

# Parental Absence and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents: The Impact of Parental Support and Self-Efficacy

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Submitted as a Master's Thesis at the Department of Psychology, University of Oslo

Spring 2023

### Abstract

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**Title:** Parental Absence and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents: The Impact of Parental Support and Self-Efficacy

**Background:** Life satisfaction among adolescents has historically been an understudied field, despite its importance related to positive psychology and well-being. Several studies have identified family factors as central predictors of adolescent life satisfaction. However, a potentially important family factor that has yet to be thoroughly addressed in research is the aspect of parental absence among adolescents. The purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents. Additionally, the thesis explored whether and to what extent parental support and self-efficacy affected the proposed relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents.

**Method:** The current study is based on data from the seventh wave of the Norwegian Tracking Opportunities and Problems Study (TOPP), using a sample of 16-17-year-old Norwegian adolescents ( $n = 363$ ). The relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction was examined using linear regression analysis, while the mediating effect of parental support and the moderating effect of self-efficacy was examined using hierarchical regression analyses. Additionally, gender, socio-economic status, number of siblings, and parental marital status were considered as potential confounding variables.

**Results:** Perceived parental absence and life satisfaction were found to be significantly negatively correlated. Parental support significantly mediated the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction. Self-efficacy, on the other hand, was not found to be a significant moderator in the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction. Parents' marital status was found to be the only significant covariate.

**Conclusion:** The current findings illustrate the importance of parents being physically present in their adolescent children's lives and providing them with support, even as older adolescents are perceived to be more independent. The results further highlight how lower levels of perceived parental absence promote parental support, seemingly enhancing life satisfaction among adolescents. Our study contributes to filling in important gaps in the research field and provides valuable insights and information for parents balancing work and family, as well as practitioners working in parental counseling.

## Acknowledgments

Reaching the end of the time-consuming process of writing this master's thesis, we would like to share some thoughts on how this time has been. First of all, we have spent a lot of time diving into fascinating literature. As such, we have learned a lot about a very relevant and important topic. Initially, we were unsure about the statistical analyses, but we were pleasantly surprised when we ended up enjoying it. Looking back, we also notice that our academic writing skills have improved. Throughout the past year, we have greatly benefited from relying on each other for support and motivation, which we are very grateful for. Although this process has been challenging at times, we have enjoyed it nonetheless. Last but not least, it is wonderful to see the master's thesis finally being completed, as it has taken up most of our time and attention this past year. We are now proud to present our master's thesis, which would not have been possible if it was not for the following.

Firstly, we would like to thank the team behind the TOPP study for allowing us to use data from their research. This has been highly valuable for us, as we would not have been able to complete the current study without it. Also, a massive thank you to Evalill Bølstad for giving us access to data material from the TOPP study.

Furthermore, we want to thank our supervisors Evalill Bølstad and Pål Ulleberg. Evalill Bølstad has been a great support throughout the project and has provided us with invaluable guidance, knowledge, and advice. We deeply appreciate her thorough feedback and the time she spent supervising us. She has been positive and encouraging about our work the entire time, which has helped us grow both personally and academically. The same can be said about Pål Ulleberg, as he has been a great support when the statistical analyses have challenged us. He has always taken the time to help us with both small and big matters. We are very grateful for his optimistic feedback and encouragement. We are immensely thankful to have had the opportunity to work with them both, it has truly been a pleasure.

We would also like to direct a huge thank you to all our friends and family for always being supportive and encouraging. Finally, we want to thank each other for an exceptional partnership and collaboration, as this thesis would not have turned out the same without the other.

Cathrine Høgenes and Erle Sofie Stabell Daling  
Oslo, May 2023

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## **Background and Relevance**

In the transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents develop a desire for increased autonomy and independence. Their parents also tend to allow them more freedom and time alone as they grow older (Feldman & Quatman, 1988). However, research indicates that more than half of Norwegian adolescents think their parents spend too much time away from home (Helland & Mathiesen, 2009). Time strains such as extensive working hours and work-related stress may leave less room for parents to spend time with their children. Less is known regarding whether parental absence may have negative consequences on adolescent children's well-being. Thus, examining whether parental absence affects adolescents' well-being and, more specifically, their life satisfaction is essential.

Life satisfaction is an important concept within the field of positive psychology, which in a historical perspective, has been an understudied field (Proctor et al., 2017). Research on life satisfaction among adolescents is recently receiving increased attention but is still limited (Antaramian et al., 2008; Gilman & Huebner, 2003). Studies have shown that several factors might influence adolescents' life satisfaction, such as stressful life events and experiences, individual level of self-efficacy, and social support from family (Compas et al., 2017; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Milas et al., 2021). Because parental absence is conceptualized as a stressor in adolescents (Chappel et al., 2014; Helland & Mathiesen, 2009), it is essential to gain more knowledge about its psychological implications. Nonetheless, research conducted on how parental absence may affect adolescents and their life satisfaction is limited. The existing literature on parental absence mainly centers on long-term absence, divorce, and paternal absence and their associations with general well-being (East et al., 2006; Lester et al., 2016; Salgado et al., 2021; Thuen et al., 2021). Chappel and colleagues (2014) argue that most literature on family stressors and life satisfaction in adolescence primarily views family stressors as a composite concept and does not examine subordinate aspects of the construct. As such, there is an evident need for more nuance in the research on how adolescents' perceived day-to-day parental absence as a family stressor might influence their life satisfaction.

Furthermore, numerous studies point to parental support as an essential contributor to adolescents' life satisfaction (e.g., Diener & Ryan, 2009; Suldo & Huebner, 2004; 2006). As today's technology makes parental support feasible even while parents are absent, it is important to consider whether parental support may compensate for parental absence and thus mediate the relationship between adolescents' perceived parental absence and life satisfaction. To the best of our knowledge, this has not been examined in previous research, which leaves

an important gap in the literature. Therefore, the current study will investigate parental support as a potential mediator in the relation between parental absence and life satisfaction.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that a person's stress level is dependent on one's perceived ability to cope with stressors. This has subsequently been supported by an abundance of research findings (e.g., Compas et al., 2017; Milas et al., 2021). Nevertheless, Milas and colleagues (2021) argue that the literature on life stress, coping, and well-being is scarce. Research suggests that self-efficacy is a crucial aspect in relation to a person's ability to cope with stressors and that it has a moderating effect on the relationship between stress and life satisfaction (Burger & Samuel, 2016; Moksnes et al., 2018). Based on this, adolescents' level of self-efficacy will be considered as a possible moderator in the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction. Importantly, Burger and Samuel (2016) highlight that the literature on how self-efficacy can moderate the relationship between adolescent life satisfaction and stress is focused mainly on academic stress. Hence, there is an evident need for research to consider family stressors in this context.

Thus, the current study aims to investigate the association between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents. Additionally, the potential mediating role of parental support and the potential moderating role of self-efficacy will be examined. By doing so, the current project will contribute towards closing important knowledge gaps in the literature. The following sections will present an overview of literature concerning adolescents' life satisfaction, parental absence, parental support, and self-efficacy, including empirical and theoretical findings and implications. Finally, the research questions and hypotheses of the current study will be introduced.

### **Previous Findings and Theory**

#### **Life Satisfaction in Adolescents**

Life satisfaction is considered the key indicator of well-being. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals that comprises "quality of life as well as the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world in accordance with a sense of meaning and purpose". Well-being can be separated into objective well-being and subjective well-being. The former term involves aspects of material advantages, such as level and stability of income and the quality of the social and natural environment (Alatartseva & Barysheva, 2015). Subjective well-being (SWB), on the other hand, embraces an individual's personal experience of one's level of well-being. SWB functions as an indication of the more commonly used term "happiness", reflecting a general sense of how content a person is with their life (Diener, 1994). The term can be defined as an

individual's evaluation of how they perceive their life is going, which involves both an affective and a cognitive aspect (Diener & Diener, 1996). The affective aspect of SWB represents people's momentary evaluations of the events occurring in their lives, including pleasant and unpleasant emotional reactions (Diener & Diener, 1996; Diener et al., 1999). The cognitive aspect of SWB is referred to as life satisfaction, which is a subjective evaluation of overall quality of life (Diener, 1994), and also the outcome of interest in this thesis.

As positive psychology, in general, has been an understudied field (Proctor et al., 2017), it is essential to further explore the positive aspects of both adult and adolescent lives, including life satisfaction. Since much of the existing literature in this field uses the concepts of SWB and life satisfaction interchangeably, we will also include research on SWB in the thesis. However, it is important to keep in mind that SWB embodies a broader concept in which life satisfaction constitutes a limited aspect.

While much effort has been dedicated towards examining adult life satisfaction during the past years, research conducted on life satisfaction among children and adolescents has been scarce until the early 1990s (Proctor et al., 2017; Suldo et al., 2006). WHO (2022) defines adolescence as between 10 and 19 years of age. Adolescence is a transitional phase characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, and psychosocial growth, in which the individual begins to gain independence and learn social skills and behaviors that provide the basis for their future health and well-being (Avedissian & Alayan, 2021; WHO, 2022). As adolescents grow older, they develop a greater need for autonomy and independence, often accompanied by their parents allowing them to spend more time unsupervised (Feldman & Quatman, 1988).

Most studies on adolescent life satisfaction indicate that adolescents generally feel positive about their lives (Proctor et al., 2017). However, some studies find a gradual decline in life satisfaction throughout adolescence (Due et al., 2019; Proctor et al., 2009; Willroth et al., 2021). The Innocenti Report Card series, conducted and published by UNICEF (2015), aims to document children's well-being in what is referred to as “rich countries”. More than 85% of the children involved in the study in 2015 reported high levels of overall life satisfaction. The report *Worlds of Influence* informs that most 15-year-olds are “reasonably satisfied” with their lives (UNICEF, 2020). Furthermore, Due and colleagues (2019) conducted a study measuring trends over time in the prevalence of very high levels of life satisfaction among Nordic adolescents. They discovered that more than every fourth adolescent scored very high on life satisfaction, albeit a tendency for the level of life satisfaction to decrease as the adolescents got older. High levels of life satisfaction was shown



to be most prevalent among 11-year-olds and lowest among 15-year-old girls in all the countries covered by the study (Due et al., 2019).

Due to this, it is imperative to examine life satisfaction in later adolescence, as well as possible influencing aspects. Research has depicted family factors, such as interparental conflict and parental support and involvement, as central predictors of adolescent life satisfaction (Chappel et al., 2014; Salgado et al., 2021). The aspect of perceived parental absence, on the other hand, is yet to be thoroughly examined in relation to life satisfaction in adolescence. In this regard, the current thesis aims to contribute towards narrowing the literature gap by investigating the possible coherence between perceived parental absence and adolescent life satisfaction, using a sample of 16-17-year-old Norwegian adolescents.

### **Perceived Parental Absence and Life Satisfaction**

Research based on Norwegian adolescents presented in a report from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (Helland & Mathiesen, 2009) indicates that many adolescents think their parents spend too much time away from home, and many also think they occasionally have too many responsibilities at home. The report further suggests that both the adolescents and their parents desire more time together. In light of such findings, knowledge about how parental absence may affect adolescents and their life satisfaction is essential.

In this thesis, parental absence is operationalized as the adolescents' perception of their parents being physically away from home. Research on how parents' physical absence may affect adolescents' well-being and life satisfaction is scarce. The existing literature mainly focuses on long-term absence, such as divorce, military service, and traveling in relation to work (Lester et al., 2016; Lucier-Greer et al., 2014; Thuen et al., 2021). Of relevance, Lester and colleagues (2016) found a negative association between parental absence due to work situations and adolescents' well-being. Results from Thuen and colleagues' (2021) research indicate that family connectedness and communication seem to be of great influence, as the quality of the communication between divorced fathers and their adolescent children was positively associated with the adolescents' life satisfaction. However, no contact with the father appeared to be even more detrimental than poor communication, indicating that the mere presence of parents could positively influence their children's well-being. In accordance with this, research tends to focus specifically on the absence of fathers. For instance, a meta-analysis found that, overall, paternal absence predicts reduced well-being in adolescents (East et al., 2006).

Helland and Mathiesen (2009) propose the "time squeeze" as a typical cause of parents' and children's missing time together. According to Oxford Reference (Oxford

University Press, 2022), the “time squeeze” refers to the demands of managing long workdays, which leave less time for leisure activities and family life. UNICEF (2020) reports that extensive working hours cause 39% of parents to find it challenging to fulfill family responsibilities several times per month and thus struggle to balance family and work. This is in line with findings from Helland and Mathiesen (2009), indicating that certain responsibilities in the home are left to the adolescent children when the parents are unable to fulfill them. In addition to lack of time, UNICEF (2020) further suggests that work-related stress can reduce parents' energy to interact with their children. As these statistics are based on data from 41 countries, the “time squeeze” seems to be an international phenomenon. Notably, the prevalence of parents struggling to balance work and family life varies across countries, ranging from one-quarter of respondents from Denmark to more than two-thirds of respondents from Turkey (UNICEF, 2020).

Based on previous findings, which mainly center on long-term and paternal absence, it is evident that parental absence may negatively affect adolescents' well-being. However, more research is required on the potential impact of day-to-day parental absence, considering that research has found the “time squeeze” to be a typical cause of parental absence.

### ***Perceived Parental Absence as a Stressor***

In order to fully understand the potentially harmful effect of parental absence on adolescents' life satisfaction, it is useful to consider its role as a stressor (Chappel et al., 2014; Helland & Mathiesen, 2009). Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (1984) proposes that stress arises when individuals perceive the transaction between themselves and their environment as challenging, threatening, or harmful to their well-being. This perception is based on cognitive evaluations, which include a primary and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal refers to an evaluation of the personal significance of the situation, while secondary appraisal involves an evaluation of internal and external coping options (Folkman, 2008). The theory further suggests that if there is a perceived imbalance between the demands of the situation and a person's perceived ability to cope, stress tends to be the outcome, which in turn affects SWB (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Studies based on Lazarus and Folkman's theory have found an association between stress and life satisfaction in adolescents and young adults (Burger & Samuel, 2016; Milas et al., 2021). In light of this theoretical framework, parental absence may lead to adverse outcomes concerning adolescents' overall life satisfaction when the individual perceives the absence as stressful.

Study findings indicate that stress is a significant predictor of adolescent life satisfaction, as adolescents who report experiencing higher levels of stress also report lower

levels of life satisfaction (McKnight et al., 2002; Milas et al., 2021). Chappel and colleagues (2014) found that 37% of the variance in life satisfaction among adolescents was accounted for by family-related stress. This is consistent with other research finding that stressors in relation to family and home life are strongly related to adolescent life satisfaction, exceeding other stressors such as school performance and romantic relationships (Moksnes & Haugan, 2015). Examples of such family-related stressors include adolescents' perceived parental absence and parental support (Chappel et al., 2014; Helland & Mathiesen, 2009). Importantly, when parental absence is recurring and frequent, it can operate as a chronic stressor in adolescents. Both acute stressors, such as parental divorce, and chronic stressors, such as frequent or ongoing interparental conflict, seem to be associated with life satisfaction among adolescents. Nonetheless, chronic stressors have been identified as more strongly related to adolescent life satisfaction (Ash & Huebner, 2001; Chappel et al., 2014). Hence, parental absence may negatively affect adolescents' overall life satisfaction, yet parental support may influence the adolescents' perspective herein.

### **The Mediating Role of Parental Support**

Social support has been linked to well-being and life satisfaction in numerous studies (e.g., Blau et al., 2019; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Ma, 2020). Social support refers to the extent of support an individual perceives to obtain from their close relationships, such as from family and friends (Chen et al., 2021). Cohen and Wills (1985) were among the first to summarize the literature on this subject. They proposed the "buffering hypothesis", which suggests that social support functions as a buffer, or protection, against the potentially harmful effects of life stress. Furthermore, social support acts as a form of resource provided by other people, which may alter a person's perception of how harmful a situation is and thus reduce or eliminate adverse physiological outcomes of the stress reaction (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Social support has been demonstrated to act as a buffer in the relationship between stressors and various negative outcomes in several studies. Stress-buffering effects of social support were established in a study conducted by Szkody & McKinney (2019), who discovered that perceived social support operated as a protective factor between the negative effects of stress on mental health. In line with this, Raffaelli and colleagues (2012) reported finding social support to reduce the association between perceived stress and depressive symptoms. Moreover, they identified that family support played a unique role as a buffer against the harmful effects of stress in Mexican youth (Raffaelli et al., 2012). Notably, the studies presented above have examined social support as a moderator. Presuming that social support from parents and parental absence are directly linked, in the sense that parental

presence is likely to facilitate the ability to provide support, it appears reasonable to consider parental support as a mediator rather than a moderator in the current thesis. The mediating effect of social support in the relationship between parental absence and life satisfaction has to the best of our knowledge not yet been previously examined.

From whom the social support is provided plays a vital role. Wan and colleagues (1996) found that the referents (i.e., individuals providing the social support) contribute to unique explained variance in life satisfaction. Notably, receiving social support from family members had a stronger predictive value on life satisfaction than receiving social support from nonfamilial referents (Wan et al., 1996). These findings are supported by more recent studies. For instance, Bi and colleagues (2021) identified a stronger association between social support from a family member and life satisfaction in adolescence than from other sources of social support. This is consistent with findings from a study conducted by Blau and colleagues (2019), who found parental support to be more strongly associated with life satisfaction in adolescence compared to support from teachers and peers.

A number of studies on life satisfaction in adolescence point to parental support as a crucial contributing factor, reflecting a positive association between life satisfaction and parental support (e.g., Blau et al., 2019; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Proctor et al., 2017; Saha et al., 2010; Suldo & Huebner, 2004; 2006; Valois et al., 2009). For instance, Valois and colleagues (2009) found that perceived parental support was significantly associated with increased life satisfaction in all races and genders involved in their study. Suldo and Huebner (2006) report that very high levels of life satisfaction in youth correlates with high levels of social support from parents. A longitudinal study conducted by Saha and colleagues (2010) additionally displays that lower levels of life satisfaction predicted lower levels of parental support. In line with these findings, UNICEF (2020) informs that children with more supportive familial relationships also tend to report higher levels of emotional well-being.

Parental support has, as of our knowledge, not previously in the literature been suggested as a potential mediator in the relationship between parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescence. Considering this knowledge gap, and based on the findings of a strong link between parental support and life satisfaction in adolescence, we intend to investigate the potential mediating role of parental support in order to understand the association between parental absence and life satisfaction to a greater extent.

### **The Moderating Role of Self-Efficacy**

In order to recognize the role of self-efficacy in the relation between stress and life satisfaction, it is essential to understand the concept of coping. Following the theory proposed

by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), numerous studies have found coping to affect the relationship between stress and life satisfaction. Coping can be defined as a controlled, effortful process of responding to stressors involving conscious and intentional thoughts and behaviors (Compas et al., 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A meta-analysis of 212 studies, including both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, indicates that adolescents who cope poorly with acute and chronic stressors experience lower levels of life satisfaction and increased risk of psychopathology (Compas et al., 2017). Moreover, Milas and colleagues (2021) found that the three coping mechanisms active coping, internal coping, and withdrawal all affected the relationship between stress and life satisfaction. Based on this, the ways in which adolescents cope with the stressor of parental absence are likely to influence their life satisfaction.

Burger and Samuel (2016) emphasize how self-efficacy is a resource that facilitates a person's ability to cope with stressors. Self-efficacy is the general belief in one's capability to exert control over one's thoughts, emotions, and actions, and one's ability to cope with environmental events (Bandura, 1982; 1991). Bandura further argues that self-efficacy influences the amount of stress one experiences and that it may account for one's chosen coping behavior, as well as the degree of effort and endurance one exerts when faced with difficulties. The higher the level of self-efficacy, the more of an active effort the person will make to cope with a challenge because they trust their capabilities to succeed (Bandura, 1977). Judging a situation to exceed one's ability to cope may result in elevated levels of stress and can essentially impair performance by directing the focus toward worrying rather than coping (Bandura, 1982). Thereby, level of self-efficacy can greatly influence how one perceives and copes with the demands of a stressful situation. More recent research findings indicate that level of self-efficacy impacts the effect stress has on life satisfaction (Burger & Samuel, 2016).

Level of self-efficacy appears to be significantly related to adolescents' subjective well-being (Ma et al., 2015; Vecchio et al., 2007). Moreover, research indicates that self-efficacy moderates the relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction in adolescents (Burger & Samuel, 2016; Moksnes et al., 2018). Burger and Samuel (2016) investigated different associations between stress, life satisfaction, and self-efficacy. Analyses showed that not only did high levels of baseline self-efficacy predict higher levels of life satisfaction, but when individuals experienced higher levels of self-efficacy than usual, they also reported higher levels of life satisfaction. Furthermore, higher levels of baseline self-efficacy moderated the negative effect baseline stress had on life satisfaction, indicating that

higher levels of self-efficacy reduce the effect stress has on life satisfaction. Similar results were found by Moksnes and colleagues (2018), as their results indicate that the association between both interpersonal and academic stress, and life satisfaction was moderated by level of self-efficacy. This suggests that the individual perception of one's ability to cope with stressors influences the effect stress has on one's life satisfaction. As parental absence is considered a stressor, these findings indicate that self-efficacy might influence the impact parental absence has on adolescents' life satisfaction. Nevertheless, this does not appear to have been researched, leaving an important knowledge gap in the literature. As such, this thesis will consider the potential moderating role of self-efficacy on the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents.

The literature reviewed in the previous sections indicates clear gaps in the research field, especially in relation to the effect of parental absence on adolescent life satisfaction. This is important to investigate as parents today struggle to balance work and family life (UNICEF, 2020), and the potential consequences this may have on their adolescent children remain unknown. Furthermore, as previous research has shown that parental support is an essential contributor to adolescent life satisfaction (e.g., Diener & Ryan, 2009; Proctor et al., 2017; Suldo & Huebner, 2004; 2006), we consider it crucial to increase the knowledge regarding how parental support might counterbalance the potentially negative effect of parental absence on life satisfaction. Considering the role of parental absence as a stressor, and previous research finding that self-efficacy has a moderating effect on the relationship between stress and life satisfaction (Moksnes et al., 2018), it is important to further investigate whether higher levels of self-efficacy might reduce the negative impact of perceived parental absence on life satisfaction. Based on this, the current study aims to contribute with imperative information on the overall relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents.

### **The Current Study**

The overall aim of the current study is to investigate the association between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents, in addition to exploring the potential mediating role of parental support and the potential moderating role of self-efficacy. In light of the empirical findings and theoretical perspectives presented in previous sections, we will examine the following research questions with the expected hypothesized relationships:

Q1: Is perceived parental absence associated with life satisfaction in adolescents?

H1: Perceived parental absence is negatively related to life satisfaction in adolescents.

Q2: Does parental support mediate the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction?

H2: Adolescents who perceive their parents as more absent will report less parental support, which in turn leads to lower levels of life satisfaction.

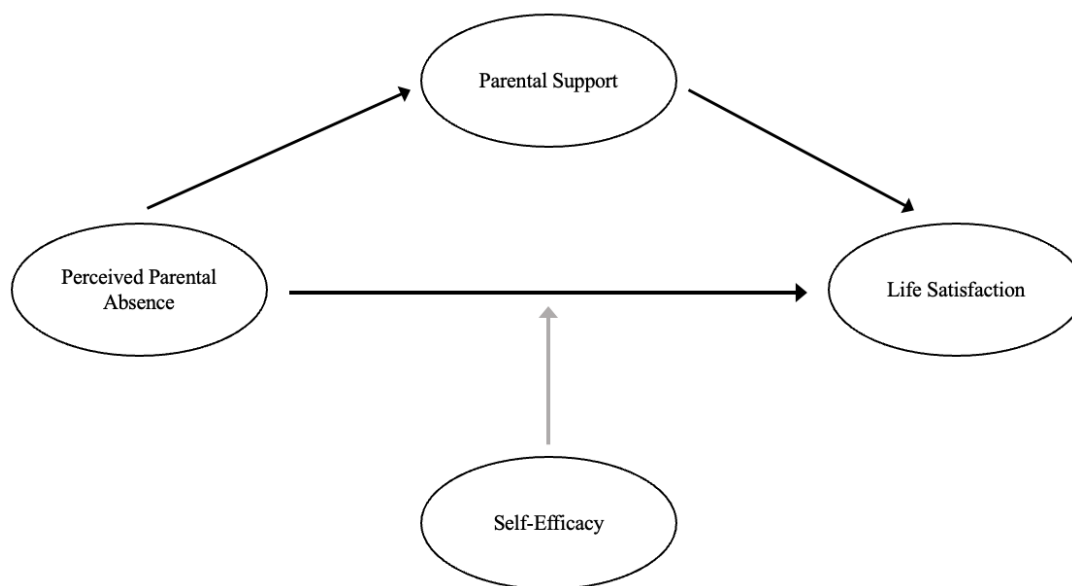
Q3: Does self-efficacy moderate the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction?

H3: Higher levels of self-efficacy will reduce the negative impact perceived parental absence has on life satisfaction in adolescents.

Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized path model. Additionally, adolescents' gender and number of siblings, and their parents' socio-economic status and marital status will be considered as potential confounding variables in subsequent analyses.

**Figure 1**

*Proposed Path Model*



*Note.* The horizontal line represents the proposed relationship between the predictor and outcome variables. The diagonal lines represent the proposed mediating path. The gray line represents the proposed moderating effect.

## Method

### The TOPP Study

Data for the current study is made available by the Tracking Opportunities and Problems in Childhood and Adolescence Study (TOPP; *Trivsel og oppvekst i barndom og ungdomstid*). TOPP is a longitudinal, community-based project that aims to acquire knowledge about the mental health and developmental trajectories of Norwegian children, adolescents, and their families. The TOPP study has conducted eight waves of data collection using questionnaires. The first wave was carried out in 1993 when the children were 18 months old (T1), and the eighth wave when they were 18-19 years old in 2011 (T8).

### Procedure

The participants in the TOPP study were recruited from 19 health care centers across Eastern Norway when families attended a scheduled 18-month vaccination (T1). More than 900 families agreed to participate in the study. The only criterion for participation was Norwegian language abilities, as the questionnaire was only available in Norwegian. The first three waves of data collection were administered by public health clinics, while the subsequent five questionnaires were sent to participants by post.

The mothers completed questionnaires on behalf of their children until the children were 8-9 years old (T4), but from ages 12-13 (T5) the questionnaires were completed by the adolescents. Additionally, the mothers completed questionnaires on their own behalf throughout all eight waves of data collection, also reporting information about their partner. The fathers completed questionnaires for the last three waves (T6-T8). Data used for the current study is based on adolescents' self-reported data at ages 16-17 (T7).

Data comparing participants to non-participants indicates that the sample used in the TOPP study is representative of the general Norwegian population at the time of recruitment (Mathiesen & Tambs, 1999). Notably, more than 95% of Norwegian children attended regular check-ups administered by health care programs during the first four years of their lives. The participants did not differ from non-participants regarding their marital status, number of children, employment status, or their age.

### Sample

The sample used in the current thesis consists of 363 adolescents (58.7% females) from the seventh wave of the TOPP study, which was collected in 2009. Thus, the participants were 16 and 17 years old at the time of data collection. Demographic data reported by the mothers and fathers at T7 will also be utilized to control for the adolescents' number of siblings, parental marital status, and socio-economic status. However, responses from mothers



and fathers were in some cases missing, resulting in a final sample of 278 mothers and 277 fathers in the statistical analyses.

More than three-quarters of the mothers who participated in the survey (276 out of 363) reported having more than one child living with them, either part-time or full-time, indicating that most of the adolescent participants had one or more siblings, biological or non-biological. Regarding mothers' marital status, 296 participants reported being married or living with a spouse, 33 reported being separated or divorced, 19 reported being unmarried or single, and 2 reported being widows. The remaining 13 maternal participants refrained from answering the question regarding marital status.

Concerning the financial situation, 93.4% of the maternal sample indicated that the household "copes" or "copes well" economically. Furthermore, 65.8% of the mothers and 71.9% of the fathers reported working full-time jobs, while 20.4% of the mothers and 2.5% of the fathers reported working part-time jobs. Considering the income level, approximately 23.4% of the mothers enrolled in the study reported that the family had an overall yearly income between 550 000 and 749 000 Norwegian kroner, while 46.3% of the mothers reported that the household had an annual income of 750 000 Norwegian kroner or more. This is well above the median income level of approximately 397 000 Norwegian kroner in the average Norwegian household in 2009 (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2011), which indicates that the parental sample in the current study possessed an overall higher socio-economic status than the general Norwegian population in the respective year.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical guidelines have been followed throughout the execution of the TOPP study and the current thesis. The participants gave informed consent, with parents doing so on behalf of their children, by signing forms informing about the study, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw from participation at any time. The TOPP study has been approved by the Regional Ethical Committee (REK #10831) and by the Norwegian Center for Data Research (NSD). As the data used in the current thesis is provided by the TOPP study, these ethical approvals apply to the thesis as well. All analyses were conducted using anonymous data, and the data was stored on a password-encrypted USB drive.

### **Measures**

The scales and items used in the current study are collected from the TOPP study questionnaires at T7, which include responses from the adolescents, their mothers, and their fathers (see Appendix A for questionnaires).

### ***Life Satisfaction***

Measures of adolescents' life satisfaction were done using the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), originally developed by Diener and colleagues (1985). SWLS consists of five items measuring overall satisfaction with life, such as "In most ways, my life is close to my ideal", "So far I have gotten the important things I want in life", and "The conditions of my life are excellent". The original SWLS is distributed as a Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 7, in which 1 corresponds to "strongly disagree" and 7 equals "strongly agree", with a total possible score between 5 and 35 (Diener et al., 1985). For instance, scores between 5 and 9 indicate an extremely low satisfaction with life, whereas scores between 31 and 35 indicate a very high degree of life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 2008). The scale used in the current study is also distributed in a Likert scale format, with values ranging from 0 to 6. In line with the original scale, 0 represents "strongly disagree" and 6 represents "strongly agree". All items in the original scale were included in the TOPP study measurement of life satisfaction.

SWLS has demonstrated good psychometric characteristics (Diener et al., 1985; Pavot & Diener, 1993; 2008). In their review, Pavot and Diener (1993) reported that the items in SWLS appeared to be strongly correlated ( $\alpha$  between .79 and .89), which indicates high internal consistency. Additionally, SWLS shows moderate stability over time, with test-retest coefficients ranging from .50 to .84 (Pavot & Diener, 2008) and an adequate level of inter-rater stability (Diener et al., 1985).

In the current study, the items of SWLS show a high internal consistency of  $\alpha = .89$ .

### ***Parental Absence***

The sole item measuring perceived parental absence included in the current study is "My parents are too much away from home (because of work or other)", originally written in Norwegian. The question was presented in the survey, and participants were asked to indicate how often, within the previous year, they experienced certain stressful life events on a scale ranging from 0 (rarely or never) to 3 (very often). The question was constructed by the researchers in the TOPP study. Notably, the item measures adolescents' perceived parental absence from home rather than parents' objective, actual absence.

### ***Parental Support***

The Warmth/Involvement scale, a sub-scale of the Lamborn Parenting Scales for Adolescents, was used to measure parental support in the adolescent sample in the current study (Lamborn et al., 1991). The Warmth/Involvement scale comprises to what extent the adolescents perceive their parents as loving, responsive, and involved. The sub-scale originally consists of 5 items directed towards how the adolescents perceive their father (or

stepfather/male guardian) and 10 items directed towards how the adolescents perceive their mother (or stepmother/female guardian). The first 5 statements directed to both the father and the mother are identical and ask the respondents to answer whether they believe the statements presented in the scale to be “usually true” or “usually false”.

The scale measuring parental support in the seventh wave of the TOPP study was separated into two scales, whereas one scale measured maternal support, and the other was directed towards measuring paternal support. That is, the adolescents reported on their mother and father separately. Both scales consist of three identical questions, which were extracted from the mutual questions for both parents in the Warmth/Involvement scale (Lamborn et al., 1991), including the items “I can count on him/her to help me out, if I have some kind of problem”, “He/she keeps pushing me to do my best”, and “He/she helps me with my school work if there is something I do not understand”. The participants were requested to answer to what extent they perceived the statements to be consistent with their reality. The scales were constructed as 5-point Likert scales ranging from 0 (“almost never”) to 4 (“almost always”). Thus, the highest possible score was 12 for each parent.

As of our knowledge, no psychometric measures have been conducted on the Lamborn Parenting Scales for Adolescents. However, the internal consistency of the scale used in the current study is  $\alpha = .77$  for the scale measuring parental support from mothers and  $\alpha = .86$  for the scale measuring parental support from fathers.

### ***Self-Efficacy***

Participants’ level of self-efficacy was measured using a short-form version of The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The original GSE consists of 10 items aiming to assess adults’ and adolescents’ general sense of self-efficacy. The TOPP study utilized the short-form version of GSE (GSE-5), which consists of five items. These include, for instance, “I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough”, “If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want”, and “I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events”. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agree with each statement on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (not at all true) to 3 (exactly true). A high score reflects a high level of self-efficacy, with the highest possible score being 15. The Norwegian translation of GSE, developed by Espen Røysamb using a translation back-translation procedure (Leganger et al., 2000), was applied in the survey.

The internal consistency of GSE appears to be good, with a Cronbach’s alpha level mainly found to be between  $\alpha = .75$  and  $\alpha = .91$  (Ebstrup et al., 2011; Leganger et al., 2000;

Scholz et al., 2002). Longitudinal studies have identified test-retest coefficients between .47 and .75 (Scholz et al., 2002), indicating moderate stability over time. Importantly, research has found that the short-form version has a score of  $\alpha = .78$  and correlates highly (.96) with the original version, indicating that the five items adequately measure self-efficacy (Tambs & Røysamb, 2014).

In the current study, the internal consistency of GSE-5 is high, with a Cronbach's alpha level of  $\alpha = .85$ .

### **Statistical Analyses**

Analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 29.0. This includes preliminary analyses as well as main statistical analyses. Mediation and moderation analyses were carried out using Hayes' (2018) PROCESS Macro version 4.1 for SPSS. A statistical power analysis was conducted using G\*Power. For all statistical analyses, the alpha level was set to .05, and all tests performed were two-tailed.

#### ***Preliminary Analyses***

Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure there were no violations of assumptions underlying regression analysis. In line with what is recommended by Field and colleagues (2012), the assumptions that were investigated include linearity, multicollinearity, normally distributed residuals, and homoscedasticity. Additionally, the presence of extreme outliers was checked and a power analysis was conducted.

The assumption of linearity was examined using curve estimation and comparing the curvilinear and linear models, which yielded no differences in explained variance in perceived parental absence. Thus, there is no indication of curvilinearity, implying that the assumption was met. This procedure was also conducted for parental support to investigate whether a curvilinear model would improve model fit. Results did not indicate curvilinearity. A correlation matrix revealed no violation of the assumption of multicollinearity between the independent variable and the mediator.

Furthermore, the assumption of normally distributed residuals was investigated using histograms. This revealed that residuals on life satisfaction and parental support were left-skewed, while the residuals on parental absence were right-skewed, as was predicted. Regarding life satisfaction, the skewness was considered in two ways, both yielding the same result. First, we conducted a logarithmic transformation, which converted the residuals to normality to a greater extent. We also used bootstrapping to remedy non-normal residuals in the regression analyses. Bootstrapping involves repeatedly resampling the observed data to create a large number of bootstrap samples, in our case, 5000 samples of 363 observations

each. Then, a regression analysis was performed for each bootstrap sample, and the resulting regression coefficients were saved.

The scatterplot used to examine homoscedasticity indicated no violations of the assumption. The presence of extreme outliers was examined using boxplots for each scale individually. This revealed no extreme outliers, indicating that no outliers significantly alter the model and thus decrease the statistical power. This was further examined by calculating Cook's D, which indicated no influential outliers, with a maximum value of .291.

Additionally, a statistical power analysis was conducted using G\*Power in order to determine whether the sample size was sufficient to detect an interaction effect strong enough to give an increase of 2% in the amount of explained variance ( $R^2$ ). An increase of 2% was regarded as the smallest meaningful effect we were interested in. The results from the power analysis revealed that a sample of 395 participants would be required to detect such an effect, based on a statistical power of .80 and a  $p$ -level of .05. This number is somewhat higher than the total number of 363 respondents in the current study. However, as the difference between the actual and ideal sample size is relatively small, we concluded that our sample had sufficient power to investigate the suggested interaction effect.

### ***Main Analyses***

The first hypothesis tested was *“Perceived parental absence is negatively related to life satisfaction in adolescents”*. This was done using a bivariate correlation and a linear regression analysis. The correlation coefficients were interpreted using Cohen's guidelines of Pearson's  $r$ , wherein .1 represents a small effect size, .3 a medium effect size, and .5 a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). The subsequent hypotheses are as follows: *“Adolescents who perceive their parents as more absent will report less parental support, which in turn leads to lower levels of life satisfaction”*, and *“Higher levels of self-efficacy will reduce the negative impact perceived parental absence has on life satisfaction in adolescents”*. These were tested by using mediation and moderation analyses utilizing the PROCESS tool.

A mediation analysis was conducted to investigate whether parental support operates as a mediator in the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents. The mediation analysis was done by running model 4 in the PROCESS tool, corresponding to a simple mediation model. Considering that parental support was measured separately for each parent, the mediator effect was tested both for mothers and fathers separately and as a joint variable of overall parental support. This was done to control for possible variability in the adolescents' perceived support from each parent. Subsequently, the

significance of the indirect effect was tested by running a bootstrap with 5000 samples and 95% confidence intervals.

The third hypothesis was examined with a moderation analysis, which was done by running model 1 in the PROCESS tool, corresponding to a simple moderation model. The aim of the moderation analysis was to examine whether self-efficacy yields an interaction effect in the relationship between parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents. Moreover, gender, socio-economic status, parental marital status, and number of siblings were included in the mediation and moderation models as covariates to control for their possible impact on adolescents' life satisfaction.

### **Missing Data**

The overall response rate in the current study was high on all the included scales. In order to utilize as much of the available data as possible and increase the statistical power of the analyses, missing values were replaced. All participants who responded to more than half of the questions in each scale (e.g., answered a minimum of 3 out of 5 total items) received a mean score, which was thereafter used to replace the missing values within the respective scale. After missing values were replaced for 14 out of 20 participants, the number of missing values was low. The remaining six participants did not answer any of the questions regarding parental support from their fathers, and thus the values could not be replaced.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

In order to acquire information regarding the central tendencies and standard deviations of the variables used in the analyses, descriptive statistics were obtained. Table 1 provides an overview of the number of participants that completed each scale, the participants' mean score on the variables, the associated standard deviation, and the minimum and maximum score of each scale. See Appendix B for a visual representation of the data. Table 1 informs that most adolescents reported experiencing low parental absence from home. Furthermore, both mothers and fathers received rather high scores on parental support, whereas mothers were perceived as somewhat more supportive than fathers. The adolescent sample also displayed relatively high levels of self-efficacy and life satisfaction.

**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Missing</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Parental Absence <sub>a</sub>	363	0	.58	.78	0	3
Parental Support (Mothers) <sub>b</sub>	363	0	10.03	2.37	0	12
Parental Support (Fathers) <sub>b</sub>	357	6	9.45	3.09	0	12
Self-Efficacy <sub>c</sub>	363	0	10.27	3.14	0	15
Life Satisfaction <sub>d</sub>	363	0	22.53	5.78	1	30

*Note.* *n*: total number of participants. *M*: mean. *SD*: standard deviation. *Min.*: Minimum score. *Max.*: Maximum score. <sub>a</sub>Range: 0 to 3. <sub>b</sub>Range: 0 to 12. <sub>c</sub>Range: 0 to 15. <sub>d</sub>Range: 0 to 30.

**Correlations**

Table 2 presents the bivariate correlations between the variables in the current study. With the exception of the correlation between perceived parental absence and self-efficacy, all correlations are significant at  $p < .01$ . As predicted, parental support from mothers and fathers are positively correlated. However, the correlation coefficient ( $r = .546$ ) indicates that maternal and paternal support might entail different aspects. Concerning the moderate to high, positive correlation between parental support from mothers and fathers, a paired sample T-test was conducted. This was done in order to examine whether there is a significant difference between parental support from mothers and fathers. The results display a significant difference in parental support, where support from mothers ( $M = 10.02$ ) appears to be higher than for fathers ( $M = 9.44$ ), with a two-sided  $p$ -value of  $<.001$ . As a result of this, we decided to keep parental support from mothers and fathers as separate mediators rather than combining them.

**Table 2***Correlation Matrix*

<i>Variables</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Parental Absence				
2. Parental Support (Mothers)	-.186**			
3. Parental Support (Fathers)	-.158**	.546**		
4. Self-Efficacy	.025	.225**	.203**	
5. Life Satisfaction	-.137**	.400**	.383**	.526**

*Note.* \*\*  $p < .01$ . Total  $n = 357$ .

### **The Relation Between Perceived Parental Absence and Life Satisfaction: Regression Analysis**

A linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate whether a relationship exists between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction. The analysis revealed a small, yet significant, negative relationship between the independent and dependent variables ( $\beta = -.137$ ,  $p = .01$ ). This is consistent with the first hypothesis (H1), indicating that higher levels of perceived parental absence is associated with lower levels of life satisfaction among adolescents.

### **The Relation Between Perceived Parental Absence, Parental Support, and Life Satisfaction: Mediation Analysis**

The aim of the current regression analysis was to examine the second hypothesis (H2) regarding whether parental support acts as a mediator in the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents. Table 3 presents the results from the mediation analysis, whereas Figure 2 illustrates the proposed mediation paths.



**Table 3***Results from Hierarchical Regression Analysis*

<i>Model</i>	<i>Predictors</i>	<i>b</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>BC 95% CI</i>	
					<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
1	Constant	23.144		< .001	22.394	23.895
	Parental Absence	-1.029		.009	-1.795	-.264
2	Constant	12.244		<.001	9.698	14.791
	Parental Absence	-.398	-.054	.269	-1.104	.309
	Parental Support (Mothers)	.646	.266	< .001	.373	.919
	Parental Support (Fathers)	.429	.229	< .001	.219	.638

*Note.* The dependent variable is Life Satisfaction. Total  $n = 357$ . *BC 95% CI* = Bias Corrected 95% Confidence Intervals, estimated from 5000 samples.  $R^2$  (Model 1) = .019,  $R^2$  (Model 2) = .202.

In order to establish mediation, the pathways proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) were investigated. These include the total effect, direct effect, and indirect effect. Model 1 (in Table 3) displays the total effect of perceived parental absence on life satisfaction in adolescents (path c in Figure 2). The model indicates that parental absence explains 1.9% of the variance in adolescents' life satisfaction ( $R^2 = .019$ ), with a significance of  $p = .009$ . In line with the first hypothesis, life satisfaction decreases significantly ( $b = -1.029$ ) as the level of parental absence increases.

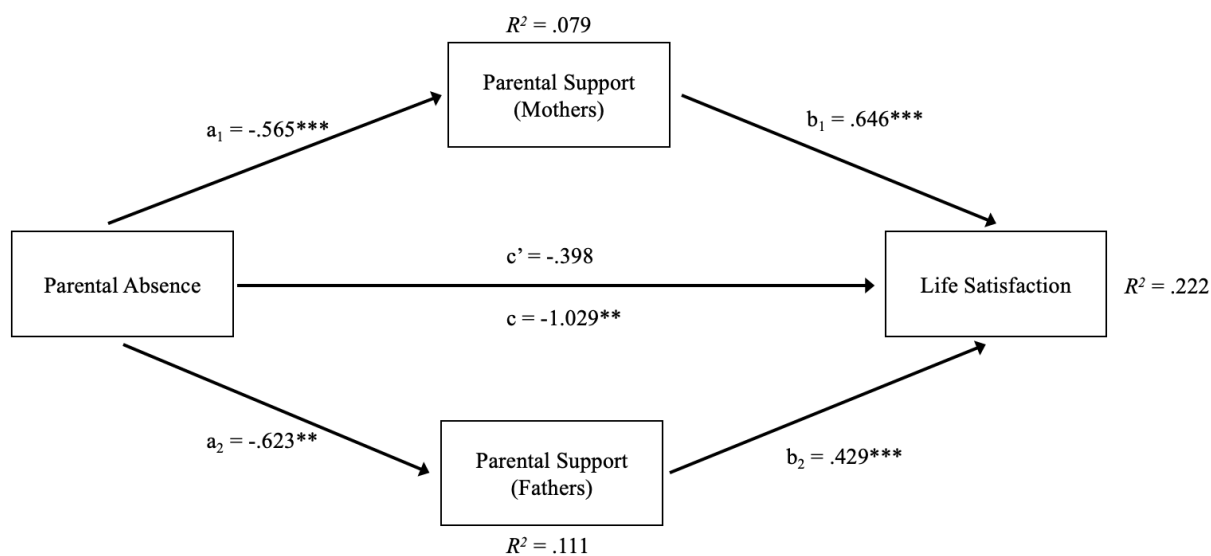
Model 2 presents the direct effect of parental absence on life satisfaction (path c' in Figure 2) and the effect of parental support, of both mothers and fathers, on life satisfaction when parental absence is controlled for (path b<sub>1</sub> and b<sub>2</sub> in Figure 2). The model is significant ( $p < .001$ ) and explains 20.2% of the variance in adolescents' life satisfaction ( $R^2 = .202$ ). The direct effect of parental absence on life satisfaction was found to be nonsignificant ( $b = -.398$ ,

$p = .269$ ). However, the results indicate that parental support significantly predicts life satisfaction. Notably, the effect is somewhat stronger for maternal support ( $b = .646, p < .001$ ) than for paternal support ( $b = .429, p < .001$ ).

Furthermore, results indicate that level of parental absence significantly predicts level of parental support, in which lower levels of parental absence is related to higher levels of parental support (path  $a_1$  and  $a_2$  in Figure 2). In this case, the effect is slightly stronger for paternal support ( $b = -.623, p < .01$ ) than for maternal support ( $b = -.565, p < .001$ ). The mediation analysis finally shows that parental absence has an indirect effect on life satisfaction through parental support (path  $a_1 * \text{path } b_1 = -.365, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.684, -.118]$ , path  $a_2 * \text{path } b_2 = -.267, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.559, -.063]$ ). This implies that parental support mediates the relationship between parental absence and life satisfaction, for both mothers and fathers, in that adolescents who receive higher levels of parental support are less negatively affected by parental absence.

**Figure 2**

*Mediation Model*



Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . All reported coefficients are unstandardized.

One can argue that parental support is fully mediating the relationship between parental absence and life satisfaction due to the direct effect ( $b = -.398$ ) being nonsignificant ( $p = .269$ ), substantially lower than the total effect ( $b = -1.029$ ), and close to zero. This implies that parental absence no longer significantly affects life satisfaction when controlling for parental support. However, the somewhat small effect sizes of the mediation argue for a

partial mediation effect. Estimations indicate that for mothers, 35.5% of the total effect between parental absence and life satisfaction is due to parental support, and 25.9% for fathers. Moreover, an additional argument for partial mediation is that the direct effect does not entirely reach zero. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that parental support partially mediates the relationship between parental absence and life satisfaction. This yields support to the hypothesis (H2) suggesting that adolescents who perceive their parents as more absent will report less parental support, which in turn is related to higher levels of life satisfaction.

### **The Relation Between Perceived Parental Absence, Self-Efficacy, and Life Satisfaction: Moderation Analysis**

The purpose of the moderation analysis was to examine the final hypothesis (H3) regarding whether higher levels of self-efficacy will reduce the negative impact perceived parental absence has on life satisfaction in adolescents. The results from the analysis are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Results from Hierarchical Regression Analysis*

<i>Model</i>	<i>Predictors</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>BC 95% CI</i>	
					<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
1	Constant	13.166	.888	<.001	11.087	15.315
	Parental Absence	-1.111	.327	<.001	-1.707	-.407
	Self-Efficacy	.975	.081	<.001	.783	1.159
2	Constant	12.467	1.079	<.001	10.345	14.589
	Parental Absence	.277	1.261	.826	-2.203	2.758
	Self-Efficacy	1.041	0.100	<.001	.844	1.238
	Parental Absence x Self-Efficacy	-.132	0.115	.255	-.359	.096

*Note.* The dependent variable is Life Satisfaction. Total  $n = 363$ . *BC 95% CI* = Bias Corrected 95% Confidence Intervals, estimated from 5000 samples.  $R^2 = .302$ .

As presented in Model 2 in Table 4, the interaction term is of negative value, while parental absence displays a positive regression coefficient. This indicates that the effect of parental absence on life satisfaction is smaller for adolescents with higher levels of self-efficacy. However, the interaction between parental absence and self-efficacy is nonsignificant, implying that the effect of parental absence on life satisfaction in adolescents does not depend on self-efficacy. In alignment with this, the increase in  $R^2$  is very small when self-efficacy is included in the model ( $\Delta R^2 = .002$ ,  $p = .225$ ), corresponding to an increase of 0.2% in explained variance in life satisfaction. In other words, adding the interaction term to the model does not seem to explain the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents to a greater extent. Thus, we did not find support for the third hypothesis, and self-efficacy does not seem to significantly moderate the relationship between parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents.

### **Covariates**

The analyses were also conducted including the covariates SES, gender, number of siblings, and parental marital status. Due to missing values on SES, marital status, and siblings, the number of participants decreased ( $n = 267$ ) when covariates were taken into account. Thus, the covariates were excluded in the main analyses in order to increase statistical power. Comparing the results from the analyses with and without covariates, we found only minor differences regarding the statistical outcomes. Hence, analyses with covariates included yielded the same conclusions. For the mediation analysis, the covariates SES ( $p = .948$ ), gender ( $p = .193$ ), and siblings ( $p = .300$ ) were nonsignificant, while parental marital status ( $p = .004$ ) was the only significant covariate. The same was found for the moderation analysis, as neither SES ( $p = .309$ ), gender ( $p = .981$ ), nor siblings ( $p = .132$ ) were significant, whereas parental marital status ( $p = .009$ ) was found to be significant. Hence, adolescents with a mother who was either married or living with a partner reported higher levels of life satisfaction compared to adolescents who had a mother who was either separated or divorced.

### **Discussion**

The overall purpose of the current study was to investigate the associations between perceived parental absence, parental support, and self-efficacy in relation to life satisfaction in a sample of 16-17-year-old Norwegian adolescents. More specifically, parental support was

proposed to mediate, and self-efficacy was proposed to moderate the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction. This was examined using adolescents' self-reported data to perform a linear regression analysis and two hierarchical regression analyses. The emerging findings indicate a small, significant relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction. Moreover, parental support was found to mediate the relationship between parental absence and life satisfaction, while self-efficacy was not a significant moderator.

In the following sections, the key findings of the current study will be further discussed. This will be done in light of previous research, as well as theoretical frameworks. Subsequently, the strengths and limitations of the current study and thesis will be addressed, followed by the study's implications and proposed future research.

### **The Relation Between Perceived Parental Absence and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents**

The first hypothesis suggested a negative relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents, in which we hypothesized that adolescents who perceive their parents to be more absent from home would report lower levels of life satisfaction. Findings indicate that adolescents who perceive their parents as more absent from home feel less satisfied with their lives compared to adolescents who do not perceive their parents as absent to the same extent. This implies that adolescents who perceived their parents as more absent displayed lower levels of life satisfaction, which yields support to our first hypothesis. The strength of the relationship between the predictor variable and the outcome variable is considered relatively small, implying that other factors might be a better explanation of variances in adolescents' life satisfaction. However, taking the poor variability in the sample regarding levels of perceived parental absence and life satisfaction into consideration, finding a significant association between these variables implies that parental absence is, in fact, a strong predictor of life satisfaction in adolescence.

In line with previous research findings on life satisfaction, the adolescent sample used in the current study reported overall high levels of life satisfaction. They further reported low levels of perceived parental absence, which is somewhat contrasting to what is previously presented in the literature. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health published a report in 2009 based on data collected from the sixth wave of the TOPP study (Helland & Mathiesen, 2009). The report highlights that more than half of the adolescent sample aged 14 and 15 were found to perceive that their parents spend too much time away from home. In the current study, data collected from the seventh wave of the TOPP study was utilized, which was conducted two years after the preceding sixth wave. Comparing the results from the sixth and

seventh waves revealed that the adolescents reported a noticeably lower level of perceived parental absence in the subsequent wave. We consider this interesting because we find it plausible that the parents of the adolescents in the study generally spent approximately the same amount of time away from home during the two years in question. This could indicate that the adolescents' perception of the absence changed throughout the two years, which might reflect a natural step in their development. Adolescence is characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, and psychosocial growth (WHO, 2022), involving increasing needs for autonomy and independence (Feldman & Quatman, 1988). Particularly, these needs might be expressed as preferences for more privacy and time alone, thereby causing the adolescents to feel more comfortable and content with being left home by themselves. In other words, two years comprise a wide span of changes in adolescents. This can contribute to clarifying the differences between our results and results from previous research.

The field of research addressing how parental absence may affect adolescent life satisfaction is rather scarce, which makes it challenging to compare our results with other study findings. However, in accordance with our results, a study conducted by Lester and colleagues (2016) found a significant negative association between parental absence due to work situations and adolescents' well-being. Additionally, Chappel and colleagues (2014) reported that family-related stressors, including parental absence, were negatively related to adolescents' life satisfaction. A number of other studies have identified a strong association between family factors and life satisfaction in adolescence (e.g., Antaramian et al., 2008; Due et al., 2019; Gilman & Huebner, 2003; Salgado et al., 2021). However, most studies do not recognize parental absence as an individual facet in the collective term of family factors, which provides a rather limited base for directly comparing the results obtained in our analyses to other research findings. Taking into account that parental absence can operate as a chronic stressor, which has been recognized as more strongly related to adolescents' life satisfaction compared to acute stressors (Ash & Huebner, 2001; Chappel et al., 2014), it is evident that parental absence is an important factor to acknowledge in future research.

Furthermore, study findings indicate that higher levels of stress accompany lower levels of life satisfaction and display family and home-related stress as particularly strong predictors of life satisfaction in adolescents (Chappel et al., 2014; McKnight et al., 2002; Milas et al., 2021; Moksnes & Haugan, 2015). Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (1984) proposes that stress tends to be the outcome when an individual perceives situational demands to exceed their ability to cope with the situation. In line with this theory, our results show a negative relationship between perceived parental absence and

adolescent life satisfaction. This implies that parental absence negatively affects life satisfaction in adolescence, which is congruent with the suggested effects of stress on life satisfaction. On the other hand, as our sample essentially reported low levels of parental absence, it is challenging to determine whether parental absence acts as a considerable stressor among the 16-17 years old adolescents involved in the current study. To some extent, this contradicts the previous findings by Helland and Mathiesen (2009), yet the basis for comparison is rather delicate, considering the age gap between the waves of data collection. Hence, more research is necessary to establish parental absence's role as a stressor.

The measurement of parental absence in this thesis consists of one single question, where the adolescent is asked to subjectively indicate to what extent they perceive their parents to be absent from home. Much of the nuance is lost by not including multiple questions and thus different aspects of the phenomenon. Firstly, the measurement does not allow for discriminating between maternal and paternal absence. An imbalance in parental absence might influence the family dynamic, which in turn may lead to parental stress and conflict. This is interesting to consider, as previous research has shown that stressors related to family and home life are strongly related to adolescent life satisfaction (Chappel et al., 2014; Moksnes & Haugan, 2015). Likewise, it would be valuable to discriminate between adolescents experiencing either one or both parents as physically unavailable. It is plausible that adolescents who perceive one parent as more present would be less negatively affected by the other parent's absence compared to adolescents who perceive both parents as absent to a considerable extent. Finally, including measurements of how adolescents feel about, and experience, their parents' absence from home could provide a more substantial basis for gaining insights into whether parental absence indeed operates as a stressor in adolescents.

Another problematic aspect of the single-question measurement is that it does not yield any information about the cause of absence. Some forms of parental absence might elicit feelings of disregard or rejection, such as in situations where the adolescent senses that the parents purposely spend time away from home. This could potentially impact the extent to which the adolescent perceives their parent as absent, in addition to how stressful they perceive the absence. Absence due to working situations as a necessity to attain sufficient financial resources might be perceived differently than, for example, absence due to leisure activities. As the assessment question specifically mentions "work" as the only example of the cause of absence, it is likely to guide the respondents' interpretation of the question. As such, it might automatically lead to an evaluation of the amount of time the parents spend at work rather than other possible causes of absence.

It is apparent that there exist societal and cultural attitudes towards parental employment status, praising a strong work ethic. Attitudes towards gender equality in parental employment status have been demonstrated to be especially present in Northern-European countries, such as Norway, where both mothers and fathers tend to spend a lot of time at work (Roeters, 2013), and dual-earner families are actively supported by formal policies (Breeschoten & Evertson, 2019). These cultural norms may contribute to experiencing social pressure from employers, as well as from public opinion and other individuals in one's social circle. This perceived work pressure can, in turn, make it more difficult to ask for reduced work hours or deny overtime for fear of being frowned upon and judged for displaying a low work ethic. As such, cultural norms and attitudes towards parental employment status may influence to what extent work situations cause parents to be absent from home and how adolescents consider and respond to the absence. This would be interesting for future research to examine further.

Parental divorce may be an essential cause of parental absence, in which the adolescent mostly spends time with the parents separately and has less physical contact with the other parent for periods or even permanently. This is a more continual form of absence and not the day-to-day absence suggested in the assessment question used in the current study. A divorce could force single parents who rely on only one income to spend more time at work in order to sustain their household and thus be more absent from home. The process of divorce also involves circumstances that could substantially affect the adolescent's life satisfaction, such as interparental conflict and disturbances in the family structure (Antaramian et al., 2008; Chappel et al., 2014; Salgado et al., 2021; Størksen et al., 2005). Parental marital status was included in the analyses as a covariate to control for its potential effect on adolescents' level of life satisfaction and was found to be significant. However, because of the low prevalence of divorced parents in our sample, parental divorce should be further addressed in future studies.

Previous research has identified social support received from siblings to play an essential role in adolescents' well-being and life satisfaction (e.g., Hollifield & Conger, 2015; Milevsky, 2005; Szymańska, 2021). Based on this, it would be interesting to examine whether sibling support influences the relationship between absent parents and life satisfaction and whether it might compensate for the lack of parental presence. As we did not have data available regarding participants' relationships with potential siblings, we included a measurement of the number of siblings as a covariate in the analyses, which did not yield significant results.



In essence, analyses demonstrated that perceived parental absence is negatively related to life satisfaction in adolescents, which aligns with previous research and our initial hypothesis. Although the effect size of the relationship was relatively small, it is an important contribution to reducing the gap in the research field. However, the current study presents limited nuance in the aspect of perceived parental absence. As previously illustrated, the adolescent sample reported overall high scores on life satisfaction and low scores on parental absence, which ultimately demonstrates little variance in our sample. Bearing this in mind, finding a significant association between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction is indeed remarkable, as we did not have the ideal sample distribution. This yields support for a valid correlation between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents.

### **Parental Support as a Mediator**

Our second hypothesis proposed that adolescents who perceive their parents as more absent will report less parental support, which in turn leads to lower levels of life satisfaction. The mediation analysis revealed that parental support significantly mediates the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents. This indicates that parental support might contribute to decreasing the potentially harmful effects of parental absence on life satisfaction in adolescents.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study aiming to investigate the mediating role of parental support in the relationship between parental absence and life satisfaction. As a result, these findings cannot be directly compared to previous research but are important contributions that fill gaps in the research field. Our other findings regarding parental support and life satisfaction, however, are in accordance with previous research. We found that parental support in itself significantly predicts life satisfaction, which complies with prior studies consistently finding parental support to be associated with adolescents' life satisfaction (e.g., Blau et al., 2019; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Proctor et al., 2017; Suldo & Huebner, 2004; 2006).

Also consistent with previous research, the participants in the current study reported overall high levels of parental support from both mothers and fathers, although higher levels of support from mothers (Kocayörük et al., 2015; Laible & Carlo, 2004). Our findings further revealed that the relationship between parental support and life satisfaction is somewhat stronger for maternal support than paternal support. One possible explanation for this could be the quality of the support provided by the mothers versus the fathers. That is, if the adolescents perceive the maternal support to be more fulfilling than the paternal support, it may also be more strongly associated with their life satisfaction. Nonetheless, as the measures

used in the current study do not adequately address all aspects of parental support, more research is needed to draw further conclusions.

Despite today's technology enabling parental support while parents are absent, our results suggest that adolescents experience higher levels of parental support when the parents are physically present. Analyses revealed that perceived parental absence and parental support are negatively correlated, indicating that less absent parents also provide more support for the adolescents. This effect was found to be slightly stronger for paternal support than maternal support, which could imply that mothers are somewhat more able to provide support while absent. However, the difference in the effects is small and more research is needed. Being physically present may also function as a form of support in itself, as the physical presence of a parent may be experienced as comforting and appeasing by adolescents. The fact that one can be physically present and mentally absent, and vice versa, illustrates the gray area between parental absence and parental support. For instance, parents who work from home are physically present in the home but may be regarded as unavailable for conversation and support by the adolescent. From a research perspective, it can be challenging to separate the understanding of these two terms and phenomena completely.

As predicted, our results were in line with the buffer hypothesis. Consistent with the theory proposing that social support decreases the harmful effects of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985), we found that parental support functions as a buffer against the adverse effect of parental absence. Following the theory, adolescents' perception of the absence may thus be altered. Although more nuanced, the current study is in accordance with other research on the buffering effect of social support (Chen et al., 2021; Raffaelli et al., 2012; Szkody & McKinney, 2019). However, as opposed to previous research, social support is considered a mediator rather than a moderator in the current study.

Notably, six participants abstained from answering measures on paternal support. All six participants reported living only with their mother, which could imply little to no contact with their father. Because of this, the participants were removed from the mediation analysis. Most participants in the current study reported living with both their parents and the prevalence of divorce reported by the mothers was low. It would be interesting to further investigate possible differences between adolescents living with both their parents and adolescents who have parents with new spouses. In the case of the latter, parents' new spouses could also be an important source of parental support or otherwise influence adolescents' perception of parental support. This is beyond the scope of the current thesis but provides interesting grounds for future research.

Altogether, we found support for our second hypothesis in that parental support mediates the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents. Nevertheless, future research needs to further examine more aspects related to parental support, as well as the relation between parental absence and parental support, as these are interconnected.

### **Self-Efficacy as a Moderator**

The third hypothesis proposed that higher levels of self-efficacy will reduce the negative impact perceived parental absence has on life satisfaction in adolescents. Results from the moderation analysis revealed that even though the effect of perceived parental absence on life satisfaction was smaller for adolescents with higher levels of self-efficacy, the interaction between parental absence and self-efficacy was nonsignificant. In other words, we did not find support for the third hypothesis.

Previous research has found self-efficacy to moderate the relationship between perceived stress and life satisfaction in adolescents (Burger & Samuel, 2016; Moksnes et al., 2018). As parental absence is considered a stressor, we predicted finding the same effect in the current study, which we did not. However, as discussed above, our results indicate that few participants experience parental absence as a stressor, as they seldom think their parents spend too much time away from home. This may be an explanation for why the results of the current study contradict previous findings. For example, using a sample extracted from the original TOPP sample, such as in the present study, Helland and Mathiesen (2009) reported that more than half of the participants thought their parents spent too much time away from home. Importantly, at the time of the data collection for the sixth wave, the participants were 14 and 15 years old. As participants in the current study were 16 and 17 years old, they might have enjoyed being home alone to a greater extent than they did two years prior and thus perceive parental absence as less stressful. Based on this, self-efficacy may not operate as a significant moderator in the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents because the premise that parental absence is experienced as stressful was not fulfilled. Another possible explanation for why we did not find self-efficacy to be a significant moderator might be related to the small effect size in the relationship between parental absence and life satisfaction. As such, adding a moderator to the model did not provide further information about the relationship.

In the current study, we considered self-efficacy a moderator rather than a mediator because we hypothesized that self-efficacy would affect the impact perceived parental absence had on adolescents' life satisfaction. Thus, we proposed that self-efficacy would

provide further information regarding which adolescents are more or less affected by perceived parental absence. Furthermore, because self-efficacy is considered relatively stable, it is unlikely to be influenced by other factors. As such, it is reasonable to consider it as a moderator. Empirically speaking, the results showing that self-efficacy was not correlated to parental absence further substantiate self-efficacy's role as a moderator rather than a mediator.

As self-efficacy was not found to significantly moderate the association between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction, our results are not in line with the theoretical framework proposed by Bandura (1977; 1982; 1991). Bandura argued that an individual's level of self-efficacy greatly influences how stressful they perceive a situation, as higher levels of self-efficacy reflect stronger beliefs in their ability to cope with the situation. As such, one would expect that higher levels of self-efficacy would increase participants' level of life satisfaction in the relationship with parental absence, which we did not find support for. However, because of participants' low scores on parental absence, and thus their lack of this form of stress, the current study does not provide a strong basis for comparison.

In summary, we did not find self-efficacy to moderate the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents. As such, our results are inconsistent with previous research and Bandura's theoretical framework. More research is needed in order to explore this inconsistency further.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

This thesis provides important insights into the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents. To the best of our knowledge, this relationship has not yet been explicitly examined in any previous studies. Hence, the findings from the current study contribute to filling an important gap in the existing literature. Additionally, by investigating life satisfaction among adolescents, the study adds to a historically understudied field (Proctor et al., 2017) which still needs to be expanded (Gilman & Huebner, 2003). The current study also provides insight into aspects that have not been thoroughly investigated in the research field. For example, previous research has mainly focused on long-term absence and paternal absence rather than day-to-day parental absence for both mothers and fathers. Moreover, the moderating role of self-efficacy in relation to stress and life satisfaction has mostly been centered on academic stress, as opposed to family-related stress (Burger & Samuel, 2016). As such, a primary strength of the current study is its contribution to filling in existing research gaps.

Another major strength is a relatively large ( $n = 363$ ) and population-based sample. This ensures that the data and results are fairly reliable and generalizable to similar

populations, particularly Norwegian adolescents. Furthermore, the overall response rate was high, yielding minimal missing data and exclusion of participants. Hence, there was a relatively small amount of values that required replacing.

A noteworthy strength is the well-established scales used in the study. Both SWLS and GSE-5 are widely used and recognized as well-suited to measure life satisfaction and self-efficacy, demonstrating good psychometric characteristics (Diener et al., 1985; Pavot & Diener, 1993; 2008; Tambs & Røysamb, 2014). Moreover, all scales used, SWLS, the Warmth/Involvement scale, and GSE-5, were found to have high internal consistency in the current study.

Some limitations with our study should also be addressed. Firstly, data for all the variables was extracted from one time point, making the current study's methodological design cross-sectional. As a result of this, no conclusions about direction, causality, or longitudinal effects can be drawn from our analyses. Nevertheless, the proposed path model (Figure 1) and the linear regression analysis indicate directionality in that perceived parental absence predicts life satisfaction.

A second limitation is the type of measures applied to collect the data. Data for the current study was obtained using self-reported questionnaires, which are vulnerable to various types of response bias, such as social desirability bias. Participants may have responded in a way they deem more socially acceptable rather than entirely truthful. For instance, some adolescents might not want to expose their parents or distort the impression of a “perfect” family life. Furthermore, the fact that perceived parental absence was measured using a single question is an important limitation to address, especially considering that parental absence is the predictor variable in the current study. This may omit essential information about ways in which adolescents experience the absence, as well as causes for the parental absence. Additionally, the Warmth/Involvement scale utilized for measuring parental support was an abbreviated version of the original Lamborn Parenting Scales for Adolescents, and psychometric measures have not been adequately reported for the abbreviated version. This might result in less nuanced data obtained from the participants. However, reducing the number of questions in a rather comprehensive questionnaire could be necessary to prevent participant fatigue, as it may distort the credibility of the responses.

Another important limitation is that the data used in the current study was collected in 2009. Many societal changes, such as attitudes toward parental working situations, may occur within a decade. It is possible that the adolescents' responses would be different had the data been collected in more recent years, as, for example, attitudes towards parental working

situations may have changed. This aspect limits the generalizability of our findings, in which the effect of perceived parental absence on adolescent life satisfaction may not currently reflect as close to true scores as preferable.

A fourth limitation is the covariates that were considered in the analyses. Due to missing values on SES, parental marital status, and siblings, the number of participants decreased significantly when covariates were included. Furthermore, only one of the four covariates was found to be significant for the mediation analysis and the moderation analysis. Because of this, as well as analyses with covariates indicating only minor differences compared to analyses without covariates included, the covariates were excluded in the main analyses. It is possible that a lower number of missing values would have yielded different results, but more research is needed to examine this further. Furthermore, including parents' level of education in the SES variable would have enhanced the validity of the variable and thus possibly the associated outcomes.

Moreover, a fifth limitation concerns the covariate socio-economic status reported by the maternal sample. As mentioned earlier, nearly half of the adolescents' mothers reported a yearly income in the family that is well above the median income level in the average Norwegian household in the respective year. This can be problematic as it makes the sample less representative of the general population. A relatively high yearly income in the household could imply that the parents of the adolescent sample are working more and consequently spend more time away from home compared to the general Norwegian parental population. As we did not have access to data on parental educational level, it was not included in the measurement of SES. To obtain a comprehensive measurement of SES, future studies should include parental level of education, as it can contribute to explaining parental income level.

The narrow cultural background represented in our sample is also an important limitation to address. The questionnaire was only available in Norwegian, excluding all Norwegian citizens unable to understand the language from participating. Additionally, as all participants included in the study were recruited from health care centers across Eastern Norway, people from other regions of the country are not represented in the sample. This generates a more homogenous sample regarding the cultural context on a country level. From a global perspective, the results can be challenging to generalize across countries as the sample consists of Norwegian citizens only. The negative effect of perceived parental absence on adolescent life satisfaction needs to be examined across countries and cultures in the future in an effort to establish it as a global phenomenon.

A final limitation worth addressing is the small effect size in the relationship between perceived parental absence and adolescent life satisfaction, which is the main relationship of interest in the current study. It may be somewhat ambitious to argue that we have found a strong correlation between parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents when the effect size is rather small. The small effect size could imply that other variables are more appropriate to describe the variation in adolescent life satisfaction. Nonetheless, considering our sample's non-ideal distribution of variable scores, we believe we have grounds for presenting our results as quite notable.

### **Implications and Future Directions**

Our findings provide valuable insights into the negative effect of parental absence and the buffering effect of parental support on life satisfaction in adolescents, which has important scientific and practical implications. A greater understanding of how parental absence can influence adolescent life satisfaction is imperative, especially due to today's society's persistent expectations of a high work ethic. Information about the detrimental effects of high levels of parental absence from home can further contribute to changing parenting practices concerning how mothers and fathers choose to allocate their time.

The results obtained from analyses in the current study revealed that parental support operates as a mediator in the relationship between perceived parental absence and adolescent life satisfaction. This suggests that the extent of perceived parental support is more suited to explain variation in adolescents' level of life satisfaction rather than parental absence in itself. Importantly, our analyses also show that the adolescents experienced the parents as more supportive when perceived as less absent, which illustrates how intertwined these two variables are in everyday life. This further implies that parental absence and parental support should not be treated as entirely separate factors, neither in the field of research nor in practice, as they potentially have a mutual influence on each other. This is important for parents to be aware of, as support provided through phone calls or text messages does not have the same impact as support provided while physically present.

As parental support has been identified as a strong predictor of adolescent life satisfaction, it seems that parental absence implicitly influences adolescent life satisfaction through parental support, ultimately making parental absence an important factor. This information can be beneficial in occupations working with parents, such as in parental counseling and health institutions aiding parents, as it yields the opportunity to provide more accurate guidance concerning the consequences of choices in parenting practice.

Finally, our results shed light on the relationship between perceived parental absence and adolescents' life satisfaction, with the mediating effect of parental support, as well as the moderating effect of self-efficacy, despite the moderating effect turning out to be nonsignificant. Although we made some important insights, the results from our cross-sectional analyses do not allow us to draw any final conclusions regarding the nature of these relationships. Nevertheless, the current study has laid grounds for research to further build on this body of knowledge.

In order to increase knowledge on parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents, more research is needed. Although the current study provides valuable insight into a Norwegian context, it offers limited information regarding parental absence and life satisfaction in other countries and cultures. Future research needs to expand the examination of the relation between parental absence and adolescents' life satisfaction to include multiple countries and cultures. This is especially relevant considering how varying workloads may impact family life across countries (UNICEF, 2020). In other words, the relations examined in the current study should be further investigated using an extended and more diverse sample.

Secondly, examining whether this relationship might be stronger in samples of youth reporting a higher degree of perceived absence by their parents would be interesting. As mentioned earlier, the relatively low prevalence of perceived parental absence among the adolescents in the current sample could explain its modest association with life satisfaction. Considering that Helland and Mathiesen (2009) found that more than half of 14-15-year-old Norwegian adolescents think their parents spend too much time away from home, a younger sample may be needed to detect a stronger coherence between parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents. Taking this into account, to what extent the adolescent experiences parental absence as a stressor might change as they get older. More specifically, it would be interesting to compare the current association between a sample of younger adolescents and a sample of older adolescents. Longitudinal studies should also be executed in order to provide additional knowledge regarding how the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction changes over time.

Furthermore, future research should develop a more comprehensive and complete scale measuring perceived parental absence, which consists of more than one single question. Based on what is discussed above, it would be beneficial for this scale to differentiate between maternal and paternal absence, as well as to identify different causes for absence. It would also be interesting to further reveal what adolescents perceive as "too much" regarding their parents' absence, along with acquiring some insights concerning their feelings about the



absence. From our point of view, it is not clear if, or to what extent, the adolescents actually perceive the absence as distressing. Including more questions in the measurement of parental absence would provide more information and additional, valuable insights.

Lastly, future research ought to investigate whether other factors might mediate or moderate the association between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction. One central factor would be other persons in the adolescents' lives who might lessen the negative impact of parental absence, such as parents' new spouses, siblings, or grandparents.

The findings of the current study reveal the importance of parents being aware of the choices they make every day in relation to their physical absence, as well as the support they provide their children. Importantly, if parents are not able to decrease their absence, their support can, to some extent, compensate for their physical unavailability. It is evident that parental support is highly valuable to adolescents' life satisfaction, even in late adolescence when they are often perceived as more independent. All things considered, this thesis highlights the importance of further investigating parental absence, as it potentially has a great impact on adolescents' life satisfaction.

### **Conclusion**

The overall purpose of the current study was to explore the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction in 16-17-year-old Norwegian adolescents. Additionally, we examined whether and to what extent parental support and self-efficacy impacted the proposed relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction. Our key findings highlight the importance of being physically present as a parent. Not only was it found to be directly related to adolescents' life satisfaction, but it was also shown to influence to what extent the adolescents perceive their parents as supportive, which in turn implicitly affected the adolescents' levels of life satisfaction. The latter is a considerably important discovery given the fact that parental support has, to the best of our knowledge, not yet been examined as a mediator in the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction among adolescents in previous research.

Moreover, the current thesis contributes valuable insights into the potential impact of day-to-day parental absence from both mothers and fathers, which also lacks thorough investigation. This is prominent, as parental absence is a relevant consideration for all parents balancing work and family life. As our findings indicate that perceived parental absence substantially impacts adolescents' life satisfaction, it is evident that greater knowledge is necessary in order to understand and improve adolescents' life satisfaction.

Furthermore, the moderating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents turned out to be nonsignificant in our study. However, our results indicated that the effect of parental absence on life satisfaction is somewhat smaller for adolescents with higher levels of self-efficacy compared to adolescents who reported lower levels of self-efficacy. Thus, future research ought to further explore the impact of self-efficacy on the relationship between perceived parental absence and life satisfaction in adolescents.

The current thesis provides valuable insights into the research field. The study demonstrates the importance of parents being physically present in their adolescent children's lives, and providing them with support, even as older adolescents are perceived to be more independent. These findings lay the grounds for future research to further investigate the interplay between parental absence and parental support, as well as their impact on adolescents' well-being. Additionally, the current research contributes valuable knowledge concerning work aimed at counseling parents and promoting adolescent life satisfaction.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Questionnaires



#### Figure A1

##### Items Measuring Life Satisfaction

### OPPFATNINGER OM DEG SELV OG LIVET DITT

Nå ønsker vi å få vite hvor fornøyd du er med livet ditt, slik som det er i dag. Kryss av om du er enig eller uenig i de følgende påstander (*sett kun ett kryss for hver linje*):

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Svært uenig	Uenig	Litt uenig	Verken eller	Litt enig	Enig	Svært enig
23	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Note.* The scale (SWLS) was originally developed by Diener and colleagues (1985).

#### Figure A2

##### Item Measuring Parental Absence

### BELASTNINGER

Nedenfor har vi listet opp ting som mange ungdommer kan oppleve. Tenk på det siste året og kryss av for hvor ofte du har opplevd noe av det følgende.

(*Sett ett kryss på hver linje.*)

	0	1	2	3
	Sjelden eller aldri	Av og til	Ganske ofte	Svært ofte
217	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Note.* The question was constructed by the researchers in the TOPP study.

**Figure A3***Items Measuring Parental Support*

Her kommer noen flere utsagn om hvordan ungdom kan oppleve at foreldrene er mot dem. Kryss av for hvor godt du synes dette stemmer for deg:

		0	1	2	3	4
<b>Tenk på moren din:</b>		Nesten aldri	Sjelden	Av og til	Ofte	Nesten alltid
116	Jeg kan stole på at hun hjelper meg hvis jeg har problemer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
117	Hun oppmuntrer meg alltid til å gjøre mitt beste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
118	Hun hjelper meg med skolearbeidet hvis det er noe jeg ikke forstår	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		0	1	2	3	4
<b>Tenk på faren din:</b>		Nesten aldri	Sjelden	Av og til	Ofte	Nesten alltid
119	Jeg kan stole på at han hjelper meg hvis jeg har problemer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
120	Han oppmuntrer meg alltid til å gjøre mitt beste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
121	Han hjelper meg med skolearbeidet hvis det er noe jeg ikke forstår	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note. Items extracted from the Warmth/Involvement scale (Lamborn et al., 1991).

**Figure A4***Items Measuring Self-Efficacy*

<b>Hvor riktige er påstandene under for deg</b> (sett <i>ett kryss</i> for hver linje):		0	1	2	3
		Ikke riktig	Litt riktig	Nesten riktig	Helt riktig
28	Jeg klarer alltid å løse vanskelige problemer hvis jeg prøver hardt nok	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29	Hvis noen motarbeider meg, så kan jeg finne måter og veier for å få det som jeg vil	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30	Hvis jeg har et problem og står helt fast, så finner jeg vanligvis en vei ut	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31	Jeg føler meg trygg på at jeg ville kunne takle uventede hendelser på en effektiv måte	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32	Jeg beholder roen når jeg møter vanskeligheter, fordi jeg stoler på mine evner til å mestre/få til ting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note. Items extracted from the GSE-5 scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

**Figure A5***Item Measuring Gender (Covariate)***DEG SELV OG FAMILIEN DIN**9 Er du jente eller gutt? 1  Jente 0  Gutt**Figure A6***Items Measuring SES (Covariate)***UTDANNING, ARBEID OG ØKONOMI**

34 Er du for tiden i lønnet arbeid?

- 1  Nei: hjemmeværende  
 2  Nei: under utdanning  
 3  Nei: trygdet/attføring  
 4  Nei: arbeidssøkende  
 5  Ja, deltidsarbeid (mindre enn 80%)  
 6  Ja, heltidsarbeid (80-100%)

35 Hvordan klarer du/familien seg med den økonomien du/dere har?

- 1  Vi klarer oss svært dårlig  
 2  Vi klarer oss dårlig  
 3  Vi klarer oss  
 4  Vi klarer oss meget bra

36 Har du, eller noen i husholdningen din, fått økonomisk støtte fra sosialkontoret i løpet av de siste 12 mnd.?

- 0  Nei 1  Ja 2  Vet ikke

37 Kan du anslå omtrent hvor høy inntekt den samlede husholdningen hadde siste år?

*(Samlet brutto årsinntekt inkludert overføringer og bidrag før skatt og fradrag er trukket.)*

- 1  Under 200 000  
 2  200 - 349 000  
 3  550 - 749 000  
 4  550 - 749 000  
 5  750 000 eller mer

**Figure A7***Items Measuring Siblings (Covariate)*24 Bor det andre barn hos deg? 2  Ja, heltid 1  Ja, deltid 0  Nei

**Figure A8***Items Measuring Marital Status (Covariate)*

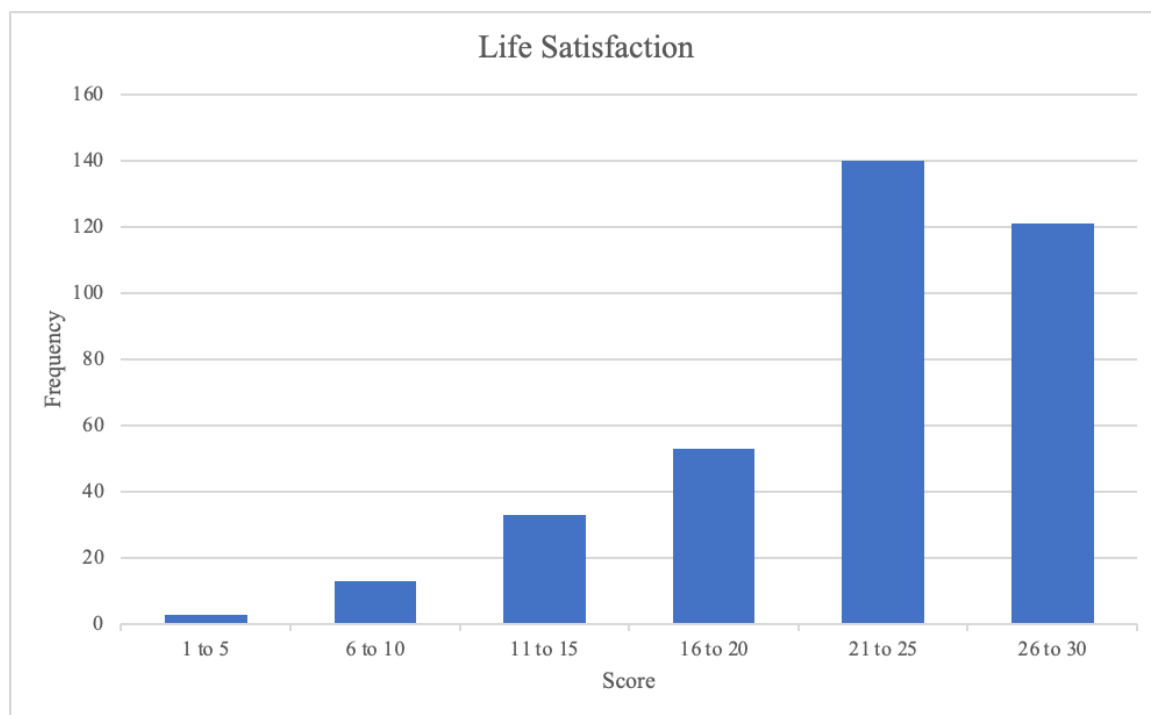
28 **Er du:**

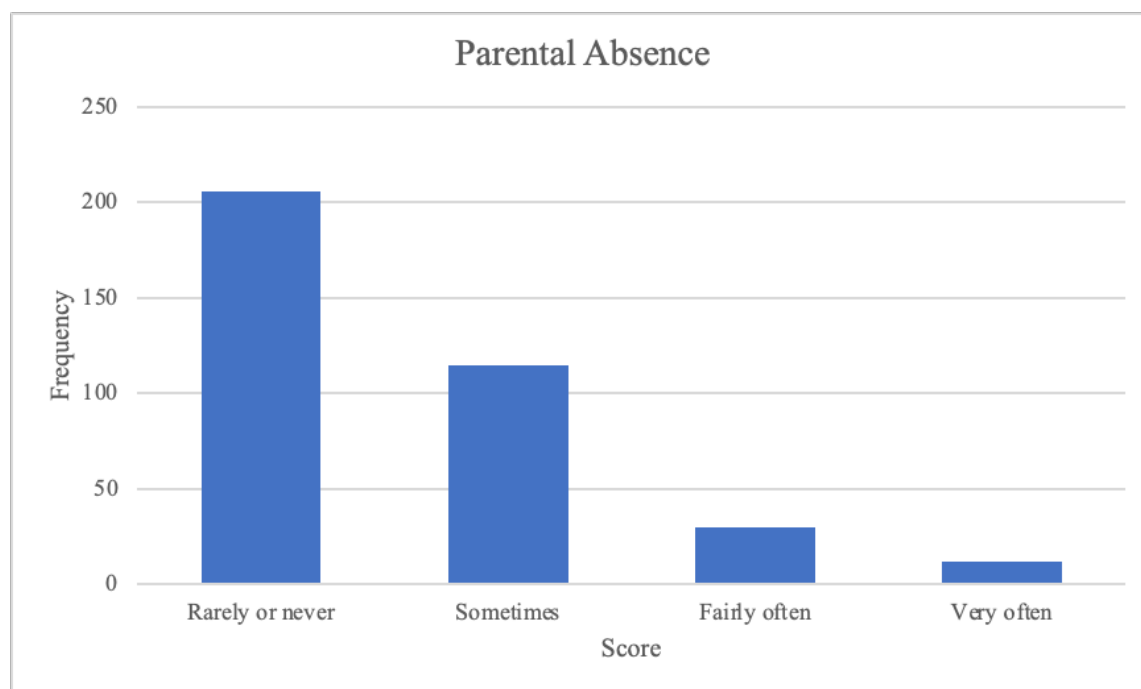
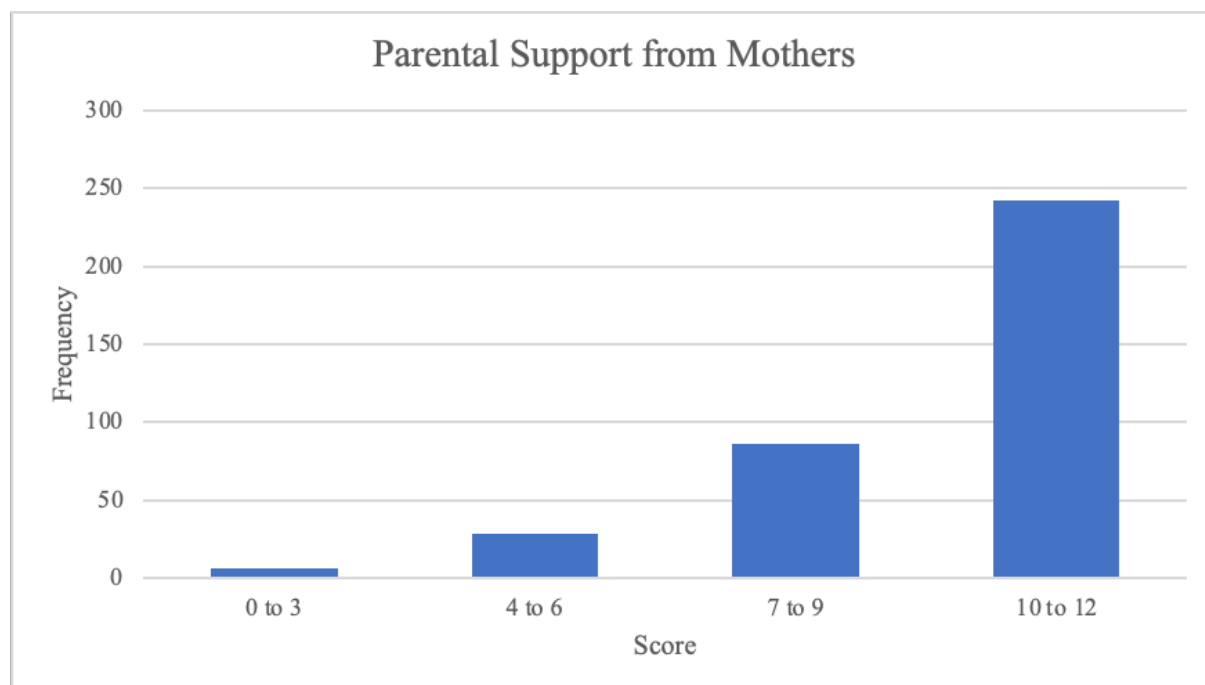
1  Gift/samboer

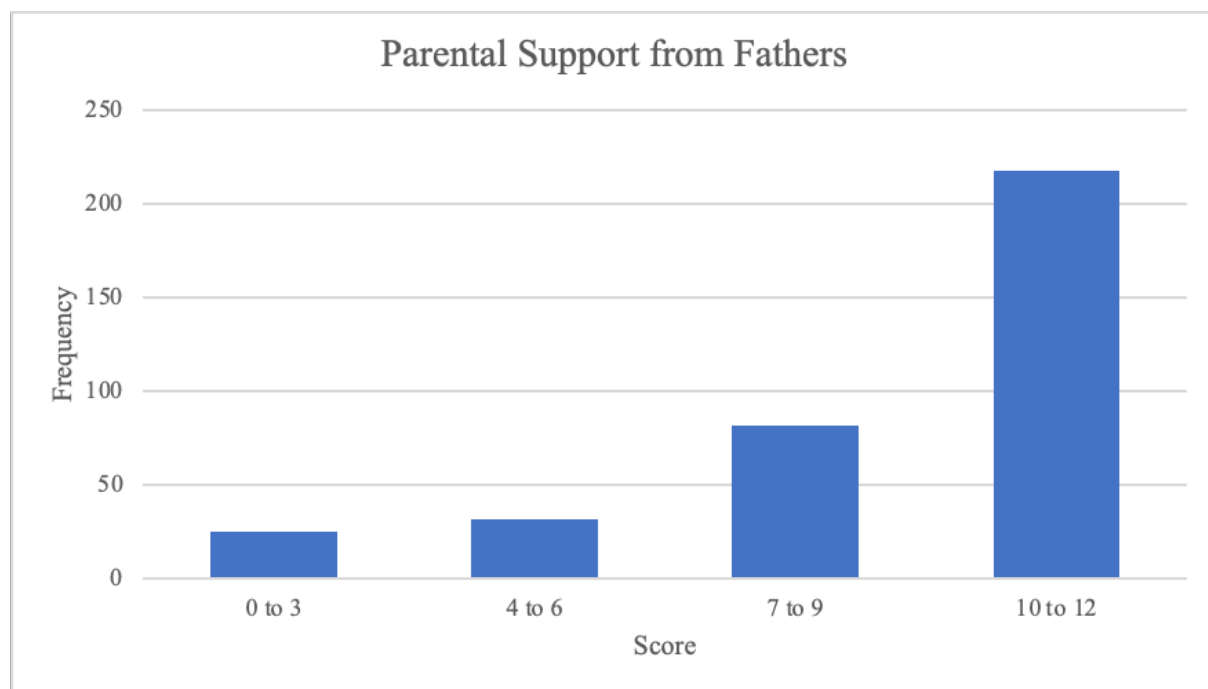
2  Ugift/enslig

3  Separert/skilt

4  Enke

**Appendix B: Visual Representation of the Data****Figure B1***Participants' Scores on Life Satisfaction*

**Figure B2***Participants' Scores on Parental Absence***Figure B3***Participants' Scores on Parental Support from Mothers*

**Figure B4***Participants' Scores on Parental Support from Fathers***Figure B5***Participants' Scores on Self-Efficacy*