



The Impact of Parenting Style on High School Students' Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy

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Abstract: The present study investigates the relationship between parenting styles and career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE) among Moroccan high school students, drawing on Social Cognitive Career Theory. A total of 114 students (72% female), aged 16 to 21, completed the Perceived Parenting Style Questionnaire (Steinberg, 1993) and the short form of the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996). Correlation analyses revealed that acceptance–involvement parenting was positively associated with CDMSE, whereas psychological autonomy-granting parenting was negatively associated with CDMSE. Strictness–supervision showed no significant relationship with CDMSE. These findings highlight the critical role of parental support in fostering adolescents’ vocational confidence. The study contributes to filling a research gap by addressing parenting styles and career decision-making in a North African context, where little empirical evidence is available. Practical implications are discussed for parents, educators, and policymakers to strengthen parent–child interactions and promote career readiness among youth.

Keywords: parenting styles; career decision-making self-efficacy; adolescents; vocational development; social cognitive career theory

Digital Object Identifier (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1814552>

1 Introduction

Adolescents in their final years of high school are facing a multitude of complex vocational decisions that significantly impact their future coping abilities, academic trajectories, and long-term professional achievements. These transitions are often sources of uncertainty, career indecision, and psychological pressure, as many students struggle with limited knowledge of available options, ambiguous self-perceptions, and doubts about their ability to make appropriate choices (Albion & Fogarty, 2002; Gati & Saka, 2001; Julien, 1999). During this critical developmental period, the ability to assess one's interests, competencies, and aspirations while navigating institutional expectations becomes increasingly challenging.

Within this context, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 2000) offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals develop and regulate their career-related behaviors. SCCT posits that career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE)—one's confidence in performing tasks related to career exploration, planning, and decision-making—plays a central role in the formation of career intentions, goal selection, and perseverance in the face of obstacles. High levels of CDMSE are associated with active information seeking, greater clarity of choices, reduced career indecision, and more adaptive coping when confronted with uncertainty (Betz & Taylor, 2001; Taylor & Betz, 1983).

Given the importance of CDMSE, identifying the contextual and psychosocial factors that support or undermine its development is essential. Among these, family influences—particularly parenting styles—represent one of the most powerful and culturally embedded determinants of adolescents' vocational behavior. In many sociocultural contexts, including collectivist or family-centered societies, parents play a decisive role in shaping academic expectations, reinforcing self-beliefs, and guiding or constraining decision-making autonomy (Leung, Hou, & Gati, 2011). Supportive parental practices may strengthen adolescents' sense of competence and self-direction, whereas controlling or inconsistent parenting may heighten anxiety and diminish confidence in their ability to choose a suitable career path.

Understanding how different parenting styles interact with CDMSE is therefore crucial for informing interventions aimed at improving students' career readiness and psychological well-being. By examining these relationships, the present study seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on the family determinants of career development and provide insights relevant for educators, counselors, and policymakers working with youth navigating key academic transitions.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE)

Career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE) was originally defined by Taylor and Betz (1983) as individuals' beliefs in their ability to successfully engage in the career decision-making process. CDMSE reflects confidence in performing tasks such as exploring career options, setting goals, planning for the future, and solving problems. Grounded in Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy and elaborated within Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), CDMSE is considered a key determinant of vocational development. Higher levels of CDMSE predict more active career exploration, persistence in the face of obstacles, and greater satisfaction with educational and professional outcomes (Lent & Brown, 2013; Alexander & Harris, 2022).

2.2 Parenting Styles

Parenting styles are conceptualized as the constellation of attitudes, behaviors, and emotional climates that define parent-child interactions (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). These styles provide the context in which parental practices are expressed and significantly influence children's psychological and social development. Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992) identified three core dimensions: acceptance-involvement (warmth, responsiveness, support), psychological autonomy-granting (encouraging independence and opinions), and behavioral strictness-supervision (monitoring and controlling behavior). Acceptance-involvement is generally associated with positive outcomes such as well-being and competence, whereas excessive autonomy-granting or authoritarian strictness may create challenges in adolescents' development (Baumrind, 1996; Knight et al., 2000).

2.3 Parenting Styles and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy

A growing body of research highlights the significant role of parenting styles in shaping adolescents' career development. Parents influence vocational confidence not only through direct guidance but also by creating emotional environments that foster or hinder self-efficacy. For example, Fouad et al. (2010) demonstrated that family influence shapes career expectations aligned with cultural and social norms, while Turner and Lapan (2002) found that parental support predicted higher self-efficacy for specific careers among middle school students. More recently, Kumala and Afriani (2023) reported that authoritative parenting was positively associated with CDMSE in adolescents, while authoritarian control limited independent decision-making. Similarly, Serrano (2021, as cited in Shruti, 2024) showed that students from authoritarian households faced greater challenges in career decisions due to excessive discipline and psychological control, whereas permissive households failed to provide sufficient structure for effective decision-making. These findings suggest that both extremes of control and permissiveness may hinder adolescents' vocational confidence.

2.4 Cultural Variations

The effects of parenting styles on CDMSE appear to vary across cultural contexts. In Western societies, overbearing parental control is often perceived as intrusive and harmful, while autonomy-supportive parenting is linked to positive developmental outcomes (Pomerantz & Wang, 2009). Studies among French students found authoritative parenting predictive of stronger CDMSE, whereas among Korean students, authoritarian parenting was more strongly related to CDMSE (Sovet & Metz, 2014). Preston et al. (2019) found in Indonesian adolescents that authoritative parenting predicted CDMSE directly, while authoritarian parenting had indirect effects through proactive personality. Permissive parenting showed no direct effect, though some indirect effects were found through maternal support. These inconsistencies highlight the importance of examining parenting styles in culturally diverse contexts to better understand their influence on adolescents' career confidence.

3. Research Gap & Hypotheses

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a critical developmental stage, marked by identity formation and the exploration of future career paths. During this phase, adolescents are expected to make complex and often high-stakes decisions regarding their educational and professional trajectories. Career decision-making is not only central to vocational development but also strongly linked to psychological adjustment, academic achievement, and overall well-being (Skorikov, 2007; Creed, Muller, & Patton, 2003). However, research consistently shows that many high school students experience difficulties in career decision-making, such as indecision, lack of confidence, and stress (Albion & Fogarty, 2002; Julien, 1999).

Within the framework of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE) has been identified as a crucial determinant of career-related behaviors. CDMSE refers to individuals' confidence in their ability to successfully engage in tasks related to making career choices, such as gathering occupational information, setting goals, and problem-solving (Taylor & Betz, 1983; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996). High levels of CDMSE are associated with more adaptive career exploration, greater persistence in the face of obstacles, and higher satisfaction with career outcomes (Reddan, 2015; Alexander & Harris, 2022).

The present study examines the relationship between parenting styles and CDMSE among Moroccan high school students. By focusing on a North African context, this research aims to extend the applicability of SCCT and provide insight into how family dynamics contribute to vocational confidence during adolescence. Specifically, the study tests three hypotheses: (1) acceptance–involvement parenting will be positively associated with CDMSE, (2) strictness–supervision parenting will be negatively associated with CDMSE, and (3) psychological autonomy-granting parenting will be negatively associated with CDMSE.

Drawing on Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) and the reviewed literature on parenting and adolescent vocational development, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- **H1.** Acceptance–involvement parenting will be positively associated with adolescents' career decision-making self-efficacy.
- **H2.** Strictness–supervision parenting will be negatively associated with adolescents' career decision-making self-efficacy.

- **H3.** Psychological autonomy-granting parenting will be negatively associated with adolescents' career decision-making self-efficacy

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

The study sample consisted of 114 Moroccan high school students recruited from different secondary schools across urban and semi-urban regions. Participants ranged in age from 15 to 21 years ($M = 17.8$, $SD = 1.2$), with the majority (79%) enrolled in the final year of the baccalaureate program. The sample included 72% females and 28% males. Students were included if they were currently enrolled in high school and preparing for the national baccalaureate examinations. Exclusion criteria included students who had previously repeated more than two academic years or who did not provide complete responses to the questionnaires. Although socio-economic background was not directly measured, participants represented a range of public-school contexts within the Moroccan educational system.

4.2 Instruments

a. Perceived Parenting Style Questionnaire (Steinberg et al., 1992; Darling & Steinberg, 1993)

This instrument includes 26 items grouped into three subscales:

- Acceptance–Involvement (9 items) (e.g., “My parents give me help and support when I need it”).
- Psychological Autonomy–Granting (9 items) (e.g., “My parents encourage me to give my own opinions”).
- Strictness–Supervision (8 items) (e.g., “How much do your parents try to know where you go at night?”).

Responses were given on Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) for the first two subscales, and different formats for supervision items (1–3 and 1–7). Higher scores indicate stronger endorsement of the parenting dimension. For the present study, the instrument was translated into Arabic using a back-translation procedure with the help of bilingual experts and validated by a panel of educational psychologists. Internal consistency for this sample was acceptable: $\alpha = .81$ for acceptance–involvement, $\alpha = .79$ for autonomy-granting, and $\alpha = .76$ for strictness–supervision

b. Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale – Short Form (CDMSE-SF; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996)

This scale comprises 25 items measuring adolescents' confidence in completing career-related tasks across five domains:

- Self-appraisal
- Occupational information
- Goal selection
- Planning
- Problem solving

Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = no confidence to 5 = complete confidence). Total scores range from 25 to 125, with higher scores reflecting greater CDMSE. The CDMSE-SF was translated into Arabic using the same back-translation procedure as above. Reliability in this study was excellent ($\alpha = .94$ for the total scale).

4.3 Procedure

Data collection took place during the 2022–2023 academic year. After obtaining authorization from school principals and local educational authorities, the study was introduced to students in classrooms. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants (and from parents/legal guardians when required for students under 18). Students were assured of anonymity and confidentiality; no identifying information was collected.

The Arabic versions of the two instruments were administered via a Google Forms questionnaire, distributed through guidance counselors' professional networks (WhatsApp groups). Counselors were asked to share the link with eligible students in their schools. Prior to the main data collection, a pilot test with 15 students was conducted to ensure clarity of wording and cultural appropriateness. Minor adjustments were made following pilot feedback.

4.4 Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26.0 (IBM Corp.) and verified with JASP version 0.17 for robustness. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) were calculated for demographic and study variables. Internal reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha.

To test the study hypotheses, Pearson correlation coefficients were first computed between parenting styles and CDMSE. Additionally, a multiple regression analysis was performed to assess the predictive power of the three parenting dimensions on CDMSE while controlling for gender and age. Significance levels were set at $p < .05$

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

The means, standard deviations, and reliability indices for the study variables are presented in Table 1. On average, students reported moderate to high levels of career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE). Among the parenting style dimensions, acceptance–involvement received the highest mean score, followed by psychological autonomy-granting and strictness–supervision. All scales demonstrated satisfactory internal reliability ($\alpha = .76-.94$).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Measures

Variable	M	SD	α	Range
Acceptance– Involvement	2.95	0.48	.81	1–4
Psychological Autonomy- Granting	2.67	0.51	.79	1–4
Strictness– Supervision	2.81	0.43	.76	1–3/7*
CDMSE (total)	89.4	13.7	.94	25–125

*Note. Strictness–Supervision subscale includes mixed-response formats.

5.2 Correlational Analyses

Pearson correlations were computed to examine the relationships between parenting styles and CDMSE (see Table 2).

Results showed that:

- **Acceptance–Involvement** was positively correlated with CDMSE ($r = .178, p < .05$).
- **Psychological Autonomy-Granting** was negatively correlated with CDMSE ($r = -.223, p < .01$).
- **Strictness–Supervision** was not significantly correlated with CDMSE ($r = .126, p = .09$).

These findings partially supported Hypotheses 1 and 3, while Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Table 2. Correlations between Parenting Styles and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Acceptance– Involvement	—			
2. Autonomy- Granting	-.12	—		
3. Strictness– Supervision	.09	-.15	—	
4. CDMSE	.178*	-.223**	.126	—

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

5.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

To further explore the predictive power of parenting styles on CDMSE, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with CDMSE as the dependent variable and the three parenting dimensions as independent variables. Gender and age were included as control variables.

The overall regression model was significant, $F(5, 108) = 4.21, p < .01$, explaining 15.3% of the variance in CDMSE ($R^2 = .153$).

- **Acceptance–Involvement** emerged as a positive predictor of CDMSE ($\beta = .19, p = .03$).
- **Psychological Autonomy–Granting** was a negative predictor of CDMSE ($\beta = -.24, p = .01$).
- **Strictness–Supervision** did not significantly predict CDMSE ($\beta = .11, p = .16$).
- Gender and age did not have significant effects on CDMSE.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Predicting CDMSE

Predictor	β	t	p
Acceptance–Involvement	.19	2.18	.03*
Psychological Autonomy–Granting	-.24	-2.67	.01**
Strictness–Supervision	.11	1.42	.16
Gender (female = 1)	.07	0.88	.38
Age	-.05	-0.64	.52

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between parenting styles and career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE) among Moroccan high school students, with particular attention to cultural context and the framework of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). The findings partially supported our hypotheses: acceptance–involvement parenting was positively associated with CDMSE, psychological autonomy–granting was negatively associated with CDMSE, while strictness–supervision did not significantly predict CDMSE.

5.1 Parenting Involvement and CDMSE

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, acceptance–involvement parenting emerged as a positive predictor of CDMSE. Adolescents who perceived their parents as supportive, engaged, and emotionally responsive reported greater confidence in their ability to make career-related decisions. This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing the role of parental warmth and involvement in fostering self-efficacy across multiple domains (Turner & Lapan, 2002; Alexander & Harris, 2022). Within the SCCT framework, parental support functions as a source of social persuasion and emotional encouragement, two of the four key mechanisms through which self-efficacy is built (Bandura, 1997). In the Moroccan context, where family ties are traditionally strong and parental approval holds significant weight in adolescents' decisions, the positive influence of acceptance–involvement is particularly salient.

5.2 Autonomy–Granting and CDMSE

Unexpectedly, and in contrast to findings from Western samples, psychological autonomy–granting parenting was negatively related to CDMSE. Adolescents who perceived their parents as highly tolerant of independence and non-directive in decision-making reported lower confidence in their career choices. This result supports Hypothesis 3 and mirrors some findings in non-Western contexts, such as Korea and Indonesia, where greater parental permissiveness was associated with indecision and lower efficacy in career tasks (Preston et al., 2019; Kumala & Afriani, 2023). SCCT emphasizes that while autonomy is important, structure and guided mastery experiences are crucial for developing career confidence. In cultures where family plays a central guiding role, excessive autonomy without parental input may be interpreted by adolescents as lack of support, leaving them feeling uncertain and less prepared to make independent decisions.

5.3 Strictness–Supervision and CDMSE

Contrary to Hypothesis 2, strictness–supervision was not significantly related to CDMSE. While some studies in Western contexts have associated authoritarian control with negative career and academic outcomes (Madjar et al., 2015; Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020), the present findings suggest that parental strictness, at least as perceived by Moroccan adolescents, does not significantly hinder their vocational confidence. One possible explanation is the relatively lower variability of strictness–supervision in the sample, or cultural norms that make parental monitoring less detrimental than in Western societies. In collectivist contexts, supervision may be interpreted not as control, but as care and responsibility, which could explain the absence of a strong negative effect (Pomerantz & Wang, 2009).

5.4 Cultural Context and Theoretical Implications

Taken together, these findings underscore the importance of considering cultural variations in the interpretation of parenting practices. In Western frameworks, autonomy-granting is often associated with positive developmental outcomes, while strictness is perceived as restrictive. However, in Moroccan and broader North African contexts, authoritative and guiding parenting seems to play a more adaptive role, while excessive permissiveness may create uncertainty for adolescents navigating a competitive educational and vocational system. This supports the argument by Darling and Steinberg (1993) that parenting styles must be understood as context-dependent constellations of attitudes rather than universal categories.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study extends the SCCT by providing evidence from a non-Western context where family guidance and involvement may be more central to the development of CDMSE than autonomy. The findings also suggest that SCCT-based interventions should be culturally adapted, emphasizing family dynamics and parental involvement when applied in collectivist societies.

6. Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The reliance on self-reported measures may introduce bias, as adolescents' perceptions of parenting styles may differ from parents' self-reports. The sample, although diverse in geography, was limited in size and disproportionately female, which may have affected its generalizability. Furthermore, parenting style was measured as a general perception of both parents combined, without distinguishing between maternal and paternal roles. Future research should address these limitations by including larger and more balanced samples, incorporating parents' perspectives, and adopting longitudinal designs to examine causal pathways. Additionally, cross-cultural comparisons between Moroccan adolescents and those in other regions would further illuminate cultural nuances in the relationship between parenting and CDMSE.

7. Conclusion

The present study provides evidence that parenting styles significantly influence Moroccan adolescents' career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE). Specifically, acceptance–involvement parenting was positively associated with CDMSE, while psychological autonomy-granting was negatively associated, and strictness–supervision showed no significant effect. These results extend the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by highlighting how family dynamics, particularly parental warmth and involvement, play a decisive role in shaping vocational confidence in a North African cultural context.

From a practical standpoint, the findings underline the importance of strengthening parent–child interactions within Moroccan families as part of national strategies to improve career readiness. Schools, career counselors, and policymakers should actively engage parents in career guidance programs, emphasizing balanced and supportive parenting practices. At the same time, interventions should raise awareness of the potential risks of excessive permissiveness, which may leave adolescents uncertain about their future choices.

This study contributes to filling a research gap by addressing the intersection between parenting and career development in a non-Western context, an area largely underrepresented in the literature. Future research should build on this foundation by adopting longitudinal and comparative designs to explore cultural variations further and by distinguishing between paternal and maternal roles in shaping adolescents' career trajectories.

In conclusion, parenting styles remain a powerful contextual factor in adolescents' vocational development. By acknowledging the cultural specificity of these influences, researchers and practitioners can better design interventions that foster confidence, direction, and resilience in young people as they navigate the critical transition from school to work.

Overall, the study underscores not only the theoretical importance of parenting styles in shaping adolescents' vocational confidence but also their practical relevance for counselors, teachers, and parents who play a decisive role in supporting young people as they navigate the critical transition from school to work

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