



Examining the Model of Relationship Between Professors' Support for Autonomy and Parental Psychological Control with Critical Thinking through Mediation of Academic Stress Among Female Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to test the model of relationship between professors' autonomy support and parental psychological control with critical thinking through the mediation of academic stress of female students. The statistical population was all female students of psychology, educational sciences and counseling at University of Khuzestan province Payam Noor. The research sample subsumed 480 subjects who were selected voluntarily. The research design was correlational. to collect data Belmont, Skinner, Welborn, and Connell's (1988) Teachers' Autonomy Support; Barber's (1996) Parental Psychological Control; Sevari Academic Stress (2019) and Critical Thinking by Wang et al. (2019) questionnaires were implemented. After modifying the proposed model, the findings related to direct relationships showed a negative relationship between professors' support for autonomy and academic stress; positive relationship between parental psychological control and academic stress; There was a negative relationship between parental psychological control and critical thinking, and a significant positive relationship between professors' support for autonomy and critical thinking, but the relationship between academic stress and critical thinking was not significant. The results related to indirect hypotheses showed that the relationship between professors' support of students' autonomy and critical thinking through academic stress and the relationship between parental psychological control and critical thinking through academic stress was significant.



Extended abstract

Introduction: Critical thinking has recently become a popular phrase in teaching and learning, and most educational experts believe that such thinking should be strengthened in the educational environment. Critical thinking is a cognitive process that actively engages learners to use their minds to observe, think, critically analyze. Promoting critical thinking in classrooms enables learners to take responsibility for their own thinking and encourages them to successfully monitor and evaluate their learning process. In the 21st century, students need seven survival skills, including critical thinking and problem solving, leadership and cooperation, agility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurial spirit, the ability to communicate effectively verbally and in writing, easy access to information and analysis. One of the factors influencing the increase of those skills is professors' support of students' autonomy and parental psychological control. Supporting student autonomy by professors in the classroom increases internal motivation and acceptance of learning responsibility through students' commitment to develop their learning skills via self-management. Hence, with the increase in learning success, their inner motivation is strengthened and this motivation and independence gradually leads autonomous learners towards independent thinking. On the other hand, the psychological control of parents as another dimension of parenting styles in which parents push their children to act according to their wishes by insuring and creating guilt is another effective factor on critical thinking. With their psychological control over their children, parents analyze their psycho-social development with interference and disturbance and hinder their ability to be independent and develop their health and personal identity. But in the meantime, we should not neglect the mediating variable called academic stress. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the causal relationship between professors' support for autonomy and parental psychological control with critical thinking through the mediation of academic stress.

Method: The statistical population of the research included all female students of psychology, educational sciences and counseling at Payam Noor University in Khuzestan province. 480 subjects were selected voluntarily as sample. to collect data Belmont, Skinner, Welborn, and Connell's (1988) Teachers' Autonomy Support; Barber's (1996) Parental Psychological Control; Sevari Academic Stress (2019) and Critical Thinking by Wang et al. (2019) questionnaires were implemented. SPSS 24 software was used for data analysis for descriptive statistics section and AMOS-24 software was used for the inferential statistics section and hypothesis testing.

Results: The results of the correlation table between the variables showed that critical thinking had a significant positive relationship with teachers' support for autonomy and had a negative relationship with academic stress and parents' psychological control. Also, academic stress had a significant positive relationship with psychological control and a negative relationship with professors' support of students' autonomy. Also, the results of the direct paths of the proposed model showed that all the paths were significant except the path of academic stress to critical thinking ($\beta = 0.04$). Also, the path of parents' psychological control to critical thinking and professors' support of students' autonomy had a significant negative relationship with academic stress. In the investigation of indirect relationships with Macro Preacher and Hayes Method (2008), the academic stress variable



was placed as a mediator between professors' support for autonomy and psychological control with critical thinking.

Conclusions: According to the theory of self-determination, supporting autonomy when the professor considered the student's point of view and provided opportunities for them to choose, the student's inner motivation and sense of independence were strengthened, also when the student's feelings of the professors' support for autonomy was confirmed, subsequently the level of perceived stress and pressure would be also reduced. This caused the student to think better about learning and evaluating the classroom environment. In addition, in classes that support autonomy, a higher level of pleasure would be perceived and less stress would be observed in participants. Therefore, it seemed that students experienced less academic stress in these conditions. On the other hand, by applying psychological control, parents put pressure on their children to perform better academically and when they fail to meet expectations, they instill shame and guilt in them. In fact, higher psychological control of parents led to less academic adjustment in subjects, that could be caused by these negative emotions and as a result academic stress. On the other hand, there was a significant relationship between autonomy support and tendency to think critically. In general, according to the results obtained in this research, it could be acknowledged that in order to have students with independent and evaluative thinking, special attention should be paid to strengthening the support of students' autonomy.

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