)=0.39$, $p=0.91$. Maternal control did not directly influence secondary school students' average exam score. Therefore, the hypothesis was to be rejected.

Table 6. Level of general academic self-efficacy.

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Low (<16)	98	21.60
Moderate (17-23)	249	55.00
High (>23)	106	23.40

Table 7. Correlation of paternal control on the perception of students' academic self-efficacy in Selangor (n=453).

Variables	Academic self-efficacy	
	r	P
Parental control	-.18**	<.001

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed).

Table 8. Correlation of maternal control on the perception of students' academic self-efficacy in Selangor (n=453).

Variables	Academic self-efficacy	
	r	P
Maternal control	-.16**	<.001

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed).

Table 9. Correlation of paternal control levels and average exam scores of secondary school students in Selangor.

Variable	Df	F	P
Between groups	7	1.02	.42
Within groups	445		
Total	452		

Table 10. Correlation of maternal control levels and average exam scores of secondary school students in Selangor.

Variable	Df	F	P
Between groups	7	.39	.91
Within groups	445		
Total	452		

The following section is dedicated to expounding on the hypothesis' results after analysing the data and reporting on the results. The findings reveal a moderate level of paternal control, indicating a shift in fathers' roles towards active involvement in their children's academic development (Doucet, 2020). This departure from traditional gender norms aligns with a more cooperative parenting approach, fostering independence while offering guidance (Croft et al., 2021). Fathers are now recognized for their significant influence on academic self-efficacy, challenging previous depictions of them as distant figures in intellectual development. Similarly, the study unveils moderate levels of maternal control influenced by cultural, societal, and educational factors in Selangor. Mothers navigate a delicate balance between tradition and modernity, adapting their parenting strategies to meet the evolving needs of the 21st century (Ulfah et al., 2023; Gjelaj et al., 2020). The amalgamation of Eastern and Western parenting ideas results in a distinctive cultural synthesis, where control is exercised thoughtfully to promote ethical values, responsibility, and a sense of direction (Lansford, 2022). Mothers, aware of the challenges their children face, emphasize a tailored approach to control, fostering autonomy while providing guidance.

The academic self-efficacy of secondary school students in Selangor is characterized by a moderate level, shaped by various factors. The state's socioeconomic development and emphasis on education contribute to students' awareness of the long-term impacts of academic achievement on their future opportunities. High standards and expectations create a culture of striving for excellence, fostering a balanced perception of academic self-efficacy (Alam, 2022). Peer comparisons in a competitive learning environment

further influence students' views, encouraging a nuanced evaluation of their academic abilities. The study reveals a lack of statistically significant differences in average exam scores across various levels of maternal and paternal control. This non-significant finding is attributed to several factors, including homogeneity in reported parental control levels, the complex nature of academic achievement influenced by various factors alongside parental control, measurement sensitivity issues, a potentially small effect size, contextual influences like socioeconomic status, and the possibility of response bias (Affuso et al., 2023). Further research, employing qualitative methods or subgroup analysis, is suggested to uncover specific contexts where parental control may exert a more significant effect on academic achievement.

The study's theoretical implications contribute significantly to the understanding of parental control and academic self-efficacy within established frameworks such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) and Belsky's model (1984). By exploring the negative associations between parental control and academic self-efficacy, the research underscores the need for a nuanced examination of specific parenting behaviours and their impact on adolescents' perceptions of their academic abilities. This aligns with Belsky's emphasis on the relationship between inherent child qualities and the level of care provided by parents. Within the ecological framework, the study's exploration of parental control across family, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems provides a sophisticated viewpoint on the dynamic interactions that influence teenagers' academic self-efficacy. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's theory, emphasizing the importance of considering multiple environmental systems in understanding individual development. The study deepens theoretical conversations by highlighting the intricate socio-ecological systems shaping adolescents' perceptions of their academic potential. In practical terms, the study's findings carry significant implications for parents in Selangor and various stakeholders. The contradiction between the established narrative in the region, emphasizing the positive impacts of parental control on child development, and the study's results necessitates a re-evaluation of traditional parenting methods. The practical implications suggest that a more complex approach is required, urging parents to find a balance between providing guidance and enforcing rules while allowing their children some independence.

Furthermore, the study's negative correlation between academic self-efficacy and parental control has broader implications for psychologists, researchers, and stakeholders involved in parenting interventions. Understanding the various ways parental control influences developmental outcomes, particularly in terms of self-esteem and academic ability, allows for the development of effective intervention strategies. Psychologists and researchers can leverage this information to design targeted interventions aimed at boosting self-esteem and fostering academic success in teenagers. The practical implications extend to various authorities, including legislators, educators, psychologists, counsellors, and parents. Acknowledging the impact of parental control on academic self-efficacy emphasizes the importance of employing parenting strategies that balance support and guidance. Open communication, expressions of love, and less authoritarian teaching methods emerge as crucial elements for positive adolescent development. Overall, the study encourages stakeholders to be more aware of the impact of parental involvement on adolescents' academic performance and self-esteem, fostering a collaborative effort to enhance the well-being of the younger generation.

Conclusion

A few limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the study's focus exclusively on secondary school students in a specific region raises concerns about the generalizability of the results to other areas or educational levels. Cultural, social, and educational differences related to regional, family, and religious factors could significantly impact parental control and academic self-efficacy (Xiao and Song, 2022; Gebauer et al., 2021). Secondly, the study acknowledges the potential influence of gender disparities on the correlation between academic self-efficacy and parental control. Differential prioritization of academic success by females and males, shaped by societal expectations and norms, could impact how parental control is perceived and its effects on academic self-efficacy (Affuso et al., 2023; Walters et al., 2022; LaFontana and Cillessen, 2010). Furthermore, the absence of a standardized assessment for the subjective variables of parental control and academic self-efficacy poses a significant limitation (Grijalva-Quiñonez et al., 2020). Qualitative research inherently relies on subjective interpretations and narratives, making it challenging to compare and assess relationships between variables across diverse settings (Paudel, 2023). The lack of standardized tests complicates the measurement of causality and limits the ability to determine whether parental control directly influences academic self-efficacy or if other factors moderate this relationship (Grijalva-Quiñonez et al., 2020). Lastly, the reliance on self-report measures introduces the possibility of response biases and social desirability effects. Social desirability bias may lead participants to respond in ways that align with societal expectations or perceived positivity, potentially distorting the accuracy of reported parental control practices and academic self-efficacy (Bergen and Labonté, 2020; Kreitchmann et al., 2019; Larson, 2019). Researchers need to navigate these biases carefully to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collected. In conclusion, while the qualitative study provides valuable insights into the relationship between parental control and academic self-efficacy, these acknowledged limitations underscore the need for caution in generalizing findings and emphasize avenues for further research and methodological refinement.

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Conflict of interest

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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