

Parental psychological control, autonomy frustration, and psychological well-being among boarding school adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Psychological well-being is fundamental for adolescents to be adaptive and fully functioning in the environment. For adolescents who stay in boarding school, even though they are away from their parents due to boarding school rules, parents still have a role to provide support and direct their behavior through parental control. On the other hand, adolescence is a period where children learn to be detached from their parents and strive for autonomy. The present study aimed to investigate the role of autonomy need frustration as a mediating variable between parental psychological control and psychological well-being for adolescents who stayed in boarding school. A survey was completed by 318 Islamic boarding school adolescents with an age range from 12–18 years old. The findings showed that autonomy need frustration fully mediated the relationship between parental psychological control and psychological well-being. Parental psychological control causes a decline in boarding school adolescents' psychological well-being through the feeling of autonomy need frustration. These results support further development of studies regarding the psychological well-being of adolescents, especially in the boarding school context.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding school is a type of boarding school that emphasizes Islamic education. It requires the students to live in dormitories which make the learning activities more intensive. Students at Islamic boarding schools are given general and Islamic education along with its application, observed by the teachers for almost 24 hours while undergoing a series of rules that must be followed [1], [2]. Islamic boarding schools usually offer character-building based on religious values, which attracts parents to enroll their children in such type of school [3]. Parents perceive that by enrolling their children in Islamic boarding school, there will be a balance between their children's religiosity and general knowledge, their children will be more disciplined, and they will be away from delinquency behavior [4]. However, apart from its advantages in educating children's good character, Islamic boarding school also needs to be studied in terms of facilitating the psychological well-being of their pupils.

Previous studies showed that adolescents in boarding schools reported higher levels of depression, anxiety, and emotional problems than adolescents in regular schools [5], [6], suggesting that adolescents in boarding schools have not achieved psychological well-being. Psychological well-being is a study of well-being that was measured based on the extent of how much an individual can attain their full potential and reach self-actualization [7]. Boarding school adolescents who have high well-being will adapt well while

living in a dormitory, be capable of attaining a good interpersonal relationship with those around them, feel more responsibility regarding their academic life, and feel a sense of belonging to their school [8].

This sense of belonging felt by boarding school adolescents can protect them from existing emotional problems and support their psychological well-being [9]. Individuals who possess high psychological well-being will make life decisions according to their own choices, live their life based on clear goals and life purposes, aspire to develop themselves and embrace new experiences, be capable of controlling their environment based on their needs, empathize well with others, and able to evaluate themselves positively despite their strengths and weaknesses [10].

One of the important determinant factors of adolescents' well-being in the boarding school context is family [11], especially relationships with parents. Due to the physical distance with parents, boarding school adolescents have different relationship dynamics with their parents compared to adolescents who stay with their parents. The almost nonexistent presence of parents in boarding school adolescents' daily life could harm their psychological function. Previous studies reported that boarding school students are vulnerable to the feeling of alienation and have lower perceived social support from parents [12], [13].

These findings raise the possibility of lower quality of parent-child relationship, which in turn can trigger conflicts that can cause adolescent risk-taking behavior and a decrease in the well-being of both parents and children [14], [15]. Several studies in Indonesia found that boarding school adolescents enrolled to their school not because of their own choice, but under coercion from their parents [16]–[18]. Coercion by parents tends to cause adaptation problems, which leads to adolescents' negative behaviors, e.g. running away from school and not attending the class [19]. The coercion indicates a form of parental psychological control that does not support adolescents' need for autonomy [20]. Parents who apply a psychological control will require their adolescents to behave according to their rules and beliefs while neglecting the adolescents' perspective [21]. They control adolescents' behavior while limiting their freedom of speech, disregarding their feelings, criticizing them in a degrading manner, and engaging in manipulating behaviors to inflict guilt on them [20]. Parental psychological control causes unfulfillment of adolescents' basic psychological needs, namely the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which affect their well-being [21]. Several studies have demonstrated the negative effects of parental psychological control on adolescents, such as lower levels of psychological well-being, autonomy and relatedness need frustration, and higher loneliness in the relationship with parents [22]–[25].

Nevertheless, studies regarding the effect of parents' behavior on boarding school adolescents revealed contradictory findings. Thohiroh *et al.* [26] found that perceived social support from parents is not significantly related to subjective well-being for boarding school adolescents. This result can be explained by previous research that reported physical separation from parents reduces the parents-adolescents conflicts in boarding school adolescents [27]. As a result of parental absence, boarding school adolescents are freer to make their own choices, which cause the fulfillment of their autonomy needs. This explanation is in line with the central issue of adolescents' unique developmental stage, which is adolescents' need for autonomy. Adolescence is a developmental phase when one's dependence on parents is fading; which is marked by the emergence of a tendency to be more independent by separating themselves from their parents; and the need for autonomy becomes greater than during childhood [28]–[31].

Previous findings concerning boarding school adolescents' autonomy showed inconsistent results. Some studies reported that boarding school adolescents have higher autonomy achievement than regular school adolescents [12], [27], [32]. Meanwhile, a study found an unstable level of autonomy in boarding school adolescents [33]. Overall, the evidence presented thus far highlights the need to study further the autonomy need of boarding school adolescents, especially concerning well-being.

The satisfaction of autonomy needs is prerequisite for adolescents, based on perspective of the basic psychological needs theory [34]. Individuals with the satisfaction of autonomy support live their lives with enjoyment, are highly motivated to reach their goals, and eventually, experience well-being [35], [36]. Adolescents who experience well-being tends to be more involved with the learning process at school and sheltered from possible depressive symptoms [37], [38]. Meanwhile, if the adolescent's need for autonomy is frustrated, they will feel pressured to do something against their will [39], [40]. Individuals who feel autonomy frustration tend to base their behavior on external forces, they do things because it's necessary to do so and live their lives as if they are being controlled [41], [42]. The experience of autonomy needs satisfaction or frustration affected by social context [43], [44], one of the most important for adolescents is parents. Prior research has found that parents' behavior contributed to the frustration of adolescents needs, and it leads to ill-being, such as depression, anxiety, and adolescents' maladjustment problems [21], [22], [44]–[46].

Several studies have shown inconsistent results regarding the psychological mechanisms of boarding school adolescents' autonomy and psychological well-being. Thus far, previous studies have identified autonomy need frustration as the mediator between parental psychological control and ill-being, such as depression and dysregulation in social media engagement [21], [47]. However, the literature

regarding its mediating effect on the association of parental psychological control and psychological well-being has not been found yet. Therefore, we hypothesized that autonomy need frustration mediates the relationship between parental psychological control and psychological well-being, with the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1. In this study, we investigate parental psychological control as the independent variable (X) that causes effects on psychological well-being as the dependent variable (Y), while autonomy need frustration is the mediating variable (M) between X and Y.

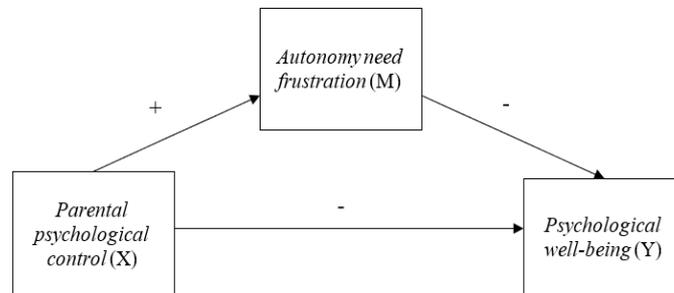


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The ethical committee of Universitas Padjadjaran approved our study (Number 1025/UN6.KEP/EC/2022). The present study used a quantitative approach with a correlational design. Variables that were investigated specifically autonomy need frustration as a mediating variable, parental psychological control as an independent variable, and psychological well-being as a dependent variable. Participants comprised of 318 junior and senior high school students recruited from an Islamic boarding school in West Java. The first author (ZAM) selected the participants in the respective school using the method of quota sampling based on their grades (7-9 for junior high school and 10-12 for senior high school). The data collection was conducted in the computer laboratory of the school. The survey instructions were given directly to the participants, while the students filled out the questionnaire itself via Google Form. The average time to complete the survey was approximately 30-45 minutes. A package of snack was given to the participants after they finished all the required questionnaires.

The demographic data was obtained by asking the participants about their gender, age, frequency of interaction with parents, and one self-report item that described their interest in being a student of an Islamic boarding school. The item asked whether they wanted to be in the boarding school or not, using 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) Likert measure. The item used the statement "I do not want to go to Islamic boarding school," and the participants were asked to choose 1 to 5 to describe their agreement. For frequency of interaction, we categorized it as face-to-face interaction and interaction done through communication devices. We further asked how many times adolescents have those interactions with their parents within a month, and the multiple choices were presented as ranges (e.g., 0-2 times/month, 3-4 times/month, 4-5 times/month, and >6 times/month).

Psychological well-being was measured using the brief scale of psychological well-being for adolescents (BSPWB-A) [48]. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items and four dimensions: five items from self-acceptance ($\alpha=0.772$; e.g., "I like most aspects of my personality"), five items from positive interpersonal relationships ($\alpha=0.756$, e.g., "I know that I can trust my friends and they know that they can trust me"), six items from autonomy ($\alpha=0.721$; e.g., "I tend to worry what other people think of me"), and four items from life development ($\alpha=0.781$; e.g., "I think everything we experience is an opportunity to grow and to become a better person"). Likert scale ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly agree) was used to measure adolescents' ability to deal with challenges and adapt to life changes. We validated the Indonesian version of BSPWB-A before it was used. The reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha resulted in $\alpha=0.829$ for all items. The validity analysis using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed that the scale has a good construct validity (comparative fit index (CFI)=0.919; non-normed fit index (NNFI)=0.901; goodness of fit (GFI)=0.918; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.064; standardized root mean square residual (SRMR)=0.072; standardized factor loading coefficient >0.50; p-value=>0.001) and good content validity (I-CVI & S-CVI=1.00) [49]. Prior to the scoring, the unfavorable items from this scale were coded reversely. Scoring was done by calculating the mean of all items, and higher calculated scores indicated higher adolescents' psychological well-being.

Parental psychological control was measured by using psychological control scale (PCS) from Wang *et al.* [50] which went through an adaptation process to the Indonesian version by the author using international test commission guidelines [51]. This questionnaire consisted of 18 items of three dimensions: that 10 items of guilt induction ($\alpha=0.796$; e.g., “My parents tell me of all the sacrifices they have made for me.”), five items of love withdrawal ($\alpha=0.731$; e.g., “My parents avoid looking at me when I have disappointed them.”), and three items of authority assertion ($\alpha=0.670$; e.g., “My parents answer my arguments by saying things like, “You’ll know better when you grow up”.”). Adolescents were asked about their perception of their parent’s psychological control by choosing 1 to 5 Likert scales (1=not at all true and 5=very true). The reliability analysis from this scale showed $\alpha=0.879$ for the overall scale. The validity analysis of the scale was done by using the measurement of content validity with I-CVI=0.99, which indicated a good relevancy between the items and the construct [49]. Scoring was done by calculating the mean of all items, with a high score indicating high parental psychological control. We also added a question for the parental psychological control scale. Since the questionnaire on parental psychological control used the word “parents” on its items, we further asked the adolescents which of the parents that they think about when they filled out the questionnaire, with the presented choices being father, mother, or both.

Autonomy needs frustration was measured by using the Indonesian version of basic psychological needs satisfaction and frustration scale (BPNSFS) [41], [46]. We used four items of the autonomy frustration dimension in this study, e.g., “I feel forced to do many things I wouldn’t choose to do”. The items used a 5-point Likert scale to measure adolescents’ feelings of being pressured and controlled by the forces outside of themselves, with 1 being not true at all and 5 being completely true. The reliability analysis conducted using Cronbach’s alpha showed $\alpha=0.602$, and the value of the corrected item-total correlation of all items is >0.3 . The validity analysis using CFA showed that the scale has a good construct validity (CFI=0.814; GFI=0.891; RMSEA=0.061; SRMR=0.083; p-value= >0.001). Scoring was done by calculating the mean of all items, and the higher score on this scale showed a higher level of adolescents’ autonomy need frustration.

Data analysis was carried out by using IBM SPSS Statistics 23. The demographic data were analyzed descriptively by calculating the frequency distribution. Descriptive analysis was also conducted for presenting three variables investigated. Inferential statistics analysis was used to analyze the correlational and regression relationship between the variables, by using Pearson and simple linear regression analysis to test the hypothesis. The normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests were conducted prior to the regression analysis and they showed good results. Mediation analysis was conducted by using the PROCESS program by Hayes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Demographic data

Participants consisted of 318 adolescents from Islamic boarding schools, with the percentage of 57.9% of girls and 42.1% of boys. There are two types of interaction with parents that were categorized in this study, the interaction that was done by face-to-face meetings and through communication tools. The data showed that adolescents in this study rarely do face-to-face interaction with their parents, with the meeting often ranging from 0-2 times a month (91.2%). The interaction tends to happen via communication tools (e.g. dormitory phone, smartphone, or laptop), ranging from 3-4 times a month (73.3%). Adolescents in this study also showed a rather neutral attitude towards the item that described their interest in being a student at an Islamic boarding school, with 46.9% (n=149) of them choosing neutral. The result for the additional question of parental psychological control showed that 82.4% (n=262) of the adolescents in this study think about both of them when they filled out the scale, while 15.4% (n=49) chose their mother and 2.2% (n=7) chose their father. All of the demographic data were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic data

Variable	Categories	n	%
Gender	Girls	184	57.9%
	Boys	134	42.1%
Age	12	60	18.6%
	13	60	18.6%
	14	64	19.8%
	15	65	20.1%
	16	38	11.8%
	17	29	9.0%
	18	2	0.6%
Interaction with parents via communication tools(times/month)	0-2	25	7.9%
	3-4	233	73.3%
	5-6	34	10.7%
	>6	26	8.2%
Interaction with parents via face-to-face (times/month)	0-2	290	91.2%
	3-4	20	6.3%
	5-6	0	0%
	>6	8	2.5%
Interest in being a student at Islamic boarding school ("I do not want to go to Islamic boarding school")	Strongly disagree	33	10.4%
	Disagree	71	22.3%
	Neutral	149	46.9%
	Agree	58	18.2%
	Strongly agree	7	2.2%
Additional question for parental psychological control scale for context purposes ("Which of the parent that you think about when you see the word "parents"?")	Father	7	2.2%
	Mother	49	15.4%
	Both	262	82.4%

3.1.2. Descriptive and correlation analysis

Table 2 presents the data for descriptive statistics, internal consistency, and Pearson correlation coefficients of each of the variables and their dimensions. The highest mean of psychological well-being was found on the life development dimension (mean=5.05), while the lowest was found on the autonomy dimension (mean=2.91). For parental psychological control, the highest mean was found on authority assertion (mean=3.28), while the lowest was found on love withdrawal (mean=2.30). Results showed significant but weak correlations between all main variables, with the strongest correlation on parental psychological control and autonomy need frustration ($r=0.355$). A negative correlation was seen between autonomy need frustration and psychological well-being ($r=-0.335$), and also between parental psychological control and psychological well-being ($r=-0.179$). Meanwhile, a positive correlation was found between parental psychological control and autonomy need frustration ($r=0.355$).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, internal consistency, and correlation data

Variable (n Item)	α	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Psychological well-being (20)	0.829	3.88	0.574	-									
Self-acceptance (5)	0.772	4.09	0.791	0.752**	-								
Positive interpersonal relationship (5)	0.756	3.89	0.973	0.745**	0.334**	-							
Autonomy (6)	0.721	2.91	0.790	0.696**	0.344**	0.371**	-						
Life development (4)	0.781	5.05	0.761	0.520**	0.465**	0.199**	0.025	-					
Parental psychological control (18)	0.879	2.71	0.719	-0.179**	-0.106	-0.048	-0.279**	-0.025	-				
Guilt induction (10)	0.796	2.74	0.739	-0.146**	-0.075	-0.020	-0.263**	-0.010	0.961**	-			
Love withdrawal (5)	0.731	2.30	0.885	-0.223**	-0.164**	-0.088	-0.255**	-0.088	-0.848**	0.733**	-		
Authority assertion (3)	0.670	3.28	0.985	-0.085	-0.030	-0.026	-0.184**	0.046	0.709**	0.612**	0.385**	-	
Autonomy need frustration (4)	0.602	3.29	0.728	-0.335**	-0.087	-0.306**	-0.486**	0.095	0.355**	0.348**	0.325**	0.197**	-

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

3.1.3. Mediation Analysis

The results of mediation analysis in Table 3 showed that there was a positive significant effect between parental psychological control (X) and autonomy need frustration (M) ($p<0.05$; $\beta=0.359$); and a negative significant effect of autonomy need frustration (M) on psychological well-being (Y) ($p<0.05$; $\beta=-$

0.245). Meanwhile, the effect of parental psychological control (X) on psychological well-being (Y) showed insignificant results when autonomy need frustration was taken into account ($p > .05$; $\beta = -0.055$). Further analysis showed a negative indirect effect of parental psychological control and psychological well-being through autonomy need frustration ($M = -0.088$), with the confidence interval does not contain zero that ranges from -0.133 to -0.049. According to previous studies, perfect mediation results can be concluded when: i) There was an insignificant relationship between independent and dependent variables when the mediating variable was included between them; and ii) The range of confidence interval did not include zero [52], [53]. In summary, these results suggest that the hypothesis is accepted: autonomy need frustration fully mediate the relationship between parental psychological control and psychological well-being with an indirect effect that appears to be significant.

Table 3. Mediation analysis

Path between variables	β	SE	t	p-value
PPC→PWB (X→Y)	-0.055	0.045	-1.212	0.226 (insignificant)
PPC→AF (X→M)	0.359	0.053	6.740	0.000 (significant)
AF→PWB (M→Y)	-0.245	0.045	-5.484	0.000 (significant)
Measurement of indirect effect				
	M	SE	LL 95% CI	UL 95% CI
PPC→AF→PWB	-0.088	0.021	-0.133	-0.049

Note: PPC: Parental psychological control; PWB: Psychological well-being; AF: Autonomy frustration

3.2. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the relationship between parental psychological control and psychological well-being mediated by autonomy need frustration in Islamic boarding school adolescents. There are several findings presented in this study. First, the current study found a positive relationship between parental psychological control and autonomy need frustration, which suggested that higher levels of parental psychological control contributed to the higher levels of autonomy need frustration. The more parents perpetrate psychological control on adolescents, the more adolescents feel autonomy frustration because of the pressured feelings that stem from doing something against their will. This finding is consistent with previous results which also found that autonomy need frustration is positively correlated with parental psychological control [22], [47].

Second, the current results showed higher levels of parental psychological control contributed to lower levels of psychological well-being. Parental psychological control by manipulating adolescents into doing something corresponding to their parent's wishes, values, and thoughts, results in a decrease in adolescents' psychological well-being. In accordance with the present results, several researches found a negative relationship between parental psychological control and psychological well-being [23], [54]–[56]. The negative relationship between parental psychological control and psychological well-being also contribute to adolescents' negative outcome, such as psychological distress and maladjustment [56], [57]. This also accords with previous works indicating the negative effect of parental psychological control on adolescents' development and well-being [20], [22]–[25], [58].

Third, the results also revealed that higher levels of autonomy need frustration contributed to lower levels of psychological well-being. Previous studies have demonstrated the relationship between autonomy need frustration to adolescents' ill-being, which is in line with the present findings [21], [22], [44]–[46]. Adolescents who feel the frustration of their autonomy will be more vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and incapability of adjusting to the environment. Furthermore, we can also conclude that this result showed the importance of autonomy need for boarding school adolescents in a collectivistic culture which was in line with the previous study which reported collectivistic adolescents' positive view on behaviors that describe parental support towards their autonomy, which can contribute to higher well-being [37], [59]. This supports the idea related to the universality of basic psychological needs theory, which is in line with the study from Chen *et al.* [41].

Fourth, the results of the mediation analysis showed that our hypothesis had been accepted; autonomy needs frustration fully mediate the relationship between parental psychological control and psychological well-being. Full mediation means that the independent variable can cause an effect on the dependent variable only by the role of mediating variable [53]. In other words, a change of levels in parental psychological control causes a change in autonomy needs frustration as the mediator, which affects the change in the psychological well-being of adolescents. The current study found that when adolescents experience parental psychological control, they will feel frustrated which affects their psychological well-being. This study further supports the argument of autonomy need frustration as the mediator between parental psychological control and adolescents' negative outcome which is consistent with previous studies

[21], [47]. These results further support the idea of parenting as a social context that could affect adolescents' autonomy needs and psychological well-being, and also an additional evidence for the significant role of social context on the negative and positive outcomes of one's psychological process [43], [60].

Several limitations need to be considered. The current data may not apply to all types of boarding school groups, since the study was limited to one Islamic boarding school in West Java. The use of quota sampling as a nonprobability sampling also makes the findings less generalizable to the wider population. On account of these limitations, further investigations are required to explore the other possible effects of psychological mechanisms on boarding school adolescents, to gain a better understanding of the underlying effects of their psychological well-being.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to examine the mediating effect of autonomy needs frustration on the relationship between parental psychological control and psychological well-being in Islamic boarding school adolescents. The major findings of the current research revealed that autonomy needs frustration fully mediate the relationship between parental psychological control and psychological well-being. These results highlight the importance of autonomy needs in adolescents and parents' role in its satisfaction. This study provides important insights to parents, schools, and researchers especially in developing a psychological well-being intervention for boarding school adolescents, in which autonomy needs should be taken into account. Therefore, in the interest of the research development regarding the related variables, it would be interesting if future work would explore these important issues: i) The exploration of protective factors for adolescents who experience parental control; and ii) A comprehensive investigation of other types of boarding schools.

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