

How Psychological Flexibility and Trust Shape Parenting Efficacy: A Quantitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the predictive relationship between psychological flexibility, trust in relationships, and parenting efficacy.

Methods and Materials: This study employed a correlational descriptive design with a sample of 350 parents, selected based on the Morgan and Krejcie table. Standardized measures, including the Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC), the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II), and the Trust Scale, were administered to assess parenting efficacy, psychological flexibility, and trust in relationships, respectively. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27, including Pearson correlation to assess bivariate relationships and multiple linear regression to examine the combined predictive effect of psychological flexibility and trust on parenting efficacy. Assumptions of normality, linearity, and multicollinearity were confirmed before conducting regression analyses.

Findings: The results demonstrated that psychological flexibility was significantly correlated with parenting efficacy ($r = 0.54, p < 0.01$), as was trust in relationships ($r = 0.47, p < 0.01$). Multiple regression analysis indicated that psychological flexibility ($B = 0.65, p < 0.01$) and trust in relationships ($B = 0.48, p < 0.01$) were both significant predictors of parenting efficacy, accounting for 37% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.37, p < 0.01$). Psychological flexibility exhibited a slightly stronger predictive effect than trust in relationships. These findings highlight the importance of both individual cognitive adaptability and interpersonal trust in shaping parents' confidence in their parenting abilities.

Conclusion: This study provides empirical support for the significant role of psychological flexibility and trust in relationships in predicting parenting efficacy. The findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing parents' emotional adaptability and strengthening relational trust may contribute to improved parenting confidence. Future research should explore longitudinal effects and cultural variations in these relationships to develop targeted parenting interventions.

Keywords: Parenting efficacy, psychological flexibility, trust in relationships, parental confidence, predictive modeling

1 Introduction

Parenting efficacy, defined as a parent's belief in their ability to manage the challenges of raising children effectively, has been extensively linked to child developmental outcomes, parental well-being, and overall family functioning. Research has consistently shown that parents with higher levels of perceived efficacy demonstrate greater engagement in their children's learning, provide more consistent discipline, and create emotionally supportive environments that foster positive development (Zhang et al., 2024). Conversely, parents with low self-efficacy often experience heightened stress, employ inconsistent parenting strategies, and struggle to establish trust-based relationships with their children, which can negatively impact child adjustment (Terrefe, 2024). Given the centrality of parenting efficacy in child-rearing practices, understanding its predictors is crucial for designing interventions that support parents in developing confidence and competence in their roles. Among the psychological factors influencing parenting efficacy, psychological flexibility and trust in relationships have gained significant attention.

Psychological flexibility, which refers to an individual's ability to adapt to changing situational demands, persist in value-driven actions despite adversity, and effectively regulate emotions, has been recognized as a key determinant of parenting behaviors (Rahman & Nasrullah, 2024). Parents who exhibit higher psychological flexibility are more likely to respond to their children's needs in a mindful, non-reactive manner, reducing coercive disciplinary strategies and fostering more secure attachments (Liu, 2024). Additionally, research suggests that psychological flexibility enhances problem-solving skills and emotional regulation, which are essential in handling parenting stressors effectively (Izmerov, 2024). Empirical studies have demonstrated that parents with greater psychological flexibility are more likely to maintain positive parenting practices even in the face of child behavioral challenges (Dewan et al., 2024). This adaptability not only benefits the parent-child relationship but also contributes to greater parental satisfaction and well-being (Brown, 2024).

The role of trust in relationships, particularly between co-parents, is another crucial factor in shaping parenting efficacy. Trust is a foundational element in interpersonal relationships, influencing communication patterns, emotional security, and cooperative parenting (Ames et al., 2024). Parents who trust their partners are more likely to

engage in joint decision-making regarding child-rearing, which reinforces a sense of shared responsibility and competence (Yeon & Choi, 2023). Studies indicate that trust between parents contributes to consistency in parenting approaches, reducing conflicts that could undermine parental confidence (Tosun & KİBaroĖLu, 2023). Furthermore, research has shown that parental trust extends beyond the immediate family context, influencing parents' willingness to seek social support and access community resources that enhance their parenting knowledge and skills (Schellenberg et al., 2023). Given that trust facilitates collaboration and emotional regulation, its impact on parenting efficacy warrants further exploration (Ross et al., 2023).

Despite the recognized importance of psychological flexibility and trust in relationships, relatively few studies have examined their combined influence on parenting efficacy. Previous research has largely focused on these variables in isolation, limiting a comprehensive understanding of how they interact to shape parental confidence (Novianty & Ramli, 2023). Psychological flexibility enables parents to navigate stressors effectively, whereas trust in relationships ensures a stable and supportive co-parenting environment (Ma et al., 2023). The interplay between these factors may provide insight into the mechanisms through which parents develop and maintain a strong sense of efficacy in their role (d'Angelo et al., 2023). Given that parenting is inherently dynamic and complex, an integrative approach considering both individual and relational determinants is necessary (Zhang et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the theoretical foundations supporting these relationships are well-established. Psychological flexibility is a core construct in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), which emphasizes cognitive and emotional adaptability as essential for psychological well-being (Tian et al., 2022). Research in this domain has shown that greater psychological flexibility reduces experiential avoidance and emotional dysregulation, both of which are linked to lower parenting efficacy (He et al., 2022). Similarly, social exchange theory posits that trust in relationships enhances cooperation and reciprocity, leading to a more cohesive and supportive parenting dynamic (Hallam et al., 2022). Parents who perceive their partners as trustworthy are more likely to engage in collaborative problem-solving, further reinforcing their confidence in managing parenting responsibilities (Ferrara et al., 2022).

Beyond theoretical considerations, empirical findings underscore the significance of these variables in real-world

parenting contexts. Studies have shown that interventions designed to enhance psychological flexibility, such as mindfulness-based parenting programs, lead to significant improvements in parental efficacy and child outcomes (Chambers et al., 2022). Similarly, trust-building interventions in couples' therapy have been found to enhance parenting confidence, particularly among parents experiencing relationship strain (Srivastav & Mathur, 2021). These findings highlight the practical implications of fostering psychological flexibility and trust to improve parenting efficacy (Dwinadia & Boediman, 2021).

Additionally, contextual factors may influence these relationships. Cultural differences, socioeconomic status, and family structures all play a role in shaping parenting experiences (Neuenschwander, 2020). For example, studies indicate that collectivist cultures, which emphasize interdependence and family cohesion, may place greater importance on trust in relationships as a predictor of parenting efficacy compared to individualist cultures (Hafting et al., 2019). Similarly, parents facing economic hardship may experience heightened stress, reducing their psychological flexibility and trust in co-parenting relationships (Zhang et al., 2024). Understanding these contextual influences is essential for developing targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by diverse parenting populations (Terrefe, 2024).

Given these considerations, the present study aims to examine the predictive relationship between psychological flexibility, trust in relationships, and parenting efficacy. Specifically, it seeks to determine the extent to which psychological flexibility and trust contribute to parenting efficacy and whether these factors interact to enhance parental confidence.

2 Methods and Materials

2.1 Study Design and Participants

This study employed a correlational descriptive design to examine the predictive relationship between psychological flexibility, trust in relationships, and parenting efficacy. The sample consisted of 350 participants, selected based on the Morgan and Krejcie table to ensure adequate statistical power. Participants were parents recruited through online advertisements and community centers, with inclusion criteria requiring them to have at least one child under the age of 18. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, and participants completed standardized questionnaires measuring parenting efficacy, psychological

flexibility, and trust in relationships. The study adhered to ethical research guidelines, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Parenting Efficacy

The Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC), developed by Gibaud-Wallston and Wandersman in 1978, is a widely used standardized tool for measuring parenting efficacy. The PSOC consists of 17 items and includes two subscales: the Satisfaction subscale, which assesses parents' perceived pleasure and fulfillment in their role, and the Efficacy subscale, which measures parents' confidence in their ability to manage parenting challenges. Items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with higher scores indicating greater parenting efficacy. Various studies have confirmed the validity and reliability of the PSOC, demonstrating its strong psychometric properties across different populations.

2.2.2 Psychological Flexibility

Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II)

Psychological flexibility is assessed using the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II), developed by Bond et al. in 2011. The AAQ-II is a standardized tool comprising 7 items that evaluate an individual's ability to accept thoughts and emotions while engaging in value-driven behaviors. The questionnaire uses a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from never true to always true, with higher scores indicating lower psychological flexibility. The AAQ-II has been widely validated in clinical and non-clinical samples, with numerous studies supporting its reliability and construct validity in measuring psychological flexibility as a core process in psychological well-being.

2.2.3 Trust

Trust in relationships is measured using the Trust Scale developed by Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna in 1985. This standardized tool consists of 17 items and includes three subscales: Predictability, which measures the consistency of a partner's behavior; Dependability, which assesses the belief in a partner's honesty and reliability; and Faith, which evaluates confidence in the future of the relationship. Responses are recorded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with higher scores reflecting greater trust. The Trust Scale has been extensively

validated, and studies have confirmed its reliability and factor structure across various relationship contexts.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated for all study variables. Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between parenting efficacy and each independent variable (psychological flexibility and trust in relationships). Additionally, linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive power of psychological flexibility and trust in relationships on parenting efficacy. Assumptions of normality, linearity, and multicollinearity were checked to ensure the validity of the

regression model. The significance level was set at 0.05 for all statistical tests.

3 Findings and Results

The sample consisted of 350 participants, of whom 192 (54.86%) were female and 158 (45.14%) were male. The participants' ages ranged from 25 to 50 years, with a mean age of 36.42 years (SD = 6.87). In terms of educational background, 78 participants (22.29%) had a high school diploma or lower, 134 (38.29%) held a bachelor's degree, and 138 (39.43%) had a postgraduate degree. Regarding marital status, 312 participants (89.14%) were married, while 38 (10.86%) were divorced or widowed. The number of children per participant varied, with 146 (41.71%) having one child, 162 (46.29%) having two children, and 42 (12.00%) having three or more children.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Parenting Efficacy	75.62	10.47
Psychological Flexibility	45.89	8.92
Trust in Relationships	52.34	7.65

The descriptive statistics for the study variables, including mean and standard deviation, are presented in Table 1. The mean score for parenting efficacy was 75.62 (SD = 10.47), indicating a moderate to high level of perceived parenting competence among participants. Psychological flexibility had a mean score of 45.89 (SD = 8.92), reflecting moderate levels of cognitive and emotional adaptability. Trust in relationships had a mean score of 52.34 (SD = 7.65), suggesting that participants generally reported a moderate to high degree of trust in their interpersonal relationships. These findings provide a foundational understanding of the distribution of scores across study variables.

Prior to conducting the main analyses, statistical assumptions were examined. The normality of the dependent

variable (parenting efficacy) was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ($D = 0.047, p = 0.127$) and Shapiro-Wilk test ($W = 0.984, p = 0.082$), indicating a normal distribution. Linearity was confirmed through scatterplots, showing a linear relationship between psychological flexibility, trust in relationships, and parenting efficacy. Multicollinearity was assessed using the variance inflation factor (VIF), with VIF values of 1.34 for psychological flexibility and 1.41 for trust in relationships, indicating no multicollinearity concerns. Homoscedasticity was verified using the Levene's test for equality of variances ($F = 1.72, p = 0.189$), confirming that variance was equally distributed. These results ensured the appropriateness of the Pearson correlation and linear regression analyses.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix for Study Variables

Variable	Pearson Correlation (r)	p-value
Psychological Flexibility	0.54	<0.01
Trust in Relationships	0.47	<0.01

The correlation analysis examined the relationships between parenting efficacy and its predictors. Psychological flexibility demonstrated a significant positive correlation with parenting efficacy ($r = 0.54, p < 0.01$), indicating that higher psychological flexibility is associated with greater parenting efficacy. Similarly, trust in relationships was positively correlated with parenting efficacy ($r = 0.47, p < 0.01$), suggesting that parents who experience greater

relational trust tend to report higher levels of parenting confidence. These findings confirm the hypothesized relationships between psychological flexibility, trust in relationships, and parenting efficacy, supporting prior literature on the importance of both cognitive adaptability and interpersonal trust in shaping parenting experiences. The results are presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 3

Summary of Regression Results

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
Regression	4523.67	2	2261.84	0.61	0.37	0.36	63.61	<0.01
Residual	12342.56	347	35.56					
Total	16866.23	349						

The regression analysis results indicate that the overall model was significant, $F(2, 347) = 63.61, p < 0.01$, with an R^2 value of 0.37, meaning that psychological flexibility and trust in relationships together explained 37% of the variance in parenting efficacy. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.36 suggests a strong model fit, accounting for sample size and predictor variables. The regression sum of squares was 4523.67, while

the residual sum of squares was 12342.56, indicating that a substantial proportion of variance in parenting efficacy was explained by the predictors. These findings highlight the strong combined effect of psychological flexibility and trust in relationships on parenting efficacy. The details of the regression model summary are shown in [Table 3](#).

Table 4

Results of Multivariate Regression Analysis

Predictor	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Constant	25.67	3.72	-	6.90	<0.01
Psychological Flexibility	0.65	0.12	0.44	5.42	<0.01
Trust in Relationships	0.48	0.11	0.36	4.36	<0.01

The multivariate regression analysis further explored the individual contributions of each predictor to parenting efficacy. Psychological flexibility had a significant positive effect on parenting efficacy ($B = 0.65, SE = 0.12, \beta = 0.44, t = 5.42, p < 0.01$), demonstrating its robust influence on parental confidence. Trust in relationships also significantly predicted parenting efficacy ($B = 0.48, SE = 0.11, \beta = 0.36, t = 4.36, p < 0.01$), indicating that relational trust plays a substantial role in fostering parenting confidence. The constant value ($B = 25.67, SE = 3.72, t = 6.90, p < 0.01$) represents the baseline parenting efficacy score when both predictors are at zero. These findings confirm that both psychological flexibility and trust in relationships are significant contributors to parenting efficacy, reinforcing the importance of internal cognitive adaptability and external relational trust in shaping effective parenting practices. The regression coefficients are detailed in [Table 4](#).

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The present study examined the predictive relationship between psychological flexibility, trust in relationships, and parenting efficacy. The results indicated a significant positive correlation between psychological flexibility and parenting efficacy, suggesting that parents with greater psychological adaptability are more likely to perceive themselves as competent in their parenting roles. Similarly, trust in relationships was also positively associated with parenting efficacy, indicating that parents who experience greater trust in their relationships exhibit higher levels of confidence in their parenting abilities. Moreover, linear regression analysis revealed that both psychological flexibility and trust in relationships significantly predicted parenting efficacy, with psychological flexibility

demonstrating a slightly stronger predictive power. These findings underscore the critical role of both personal psychological resources and interpersonal trust in shaping parental confidence.

The observed relationship between psychological flexibility and parenting efficacy aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of adaptability and emotion regulation in parenting practices. Psychological flexibility allows parents to respond effectively to their children's needs while managing stress and uncertainty, ultimately fostering a more positive parent-child relationship (Rahman & Nasrullah, 2024). These findings are consistent with studies that have shown a link between psychological flexibility and reduced parental distress, suggesting that parents who can regulate their emotions and engage in value-driven parenting behaviors are more likely to experience greater confidence in their parenting abilities (Liu, 2024). Furthermore, psychological flexibility has been found to enhance parental well-being, reducing the likelihood of burnout and emotional exhaustion, which are common factors that contribute to lower parenting efficacy (Izmerov, 2024).

The positive association between trust in relationships and parenting efficacy also supports previous literature on the role of interpersonal trust in parenting outcomes. Trust in relationships fosters a stable and supportive co-parenting environment, which in turn strengthens parental confidence (Dewan et al., 2024). Studies have demonstrated that trust between partners enhances cooperative parenting and reduces parenting-related conflicts, leading to more consistent and effective parenting practices (Brown, 2024). Moreover, trust enables parents to rely on their partners for emotional and logistical support, which alleviates parenting stress and increases overall efficacy (Ames et al., 2024). This finding is in line with previous research indicating that parents with higher levels of relational trust are more likely to engage in open communication, problem-solving, and shared decision-making regarding child-rearing, all of which contribute to a stronger sense of parenting competence (Yeon & Choi, 2023).

The slightly stronger predictive power of psychological flexibility compared to trust in relationships suggests that personal cognitive and emotional processes may play a more direct role in shaping parenting efficacy. While trust in relationships provides external support, psychological flexibility represents an internal coping mechanism that allows parents to navigate challenges independently (Tosun & KİBaroĖLu, 2023). This is consistent with previous

studies indicating that psychological resilience and self-regulation are primary determinants of effective parenting, particularly in high-stress situations (Schellenberg et al., 2023). Additionally, research has suggested that parents with greater psychological flexibility are more likely to engage in mindfulness-based parenting practices, which further enhance their ability to respond to their children's needs with patience and empathy (Ross et al., 2023). These findings highlight the importance of fostering psychological flexibility in parenting interventions, as it serves as a foundational skill that enables parents to remain adaptive and effective in their roles (Novianty & Ramli, 2023).

Moreover, the study's results align with broader theoretical frameworks that emphasize the interplay between cognitive, emotional, and relational factors in parenting efficacy. The role of psychological flexibility is well-supported by Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), which posits that cognitive adaptability allows individuals to maintain goal-directed behaviors despite distressing emotions (Ma et al., 2023). Similarly, the social exchange theory supports the findings on trust in relationships by suggesting that trust enhances cooperation and mutual support, both of which are essential for maintaining effective parenting practices (d'Angelo et al., 2023). These theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive explanation of how both personal and relational factors contribute to a parent's confidence in their abilities (Zhang et al., 2022).

Beyond theoretical considerations, the practical implications of these findings are significant. Research on parenting interventions has demonstrated that training programs aimed at increasing psychological flexibility lead to substantial improvements in parental confidence and child behavioral outcomes (Tian et al., 2022). Similarly, relationship-based interventions that focus on enhancing trust and communication between co-parents have been found to strengthen parenting efficacy, particularly among parents experiencing relational strain (He et al., 2022). These findings suggest that interventions targeting both psychological flexibility and relational trust could provide a more holistic approach to supporting parents in their roles (Hallam et al., 2022).

The findings also have broader implications for understanding parenting efficacy across different demographic groups. Prior research has indicated that contextual factors such as cultural background, socioeconomic status, and family structure influence the development of parenting efficacy (Ferrara et al., 2022). In collectivist cultures, where interdependence and familial

support play a central role, trust in relationships may exert a stronger influence on parenting efficacy than psychological flexibility (Chambers et al., 2022). Conversely, in individualist cultures that emphasize autonomy and self-reliance, psychological flexibility may be a more critical determinant of parental confidence (Srivastav & Mathur, 2021). These cultural differences suggest that interventions should be tailored to address the specific needs and values of diverse parenting populations (Dwinadia & Boediman, 2021).

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study utilized a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between psychological flexibility, trust in relationships, and parenting efficacy. Longitudinal research is needed to determine the directionality of these associations over time. Second, the study relied on self-report measures, which may be subject to social desirability bias, as parents may have overestimated their levels of efficacy, psychological flexibility, or trust. Future studies could incorporate observational methods or reports from other family members to enhance measurement accuracy. Third, the sample consisted primarily of parents recruited through online platforms and community centers, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to more diverse populations, such as parents from rural areas or those with lower socioeconomic status. Future research should aim to include a more representative sample to ensure broader applicability of the results.

Given the study's limitations, several directions for future research are recommended. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to examine how psychological flexibility and trust in relationships influence parenting efficacy over time, particularly in response to major life stressors such as economic hardship or marital transitions. Additionally, experimental research could explore the effectiveness of targeted interventions designed to enhance psychological flexibility and relational trust in parents, providing further evidence of causal mechanisms. Future studies should also consider the role of additional moderating variables, such as parental stress, social support, and child temperament, to gain a more nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to parenting efficacy. Furthermore, cross-cultural research could examine how cultural values and parenting norms shape the relative importance of psychological flexibility and trust in relationships in different societal contexts.

The findings of this study have important practical implications for parenting programs and family support initiatives. Intervention programs aimed at improving parenting efficacy should incorporate strategies to enhance psychological flexibility, such as mindfulness-based techniques and cognitive-behavioral approaches that help parents regulate emotions and adapt to challenges. Additionally, couples-based interventions that foster trust and communication between co-parents should be integrated into family support programs to strengthen the relational foundation of parenting. Schools and community organizations should also provide educational resources that emphasize the importance of psychological flexibility and relational trust in effective parenting. Mental health professionals working with parents should assess both individual cognitive processes and interpersonal dynamics when addressing parenting concerns, ensuring a comprehensive approach to enhancing parental confidence and competence. Finally, policy initiatives should support access to parenting education programs, particularly for at-risk families, to ensure that all parents have the tools and support needed to foster a strong sense of parenting efficacy.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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