Literature Review

Names:

Institution:

**Literature Review**

# Problem statement

Parent-child relation is a field that has gained significant interest in the recent past. In this regard, the bond and the kind of relationship that exists between a parent and a child differ considerably from one region to another and from one group to another. In a recent study, it was reported that parent-child relationships are heavily influenced by cultural differences, the religiosity of a family, the gender of a child, and the age of the child (Acar, 2017). However, these result in different outcomes. For instance, children could develop different perceptions about the parenting style, gain different levels of control at later stages of their lives, and have different developmental outcomes. Parent-child relationships are mainly based on the level of parental control and the child’s autonomy. Different parents adopt different levels of control over the lives of their children at different stages as well as the extent to which they respect their children’s autonomy. This could have different results on the development of the child. This paper will analyze the influence of parental control and children’s autonomy on the development of the children and parenting outcomes.

## Definition of the problem

Parent-child relationships and parental behavior have been extensively studied in the recent past. Studies indicate that panting styles have a significant influence on the parent-child relationships between the two parties. One of the recent studies suggest that parental control and autonomy are parenting elements that should be adjusted as the child grows so as to facilitate parental guidance at the early stages of development and allow the child to gain more control over their lives at later stages (Bradley, Iida, Pennar, Owen & Vandell, 2017). This suggests that the level of parenting should vary from one age group to another. Further, it is also suggested that parental behavior and parenting style have a significant impact on the development of the child. However, studies do not conclusively illustrate the extent of parental control that should be exercised and the ideal age that the child should be exposed to self-control. As a result, it is difficult for parents to understand the best parenting strategy, the level of control that they should exercise upon their children, the level of freedom that they should accord these children, and the potential outcomes of their decisions. There is a need to further explore these concepts as a way of providing helpful information to parents about the appropriate ways to rear their children.

## Description of variables

Independent variables in this study are parental control and children’s autonomy while the dependent variable is the parenting outcomes. Parental control can be understood in different ways. It is the level of strictness in parenting that is characterized by parental influence over a child’s life and decisions. Strict and more influential parents exercise higher parental control while less strict and less influential parents have lower parental control. Children’s autonomy is the level of freedom and control that children have over their lives. According to Van, Zimmer-Gembeck, Soenens, Vansteenkiste ... Zimmermann (2017), this concept also covers the freedom that children have over making their decisions and parental support of the children’s ideologies. Parental outcomes are simply the state of a child’s development. The effects of parenting can be easily measured by analyzing the development of the child and the competence of the child in different areas including health, decision-making, and self-control. By exploring the relationship between these variables, this research will help in coming up with more reliable results that inform parenting styles.

# Review of scholarly sources

## Theoretical framework

Parenting has an influence on the social, behavioral, and psychological outcomes of a child. Some studies suggest that parenting style and the level of children’s autonomy influence their success as adults due to the influence of autonomy at an early age on a child’s ability to make decisions. A recent study went further to associate increased parental control with common psychological disorders including higher stress levels and childhood depressive symptoms (Yan, Han, Tang & Zhang, 2017). Poor parenting, which means a poor balance between parental control and personal autonomy, will then result in poor parental outcomes that will be marked by poor developmental outcomes in a child. Parenting strategies change as a child grows. This is a theory that has been demonstrated by two of the research studies (Bradley et al., 2017; Van et al., 2017). It should then be expected that parental outcomes vary in one way or another at different ages of the child. This further raises the relevance of this topic and a need to develop a better understanding of parent-child attachment levels.

## Previous research

There are many recent studies that have focused on the topic of parenting while exploring various concepts and issues related to parental control and children’s autonomy. In a research study by Acar (2017), for instance, the author compared the reasoning of daughters and their mothers about personal autonomy and parental authority. After interviewing young girls and middle-aged females in Turkey, the author identified the existence of various inconsistencies in the mothers’ and daughters’ perspectives of personal autonomy and maternal authority that varied based on the religiosity of the participants. In a different study, Cheung, Pomerantz, Wang and Qu (2017) explored the consistency of reports about controlling parents and autonomy-supportive parenting in the US and China from the perspective of both the mothers and their children. The researchers found great consistency in results between the two nations with regard to the perceptions that children and parents held about parental control and autonomy-supportive parenting. Autonomy-supportive parents were found to have a positive influence on the development of the children. Different research by Yan et al. (2017) that focused on the role of parent-child attachment on a child’s depressive symptoms linked parental support to reduced depressive symptoms among children.

## Relevance to project models, methods, and measures

Previous research studies have focused on the responses from children as the basis of their results (Acar, 2017; Bradley et al., 2017; Van et al., 2017; Yan et al., 2017). While the results from these studies show consistency and all agree that parenting influences children’s development, they fail to integrate the influence of various confounding variables including culture, geographical region, and gender, among others. While a study by Cheung et al. (2017) is the only one to integrate the cultural and racial factors while also collecting data from both the daughters and parents’ perspectives, it fails to integrate other important factors such as gender of the children and socioeconomic factors. These wide gaps in past research inform future research in that future researchers should focus on ways to incorporate these variables in their research in a move to improve the reliability and replicability of results. These part studies provide an important framework, the kind of variables to focus on, and the methods.

## Relevant findings

There are a number of important findings that can be deduced from the resources synthesized in the above sections. All studies agree that parenting – from both the perspectives of parental control and personal autonomy – have an influence on parental outcomes or the development of a child. In fact, these outcomes extend from the more common factors such as children’s competence in decision-making, level of children’s exposure, and to the least explored areas such as children’s psychological health (Van et al., 2017; Yan et al., 2017). At the same time, it has also been revealed that differences in the level of parental control over male and female children influence the bond that exists between these children and the perception of children from one gender towards those of the other gender (Acar, 2017).

# Research hypothesis

## Relevance of literature to this project

The research studies that have been analyzed in the above sections inform the methods, scope, the kind of variables, a framework over which to base the project, and the type of data. Notably, these studies have helped in developing a theoretical framework that parenting varies as a child grows and that demographical factors also have an influence on parenting. This revelation was also important in formulating the variables of interest in the first section of this paper. The studies have also shown that qualitative research is the most effective method of data collection. However, this has been extended where gaps suggest that future studies focus on integrating the perspectives of both parents and children as a way of collecting more relevant and unbiased data.

## Hypothesis

Parental control and personal autonomy have an influence on parenting outcomes or the development of the children. This hypothesis is informed by all the research papers that have been analyzed in the above sections. While the influence of these variables on parenting outcomes differ from one research paper to another, it is clear that any research that focused on the same area should expect a significant relationship between the variables. Regardless of whether the influence is positive or negative, future research should be crafted in a way that it best captures this influence at different stages of growth.

Both parenting and parenting outcomes differ considerably from one group and region to another. Research has shown that different factors including culture and religion have an impact on the level of parental control, personal autonomy, and the parent-child bond. While these variables are not within the primary area of focus, their influence should be accounted for. This extends the scope of both parenting from just parental control and personal autonomy to cultural and other demographical factors.

# Conclusion

The above sections reveal that both parental control and personal autonomy have an influence on parenting outcomes. However, additional research is necessary to provide results that can be replicated across different groups and geographical regions. The target population for future research should be diverse and should cover all genders, subjects from different geographical regions, and subjects from different racial/cultural groups so as to ensure that they are representative of the global community. This is particularly important as a result of the rising level of immigration. The results could serve as an important part of informing practice in social work. Social work is concerned with the issues affecting the community and improving the welfare of the different groups within the community as well. Results from the proposed study could be important to social workers as it could equip them with reliable knowledge that could be used to educate or advise parents about the appropriate parenting strategies. In addition, it could help social workers in easily identifying the challenges affecting the community and particularly the children, their sources, and potential solutions. This will not only raise the effectiveness of social workers in their profession, but it will also help in improving the welfare of the community and the quality of parenting.

# References

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