

Parental Attitudes as Predictors of Career Choice and Fear of Failure among University Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the predictive role of parental attitudes in career choice and fear of failure among university students. A quantitative cross-sectional correlational research design was employed. A sample of 200 undergraduate and postgraduate students aged 18–25 years was selected from public and private universities in Faisalabad using convenience sampling. Data were collected through the Parental Attitude Scale (PAS), Career Decision Scale (CDS), and Fear of Failure Scale (FFS). Pearson correlation and linear regression analyses were performed using SPSS Version 26. The findings revealed significant positive relationships among parental attitudes, career choice, and fear of failure. Parental attitudes were positively associated with career choice ($r = .213, p < .01$) and fear of failure ($r = .164, p < .05$). Regression analysis further indicated that parental attitudes significantly predicted career choice ($\beta = .213, p = .002$) and fear of failure ($\beta = .164, p = .020$). The results highlight the important role of parental influence in shaping students' vocational decisions and psychological experiences related to failure. The study emphasizes the need for supportive parental involvement and effective career counseling interventions to facilitate healthy career development among university students.

Keywords: Parental attitudes, career choice, fear of failure, university students, career development

INTRODUCTION

Career choice is a critical developmental task that significantly influences an individual's future professional success, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction. Among university students, career decision-making is often shaped by multiple social and psychological factors, with parental influence remaining one of the most significant determinants. Parents play a central role in transmitting values, expectations, and beliefs regarding academic achievement and occupational aspirations. One of the most important developmental challenges encountered by college students is choosing a career, as it determines not only their professional trajectories but also their long-term psychological health and contentment with life. In the 21st century, The decision-making process for a career has become increasingly complex due to globalization, technological disruption, and rapidly evolving labor market demands (Kim & O'Brien, 2022). As a result, students must navigate a wide range of academic and occupational options while simultaneously coping with uncertainty and performance pressures.

within this context, family particularly parents remains a central influence on students' career development. Despite the growing emphasis on individual autonomy, empirical research consistently demonstrates that parental attitudes significantly shape students' career aspirations, decision-making processes, and psychological outcomes (Sawitri & Creed, 2021; Whiston et al., 2020). Parents act as

primary agents of socialization, transmitting values, expectations, and beliefs about success, achievement, and acceptable career paths. Parental attitudes refer to the patterns of beliefs, expectations, and behaviors that parent's exhibit toward their children, particularly in relation to academic and career development. These attitudes can range from supportive (e.g., encouragement, guidance) to controlling (e.g., pressure, criticism). Recent empirical research indicates that autonomy-supportive parenting promotes intrinsic motivation, career exploration, and decision-making confidence among students (Guan et al., 2021).

Supportive parental attitudes characterized by encouragement, guidance, and autonomy support have been associated with greater career decision-making confidence and adaptability. Conversely, controlling and demanding parental behaviors may contribute to career indecision, anxiety, and psychological distress. Recent studies indicate that supportive parental attitude, characterized by encouragement, emotional support, and autonomy granting; positively influence students' career decision-making self-efficacy and adaptability (Guan et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2023). In contrast, controlling or pressuring parental attitudes have been associated with negative outcomes such as career indecision, stress, and reduce psychological well-being (Dietrich & Kracke, 2021; Karna et al., 2024). These

Simultaneously, there has been increasing scholarly attention regarding the impact of failure-related fear in shaping academic and career-related behaviors. Fear of failure is a critical motivational construct that describes a tendency to remain clear of circumstances where failing might have detrimental effects including humiliation, shame, or a decline in self-worth (Conroy et al., 2002; updated applications in Sagar et al., 2020). Contemporary research suggests that fear of failure is strongly associated with avoidance behaviors, reduced risk-taking, and limited career exploration among university students (Zhou et al., 2022; Hsieh & Huang, 2023).

Importantly, emerging evidence highlights that parental attitudes may serve as a significant antecedent of fear of failure. For instance, parenting styles characterized by high expectations, criticism, or conditional approval can foster anxiety and fear-based motivation in students (Putwain et al., 2021; Grumm et al., 2023). These students may become overly concerned with avoiding failure rather than pursuing meaningful career goals, thereby limiting their potential.

The present study is based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent et al., 1994), which highlights how behavioral, contextual, and personal variables interact to shape career development. Recent extensions of SCCT (Lent & Brown, 2020) underscore the importance of contextual influences such as parental attitudes in shaping both emotional (such as dread of failing) and cognitive (such as self-efficacy) variables that influence career outcomes. The objective of this study was to investigate the Parental Attitudes as Predictors of Career Choice and Fear of Failure among University Students

Objectives

- To measure the prediction level of Parental Attitudes on Career Choice and Fear of Failure among University Students
- To investigate the relationship between parental attitudes and fear of failure.
- To determine whether parental attitudes predict career choice.
- To determine whether parental attitudes predict fear of failure.

Hypotheses

Hypotheses of Study

- There will be a significant relationship among parental attitudes, career choice, and fear of failure among university students.
- Parental attitudes will significantly predict career choice among university students.
- Parental attitudes will significantly predict fear of failure among university students.

METHOD

Research Design

The current investigation used a cross-sectional, quantitative, correlational research design in order to explore relationships between variables without manipulation.

Participants

The sample consisted of undergraduates attending both public and private colleges. A total of N = 200 students (aged 18–25 years) were selected using convenience sampling. Both male and female students from diverse academic disciplines participated in the study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The requirements for participating in this study required individuals to be currently enrolled as students in recognized public and private sector universities in Faisalabad and to be between the ages of 18 and 25. Additionally, Participants had to show that they were willing to participate and give their informed consent.

The exclusion criteria comprised individuals who were not enrolled in a university program at the time of data collection or who fell outside the specified age range, as well as those with any psychological or mental health conditions.

Furthermore, responses that were incomplete, inconsistent, or demonstrated response bias (e.g., selecting the same response for all items) were excluded from the final dataset to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

Instruments

Demographic Information Sheet

The researcher created a demographic data sheet to acquire relevant background information about the Respondents. This sheet included factors like gender and age, academic discipline, year of study, type of university (public or private), and socioeconomic background etc.

Parental Attitude Scale (PAS)

The 24-item Parental Attitude Scale (PAS), created by Küçükturan in 2005, measures perceived parental attitudes in three different areas: Democratic (Authoritative) Attitude (Items 1–8), Authoritarian Attitude

(Items 9–16), and Protective–Demanding Attitude (Items 17–24). Higher scores indicate a stronger endorsement of the corresponding parental attitude. Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), With reported Cronbach's alpha reliability values of above.70, the scale has shown respectable psychometric qualities and adequate internal consistency across its subscales.(Küçüküran, 2005).

Career Decision Scale (CDS)

Samuel H. Osipow created the Career Decision Scale (CDS) in 1987 to evaluate people's career decision-making status and challenges. The scale consists of 19 items, including both content and construct-related statements designed to measure career indecision and certainty. Responses are typically recorded on a Likert-type scale, where respondents indicate the degree to which each statement applies to them. The CDS is structured into two main factors, generally reflecting Career Indecision and Career Certainty/Decidedness.

Reported Cronbach's alpha reliability values ranging from roughly.70 to.90 across studies, suggesting good to strong internal consistency, the measure has shown adequate psychometric qualities. It has been widely used in career counseling and educational research to assess difficulties in career decision-making among students (Osipow, 1987).

Fear of Failure Scale (FFS)

The Fear of Failure Scale was Created by Köroğlu and Kıralp in 2025 to measure people's fear of failure in achievement and performance-related contexts. The scale consists of 17 items designed to measure cognitive and emotional reactions associated with fear of failure. The degree of agreement with each statement is indicated by the responses, which are recorded on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The instrument is structured into multiple factors (as specified in its development study, typically reflecting dimensions such as performance anxiety, avoidance of failure, and concern about negative evaluation). Reported Cronbach's alpha values typically above, the scale has shown respectable internal consistency dependability.70, indicating satisfactory reliability for research purposes (Köroğlu & Kıralp, 2025).

Procedure

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the relevant university authorities. Participants were approached through classroom visits and online academic platforms. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to the participants, and They received assurance that their answers would be kept private and used only for academic research, Participants were requested to fill out the questionnaire either online or on paper after giving their informed consentThe questionnaire took an average of 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Upon completion, the questionnaires were collected and carefully screened for missing values and inconsistencies before proceeding to data analysis.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 26, was used to analyse the gathered data. Initially, data screening procedures were carried out to check for missing values, outliers, and the normality of data distribution through skewness and kurtosis. Cronbach's alpha was used in reliability analysis to evaluate the instruments' internal consistency. To summarise the features of the data, descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were calculated. The associations between profession choice, fear of failure, and parental views were investigated using Pearson product-moment

correlation analysis. Furthermore, The predictive significance of parental attitudes in determining profession choice and fear of failure was investigated using linear regression analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards for research involving human participants, including the guidelines provided by the American Psychological Association and the Declaration of Helsinki. Before the study started, ethical permission was received from the appropriate institutional review committee.

Participants were fully informed about the purpose and procedures of the research, and their involvement was completely voluntary. Prior to data collection, informed permission was acquired, and participants were given the assurance that they may leave the research at any moment without facing any repercussions. To ensure confidentiality, All response's were kept anonymous and no personally identifiable information was gathered. Only the researcher had access to the safely stored data. Furthermore, the study involved minimal psychological risk, and participants were provided with appropriate guidance in case they experienced any discomfort during participation.

RESULTS

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 23) was used to analyse the data. To have a comprehensive knowledge of the connections between the research variables, Multiple statistical methods were used, such as linear regression analysis, Pearson correlation, and descriptive statistics. These methods allowed the researcher to examine the strength and direction of associations among parental attitudes, career choice, and fear of failure. Additionally, frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the participants' demographic features in order to give a comprehensive picture of the sample profile. The results of the demographic analysis are presented in the table below.

Table 1: The Percentages and Frequencies of Demographic Factors(N=200)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Age			21.99 (1.45)
Gender			
Male	78	39%	
Female	122	61%	
Education			
BS	125	62.5%	
MS/M.Phil.	75	37.5%	
Family System			
Nuclear	120	60.0%	
Joint	80	40.0%	
Socioeconomic status			
Upper	17	8.5%	
Middle	179	89.5%	
Lower	04	2%	
Home Residence			
Rural	17	8.5%	
Urban	183	91.5%	

Table 1 displays the frequency and percentage distribution of demographic data, Based on a sample of 200 participants, The standard deviation was 1.45 and the mean age was 21.99. There were just 200 participants in this research, 78 (39.0%) were male individuals and 122 (61.0 %) were female students. The participants were with different education discipline as BS was 125 (62.5%), and in MS were 75(37.5%) students. Participants in this study, 80 (40.0%) belonged to the joint family system and 120 (60.0%) to the nuclear family system. There were 17 (8.5%) upper, 179 (89.5%) intermediate, and 04 (2.0%) lower socioeconomic category individuals. 17 (8.5%) of the 183 (91.5%) people resided in rural regions.

Table 2: The Reliability Analysis of Research Factors(N=200)

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Items
PAS	.70	24
CDS	.61	18
FFS	.72	17

In Table 2, The research questionnaires' Cronbach's alpha values demonstrate a reasonable degree of significance: the parental attitude scale (PAS) has a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.70, the Career Decision Scale (CDS) has a value of 0.61 and fear of failure scale (FFS) the has a 0.72 value. The reliability of the data is evident by examining the individual values of each variable, as shown by the Cronbach's alpha values.

Table 3: The Correlation between Variables (N=200)

Variables	1	2	3
1-Parental Attitudes	--	.213**	.164*
2-Career Choice		--	.147*
3-Fear of Failure			--

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows a substantial positive correlation between the parental attitude and the 200 individuals in the study Career Choice ($r = .213^{**}$, $p < 0.01$) and Fear of failing was substantially positively associated ($r = .164^{*}$, $p < 0.05$). In other hand Career Choice is significantly positively correlated with fear of failure ($r = .147^{*}$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4: The Model Summary of Linear Regression Analysis for Parental Attitude as Predictor of Career Choice (N=200)

Predictor	R	R ²	ΔR ²	F	Sig.
Parental Attitude	.213	.046	.041	9.443	.002

Note. $p < .05$, Dependent variable= Career of choice

Table 5: Coefficients of Linear Regression Analysis for Parental Attitude and Career of choice (N=200)

Model	B	SE B	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	29.898	2.417		12.372	.000
PAS	.122	.040	.213	3.073	.002

According to the linear regression analysis, the parental attitude is a strong predictor of career of choice among university students, with the R is .213, R^2 is .046; Adjusted R^2 is equal to .041, while F is 9.443 and p value is .002.

Table 6: The Model Summary of Linear Regression Analysis for Parental Attitude as a Predictor of Fear of Failure (N= 200)

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>ΔR²</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Parental Attitude	.164	.027	.022	5.457	.020

Note. $p < .0$

Table 7: Coefficients of Linear Regression Analysis for Parental Attitude and Fear of failure (N= 200)

<i>Model</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
(Constant)	49.507	3.298		15.009	.000
Parental Attitude	.126	.054	.164	2.336	.020

According to the linear regression analysis, the parental attitudes are strong predictors of fear of failure among university students, with the R is .164, R^2 is .027, Adjusted R^2 is equal to .022, while F is 5.457 and p value is .020.

DISCUSSION

The current investigation was carried out to look into parental attitudes as predictors of career choice and fear of failure among students in universities. The links between parental views, job choice, and fear of failure among students enrolled in public and private institutions in Faisalabad were examined using a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational study methodology. The use of a quantitative correlational approach enabled the researcher to systematically explore the associations among the study variables within a relatively large and diverse sample of university students.

The inclusion of participants from both public and private sector universities further enhanced the representativeness and diversity of the sample. Standardized instruments with satisfactory psychometric properties were utilized to assess parental attitudes, career choice, and fear of failure, thereby strengthening the credibility and reliability of the findings. Reliability analysis indicated acceptable internal consistency for the Parental Attitude Scale (Küçükturan, 2005) and the Fear of Failure Scale (Köroğlu & Kıralp, 2025), while the Career Decision Scale (Osipow, 1987) demonstrated moderate but acceptable reliability for social science research. The study's conclusions were interpreted in the context of The suggested hypotheses and supported through relevant empirical literature.

The first hypothesis stated that there would be a significant relationship among parental attitudes, career choice, and fear of failure among university students. The findings supported this hypothesis, as significant positive relationships were found among all study variables. Specifically, parental attitudes were positively correlated with career choice and fear of failure, while career choice also showed a positive association with fear of failure. These findings suggest that parental behaviors, expectations, and involvement have a significant impact on students' career-related decisions as well as their psychological concerns regarding failure.

The positive relationship between parental attitudes and profession choice is in line with other studies that highlight the impact of parents on students' vocational development and career decision-making

processes. Parents often serve as primary role models and sources of guidance regarding educational and occupational pathways. Supportive parental attitudes may enhance students' confidence and clarity regarding future career plans, while controlling or highly demanding attitudes may increase dependence on parental approval during career decisions. Wong et al. (2019) revealed similar results, indicating that parental participation had a substantial impact on students' profession choices and career planning behaviours. Likewise, Choi et al. (2022) reported that parental authority and support significantly impacted students' occupational certainty and self-efficacy in choosing career decisions.

The findings also showed a strong positive correlation between fear of failure and parental views, indicating that stronger parental influence may increase students' concerns regarding failure, criticism, or disappointing family expectations. These findings are supported by previous literature suggesting that psychologically controlling or overprotective parenting styles contribute to anxiety, fear of failure, and emotional distress among young adults (Park et al., 2025). In collectivistic societies such as Pakistan, family expectations regarding academic success and professional achievement are highly valued, which may intensify students' fear of making mistakes or failing to meet parental standards.

Additionally, the positive association between career choice and fear of failure indicates that students who experience uncertainty or pressure regarding career decisions may also experience higher fear of failure. Career decision-making is often accompanied by concerns about future success, social expectations, and economic stability. Previous studies have similarly demonstrated that fear of failure negatively influences career decision-making confidence and increases indecisiveness among university students (Kim & Kang, 2020). Therefore, students who perceive career decisions as highly consequential may become more fearful of making incorrect choices.

The second hypothesis proposed that parental attitudes would significantly predict career choice among university students. The findings supported this hypothesis, as regression analysis demonstrated that parental attitudes significantly predicted career choice. Although the explained variance was relatively small, parental attitudes emerged as a statistically important indicator of choosing a career. This finding highlights the influential role of parental guidance, expectations, emotional support, and family values in students' occupational planning and career preferences.

The predictive role of parental attitudes in career choice is consistent with social learning and career development theories, which suggest that family environments significantly shape vocational interests and career-related behaviors. Parents often influence career decisions through direct communication, modeling behaviors, educational encouragement, and financial support. In Pakistani culture, parents are frequently involved in determining suitable educational and professional pathways for their children, especially in careers perceived as socially prestigious or financially stable. Previous studies also support these findings. For example, McCabe and Campbell (2024) found that parental involvement and personality-related factors significantly influenced undergraduate students' career attitudes and planning. Similarly, Choi et al. (2022) emphasized that parental authority significantly contributes to career certainty and decision-making confidence among students.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the present study have important theoretical and practical implications for understanding the role of parental attitudes in shaping career choice and fear of failure among university students. The research adds to the body of knowledge by proving that parental attitudes significantly influence students' vocational decision-making and psychological well-being, particularly within the Pakistani cultural context where parental involvement in educational and career matters is highly valued. The findings suggest that supportive and balanced parenting practices can promote confidence and effective career

planning among students, whereas excessive parental pressure and controlling attitudes may increase fear of failure and emotional distress.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The few limitations of this study are given below:

- The study's cross-sectional research approach makes it more difficult to determine the causes of parental attitudes, career choice, and fear of failure.
- The sample was restricted to students from public and private universities in Faisalabad; therefore, the findings may not represent students from other cities or regions of Pakistan.
- Self-report questionnaires were used to gather data, which might be influenced by subjective answers and social desirability bias.
- The study focused only on parental attitudes as predictors, while other important variables such as self-esteem, academic stress, peer influence, personality traits, and self-efficacy were not examined.

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