

Parental Influence and Interest Alignment as Predictors of Perceived Academic Difficulty among Psychology Students of Laguna University

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Abstract- This study examined the predictive effects of parental influence and interest alignment on perceived academic difficulty among undergraduate Psychology students at Laguna University. Perceived academic difficulty refers to students' subjective evaluation of academic challenges, which may be influenced by environmental and personal factors. Guided by Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, the study explored how parental influence, as an external factor, and interest alignment, as an internal factor, contribute to students' academic experiences. Specifically, the research aimed to determine whether parental influence and interest alignment significantly predict perceived academic difficulty among Psychology students. A quantitative cross-sectional regression design was employed in the study. Data were collected from 195 undergraduate Psychology students through convenience sampling using a self-constructed survey questionnaire validated by registered psychometricians. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were utilized to determine the levels of parental influence and interest alignment, while multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive relationship among the variables. Findings revealed a moderate level of parental influence ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.98$), suggesting parental involvement without excessive control. Respondents also demonstrated a moderate to high level of interest alignment, indicating consistency between their chosen academic program and personal interests. Regression analysis showed that the model was statistically significant, $F(2, 192) = 25.4$, $p < .001$, confirming that parental influence and interest alignment significantly predicted perceived academic difficulty. The model accounted for 20.9% of the variance in academic difficulty ($R^2 = .209$, Adjusted $R^2 = .201$). Interest alignment emerged as a stronger predictor, wherein higher alignment was associated with lower perceived academic difficulty. The findings emphasize the importance of balanced parental involvement, student autonomy, and strengthened career guidance initiatives in supporting academic adjustment, improving educational

experiences, and promoting informed college program selection among students.

Keywords: Parental Influence, Interest Alignment, Perceived Academic Difficulty, Psychology Students, Academic Adjustment, Career Guidance, Social Cognitive Theory

I. INTRODUCTION

Choosing an academic program is a critical decision that significantly shapes students' educational experiences and future career opportunities. Students' decisions regarding their chosen academic program are influenced by several factors, including parental expectations, personal interests, career opportunities, and societal pressures. In collectivist cultures such as the Philippines, parental involvement often plays a significant role in educational and career decision-making.

Parental influence may positively affect students by providing emotional support, academic guidance, and encouragement. However, excessive parental expectations and pressure may negatively impact students' motivation, emotional well-being, and academic adjustment. Students who pursue programs primarily because of parental expectations rather than personal interest may experience increased academic strain and dissatisfaction.

Interest alignment refers to the degree to which students' interests correspond with their chosen academic program. Research suggests that students whose academic programs align with their interests demonstrate higher academic motivation, engagement, persistence, and satisfaction. Conversely, students who experience a mismatch

between their interests and academic program may encounter increased stress, disengagement, and perceived academic difficulty.

Perceived academic difficulty refers to students' subjective assessment of how challenging academic tasks and experiences are. This includes cognitive difficulty, emotional difficulty, and academic workload difficulty. Students' perceptions of academic difficulty are influenced not only by academic demands but also by personal and environmental factors such as parental influence and motivational congruence.

Although several studies have examined parental involvement and academic motivation, limited research has explored how parental influence and interest alignment jointly predict perceived academic difficulty among Psychology students in Philippine higher education institutions. This study aims to address this gap by examining the predictive relationship between parental influence, interest alignment, and perceived academic difficulty among Psychology students at Laguna University.

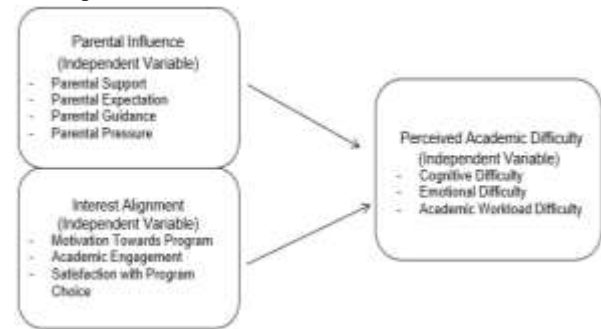
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored in Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (1986), which posits that behavior is shaped through the reciprocal interaction of personal factors, environmental influences, and behavioral outcomes. According to SCT, individuals acquire knowledge, develop skills, and form beliefs through continuous interaction with their social environment, a process referred to as reciprocal determinism. This theory provides a useful framework for understanding how external and internal factors influence students' academic experiences.

In the context of this study, parental influence serves as the environmental factor. Parents function as primary social models who provide support, guidance, expectations, and feedback that can shape students' attitudes, decisions, and responses to academic demands. Through these interactions, parents may influence how students perceive and cope with academic challenges.

Interest alignment represents the personal factor in SCT. It refers to the degree to which students' chosen academic programs correspond with their interests, motivations, and preferences. SCT suggests that personal factors such as motivation and self-beliefs affect behavior and performance. Students whose academic programs align with their interests are more likely to demonstrate greater engagement, satisfaction, and persistence in their studies, which may reduce their perception of academic difficulty.

Figure 1.
Conceptual Framework



Perceived academic difficulty serves as the behavioral outcome. It reflects students' assessment of the challenges associated with their academic tasks and responsibilities. Consistent with SCT, this outcome is influenced by the interaction between environmental factors, such as parental influence, and personal factors, such as interest alignment.

Based on this theoretical foundation, the conceptual framework of the study proposes that parental influence and interest alignment function as independent variables that affect perceived academic difficulty, the dependent variable. Parental influence is measured through parental support, parental expectations, parental guidance, and parental pressure. Interest alignment is assessed through motivation toward the program, academic engagement, and satisfaction with program choice. These variables are hypothesized to influence students' perceptions of academic difficulty, providing insight into how external support systems and personal interests shape academic experiences.

The framework suggests that students who receive positive parental support and experience strong

alignment between their interests and academic programs are more likely to perceive lower levels of academic difficulty. Consequently, understanding these relationships may contribute to the development of interventions aimed at improving student adjustment, engagement, and academic performance.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Parental influence is a significant factor that shapes students' academic pathways, career interests, and educational outcomes across different educational levels and cultural contexts. Parents often influence their children's academic and career decisions based on cultural values, societal expectations, and aspirations for future success. In many collectivist societies, parental authority and family expectations play a substantial role in students' decisions when selecting academic programs in higher education. Consequently, students may choose academic programs not only according to their personal interests but also in response to parental preferences and expectations.

Previous studies have demonstrated that parental involvement significantly affects students' academic engagement, motivation, and educational choices. Parents frequently consider factors such as affordability, practicality, and career opportunities when guiding their children's program selection, which may either support or constrain students' personal aspirations. Parental influence is likewise important among students with special educational needs, as active parental involvement has been found to shape career interests and enhance career readiness by helping align educational pathways with students' abilities and future goals. These findings suggest that parental guidance plays a crucial role in students' educational adjustment and career development.

Furthermore, parental involvement has consistently been associated with positive academic outcomes, including improved academic performance, stronger school engagement, and greater educational persistence. Students who perceive higher levels of parental support often demonstrate better academic achievement and stronger motivation to succeed. However, the nature of parental involvement is

equally important. While supportive involvement can foster confidence and resilience, excessive parental expectations and academic pressure may contribute to stress, anxiety, and psychological distress among students. Factors such as parental education, socioeconomic status, employment, and family dynamics may further influence the extent and effectiveness of parental involvement. Therefore, parental influence may function as both a protective and challenging factor that shapes students' academic experiences and perceptions of academic difficulty.

Research Questions

This study focused on the role of parental influence and interest alignment as predictors of perceived academic difficulty among college students.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following:

1. What is the level of parental influence and interest alignment among the psychology students of Laguna University?
2. What is the level of perceived academic difficulty among the psychology students of Laguna University?
3. Does parental influence and interest alignment significantly impact the academic difficulty among the psychology students of Laguna University?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what action plan may be proposed?

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative regression research design to determine the predictive relationship between parental influence, interest alignment, and perceived academic difficulty among Psychology students.

Multiple linear regression analysis was utilized to examine the extent to which parental influence and interest alignment predicted perceived academic difficulty. This study utilized a quantitative regression research design to examine how parental influence and interest alignment predict perceived academic difficulty among college students.

Specifically, multiple linear regression was employed to determine the magnitude and significance of the predictor.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of 195 Psychology students enrolled at Laguna University. The sample exceeded the minimum requirement determined through G*Power computation, thereby ensuring adequate statistical power for the study.

Convenience sampling was employed due to accessibility and practicality in gathering respondents.

The respondents consisted of 195 Psychology students from Laguna University selected through convenience sampling. The number of participants exceeded the minimum sample requirement identified through G*Power computation, indicating that the sample size was adequate for regression analysis. The respondents were considered suitable because they possessed diverse academic experiences and varying levels of parental influence, interest alignment, and perceived academic difficulty. This diversity allowed the researchers to gather sufficient data needed to examine the predictive relationship among the variables in the study.

Research Instrument

The instrument consisted of thirty-six (36) items divided into three major variables: parental influence, interest alignment, and perceived academic difficulty. Among the variables, parental influence contained the greatest number of items because it measured multiple dimensions affecting students' academic experiences. The questionnaire was designed to comprehensively assess how environmental factors such as parental involvement and personal factors such as interest alignment influence students' perceptions of academic difficulty. The balanced distribution of items ensured that all dimensions of the study variables were properly represented and measured.

The four-point Likert scale used in measuring respondents' perceptions regarding parental influence, interest alignment, and perceived academic difficulty. The scale allowed respondents to indicate

their level of agreement with each statement included in the questionnaire. The use of a four-point scale eliminated the neutral option and encouraged respondents to provide more specific responses regarding their academic experiences. This approach improved the accuracy and clarity of the collected data by minimizing indecisive answers.

The interpretation of mean scores utilized in analyzing the respondents' answers. Higher mean scores indicate higher levels of parental influence, stronger interest alignment, and greater perceived academic difficulty. The interpretation was based on equal interval scaling to ensure consistency in describing the gathered data. This interpretation served as the basis for determining whether the variables and dimensions measured in the study were high, moderate, low, or very low among the respondents.

Data Gathering Procedure

The questionnaire underwent validation by three registered psychometricians. Pilot testing and reliability analysis were conducted before actual data gathering.

The researchers secured institutional approval and complied with ethical requirements, including informed consent and confidentiality assurances.

Data collection was conducted through Google Forms distributed via online platforms such as Facebook and Messenger.

Ethical Consideration

This study adhered to established ethical guidelines to ensure the rights, safety, and well-being of all participants. Prior to data collection, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the voluntary nature of their participation. An informed consent form was presented at the beginning of the online questionnaire, and only those who provided their agreement were allowed to proceed. This process ensured that participation was based on full understanding and voluntary decision-making.

The researchers upheld the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which mandated the secure

handling and protection of personal data. In compliance with this law, no identifying information, such as names, email addresses, or student numbers, was collected from the participants. All responses remained anonymous and unlinked to any individual. The gathered data were stored in a password-protected digital file accessible only to the researchers, ensuring that information was safeguarded from unauthorized access or misuse.

The study posed minimal risk, as the topics covered—parental influence, interest alignment, and perceived academic difficulty—were not expected to cause harm or distress. Participants were informed that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. This respect for autonomy aligned with the principles of voluntary participation and protection from discomfort.

Furthermore, all collected data were used exclusively for academic research purposes and were not disclosed to any individuals or groups outside the research team. After the completion of the study, the data were retained only for documentation requirements and were securely disposed of in accordance with the institution’s research data management policies. By ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, and secure data handling, the study upheld the ethical standards required for research involving human participants and complied with relevant national regulations.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The following statistical tools were used:

- Mean and Standard Deviation – to determine the levels of parental influence, interest alignment, and perceived academic difficulty.
- Multiple Linear Regression – to determine whether parental influence and interest alignment significantly predict perceived academic difficulty.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that parental support and parental guidance obtained high interpretations,

indicating that students generally received encouragement, advice, and assistance from their parents regarding academic matters. In contrast, parental expectations and parental pressure were interpreted as moderate, suggesting that students experienced a certain degree of pressure to meet academic standards and parental expectations.

Table 1
 Level of Parental Influence Among the Psychology Students of Laguna University

Indicator	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Parental Support	3.03	0.95	Agree
Parental Expectations	2.74	0.94	Agree
Parental Guidance	2.42	1.00	Disagree
Parental Pressure	2.50	1.09	Disagree
Overall Mean	2.91	0.98	Agree

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 – Strongly Disagree
 2.51 – 3.25 – Agree
 1.76 – 2.50 – Disagree
 3.26 – 4.00 – Strongly Agree

The findings imply that parents continue to play a significant role in shaping students’ academic experiences and attitudes. Supportive parental involvement may contribute positively to students’ motivation and academic adjustment. However, excessive expectations and pressure may also contribute to stress and increased perceptions of academic difficulty among students.

Table 2
 Level of Interest Alignment Among the Psychology Students of Laguna University

Indicator	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Motivation Towards the Program	3.48	0.62	Strongly Agree
Academic Engagement	3.31	0.71	Strongly Agree
Satisfaction with Program Choice	3.25	0.78	Agree
Overall Mean	3.34	0.72	Strongly Agree

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 – Strongly Disagree
 2.51 – 3.25 – Agree
 1.76 – 2.50 – Disagree
 3.26 – 4.00 – Strongly Agree

The findings showed that students generally demonstrated high levels of motivation toward their chosen academic program and actively participated in academic activities. Satisfaction with program choice

also obtained a moderate to high interpretation, indicating that most students were relatively satisfied with pursuing Psychology as their field of study.

Table 3
 Perceived Academic Difficulty
 Level of Perceived Academic Difficulty Among the
 Psychology Students of Laguna University

Indicator	M	SD	Interpretation
Cognitive Difficulty	2.39	0.75	Disagree
Emotional Difficulty	2.17	0.81	Disagree
Academic Workload Difficulty	2.41	0.83	Disagree
Overall Mean	2.36	0.80	Disagree

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 – Strongly Disagree
 2.51 – 3.25 – Agree
 1.76 – 2.50 – Disagree
 3.26 – 4.00 – Strongly Agree

The results suggest that students whose personal interests align with their academic program are more likely to exhibit enthusiasm, engagement, and commitment to their studies. Interest alignment appears to function as a positive motivational factor that may help students manage academic demands and reduce perceptions of academic difficulty.

Among the dimensions, academic workload difficulty obtained the highest interpretation. This finding indicates that students perceived coursework, academic requirements, deadlines, and responsibilities as highly demanding and stressful. The results suggest that academic workload remains one of the major contributors to students' perceived academic difficulty in higher education.

Table 4
 Regression Analysis
 Test of Impact of Parental Influence and Interest Alignment
 to Academic Difficulty Among the Psychology Students of
 Laguna University

Variable	B	SE	95% CI		p
			Lower	Upper	
Intercept	2.275	0.2808	1.721	2.829	<.001
Parental Influence	0.436	0.0712	0.295	0.576	<.001

Interest	-	0.0704	-0.463	-0.185	<
Alignment	0.324				.001

Note: N = 195. R² = .209, Adjusted R² = .201, F (2,192) = 25.4, p < .001

The findings revealed that both parental influence and interest alignment were significant predictors of perceived academic difficulty.

This indicates that students' perceptions of academic difficulty are influenced not only by academic workload but also by environmental and personal factors. Students who experienced supportive parental involvement and stronger alignment between their interests and chosen academic program were more likely to report lower levels of perceived academic difficulty. Conversely, students who experienced excessive parental pressure or poor interest alignment were more likely to perceive greater academic difficulty.

The findings support Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that environmental and personal factors interact in shaping students' academic experiences, behaviors, and perceptions.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Psychology students generally experienced high parental support and guidance but moderate parental expectations and pressure.
2. Students demonstrated strong interest alignment with their chosen academic program, particularly in terms of motivation and engagement.
3. Academic workload difficulty emerged as the most prominent aspect of perceived academic difficulty.
4. Parental influence and interest alignment significantly predicted perceived academic difficulty among Psychology students.
5. Supportive parental involvement and strong interest alignment contribute to more positive academic experiences and reduced perceptions of academic difficulty.

VI. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings emphasize the importance of balanced parental involvement and student autonomy in academic decision-making.

Educational institutions may strengthen career guidance and counseling programs to help students select academic programs aligned with their interests, abilities, and long-term goals.

The study also highlights the need for academic support and wellness programs that help students manage academic workload and emotional stress.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parents should provide guidance while respecting students' personal interests and career aspirations.
2. Educational institutions should strengthen career orientation and counseling programs for incoming college students.
3. The Psychology Department should implement academic wellness programs to help students cope with workload-related stress.
4. Future researchers may explore additional variables such as mental health, coping strategies, and academic resilience.

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