

# Do Parents Feel Autonomous, Competent, and Connected When Engaging in their Child's Schooling?



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CHAIRE DE RECHERCHE DU CANADA  
SUR LES PRATIQUES PARENTALES  
ET LES TRAJECTOIRES SCOLAIRES  
ET VOCATIONNELLES

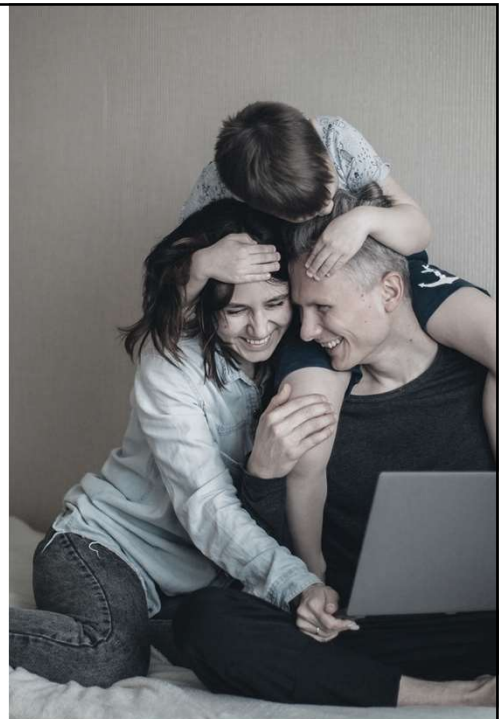
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## PERSPECTIVES

- Parental involvement in their children's schooling is a key ingredient in students' academic learning and success (Pomerantz et al., 2012; Ratelle & Duchesne, 2017).
- Elementary school students succeed more in school when their parents are involved in their schooling.
- Hence, if we want students to succeed in school and be motivated, we need parents to be involved in their child's schooling, starting in elementary school.

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## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- According to self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017), individuals will behave more optimally when their psychological needs are satisfied.



AUTONOMY



COMPETENCE



RELATEDNESS

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## PERSPECTIVES

- Research on parents' psychological needs is scarce.
- Past studies examined specific needs in :
  - specific contexts (e.g., competence in the transition to parenthood; see Borstein, 2016)
  - general (Mabbe et al., 2018; van Der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2019)
- To our knowledge, no research had examined parents' psychological needs in the context of their school involvement.

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## OBJECTIVES

The present study thus aimed to examine parents' autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their school involvement.

1. Analyze parents' discourse when reflecting on their experience of engaging in their child's schooling to document manifestations of each need and identify whether these were instances of their satisfaction or their frustration.
2. Assess parents' levels of satisfaction and frustration of each need in large representative samples of parents to determine their state.

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## STUDY 1 (QUALITATIVE) : METHOD

### Participants

- 113 parents (86% mothers, 14% fathers) of elementary school children
- Their child was in grades 1 (8%) or 2 (92%)
- 46% reported their child was a girl
- 56% had a child with a special need

### Measures

- Open-ended electronic questionnaire:
  - How they felt about their school involvement with their child
  - What the homework and lesson time was like
  - What facilitates or impedes on their school involvement.

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## STUDY 1 (QUALITATIVE) : METHOD

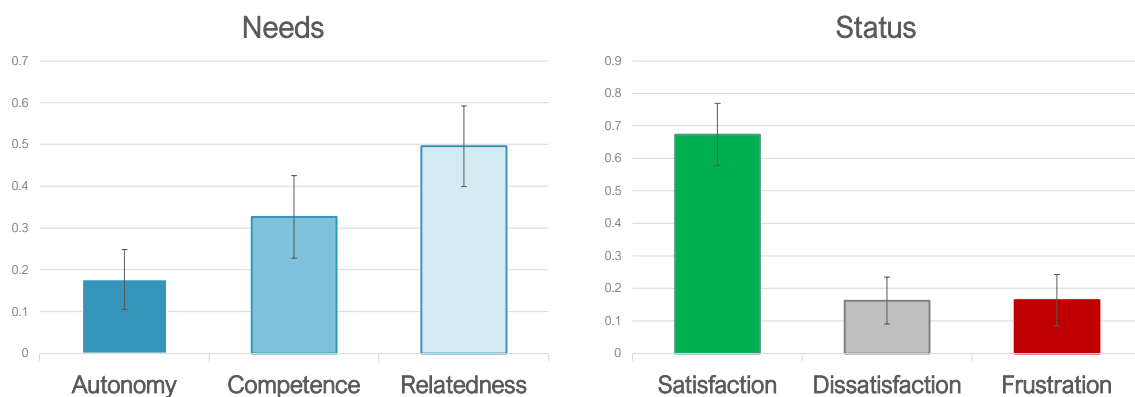
### Procedure

- Coded by two trained research assistants knowledgeable of SDT's conceptualization of needs.
1. They read participants answers to the three questions and highlighted each passage that pertained to a need and specified which one(s).
  2. They identified whether each need manifestation represented its satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or frustration.
  3. A third coder reviewed the two coders' results to determine if they identified the same passages and if their rating (satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or frustration) matched.

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## STUDY 1 (QUALITATIVE) : METHOD



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Autonomy	<p>« I appreciate having the assignments for the entire week in advance, it helps with planning. » (ID-35)</p> <p>« I don't see how I can do lessons with my ADHD child and have it be very beneficial. In the evenings, the medication hardly works and he doesn't seem to be able to concentrate or study. » (ID-4)</p>
Competence	<p>« I am very at ease, especially when the teacher's expectations are clear. » (ID-18)</p> <p>« He does well, but makes systematic mistakes (e.g., reversing letters) and we don't know how to help him (or at least what I have tried doesn't work). » (ID-79)</p>
Relatedness	<p>« Very dynamic teacher who communicates extensively with parents. Available upon request. Quick response. » (ID-2)</p> <p>« What's difficult with him is that he never listens to our advice, he does what he wants. He is kinesthetic, he learns by experience and not by reasoning, so it is complicated and discouraging. » (ID-5)</p>

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## STUDY 2 (QUANTITATIVE) : METHOD

### Sample 1: Convenience Sample

- 1017 parents (64% mothers;  $M_{age}=42$  years) of elementary school children
- Online questionnaire in January 2020 (T1) and 2021 (T2).
- Most parents were born in Quebec (82%), spoke French (95%), earned a postsecondary school diploma (73%), and held a full-time job (82%).
- Families were mostly from upper middle class (64% reported an annual family income of CAN \$100,000 or more)
- They had children in grades 1 (28%), 2 (24%), 3 (20%), 4 (14%), 5 (9%), 6 (5%) at T1.
- Child gender was evenly distributed (49% girls) and 26% had special needs.

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## STUDY 2 (QUANTITATIVE) : METHOD

### Sample 2: Representative Sample

- 1448 parents (76% mothers;  $M_{age}=38$  years) of elementary school children
- Online questionnaire in October 2020 (T1) and June 2021 (T2).
- Most parents were born in Quebec (79%), spoke French (90%), earned a postsecondary school diploma (49%), and held a full-time job (71%).
- Families were mostly from the middle class (57% reported an annual family income of CAN \$75,000 or more)
- They had children in grades 1 (55%) and 2 (45%)
- The sample included a bit more girls (63%) and 41% of the children had special needs.

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## STUDY 2 (QUANTITATIVE) : METHOD

### Measures

- Parents' psychological needs in the context of their school involvement:
  - Autonomy satisfaction (4 items; "I feel like I can do things my way.",  $\omega=.85-.87$  )
  - Autonomy frustration (4 items; "I feel compelled to do too many things.",  $\omega=.86-.88$ )
  - Competence satisfaction (4 items; "I feel competent in what I do.",  $\omega=.92-.93$  )
  - Competence frustration (4 items; "I feel uncertain about my skills.",  $\omega=.87-.89$ )
  - Relatedness satisfaction (4 items; "I feel close and connected to my child.",  $\omega=.83-.85$  )
  - Relatedness frustration (4 items; "I feel like my child doesn't like me.",  $\omega=.92-.94$ )

Parents respond to each item using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Completely false) to 5 (Completely true).

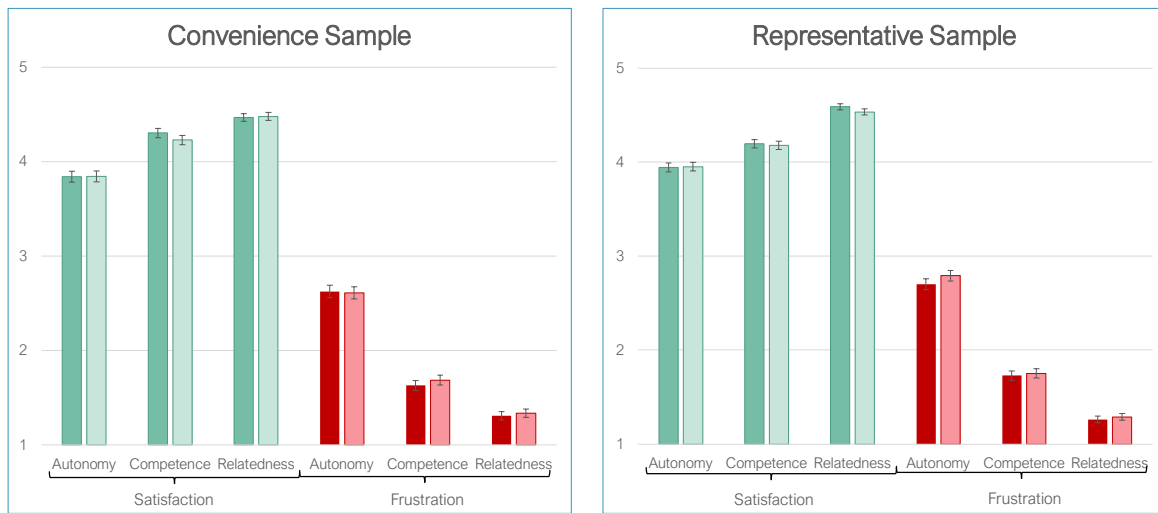
Scale developed for the purpose of this study, adapted from Chevrier and Lennegrand (2021) and Brenning et al. (2018)

- Sociodemographic Information
  - On themselves (e.g., age, gender), their child (e.g., age, gender), and their child's school (e.g., school name, school type).

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## STUDY 2 (QUANTITATIVE) : METHOD



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## SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- First study examining the satisfaction and frustration of parents' psychological needs in the context of their involvement in their child's schooling.
- Results confirmed that these dimensions of parents' experience is relevant, and that parents' discourse could present manifestations of each need and that these could reflect their satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or frustration.
- These findings were later confirmed in two large samples surveyed longitudinally.

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## SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- Nevertheless, there is a place for improvement, and more specifically in terms of supporting parents' autonomy need.
- These findings have important implications for interventions.
  - Teachers are not formally taught during the training how they can develop a positive working relation with parents.

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## FUTURE RESEARCH

- Examine the factors that predict parental need satisfaction and frustration. Based on past categorizations of parenting determinants (see Bornstein, 2016), these can pertain to:
  - the child (e.g., learning difficulties);
  - the parent (e.g., personality traits);
  - their environment (e.g., family conflicts), and
  - school (e.g., school climate).
- Examine how meeting parents' psychological needs predicts their behaviors in supporting their child schooling.
  - Autonomy support
  - Involvement
  - Structure

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## FUTURE RESEARCH



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