

The Role of Child-Rearing Beliefs in Parenting: A Study among Spanish Parents

El papel de las creencias sobre la crianza infantil en la parentalidad: estudio entre padres y madres españoles

Received: May 11, 2023; **Reviewed:** December 4, 2025; **Accepted:** April 21, 2026

Carmen Rodríguez-Menéndez*

Universidad de Oviedo, Facultad de Formación del Profesorado y Educación, Oviedo, Spain

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7074-8223>

Marcos Rodríguez-Álvarez

Universidad de Oviedo, Facultad de Formación del Profesorado y Educación, Oviedo, Spain

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7948-069X>

Susana Torío-López

Universidad de Oviedo, Facultad de Formación del Profesorado y Educación, Oviedo, Spain

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5004-2338>

Abstract

According to self-determination theory, children's development is shaped by three dimensions of parental behavior: autonomy support vs. control, structure vs. chaos, and warmth vs. rejection. The main goals of the study were: a) to investigate the associations between parents' beliefs about parenting and the dimensions of parenting, and b) to analyze differences based on parents' gender. This cross-sectional, descriptive, correlational study assessed 2,144 Spanish fathers and mothers with a mean age of 44.33 years ($SD = 5.50$). The probability-proportional-to-size (PPS) sampling technique was used. Several scales were used to assess different parental beliefs considered antecedents of child-rearing practices. The results suggest that intrinsic motivation for parenting and parental mastery goals promote supportive parenting practices. Extrinsic motivation for parenting, unfulfilled dreams, parental avoidance goals, parental separation anxiety, and child-invested contingent self-esteem influence negative parenting behaviors. Some gender differences were examined. Fathers' mastery goals were positively correlated with parental autonomy support, whereas maternal avoidance goals, paternal performance goals, and paternal unfulfilled dreams were negatively correlated with autonomy-supportive parenting. In fathers, extrinsic motivation for parenting and in mothers, avoidance-approach goals were both negatively related to structure. Maternal separation anxiety and paternal extrinsic motivation were positively correlated with negative parenting behaviors. The findings confirm the principle of universalism in self-determination theory and advance knowledge in parenting by extending previous research to a country with a specific cultural background (Spain). They also demonstrate the association between certain parental beliefs and behaviors, thereby expanding scientific knowledge in family studies.

Keywords

Self-determination theory; parenting antecedents; parenting beliefs; gender; universalistic principle.

Resumen

La teoría de la autodeterminación sostiene que la familia influye en el desarrollo infantil a través de tres dimensiones: apoyo a la autonomía frente al control, estructura frente al caos y calidez frente al rechazo. Los objetivos principales del estudio fueron: a) investigar las asociaciones entre distintas creencias parentales y las dimensiones de la parentalidad; b) analizar las diferencias según el género del progenitor. Este estudio transversal, descriptivo y correlacional incluyó a 2144 padres y madres españoles, con una edad media de 44,33 años ($DE = 5,50$). Se empleó la técnica de muestreo por probabilidad proporcional al tamaño (PPS). Los resultados señalan que la motivación intrínseca hacia la crianza y las metas parentales de logro promueven prácticas que apoyan la autonomía infantil. La motivación extrínseca hacia la crianza, los sueños no cumplidos, las metas parentales de evitación, la ansiedad parental ante la separación y una autoestima que depende de los logros de los hijos influyen en el desarrollo de comportamientos parentales negativos. Se observaron diferencias de género. Las metas paternas de logro se correlacionaron positivamente con el apoyo a la autonomía, mientras que las metas maternas de evitación, los sueños paternos incumplidos y las metas paternas de rendimiento se correlacionaron negativamente con dicho apoyo. La motivación paterna extrínseca y las metas maternas de evitación se correlacionaron negativamente con la estructura. La ansiedad materna ante la separación y la motivación extrínseca paterna se correlacionaron positivamente con prácticas parentales negativas. Los hallazgos demuestran el principio universalista de la teoría de la autodeterminación y amplían investigaciones previas en un país, España, que presenta características culturales propias.

Palabras clave

Teoría de la autodeterminación; antecedentes de la parentalidad; creencias parentales; género; principio universalista.

How to cite [APA]:

Rodríguez-Menéndez, C., Torío-López, S., & Rodríguez-Álvares, M. (2026). The Role of Child-Rearing Beliefs in Parenting: A Study among Spanish Parents. *Acta Colombiana de Psicología*, 29, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.14718/ACP2026.29.5>

-
- * **Contact information:** Universidad de Oviedo, Facultad de Formación [A1.1] del Profesorado y Educación. C/ Aniceto Sela s/n, 33005, Oviedo (Spain). Email: carmenrm@uniovi.es, carmenrm@uniovi.es.

Authors' Notes:

Acknowledgments: We appreciate the support of the statistical consulting unit of the University of Oviedo.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Funding: This article is based on work supported by the Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Universities of the Government of Spain (MCIU-19-PGC2018-095462-B-100).

Introduction

Understanding how parents shape their children's development requires a theoretical framework that goes beyond cataloging parenting behaviors to explain *why* those behaviors arise and *how* they influence children's psychological functioning. Self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017) provides such a framework. At its core, SDT posits that human beings have three universal basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—that need to be satisfied for optimal psychological growth, effective internalization of social norms, and well-being. Autonomy refers to experiencing a sense of volition and choice in one's actions; competence refers to feeling effective in engaging with one's environment; and relatedness refers to feeling genuinely connected to others.

Within the family context, SDT identifies three parenting dimensions through which parents can either satisfy or fail to meet these basic psychological needs. Autonomy support versus psychological control determines whether children experience volition or pressure in their actions, directly affecting satisfaction of the need for autonomy. Structure versus chaos determines whether children develop a sense of competence through clear expectations and consistent feedback, or whether they are left without the scaffolding they need to feel effective. Warmth versus rejection determines whether children feel genuinely loved and connected, satisfying the need for relatedness. Parents who provide autonomy support, structure, and warmth therefore create a family environment that nurtures all three basic needs, fostering autonomous motivation and intrinsic goals in children—goals oriented toward personal growth, relationships, and well-being. In contrast, parents who exert psychological control, provide chaotic or inconsistent guidance, or show hostility frustrate children's basic needs, promoting controlled motivation and extrinsic goals, which are associated with poorer psychological adjustment (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010).

A substantial body of research has confirmed these theoretical predictions across cultures and developmental stages (Costa *et al.*, 2019; Ratelle *et al.*, 2017, 2018). For example, Bülow *et al.* (2022) reported positive effects of parental warmth and autonomy support on adolescent well-being in 91–98% of the families in their study. A recent meta-analysis by Bradshaw *et al.*

(2025) confirmed that parental autonomy support was positively associated with children's well-being across regions, genders, and developmental stages, and that the detrimental effects of psychological control were consistent with SDT predictions. In addition, Ferber *et al.* (2024) found that children's intrinsic aspirations were higher when parents created a needs-supportive environment.

This evidence raises a fundamental question: what leads some parents to be autonomy-supportive, warm, and structured, while others are controlling, cold, or chaotic? SDT researchers have classified the antecedents of parenting into three categories: pressure from “above” (social and contextual factors such as employment status or marital quality), pressure from “below” (child characteristics such as temperament), and pressure from “within” (parents' own beliefs, motivations, and personality characteristics) (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Mageau *et al.* (2016) noted that despite the theoretical and practical importance of understanding what facilitates or impedes autonomy-supportive parenting, fewer studies have examined its antecedents than its consequences. This gap is particularly important because identifying psychological factors in parents that can be altered offers direct intervention pathways. The present study addresses this gap by examining five antecedents that operate as internal pressures—parental psychological factors that, according to SDT, shape the quality of parenting.

The first antecedent is parental motivation for parenting. SDT distinguishes between autonomous motivation—acting out of genuine interest, personal values, or identified importance—and controlled motivation—acting out of external or internal pressure such as guilt, shame, or social approval (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This distinction applies directly to parenting: parents who are autonomously motivated engage with their children because it is genuinely meaningful to them, whereas parents who are controlled in their motivation do so to avoid guilt or to be seen by others as good parents. Theoretically, autonomous parental motivation should facilitate autonomy-supportive parenting, as parents who act from a place of volition are better positioned to recognize and respect their children's volitional needs. Consistent with this reasoning,

Jungert *et al.* (2015) found that autonomous motivation for parenting was positively associated with parents' autonomy-supportive behavior and with children's perceptions of parental autonomy support, whereas controlled motivation was negatively associated with those perceptions.

The second antecedent is parental achievement goals, defined as the goals parents set for their children's competence development (Mageau *et al.*, 2016). Drawing on SDT's distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic goals, Mageau *et al.* (2016) differentiated between mastery goals—focused on the child's personal progress—and performance goals—focused on the child's standing relative to others, either approach-oriented (wanting the child to be the best) or avoidance-oriented (avoiding the child performing worse than peers). This distinction matters because performance goals, being inherently comparative and extrinsically oriented, are theoretically incompatible with the recognition of each child's individual process, which is a cornerstone of autonomy-supportive parenting. Consistent with this, Mageau *et al.* (2016) found that performance-approach goals were associated with more controlling parenting strategies, particularly guilt-inducing criticism. However, the relationship between mastery goals and autonomy support was not significant, suggesting that the theoretical link between intrinsic parental goals and autonomy-supportive behavior warrants further investigation, particularly in cultural contexts beyond those originally studied. In the study by Palacios *et al.* (2023), with Ecuadorian parents, there was no correlation between parental achievement goals and parental autonomy support or parental control.

The third and fourth antecedents—parental child-invested contingent self-esteem and unfulfilled dreams—both represent forms of ego-involvement that, according to SDT, are fundamentally incompatible with autonomy-supportive parenting. Parental child-invested contingent self-esteem refers to parents' tendency to base their own self-worth on their children's successes and failures (Wuyts, Vansteenkiste, *et al.*, 2015). When parents' self-esteem is contingent on their children's performance, they have a personal stake in controlling their children's outcomes—their own psychological well-being depends on it. This creates systematic pressure toward psychological control, as

parents use their children's achievements to regulate their own self-worth rather than to support their children's development. Research has consistently supported this mechanism: contingent self-esteem has been positively linked to achievement-oriented psychological control across age groups and parental genders (Nget *et al.*, 2014; Soenens, Wuyts, *et al.*, 2015; Wuyts, Chen, *et al.*, 2015; Wuyts, Vansteenkiste, *et al.*, 2015), and more recently to parental maltreatment (Li *et al.*, 2025). Similarly, unfulfilled dreams—representing parents' regrets about unrealized life choices—introduce a parallel ego-involving dynamic, in which parents project their own unresolved ambitions onto their children and pressure them to compensate for the parents' perceived failures (Wuyts, Chen, *et al.*, 2015). Crucially, Wuyts, Chen, *et al.* (2015) showed that unfulfilled dreams influence psychological control partly through their effect on contingent self-esteem, suggesting that these two constructs operate within a common motivational pathway in which parental ego-involvement—whether rooted in current self-worth or past regrets—undermines the basic psychological distance needed to support children's autonomy.

The fifth antecedent is parental separation anxiety, which refers to parents' difficulty accepting their children's growing autonomy because they perceive it as a threat to the parent-child relationship (Soenens *et al.*, 2006). Within the SDT framework, this construct occupies a theoretically distinct position from the previous antecedents. While contingent self-esteem and unfulfilled dreams represent forms of ego-involvement rooted in the parental need for competence—parents whose sense of efficacy and worth depends on their children's outcomes—separation anxiety is fundamentally driven by a frustrated need for relatedness. For these parents, the child's developmental progress toward autonomy is not experienced as a sign of healthy growth but as a threat to the emotional bond that constitutes the parent's primary source of relational need satisfaction. SDT predicts that when a basic psychological need is chronically threatened, individuals engage in compensatory behaviors aimed at protecting that need, even at the cost of others' well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In the case of separation-anxious parents, this compensation takes the form of dependency-oriented psychological control—strategies designed to keep children in close emotional and physical proximity (Guzzo *et al.*, 2014; Soenens *et al.*, 2010)—including possessive,

guilt-inducing, and conditionally approving behavior (Ahmad & Soenens, 2010; Pérez *et al.*, 2022; Soenens *et al.*, 2006). This pattern reveals a fundamental paradox from an SDT perspective: in their attempt to preserve relatedness, separation-anxious parents undermine the very autonomy support that would allow children to freely choose closeness with their parents, thereby transforming a genuine relational need into a source of psychological control. Consistent with this reasoning, Wuyts *et al.* (2017) found that mothers with high separation anxiety were less autonomy-supportive overall, while warmth and responsiveness remained relatively intact—suggesting that the need for relatedness can persist as a functional motivational force even when its frustrated expression distorts the parenting relationship.

Considered jointly, the five antecedents examined in this study are not merely a heterogeneous list of parenting determinants, but rather a theoretically coherent set of psychological factors that, within SDT's motivational framework, share a common mechanism. They all reflect conditions under which parents' own need states—whether the need to feel competent through their children's success, to fix past failures through their children's achievements, or to maintain relational closeness by limiting their children's independence—take precedence over satisfaction of their children's needs. From an SDT perspective, when parenting becomes a vehicle for regulating the parent's own psychological needs rather than an expression of genuine care for the child's development, the resulting behaviors are more likely to be intrusive, pressuring, and need-frustrating for the child (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010).

Despite the theoretical importance of these antecedents, several notable gaps remain in the literature. First, most existing studies have examined these antecedents in isolation, without testing their simultaneous predictive effects on the full range of parenting dimensions—autonomy support, structure, and warmth—within a single model. Second, research on these antecedents has primarily been in Northern European and East Asian contexts (Belgium, China, Canada), with very limited evidence from Southern European samples. Given that cultural context shapes both parenting practices and their psychological underpinnings, it remains unclear whether the patterns observed in those studies generalize to Spanish families. The present study addresses these gaps by simultaneously examining five

antecedents of parenting—parental motivation, achievement goals, child-invested contingent self-esteem, unfulfilled dreams, and separation anxiety—as predictors of three parenting dimensions in a Spanish sample, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive and culturally situated understanding of the psychological factors that shape parenting within the SDT framework.

The Present Study

The main goal of the present study was to investigate the association between parents' beliefs about parenting in the following parenting dimensions: autonomy-supportive versus controlling, structure versus chaos, and warmth versus rejection. We had two specific aims: a) to investigate how motivation for parenting, parental achievement goals, parental child-invested contingent self-esteem, unfulfilled dreams, and parental separation anxiety are associated with the three dimensions of parenting proposed by SDT, and b) to analyze differences in those associations based on parent gender.

We expected autonomous motivation and mastery goals to facilitate adoption of an autonomy-supportive style of parenting and a structured, warm family environment. In contrast, controlled motivation, parental performance-approach goals, parental child-invested contingent self-esteem, unfulfilled dreams, and parental separation anxiety would orient parents toward a more controlling and rejecting style. Finally, we posulated that the SDT perspective on parenting would apply to our Spanish sample, indicating its universalism.

In this regard, our research advances knowledge of parenting in two main ways. First, the study extends previous research to Spain, which has a specific cultural background. According to SDT, parents' support for autonomy plays a necessary role in all cultural contexts, as the needs described by the theory are considered universal (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Most studies based on SDT have been conducted in countries characterized by high levels of independence and individualism. Authors such as Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2010) have highlighted the importance of examining other cultural contexts to determine whether the theory applies universally. Our study took place in Spain, and although it shows some general individualist tendencies, in line with the dominant Western cultural model, it also

exhibits significant levels of interdependence in the family context. Kagitcibasi's (2005) distinction between material and psychological interdependence in the family is particularly useful for interpreting the Spanish context. While material interdependence has declined due to the social and economic transformation in the second half of the 20th century, psychological interdependence—which concerns the family functioning as an emotional support network—persists. In general terms, this leads to a pattern of close relationships between parents and children in Spain, within a framework characterized by strong family bonds. According to Kagitcibasi (2005), the family model of psychological interdependence would be less favorable to what the author called related autonomy, in other

words, strengthening autonomy in a warm, ordered family environment, which would be in line with the ideas in SDT. All of this would suggest that SDT will have explanatory validity in our context.

In addition, SDT research indicates that more studies are needed to examine different types of pressure as antecedents of psychologically controlling or autonomy-supportive parenting styles (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Our study contributes to achieving this objective by analyzing the association between five pressures from within and the six dimensions of parenting: autonomy-supportive versus controlling, structure versus chaos, and warmth versus rejection.

Method

Type of Study

The study was quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive, and correlational (Hernández *et al.*, 2014).

Participants

A probability-proportional-to-size (PPS) sampling technique was used. The participants were 2,144 fathers and mothers from Spain (1,020 fathers, 48.3% of the sample; 1,091 mothers, 51.7% of the sample; and 1 person who ticked "other," 0.05% of the sample). There were 32 missing values in this variable. The mean age of the parents was 44.33 years ($SD = 5.50$). Most of the sample (80.1%) were married, 7.6% were living as couples, 7.2% were divorced, 4.5% were single, and 0.5% were widowed. In terms of educational attainment, 44.6% of parents had completed secondary education, 44.2% had university qualifications, and 11.2% had only primary education. Finally, regarding work, 72.1% were in full-time employment, 11.1% were part-time, 3.3% were retired, 7.5% were unemployed, and 6% were homemakers.

The inclusion criteria for participating were being the parent of at least one school-aged child (8–12 years old), residing in Spain, and fully completing the administered questionnaires. Only parents who provided informed consent were included. Parents were selected through the schools their children attended, which acted as in-

termediaries for contacting the participating families. Each parent constituted the unit of analysis in the study.

Procedure

We collected data from children aged 8–12 and their parents. First, contact was made with parents through their children's schools via a letter explaining the study and asking for their informed consent to participate. Subsequently, the children of participating parents were given envelopes with two copies (one for each parent) of the Questionnaires for Parents, along with a pre-paid return envelope and a letter again explaining the purpose of the study. They were given two weeks to complete and return the questionnaires. Participants were not remunerated in any way. The study reported a 13.8% rejection rate for the administered questionnaires.

All scales were translated from English. Spanish versions were produced in accordance with the International Test Commission's established rules. Each scale was initially translated into Spanish by two members of the research team who are fluent English speakers. Then, the initial versions of all scales were assessed by two experts in parenting styles, who evaluated whether the items reflected the daily dynamics of Spanish families. Following that, a translator back-translated the items, and the items were compared with the original

versions to determine whether they were equivalent. This process constituted a standard forward and backward translation design (Hambleton *et al.*, 2005).

Ethical Aspects

This study is part of a larger project entitled “Influence of Parental Control and Structure on the Development of Children Aged 6–12 Years,” funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (PGC2018-095462-B-I00). The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Principality of Asturias on September 19, 2019. The researchers were told that informed consents must be signed in duplicate and that a copy must be kept with the study documentation. It was also indicated that the data produced by the study should be kept absolutely confidential. The research team has been rigorous in fulfilling these mandates. Data were collected after parents provided their written consent. The text of the consent specified all aspects related to confidentiality would be respected throughout the process, in accordance with Law 15/1999 regarding access, rectification, cancellation and opposition, Organic Law 3/2018, of December 5, Protection of Personal Data and Guarantee of Digital Rights; and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of April 27, 2016 on Data Protection. Informed consent forms were distributed to parents along with the questionnaires via their children. Upon return, the consent forms were verified to ensure they had been duly signed.

Measures

Parenting Motivation (Jungert *et al.*, 2015). This scale consists of twelve items measuring autonomous and controlled motivation for parenting. Controlled motivation includes three items from extrinsic motivation (e.g., “I want those around me to see me as a good parent”) and three items from introjected motivation (e.g., “Because if I wasn’t a good parent, I would feel guilty”). Autonomous motivation includes three items from identified motivation (e.g., “Taking good care of my child is important to me and part of my values”) and three items from intrinsic motivation (e.g., “I feel a sense of personal accomplishment in taking care of my child in my own way”). The items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 7 (*completely agree*); mothers and fathers answer separately. The alpha values in

the original version were .78 for autonomous motivation and .82 for controlled motivation (Jungert *et al.*, 2015). We found a first factor composed of intrinsic, introjected, and identified items from the original scale, and a second factor composed of extrinsic motivation items. Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 8756.32$, $p < .001$), and the overall KMO value was .847. After performing an exploratory factor analysis with an oblimin rotation, we found two factors that explained 42% of the variance: a first factor composed of intrinsic, introjected, and identified items from the original scale, and a second factor composed of extrinsic motivation. The overall scale had an alpha coefficient of .83, and the two factors had alphas of .8 and .83, respectively. The correlations between the factors were all significant ($p < .001$) and positive. The overall indices of model fit were: RMSEA (.10), SRMR (.077), CFI (.84), and TLI (.80).

Parental Achievement Goals (Mageau *et al.*, 2016).

This scale assesses parents’ goals for their children’s development and achievement. Parental mastery goals are measured with 3 items (e.g., “I try to help my child get better in his/her activities,” $\alpha = .69$) (Mageau *et al.*, 2016), performance-approach goals are measured with 4 items (e.g., “I would like my child to excel in his/her activities,” $\alpha = .80$) (Mageau *et al.*, 2016), and performance-avoidance goals are assessed with 4 items (e.g., “I do not want my child to do activities in which he/she will be less competent than others,” $\alpha = .85$) (Mageau *et al.*, 2016). Parents rate each item on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *completely disagree* to 7 = *completely agree*); mothers and fathers answer separately. In the present study, overall internal consistency was good ($\alpha = .84$), and the three factors showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = .81$ for performance-avoidance goals; $\alpha = .8$ for performance-approach goals; and $\alpha = .7$ for mastery goals). The scale was initially adapted by the research team for the Spanish population. Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 9424.29$, $p < .001$), and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test gave a value of .846. Next, we tested the three-factor solution proposed by Mageau *et al.* (2016). EFA identified three factors, accounting for 51% of the variance. The first factor corresponds to performance-avoidance goals, the second to performance-approach goals, and the last factor consists of mastery goals items. The scale had good internal consistency overall ($\alpha = .84$) and for the three factors individually ($\alpha = .81$, .8, and .7, respectively). All correlations between the factors were significant ($p < .001$) and positive. RMSEA (.087) was slightly above the conventional cutoff of

.08, suggesting a moderate level of approximation error. In contrast, SRMR (.049) was well within acceptable limits, indicating good absolute fit. The incremental fit indices were also satisfactory, with CFI (.92) and TLI (.90) meeting commonly accepted thresholds for adequate fit. Taken together, these results suggest that the model provides a reasonably good representation of the data.

Parental Child-Invested Contingent Self-Esteem (Wuyts, Vansteenkiste, *et al.*, 2015). This scale consists of 15 items that assess parents' tendency to gauge their self-worth through their children's successes and failures. It has three items related to achievement (e.g., "My child's achievements are also my achievements"), six items about children's failures (e.g., "When my child fails, I feel bad about myself"), and six items about children's success (e.g., "My child's success is an important source of happiness in my life"). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*); mothers and fathers answer separately. The Cronbach's alpha values in a Belgian sample were .91 for mothers and .89 for fathers. The scale was initially adapted by the research team for the Spanish population. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 13686.06, p < .001$), and the overall KMO value was .915. The one-factor solution proposed by Wuyts, Vansteenkiste, *et al.* (2015) accounted for 36% of the variance. The alpha coefficient for the scale was .89.

Unfulfilled Dreams (Wuyts, Chen, *et al.*, 2015). This scale comprises six items that measure people's beliefs about their childhood dreams and aspirations (e.g., "I regret that I failed to realize important dreams during my childhood"). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*); mothers and fathers answer separately. In our study, the alpha coefficient was .86. The scale was initially adapted by the research team to the Spanish population. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 6546, p < .001$), and the overall KMO value was .892. We tested a single-factor solution. After an exploratory factor analysis with an oblimin rotation, we accepted a single-factor solution that explained 50% of the variance. The alpha coefficient for the scale was .86. The model showed good overall fit.

Maternal Separation Anxiety (Hock *et al.*, 1989). This scale has twenty-one items evaluating aspects of anxiety and feelings of guilt resulting from or in anticipation of

leaving the child (e.g., "When I am away from my child, I feel lonely and miss him/her a great deal"). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*); mothers and fathers answer separately. Cronbach's alpha in the original study was .90 (Hock *et al.*, 1989). The original scale measured maternal separation anxiety; we renamed the scale Parental Separation Anxiety for our study since it was used to measure mothers' and fathers' separation anxiety. The scale was initially adapted by the research team for the Spanish population. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 22986.42, p < .001$), and the overall KMO value was .952. We tested the one-factor solution proposed by Hock *et al.* (1989), which explained 42% of the variance. The alpha coefficient for the scale was .94.

Parents as a Social Context Questionnaire (PSCQ; Skinner *et al.*, 2005). This scale assesses the dimensional model of parenting, based on SDT, developed by Skinner *et al.* (2005). The model distinguishes three conceptual dimensions: warmth/rejection, autonomy support/coercion-control, and structure/chaos. The scale has 31 items to measure warmth (e.g., "I know a lot about what goes on for my child"), rejection (e.g., "At times, the demands that my child makes feel like a burden"), autonomy support (e.g., "I encourage my child to express his/her feelings even when they're hard to hear"), coercion-control (e.g., "Sometimes I feel that I have to push my child to do things"), structure (e.g., "I make it clear what will happen if my child does not follow our rules"), and chaos (e.g., "I let my child get away with things I really shouldn't allow"). Parents rate each item on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *completely disagree* to 4 = *completely agree*); mothers and fathers answer separately. In the original study, Cronbach's alpha values were warmth (.66 mothers and .70 fathers), rejection (.74 mothers and .67 fathers), structure (.61 mothers and .64 fathers), chaos (.70 mothers and .67 fathers), autonomy support (.61 mothers and .62 fathers), coercion/control (.82 mothers and .74 fathers). We found four factors: factor 1 made up of most of the negative parenting items (coercion, chaos, and three rejection items), factor 2 of autonomy support items and one structure item, factor 3 with warmth and two rejection items that are inversely scored, and factor 4 that corresponds to four structure items. Initially, the research team adapted the scale to the Spanish population. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 18246.42, p < .001$), and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test gave a value of .877. The alpha coefficient for the whole scale was

.87, and for the four factors it was .8, .8, .79, and .69, respectively. The four-factor solution demonstrated adequate performance, explaining approximately 34 % of the total variance, which is considered acceptable for psychological instruments with multidimensional structures. Correlations between the factors were all significant ($p < .001$) and positive, except for factor 1, which correlated negatively with the rest. *RMSEA* (.066) and *SRMR* (.063) were within acceptable ranges, indicating adequate absolute fit. However, the *CFI* (.78) and *TLI* (.76) did not meet the recommended thresholds, indicating limited incremental fit. Even so, all factor loadings were significant, confirming that each item is a good indicator of the latent construct. Overall, the model presents a valid measurement structure, though its global fit could be improved. The four-factor structure is theoretically consistent with SDT, which distinguishes between satisfaction and frustration of basic psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Positive parenting dimensions emerge as differentiated factors because each nurtures a distinct psychological need (self-determination, competence, and relatedness, respectively), which are conceptually independent constructs within SDT. Conversely, negative parenting dimensions converge into a single factor because control, chaos, and a lack of warmth share a common function: the global frustration of the self.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics—means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis—were calculated. All factors produced absolute values under 1, indicating that the normality criterion was met. An exploratory factor

analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the scales' psychometric properties. Parametric criteria were assessed, indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis (skewness and kurtosis indicated normality, Bartlett's sphericity test was significant, and all of the *KMO* indices were greater than .80). The EFA was performed using maximum likelihood as the factor extraction method and oblimin rotation as the estimation method. Internal consistency was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha. In addition, Spearman's correlations between the factors were calculated. Subsequently, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to verify the factor structure of the multidimensional constructs, and overall model fit indices were calculated: *CFI*, *TLI*, *RMSEA*, and *SRMR*. CFA was conducted in R using the Lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012).

Following that, regression models were specified. This involved first creating univariate models, independently for each predictor variable. A multivariate model was then built using all variables from the univariate models. Finally, this multivariate model was simplified through a series of steps. The model was specified for the entire sample and stratified according to gender. In a first approximation, a maximal model was created that included all predictors. A stepwise procedure was then applied to avoid collinearity and simplify the model by reducing the number of predictors. The Akaike information criterion (AIC) was used as the criterion in the stepwise method.

The significance level used was 0.05. Statistical analysis was performed in R (R Development Core Team, 2020; version 3.6.3) using the Psych (Psych, 2020) and EFAtools (EFAtools, 2021) libraries.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Table 1 presents the primary factor loadings for each item of the PSCQ. The results indicate that items loaded satisfactorily onto their corresponding factors, with loadings ranging from .36 to .75. Warmth items loaded onto PSCQ3, while rejection, chaos, and coercion items

clustered onto PSCQ1, reflecting a broader negative parenting behaviors factor. Autonomy-support items loaded onto PSCQ2, and structure items loaded predominantly onto PSCQ4, except for structure 6, which loaded onto PSCQ2.

Table 1. Factor Loadings for the PSCQ

Item	Factor loading	Factor
Warmth		
warmth1	.39	PSCQ3
warmth2	.39	PSCQ3
warmth3	.53	PSCQ3
warmth4	.61	PSCQ3
warmth5	.70	PSCQ3
warmth6	.36	PSCQ3
Rejection		
reject1	.45	PSCQ1
reject2	.39	PSCQ1
reject3	.46	PSCQ1
reject4	-.54	PSCQ3
reject5	-.48	PSCQ3
Structure		
structure1	.75	PSCQ4
structure2	.64	PSCQ4
structure3	.41	PSCQ4
structure4	.23	PSCQ4
structure5	.50	PSCQ4
structure6	.43	PSCQ2
Chaos		
chaos1	.39	PSCQ1
chaos2	.42	PSCQ1
chaos3	.43	PSCQ1
chaos4	.47	PSCQ1

» Table 1. (continued)

» Table 1. (continued)

Item	Factor loading	Factor
Autonomy support		
autonomy1	.58	PSCQ2
autonomy2	.64	PSCQ2
autonomy3	.50	PSCQ2
autonomy4	.70	PSCQ2
autonomy5	.63	PSCQ2
Coercion		
coercion1	.58	PSCQ1
coercion2	.60	PSCQ1
coercion3	.43	PSCQ1
coercion4	.61	PSCQ1
coercion5	.67	PSCQ1

Note. PSCQ: Parents as a Social Context Questionnaire; PSCQ1: negative parenting behaviors (coercion, rejection, and chaos); PSCQ2: autonomy support; PSCQ3: warmth; PSCQ4: structure.

Descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation, maximum, and minimum) are shown in Table 2. As noted above, the original

six-factor structure for PSCQ was not replicated in our study. Instead, we validated a four-factor model.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Each Factor

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
PSCQ1	20.09	5.51	19.00	4.00	48.00
PSCQ2	22.39	2.23	23.00	5.00	24.00
PSCQ3	25.99	3.85	25.00	13.00	32.00
PSCQ4	17.05	2.33	17.00	5.00	20.00
Dreams	2.70	.96	2.57	1.00	5.00
GoalsAV	1.68	1.03	1.25	1.00	7.00
GoalsPe	3.63	1.57	3.50	1.00	7.00
GoalsMA	5.43	1.24	5.67	1.00	7.00
MOVEXT	3.04	1.67	3.00	1.00	7.00

» Table 1. (continued)

» Table 1. (continued)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
MOVIN	5.76	0.94	5.89	1.56	7.00
Anxiety	2.73	.83	2.62	1.00	5.00
Self	2.97	.75	2.93	1.07	5.00

Note. PSCQ1: negative parenting behaviors (coercion, rejection, and chaos); PSCQ2: autonomy support; PSCQ3: warmth; PSCQ4: structure; Dreams: unfulfilled dreams; GoalsAV: parental avoidance goals; GoalsPE: parental performance goals; GoalsMA: parental mastery goals; MOVEXT: extrinsic parenting motivation; MOVIN: intrinsic parenting motivation; Anxiety: parental anxiety separation; Self: parental child-invested contingent self-esteem.

Regression Models

First, the relationships between parenting antecedents and the four parental dimensions, as measured by the PSCQ, were evaluated using Spearman's correlations (Table 3).

Table 3. Summary of Spearman's Linear Correlation Coefficients

	PSCQ1	PSCQ2	PSCQ3	PSCQ4
Dreams	.29***	-	-.12***	.09***
GoalsAV	.27***	-.21***	-.13***	-.07**
GoalsPE	.17***	-.06*	-	.11***
GoalsMA	.06*	.16***	.1***	.23***
MOVEXT	.24***	-.13***	-.08**	-
MOVIN	-	.22***	.16***	.28***
Anxiety	.21***	-	-	.06*
Self	.24***	-	-	.12***

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. PSCQ1: negative parenting behaviors (coercion, rejection, and chaos); PSCQ2: autonomy support; PSCQ3: warmth; PSCQ4: structure; Dreams: unfulfilled dreams; GoalsAV: parental avoidance goals; GoalsPE: parental performance goals; GoalsMA: parental mastery goals; MOVEXT: extrinsic parenting motivation; MOVIN: intrinsic parenting motivation; Anxiety: parental anxiety separation; Self: parental child-invested contingent self-esteem.

Next, multivariate linear regression models were created for each subscale, with the questionnaires measuring parenting beliefs as predictors. The models presented below are the result of the step-by-step simplification selection method (Table 4). The models indicated that the higher the scores in unfulfilled dreams ($p < .001$), parental avoidance goals ($p < .001$), extrinsic motivation to parenting ($p < .001$), parental separation anxiety ($p < .05$), and parental child-invested contingent self-esteem ($p < .05$), the higher the score in negative parenting behaviors. At the same time, the higher the score in intrinsic motivation, the

lower the score in negative parenting behaviors ($p < .001$). Anxiety and self were the factors with the least weight when explaining negative parenting behaviors. In addition, parental performance goals were excluded from the equation, and parental mastery goals did not reach statistical significance.

Furthermore, the higher the scores in parental mastery goals ($p < .001$) and intrinsic motivation ($p < .001$), the higher the score in parental autonomy support. There was a negative correlation between autonomy support and extrinsic motivation for

parenting ($p < .001$), avoidance ($p < .001$), and performance goals ($p < .01$). Neither unfulfilled dreams nor child-invested contingent self-esteem influenced parental autonomy support, while parental anxiety separation did not reach statistical significance.

Higher warmth scores were associated with higher mastery goals ($p < .05$) and intrinsic motivation ($p < .001$). In addition, higher scores on unfulfilled dreams ($p < .001$) and extrinsic motivation ($p < .001$) were associated with lower warmth scores. Avoidance performance goals, parental separation anxiety, and

child-invested contingent self-esteem were left out of the equation. Intrinsic motivation is the variable with the most explanatory weight in the third factor.

Finally, higher scores in structure were related to higher scores in mastery goals ($p < .001$) and intrinsic motivation ($p < .001$). In addition, the higher the scores on extrinsic motivation for parenting ($p < .01$) and child-invested contingent self-esteem ($p < .01$), the lower the score on structure. The model's explanatory power was 20.8 % for PSCQ1, 10.4 % for PSCQ2, 7.75 % for PSCQ3, and 8.66 % for PSCQ4.

Table 4. Coefficients of the Multivariate Linear Regression Models for Each of the Subscales

	PSCQ1	PSCQ2	PSCQ3	PSCQ4
	β	β	β	β
Dreams	.18***	-	-.17***	-
GoalsAV	.23***	-.11***	-	-.06
GoalsPE	-	-.11**	-.06	-
GoalsMA	.04	.12***	.07*	.14***
MOVEXT	.11***	-.16***	-.12***	-.08**
MOVIN	-.18***	.26***	.25***	.21***
Anxiety	.08*	.05	-	-.06
Self	.08*	-	-	-.09**
R ²	.208	.104	.077	.086
f ²	.27	.12	.09	.10

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; β : standardized regression coefficient; R^2 : coefficient of determination; f^2 : Cohen's effect size index; PSCQ1: negative parenting behaviors (coercion, rejection, and chaos); PSCQ2: autonomy support; PSCQ3: warmth; PSCQ4: structure; Dreams: unfulfilled dreams; GoalsAV: parental avoidance goals; GoalsPE: parental performance goals; GoalsMA: parental mastery goals; MOVEXT: extrinsic parenting motivation; MOVIN: intrinsic parenting motivation; Anxiety: parental anxiety separation; Self: parental child-invested contingent self-esteem.

Table 5 shows the coefficients and significance of the multivariate linear regression models by sex. In both mothers and fathers, negative parenting behaviors (coercion, rejection, and chaos) were positively and significantly associated with unfulfilled dreams ($p < .001$) and avoidance goals ($p < .001$). In mothers, there was also a positive association with maternal separation anxiety ($p < .05$), while in fathers, there was a positive association with extrinsic motivation to parenting ($p < .01$). In both samples, there was a negative association with intrinsic motivation ($p < .001$).

There were differences by parents' gender in relation to parental autonomy support. In mothers, this factor was negatively associated with extrinsic motivation to parenting ($p < .01$), and avoidance goals ($p < .001$), and positively associated with intrinsic motivation to parenting ($p < .001$). In fathers, the associations were only positive with mastery goals ($p < .001$) and intrinsic motivation ($p < .001$). In addition, there were negative associations between fathers' autonomy support and unfulfilled dreams ($p < .05$), parental performance goals ($p < .01$), and extrinsic motivation for parenting ($p < .001$).

In terms of warmth, there were some similarities between the two genders. In both fathers and mothers, warmth was negatively associated with unfulfilled dreams ($p < .001$) and positively associated with intrinsic motivation ($p < .001$). In fathers, it was also negatively associated with extrinsic motivation for parenting ($p < .001$) and performance goals ($p < .05$) and positively associated with mastery and avoidance goals ($p < .05$).

Finally, structure was positively associated with mastery goals ($p < .001$) and intrinsic motivation ($p < .001$) in both mothers and fathers. In mothers it was also negatively associated with avoidance goals ($p < .01$) and in fathers it was negatively associated with extrinsic motivation to parenting ($p < .01$). The explanatory power of the model was 25.47% (fathers) and 15.64% (mothers) for PSCQ1, 10.81% (fathers) and 10.34% (mothers) for PSCQ2, 9.99% (fathers) and 5.77% (mothers) for PSCQ3, and 9.24% (fathers) and 8.24% (mothers) for PSCQ4.

Table 5. Coefficients of Multivariate Linear Regression Models for Each of the Subscales for Mothers and Fathers

	PSCQ1		PSCQ2		PSCQ3		PSCQ4	
	β		β		β		β	
	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers
Dreams	.19***	.19***	-.08*	-	-.21***	-.15***	-	-
GoalsAV	.25***	.19***	-	-.19***	.09*	-.07	-	-.11**
GoalsPE	-	-	-.16**	-	-.1*	-	-	-
GoalsMA	.07	-	.19***	-	.11*		.14***	.16***
MOVEXT	.14**	.07	-.19***	-.11**	-.16***	-.07	-.15**	-
MOVIN	-.18***	-.15***	.23***	.3***	.26***	.23***	.25***	.16***
Anxiety	.07	.09*	-	-	-	-	-.09	-
Self	.078	.08	.08	-	-	-	.09	.08
R ²	.254	.156	.108	.103	.099	.057	.092	.082
f^2	.36	.19	.13	.12	.12	.07	.11	.09

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; β : standardized regression coefficient; R^2 : coefficient of determination; f^2 : Cohen's effect size index; PSCQ1: negative parenting behaviors (coercion, rejection, and chaos); PSCQ2: autonomy support; PSCQ3: warmth; PSCQ4: structure; Dreams: unfulfilled dreams; GoalsAV: parental avoidance goals; GoalsPE: parental performance goals; GoalsMA: parental mastery goals; MOVEXT: extrinsic parenting motivation; MOVIN: intrinsic parenting motivation; Anxiety: parental anxiety separation; Self: parental child-invested contingent self-esteem.

Discussion

The main goal of the present study was to investigate the associations between parents' beliefs about parenting, as antecedents, and the basic parenting dimensions proposed by SDT: autonomy-supportive versus controlling, structure versus chaos, and warmth versus rejection. Research has shown that a greater understanding is needed of the influence that different types of antecedents exert on

parents' behavior (mageau *et al.*, 2016). In this regard, little research has been conducted, and our study advances knowledge in the field of parenting. The original six-factor structure of the original scale was not replicated in our study. Instead, factor analysis indicated a four-factor solution: negative parenting behaviors, autonomy-supportive, structure, and warmth.

In relation to autonomy supportive parenting, our study showed that, as expected, parental mastery goals and internalized motivation for parenting correlated positively with autonomy support. This contrasts with the results of Mageau *et al.* (2016) and Palacios *et al.* (2023), who did not find a statistically significant relationship between parental mastery goals and autonomy-supportive parenting. Nevertheless, that association between mastery goals and autonomy-supportive parenting was found only in fathers. A possible explanation for this finding is that mastery goals may be expressed differently by mothers and fathers due to the traditional distribution of parental roles and the social expectations associated with child-rearing. In fathers, a mastery-oriented approach may be more directly linked to autonomy-supportive practices, such as encouraging initiative, expressing opinions, and independent problem solving, particularly when they assess or compare their children's achievement over time (past versus present performance). In contrast, although mothers may also be oriented toward mastery goals, these goals may be expressed through other forms of support—such as emotional support or guidance. In addition, when fathers have internalized values about parenting, they foster a sense of volition in their children, who can then act in accordance with their personal values and interests (see also Jungert *et al.*, 2015).

In contrast, extrinsic parental motivation for parenting, paternal performance goals, paternal unfulfilled dreams, and maternal avoidance goals correlated negatively with autonomy-supportive parenting. Fathers who want their children to be the best, and mothers who avoid their children taking part in activities where they perform worse than others, promote children's autonomy to a lesser extent. Furthermore, when parents indicated that their parenting was motivated by contingencies or external factors, they were less likely to encourage their children to take responsibility for their own actions and decisions (see also Jungert *et al.*, 2015). Along similar lines, fathers who harbor regret over unrealized childhood dreams and aspirations may be more likely to project those unmet goals onto their children. Rather than supporting the child's own interests, values, and self-directed choices, these parents may—consciously or unconsciously—steer their children toward the paths they themselves were unable to pursue. This dynamic is inherently controlling: the child's autonomy becomes subordinated to the parent's need for vicarious fulfillment. A parent preoccupied with their own unfulfilled aspirations may be less attuned to what

the child genuinely wants or needs, further undermining an autonomy-supportive style.

Structure is another positive parenting dimension. In our study, it was positively related, in fathers and mothers, to internalized motivation and mastery goals. Our study is the first to analyze the influence of parenting beliefs on structure and shows that positive parenting beliefs influence structure. Parents who encourage children's effort without external comparisons, and who feel a self-determined motivational orientation towards parenting, provide children with a sense of why and how their actions are connected to certain consequences. In addition, other negative parenting beliefs correlated negatively with structure. First, fathers' extrinsic motivation for parenting was negatively associated with structure. In this sense, a father who parents to satisfy external demands is unlikely to engage in that kind of deliberate, organized effort, as his attention is directed outward rather than toward the child's developmental needs. These findings suggest that when fathers' parenting is driven by external or ego-related pressures rather than genuine engagement, their ability to provide a stable, organized, and supportive environment for their children is compromised. Secondly, maternal avoidance goals were negatively related to structure. Avoidance goals are fundamentally driven by fear rather than by positive engagement. So, a mother oriented toward preventing her child from failing or experiencing negative outcomes is not focused on fostering the child's autonomy and competence, but on shielding the child from difficulty. This defensive orientation is psychologically incompatible with providing structure, which requires a parent to set clear expectations, allow the child to face manageable challenges, and establish consistent rules and limits that guide behavior over time.

Our results regarding warmth—which refers to the affection, care, and support that children can experience from their parents—are consistent with the conclusions regarding autonomy support and structure. As expected, internalized motivation for parenting was again directly related to parenting warmth, but the coefficient was larger for fathers, indicating that empirically the variable had a greater impact for them. In fathers, extrinsic motivation was negatively associated with this parenting dimension. Parental warmth can be expressed in various ways, such as showing interest in children's activities, expressing physical affection and love, providing comfort, moral guidance, and advice,

and taking part in social activities with children. It is thus reasonable to suggest that this type of behavior is accompanied by the internal belief that parenting should be exercised to promote children's well-being.

In our analysis of parenting goals, we found statistically significant correlations, but only among fathers. Paternal mastery goals were positively correlated with warmth. Mastery-oriented fathers are fundamentally focused on the process of their child's development rather than on outcomes or social comparison. This orientation naturally aligns with warmth, which involves expressing affection, offering emotional support, and genuinely showing interest in the child as an individual. When a father values effort, curiosity, and growth for their own sake, they are more likely to engage with their child in an encouraging, patient, and emotionally close manner—all hallmarks of warm parenting. In contrast to performance goals, which can introduce pressure, conditional approval, and evaluative tension into the parent-child relationship, mastery goals create an emotional climate in which the child feels accepted regardless of their achievements. At the same time, paternal performance goals correlated negatively with warmth.

Finally, unfulfilled parental dreams were negatively related to warmth. Unfulfilled dreams are closely linked to feelings of frustration, loss, and unresolved tension around one's own life trajectory. These emotional states can generate a kind of inward preoccupation that makes it harder to be consistently present and responsive as a parent. Warmth, by its very nature, requires consistency and emotional availability—qualities that are difficult to maintain when a parent's inner emotional life is marked by unresolved conflicts.

The final factor in our study grouped various negative parenting behaviors (rejection, coercion, and chaos) and showed the strongest positive and negative correlations with parenting beliefs. As expected, unfulfilled parental dreams and paternal extrinsic motivation were positively correlated with negative parenting behaviors, while intrinsic motivation showed the opposite pattern. These findings carry meaningful implications for children's development: when children do not feel adequately protected and supported by their parents, their opportunities for emotional and psychological growth are significantly compromised.

Under these circumstances, parents cease to function as a secure base, which undermines children's ability to explore their environment freely, adapt to unfamiliar people, and seek comfort in distressing situations. In this regard, parents who projected unfulfilled personal aspirations onto their children, as well as fathers whose parenting was guided by adherence to an idealized model, tended to engage in more coercive and chaotic behaviors while displaying lower levels of warmth. Conversely, parents who felt genuinely satisfied with their parenting role and were intrinsically motivated were less likely to reject their children or restrict their autonomy through controlling and disorganized practices.

One important factor that impedes children's autonomy development is parental efforts to undermine it. In our study, only maternal separation anxiety was positively correlated with negative parenting behaviors. Several studies have, like ours, demonstrated that parental separation anxiety is correlated with parental control/coercion (Ahmad & Soenens, 2010; Guzzo *et al.*, 2014; Pérez *et al.*, 2022; Soenens *et al.*, 2006; Soenens *et al.*, 2010; Wuyts *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, Wuyts *et al.* (2017) found that mothers who scored highly on separation anxiety did not necessarily undermine their warmth and responsiveness. However, we found no correlation between separation anxiety and warmth. It is important to highlight that parents who use strategies to keep their children within close physical and emotional boundaries undermine their children's autonomy using negative parenting strategies.

We found no correlation between parental mastery goals or performance-approach goals and negative parenting behaviors, unlike Mageau *et al.* (2016). Nevertheless, parental avoidance-approach goals were positively correlated with them. One unexpected finding reported by Mageau *et al.* (2016) was that mothers' performance-avoidance goals were negatively related to guilt induction, whereas our results showed the opposite relationship. In our study, maternal and paternal avoidance-approach goals correlated with negative parenting behaviors, suggesting that the motivational orientation parents bring to their parenting role has meaningful consequences not only for positive parenting dimensions but also for the occurrence of harmful or counterproductive parenting practices.

In addition, and contrary to expectations, parental child-invested contingent self-esteem was not significantly correlated with negative parenting behaviors. This finding diverges from previous studies, which have reported associations between parental child-invested contingent self-esteem and certain forms of psychological control (Ng *et al.*, 2014; Soenens, Wuyts, *et al.*, 2015; Steffgen *et al.*, 2022; Wuyts, Chen, *et al.*, 2015; Wuyts, Vansteenkiste, 2015).

Finally, our study found that correlations between parental antecedents and parenting practices were, in most cases, stronger in fathers than in mothers. This was particularly evident in the affective (warmth) dimension. Statistics show that, compared to fathers, Spanish mothers show their children greater affection. However, in our study, several antecedents expected to define this affective dimension did not significantly influence mothers' behavior. We believe that certain historic and cultural factors specific to Spain may be behind these results. Up to the 1970s, Spain was under a Catholic, nationalist dictatorship that imposed significant coercive influence on women. Maternal identity was constructed to fit the ideal of the "good mother" that was based on patriarchal assumptions and the figure of the Virgin Mary. Mothers were supposed to be selfless, sensitive, tender, delicate, patient, meticulous, loving, and sweet, in contrast to the authoritative, strong, rational father figure. This model was deeply rooted in the social imagination. Recent studies have shown the enduring impact of Franco's cultural model on the construction of the maternal ideal in Spain (Alzard, 2019). Consequently, we believe that the warmth Spanish mothers show their children is largely due to this mystical maternity, which has persisted to the present day. That same mystic idea would also be present in Latin America as a legacy of the strong influence of Catholic colonialism (Ormart & Curado, 2022).

Limitations and Future Research

Some limitations of the current study warrant caution when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the cross-sectional design is a methodological limitation. A promising area of investigation would involve a longitudinal analysis of antecedents of parenting behaviors. Longitudinal designs are needed to validate causal relations between different parenting beliefs

and the six parenting dimensions proposed by SDT. It is possible that parenting experiences of autonomy support or warmth, for example, not only follow from certain parent beliefs, but also contribute to them. Parents who are supportive and loving may develop certain beliefs about how they feel about parenting or about their relationship with their children. However, focusing solely on longitudinal studies to examine the relationship between antecedents and parenting behaviors may overlook the value of clinical research. Collaborating with clinical psychologists allows a comprehensive approach. Clinical research focuses on the uniqueness of each individual, that is, on how the constructs under study manifest in each specific case before generalizing findings more generally. This approach would facilitate a more complete, nuanced understanding of parental behaviors and their antecedents, complementing and enriching the evidence obtained through longitudinal studies.

Future research should also employ qualitative methodologies to better understand the complex relationships among the critical parenting beliefs identified in our study. Parents should be asked about their expectations, values, and goals to better understand their experiences and allow them to express their opinions about parenting.

Another limitation of our study is that the sample population was parents in a specific geographical and cultural context. Any generalization of our findings to other sociocultural contexts should be done with caution. Furthermore, our study sample was racially homogeneous. Future research in this line should aim to have more racially and geographically diverse samples to determine whether similar findings are produced. It would also be interesting to compare our Spanish sample's results with future studies in Latin American settings. Because of the cultural similarities between the two contexts regarding child-rearing, it is possible to hypothesize about similar behaviors. It would be particularly interesting to see whether the differences in some of our results compared to English-speaking contexts can be replicated in the Latin American context.

Finally, another limitation of our study is the absence of measures of parental temperament as antecedents in the analysis of parenting practices. Parental

temperament, understood as a set of relatively stable dispositions that influence emotional reactivity, impulsivity, and self-regulation, may play an important role in the way adults engage in and modify their parenting practices. Including this variable in future research would allow for a more comprehensive, nuanced understanding of parental dynamics.

To summarize, this study contributes to the literature by extending the SDT framework to a Spanish population. The cross-cultural validity of SDT has recently become a growing focus of inquiry in family research.

Our study contributes to progress in this direction, since the results verify some conclusions in a different cultural context. SDT suggests that parent behavior may exhibit similarities across cultural groups. This is because positive parenting practices help satisfy children's basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In contrast, negative parenting behaviors frustrate these needs (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). This is why our study tested whether the SDT approach was universal in relation to parenting and confirmed the principle of universalism without uniformity (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Van Petegen, 2015).

References

- Ahmad, I., & Soenens, B. (2010). Perceived maternal parenting as a mediator of the intergenerational similarity of dependency and self-criticism: a study with Arab Jordanian adolescents and their mothers. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24(6), 756–765. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021508>
- Alzard, D. (2019). *Del modelo maternal del primer franquismo al discurso neoliberal de la “buena madre”; mater amantísima, llena de gracia y de símbolos* [Doctoral dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid].
- Bradshaw, E. L., Duineveld, J. J., Conigrave, J. H., Steward, B. A., Ferber, K. A., Joussemet, M., Parker, P. D., & Ryan, R. M. (2025). Disentangling autonomy-supportive and psychologically controlling parenting: A meta-analysis of self-determination theory’s dual process model across cultures. *American Psychologist*, 80(6), 879–895. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0001389>
- Bülow, A., Neubauer, A. B., Soenens, B., Boele, S., Denissen, J., & Keijsers, L. (2022). Universal ingredients to parenting teens: parental warmth and autonomy support promote adolescent well-being in most families. *Scientific Reports*, 12, 16836. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-21071-0>
- Costa, S., Sireno, S., Larcán, R., & Cuzzocrea, F. (2019). The six dimensions of parenting and adolescent psychological adjustment: the mediating role of psychological needs. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 60(2), 128–137. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12507>
- Ferber, K. A., Bradshaw, E. L., Noetel, M., Wong, T. Y., Ahn, J. S., Parker, P. D., & Ryan, R. M. (2024). Does the apple fall far from the tree? A meta-analysis linking parental factors to children’s intrinsic and extrinsic goals. *Psychological Bulletin*, 150(10), 1155–1177. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000448>
- Guzzo, G., Lo Cascio, V., Pace, U., & Zapulla, C. (2014). Psychometric properties and convergent validity of the Dependency-Oriented Psychological Control and Achievement-Oriented Psychological Control Scale (DAPCS) with Italian adolescents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 23, 1258–1267. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-013-9786-2>
- Hambleton, R., Merenda, P., & Spielberger, C. (2005). *Adapting educational and psychological tests for cross-cultural assessment*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410611758>
- Hernández, R., Fernández, C., & Baptista, P. (2014). *Metodología de la investigación*. McGraw-Hill.
- Hock, E., McBride, S., & Gnezda, T. (1989). Maternal separation anxiety: Mother-Infant separation from the maternal perspective. *Child Development*, 60(4), 793–802. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1131019>
- Jungert, T., Landry, R., Joussemet, M., Mageau, G., Gingras, I., & Koestner, R. (2015). Autonomous and controlled motivation for parenting: associations with parent and child outcomes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24, 1932–1942. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-014-9993-5>
- Kagitcibasi, C. (2005). Autonomy and relatedness in cultural context. Implications for Self and Family. *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*, 36(4), 403–422. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022105275959>
- Li, J., Ding, W., Yao, H., Chen, T., Li, W., & Xie, R. (2025). Child-invested contingent self-esteem, emotional dysregulation, and parental maltreatment: An actor-partner interdependence model among Chinese parents. *Aggressive Behavior*, 51(5), e70047. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.70047>
- Mageau, G., Bureau, J., Ranger, F., Allen, M., & Soenens, B. (2016). The role of parental achievement goals in predicting autonomy-supportive and controlling parenting. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 25, 1702–1711. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-015-0341-1>

- Ng, F., Pomerantz, E., & Deng, C. (2014). Why are Chinese mothers more controlling than American mothers? "My child is my report card". *Child Development*, 85(1), 355–369. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12102>
- Ormart, E., & Curado, C. (2022). La construcción de la subjetividad católica a través de la figura de la virgen—madre en el ámbito de las técnicas de reproducción asistida. *Interdisciplina*, 10(28), 301–324. <https://doi.org/10.22201/ceiich.24485705e.2022.28.83300>
- Palacios, M. D., Conforme, E. G., Arpi, N., & Morales, J. A. (2023). Relación de las metas de logro parental con el apoyo a la autonomía y el control psicológico percibido por los adolescentes. *Interdisciplinaria. Revista de Psicología y Ciencias Afines*, 40(2), 133–149. <https://doi.org/10.16888/interd.2023.40.2.8>
- Pérez, J. C., Huerta, P., Rubio, B., & Fernández, O. (2022). Corrigendum: Parental psychological control: maternal, adolescent, and contextual predictors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 712087. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.979872>
- Ratelle, C., Duchesne, S., & Guay, F. (2017). Predicting school adjustment from multiple perspectives on parental behaviors. *Journal of Adolescence*, 54(1), 60–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2016.11.008>
- Ratelle, C., Morin, A., Guay, F., & Duchesne, S. (2018). Sources of evaluation of parental behaviors as predictors of achievement outcomes. *Motivation and Emotion*, 42, 513–526. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-018-9692-4>
- Rosseel, Y. (2012). Lavaan: An R Package for Structural Equation Modeling. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 48(2), 1–36. <https://doi.org/10.18637/jss.v048.i02>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-Determination theory. Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Press. <https://doi.org/10.1521/978.14625/28806>
- Skinner, E., Johnson, S., Snyder, T. (2005). Six dimensions of parenting: a motivational model. *Parenting*, 5(2), 175–235. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327922par0502_3
- Soenens, B., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2010). A theoretical upgrade of the concept of parental psychological control: proposing new insights on the basis of self-determination theory. *Developmental Review*, 30(1), 74–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2009.11.001>
- Soenens, B., Vansteenkiste, M., & Luyten, P. (2010). Toward a domain-specific approach to the study of parental psychological control: distinguishing between dependency-oriented psychological control and achievement-oriented psychological control. *Journal of Personality*, 78(1), 217–256. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2009.00614.x>
- Soenens, B., Vansteenkiste, M., & Van Petegem, S. (2015). Let us not throw out the baby with the bathwater: applying the principle of universalism without uniformity to autonomy-supportive and controlling parenting. *Child Development Perspectives*, 9(1), 44–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12103>
- Soenens, B., Vansteenkiste, M., Duriez, B., & Goossens, L. (2006). In search of the sources of psychologically controlling parenting: the role of parental separation anxiety and parental maladaptive perfectionism. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 16(4), 539–559. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2006.00507.x>
- Soenens, B., Wuyts, D., Vansteenkiste, M., Mageau, G., & Brenning, K. (2015). Raising trophy kids: the role of mother's contingent self-esteem in maternal promotion of extrinsic goals. *Journal of Adolescence*, 42(1), 40–49. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.04.001>
- Steffgen, S. T., Otterpohl, N., Wessing, F., Schwinger, M., Assor, A., Kanat-Maymon, Y., El Gueta, B., & Stiensmeier-Pelster, J. (2022). The process linking child-invested contingent self-esteem and conditional regard: The roles of maternal anger and its regulation. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 31, 2412–2423. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-022-02316-y>

- Wuyts, D., Chen, B., Vansteenkiste, M., & Soenens, B. (2015). Social pressure and unfulfilled dreams among Chinese and Belgian parents: two roads to controlling parenting via child-invested contingent self-esteem. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 46(9), 1150–1168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022115603125>
- Wuyts, D., Vansteenkiste, M., Soenens, B., & Assor, A. (2015). An examination of the dynamics involved in parental child-invested contingent self-esteem. *Parenting: Science and Practice*, 15, 55–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295192.2015.1020135>
- Wuyts, D., Soenens, B., Vansteenkiste, M., Van Petegem, S., & Brenning, K. (2017). The role of separation anxiety in mothers' use of autonomy support: An observational study. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 26, 1949–1957. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0707-7>