




Exploring How Parental Encouragement Affects Self-Esteem Through Self-Advocacy in Adolescents with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between parental encouragement and self-esteem in adolescents with disabilities, with a particular focus on the mediating role of self-advocacy. The study employed a descriptive correlational design involving 421 adolescents with disabilities in Germany, selected based on the Morgan and Krejcie sample size table. Standardized instruments were used to assess the key variables: the Perceptions of Parents Scale (POPS) for parental encouragement, the Self-Advocacy Scale for Youth with Disabilities (SAS-YD), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Data were analyzed using SPSS-27 for descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation, and AMOS-21 was utilized for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the mediation model. Assumptions of normality, linearity, and multicollinearity were confirmed prior to analysis. Descriptive statistics indicated relatively high levels of perceived parental encouragement ($M = 5.74$, $SD = 0.63$), moderate self-advocacy ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.71$), and high self-esteem ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.62$). Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between parental encouragement and self-advocacy ($r = .46$, $p < .001$), parental encouragement and self-esteem ($r = .39$, $p < .001$), and self-advocacy and self-esteem ($r = .52$, $p < .001$). The structural model showed good fit indices ($\chi^2 = 94.78$, $df = 48$, $CFI = 0.97$, $RMSEA = 0.047$), and self-advocacy was found to partially mediate the relationship between parental encouragement and self-esteem. The total effect of parental encouragement on self-esteem was $\beta = 0.50$ ($p < .001$), with a direct effect of $\beta = 0.28$ and an indirect effect of $\beta = 0.22$ through self-advocacy. The findings highlight the crucial role of parental encouragement in fostering self-esteem among adolescents with disabilities, both directly and through the development of self-advocacy skills, suggesting the need for family-centered interventions to enhance youth empowerment.

Keywords: Parental encouragement, self-advocacy, self-esteem, adolescents with disabilities.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a transformative stage marked by significant physical, emotional, and psychological development. For adolescents with disabilities, this developmental period is often more complex due to the added layers of social, cognitive, and structural challenges that can interfere with identity formation, emotional regulation, and self-worth. Among these variables, self-esteem stands out as a critical component of adolescent well-being, as it influences motivation, mental health, academic outcomes, and interpersonal relationships. Self-esteem in adolescents with disabilities can be especially fragile, given societal stigma, limited autonomy, and reduced opportunities for social participation (Emerson et al., 2023; Lönnfjord et al., 2023). Therefore, identifying protective and promotive factors—such as parental encouragement and self-advocacy—that can enhance self-esteem is vital for both theory and intervention.

Parental roles are particularly salient in shaping the psychosocial outcomes of adolescents with disabilities. Supportive and encouraging parental behaviors have been associated with greater resilience, self-efficacy, and adaptive functioning in adolescents (Hamilton et al., 2024; McMahon et al., 2023). Parents who foster autonomy, validate emotions, and provide consistent guidance serve as critical agents of empowerment. When such encouragement is provided to adolescents with disabilities, it can counterbalance external marginalization and foster a secure internal sense of value. Previous research has demonstrated that parental support plays a vital role in enhancing self-confidence among youth with disabilities, positively influencing their willingness to explore, express themselves, and form constructive social relationships (Silvani et al., 2022; Wahyuni et al., 2024). Encouragement from parents has also been shown to directly predict self-esteem through mechanisms such as recognition of personal strengths, provision of emotional validation, and modeling of effective problem-solving behaviors (Andriani & Lengkong, 2021; Ren et al., 2024).

While parental encouragement is undoubtedly influential, its impact may not be entirely direct. Instead, it may operate through mediating psychological processes such as self-advocacy. Self-advocacy refers to the ability of individuals to understand their needs, express themselves, and make decisions that affect their lives. For adolescents with disabilities, developing self-advocacy is not just a skill but a foundational requirement for navigating educational, social,

and healthcare environments effectively (Paat et al., 2024; Tikhomirova & Volosova, 2021). Parental encouragement may foster this competency by creating environments in which adolescents feel safe and supported in expressing themselves, advocating for their needs, and pursuing personal goals. Adolescents who perceive high levels of parental encouragement are more likely to internalize a sense of agency, which enhances their ability to advocate for themselves in social, academic, and familial contexts (Virgiana et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2020).

Self-advocacy, in turn, is closely tied to self-esteem. Adolescents who effectively advocate for their own needs often feel a greater sense of control over their lives and increased self-worth. The act of self-advocating can reinforce an internal narrative of competence and value, thus enhancing self-esteem over time (Koroleva, 2023; Ustilaite & Petrauskienė, 2018). In the context of disability, where dependency and societal underestimation are common, the role of self-advocacy becomes even more pronounced. Individuals who are able to speak for themselves and make decisions are more likely to experience positive identity development and psychological resilience, even in the face of structural limitations (Chernova, 2022; Ouyang et al., 2023). This suggests a potential mediating pathway wherein parental encouragement fosters self-advocacy, which in turn enhances self-esteem—a model that remains under-explored in the current literature.

Despite a growing body of research on adolescent self-esteem, most studies have focused on general populations or those with typical development, often overlooking youth with disabilities (Dutta & Salamon, 2020; Grigoryeva et al., 2022). Studies that have examined adolescents with disabilities tend to emphasize risk factors such as isolation, academic difficulties, and internalized stigma, rather than examining the positive psychosocial pathways that promote well-being (Ericson et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2021). A more holistic understanding of self-esteem development in this population requires attention to both environmental influences, such as parenting, and intrapersonal capacities, such as self-advocacy. The intersection of these domains provides a promising avenue for conceptualizing how adolescents with disabilities can be supported in achieving psychological growth.

Existing literature supports the interconnectedness of these variables. For instance, Wahyuni found a significant association between parental support and self-esteem in adolescents with mental disabilities, underscoring the vital role of familial dynamics in shaping psychological outcomes

(Wahyuni, 2024). Similarly, research by Nagar has linked parenting style to adolescent self-concept and adjustment, suggesting that parental behavior creates the emotional scaffolding through which adolescents interpret their social world (Nagar & Ahmed, 2024). In studies of children with developmental delays, Paat et al. argued for a socio-ecological model where parenting practices, peer influences, and individual traits coalesce to influence self-regulatory capacities, including self-advocacy (Paat et al., 2024). These studies highlight the multifaceted nature of adolescent development, particularly in populations requiring tailored support systems.

Further, the development of self-esteem and self-advocacy in adolescents with disabilities is not only a matter of individual agency but also a product of systemic and relational contexts. McMahon's evaluation of a parenting program for adolescents with intellectual disabilities revealed that structured, intentional parent training led to improvements in adolescent self-expression and confidence, pointing to the modifiability of parental behavior as a critical factor (McMahon et al., 2023). Moreover, Grigoryeva et al. have emphasized that academic adaptation in adolescents with health limitations is closely linked with the development of internal control and self-belief—attributes central to self-advocacy and self-esteem (Grigoryeva et al., 2022). In light of these findings, understanding how specific parenting behaviors, such as encouragement, might cultivate internal strengths in youth with disabilities is essential.

There is also a cultural component to these dynamics. For example, Silvani's research in Indonesia demonstrated that parental involvement and encouragement played a decisive role in boosting the confidence of children with special needs, highlighting how cultural norms around parenting influence adolescent outcomes (Silvani et al., 2022). Similarly, Kusumaningrum identified that culturally appropriate health education delivered by parents correlated positively with adolescents' confidence in reproductive decision-making (Kusumaningrum et al., 2022). While cultural norms and expectations vary, the core principle that parenting behaviors shape adolescent internal states is a universal theme echoed across studies and contexts.

However, while associations between parental encouragement, self-advocacy, and self-esteem have been documented separately, few studies have explored their interrelationships within a single mediational framework among adolescents with disabilities. For example, Hamilton emphasized the need for co-facilitated interventions that involve both adolescents and their parents, but did not

empirically test the pathway from parental behavior through self-advocacy to self-esteem (Hamilton et al., 2024). Similarly, Emerson's findings on mental health disparities between adolescents with and without disabilities called for greater exploration of family-level protective factors but lacked specific focus on self-advocacy mechanisms (Emerson et al., 2023). This leaves a critical gap in understanding the processes by which parental encouragement might not only predict self-esteem but do so by enhancing adolescents' capacity to advocate for themselves.

The present study addresses this gap by proposing and testing a mediation model in which self-advocacy serves as the psychological bridge between parental encouragement and self-esteem in adolescents with disabilities.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a descriptive correlational design to explore the relationships between parental encouragement, self-advocacy, and self-esteem in adolescents with disabilities. The study aimed to examine how parental encouragement influences self-esteem through the mediating role of self-advocacy. A total of 421 participants were included in the study, with the sample size determined based on the Morgan and Krejcie (1970) table for sample size determination, which was deemed sufficient for ensuring statistical power. Participants were adolescents aged 13 to 18 years who had documented disabilities and were residing in Germany. The inclusion criteria required that participants have a formal diagnosis of a disability and the ability to complete self-report questionnaires independently. Participants were recruited from various disability support organizations and special education institutions across Germany.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Self-Esteem

To assess the dependent variable of self-esteem, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965, was employed. This widely used instrument comprises 10 items that measure global self-worth by assessing both positive and negative feelings about the self. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), with higher total scores indicating higher levels of self-esteem. The scale

includes both positively worded items (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself") and negatively worded items (e.g., "I feel I do not have much to be proud of"), which are reverse scored. The RSES has been validated extensively across various age groups and cultural settings, and numerous studies have confirmed its strong internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha typically ranging from .77 to .88) and construct validity in adolescent populations, including those with disabilities (Almurumudhe et al., 2024; Ramirez & Kwon, 2024).

2.2.2. Parental Encouragement

Parental encouragement was measured using the Perceptions of Parents Scale (POPS), developed by Grolnick, Ryan, and Deci in 1991. This standardized tool evaluates children's and adolescents' perceptions of their parents' autonomy support, involvement, and encouragement, and includes separate forms for mother and father. The scale consists of 42 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all true) to 7 (very true). For the purposes of this study, subscales related to parental involvement and encouragement were emphasized, including items like "My parent encourages me to make my own decisions." The POPS has been extensively used in developmental and educational research, and its psychometric properties are well-supported, with high internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha values typically above .80) and established validity in samples of adolescents, including those with special needs (Suman & Ballhara, 2018).

2.2.3. Self-Advocacy

The Self-Advocacy Scale for Youth with Disabilities (SAS-YD), developed by Test et al. in 2005, was used to assess the mediating variable of self-advocacy. This instrument specifically targets youth with disabilities and captures key components of self-advocacy, including knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication skills, and leadership. The scale includes 25 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger self-advocacy skills. Items such as "I can explain what accommodations I need" reflect the functional and empowerment-oriented

nature of the tool. The SAS-YD has demonstrated sound psychometric properties, with confirmed content validity and construct validity, and internal consistency coefficients exceeding .80 across different adolescent disability populations in previous studies (Lee, 2023; Plackowski & Bogart, 2022; Ramirez & Kwon, 2024).

2.3. Data Analysis

Data collected from the self-report questionnaires were analyzed using both Pearson correlation and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the relationships between the variables. First, Pearson correlation was used to assess the bivariate relationships between the dependent variable (self-esteem) and each independent variable (parental encouragement and self-advocacy). Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated using SPSS-27. Next, SEM was employed to explore the mediating role of self-advocacy in the relationship between parental encouragement and self-esteem. SEM was conducted using AMOS-21, which allowed for the estimation of direct, indirect, and total effects within the proposed model. The model fit was assessed using various indices, including the Chi-square statistic, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The results were interpreted to provide insights into the pathways through which parental encouragement impacts self-esteem, with self-advocacy serving as a potential mediator in this process.

3. Findings and Results

The sample consisted of 421 adolescents with disabilities, with a mean age of 15.4 years ($SD = 1.6$). Of the participants, 51.1% were female ($n = 215$) and 48.9% were male ($n = 206$). In terms of disability type, 40.4% ($n = 170$) had a learning disability, 28.0% ($n = 118$) had a physical disability, 15.7% ($n = 66$) had a sensory disability, and 15.9% ($n = 67$) had a developmental disability. Regarding parental marital status, 71.5% ($n = 301$) of participants came from two-parent households, while 28.5% ($n = 120$) came from single-parent households. In terms of educational level, 55.6% ($n = 234$) were enrolled in secondary education, 38.2% ($n = 160$) were in high school, and 6.2% ($n = 27$) were in vocational education programs.

Table 1*Means and Standard Deviations of Research Variables (N = 421)*

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Parental Encouragement	5.74	0.63
Self-Advocacy	4.31	0.71
Self-Esteem	3.28	0.62

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 indicate that the average score for parental encouragement was 5.74 (SD = 0.63), based on a 7-point Likert scale, suggesting that participants generally perceived high levels of encouragement from their parents. The mean self-advocacy score was 4.31 (SD = 0.71), indicating moderate self-advocacy skills on a 5-point scale. The average self-esteem score, measured on a 4-point scale, was 3.28 (SD = 0.62), reflecting relatively high self-esteem levels among adolescents with disabilities in this sample.

Prior to conducting the statistical analyses, several assumptions for the data were checked and confirmed. First, normality was assessed using the skewness and kurtosis values. The skewness values for all variables (parental

encouragement, self-advocacy, and self-esteem) were within the acceptable range of -1 to +1, indicating that the data were approximately normally distributed. The kurtosis values also fell within the range of -2 to +2, confirming the absence of extreme outliers. Next, multicollinearity was examined using the variance inflation factor (VIF) for each variable. All VIF values were below the threshold of 5, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern. Finally, linearity was assessed through scatterplots, and no significant deviations from linear relationships were found among the variables. These results suggest that the assumptions of normality, multicollinearity, and linearity were adequately met for the subsequent analyses.

Table 2*Correlation Matrix of Study Variables (N = 421)*

Variable	1	2	3
1. Parental Encouragement	—		
2. Self-Advocacy	.46** (p < .001)	—	
3. Self-Esteem	.39** (p < .001)	.52** (p < .001)	—

Table 2 shows significant positive correlations between all key variables. Parental encouragement was significantly correlated with self-advocacy ($r = .46$, $p < .001$) and self-esteem ($r = .39$, $p < .001$). Additionally, self-advocacy

showed a strong positive correlation with self-esteem ($r = .52$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that as parental encouragement increases, both self-advocacy and self-esteem also tend to increase in adolescents with disabilities.

Table 3*Fit Indices for the Structural Equation Model*

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold
Chi-Square (X^2)	94.78	—
Degrees of Freedom	48	—
X^2/df	1.98	< 3.00
GFI	0.96	> 0.90
AGFI	0.94	> 0.90
CFI	0.97	> 0.95
RMSEA	0.047	< 0.06
TLI	0.96	> 0.95

Table 3 presents the fit indices of the structural equation model. The Chi-square value was 94.78 with 48 degrees of freedom, resulting in a X^2/df ratio of 1.98, indicating an

acceptable model fit. Other fit indices also supported a good model fit: GFI = 0.96, AGFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.047, and TLI = 0.96. All values fall within the

recommended thresholds, confirming that the model adequately fits the observed data.

Table 4

Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects in the Structural Model

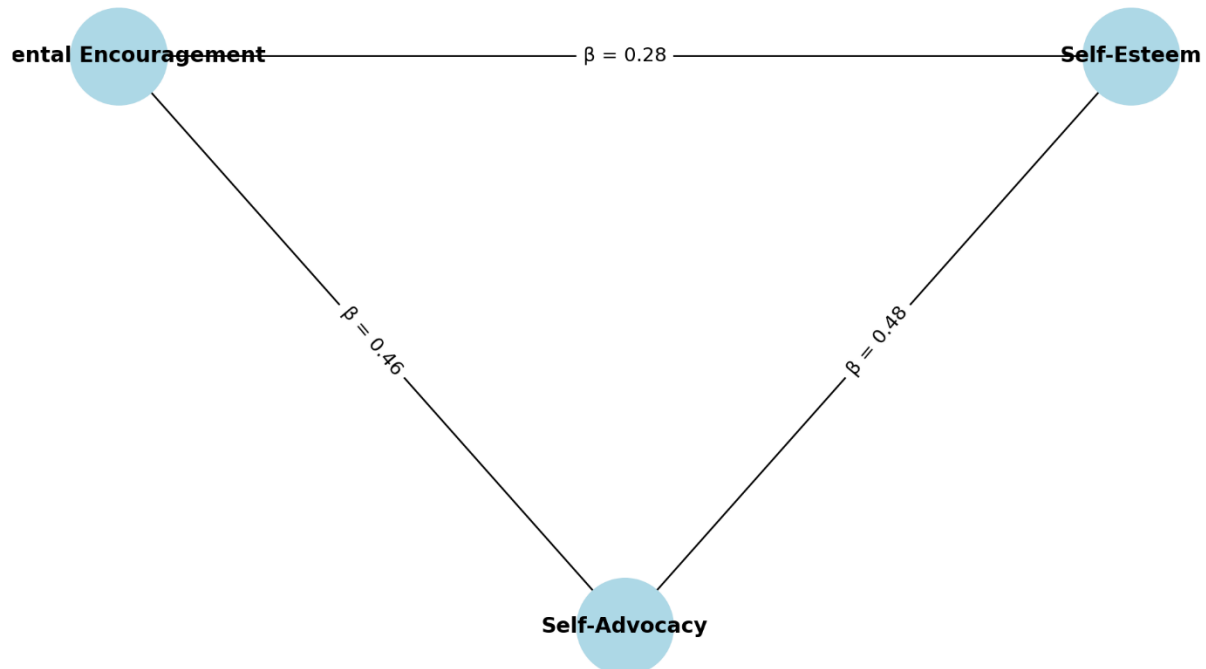
Path	B	S.E.	Beta	p
Parental Encouragement → Self-Advocacy	0.42	0.06	0.46	< .001
Self-Advocacy → Self-Esteem	0.37	0.05	0.48	< .001
Parental Encouragement → Self-Esteem	0.21	0.07	0.28	.002
Indirect: Parental Encouragement → Self-Advocacy → Self-Esteem	0.16	0.04	0.22	< .001
Total Effect: Parental Encouragement → Self-Esteem	0.37	0.06	0.50	< .001

As shown in Table 4, the path from parental encouragement to self-advocacy was significant ($B = 0.42$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = 0.46$, $p < .001$), indicating that adolescents who perceive higher parental encouragement tend to have stronger self-advocacy skills. The path from self-advocacy to self-esteem was also significant ($B = 0.37$, $SE = 0.05$, $\beta = 0.48$, $p < .001$), supporting the notion that self-advocacy is a strong predictor of self-esteem. The direct effect of parental encouragement on self-esteem was significant as well ($B =$

0.21 , $SE = 0.07$, $\beta = 0.28$, $p = .002$). The indirect effect of parental encouragement on self-esteem through self-advocacy was also statistically significant ($B = 0.16$, $SE = 0.04$, $\beta = 0.22$, $p < .001$). The total effect of parental encouragement on self-esteem (direct + indirect) was $B = 0.37$ ($SE = 0.06$, $\beta = 0.50$, $p < .001$), confirming that self-advocacy partially mediates the relationship between parental encouragement and self-esteem.

Figure 1

Model with Beta Coefficients



4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between parental encouragement and self-esteem in

adolescents with disabilities, with self-advocacy examined as a mediating variable. The results revealed significant positive correlations between parental encouragement and self-esteem, as well as between parental encouragement and

self-advocacy. Furthermore, self-advocacy was significantly and positively correlated with self-esteem. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) confirmed that self-advocacy partially mediated the relationship between parental encouragement and self-esteem. These findings highlight the importance of both external familial support and internal self-representation in the psychological development of adolescents with disabilities.

The significant positive correlation between parental encouragement and self-esteem found in this study is consistent with prior research emphasizing the foundational role of supportive parenting in adolescent psychological well-being. Adolescents who perceive their parents as encouraging and affirming tend to internalize positive self-concepts, particularly when navigating the additional challenges posed by disability (Ren et al., 2024; Wahyuni et al., 2024). Parents who actively support their child's autonomy and decision-making provide a safe context for adolescents to develop a stable sense of self-worth. This finding is aligned with the work of Silvani, who reported that parental support significantly enhances confidence among children with special needs in Indonesian settings (Silvani et al., 2022). Similarly, Andriani demonstrated that consistent parental encouragement directly contributed to higher confidence and assertiveness among youth with disabilities, especially in structured environments (Andriani & Lengkong, 2021).

The association between parental encouragement and self-advocacy also confirms the proposed theoretical framework in which external support fosters internal empowerment. Adolescents with disabilities often depend on caregivers not only for physical support but also for emotional and motivational scaffolding. When parents encourage expression, decision-making, and problem-solving, adolescents are more likely to internalize self-advocacy skills (Paat et al., 2024; Tikhomirova & Volosova, 2021). This is supported by the findings of Virgiana, who documented that family involvement was a major predictor of academic achievement in blind children, mediated by their ability to articulate needs and set personal goals (Virgiana et al., 2024). In the current study, adolescents reporting higher levels of parental encouragement also displayed greater competence in communicating their rights, preferences, and goals—an essential aspect of self-advocacy.

Moreover, the direct relationship between self-advocacy and self-esteem underscores the internal processes through which empowerment develops. Adolescents who actively

advocate for themselves are more likely to perceive themselves as competent, autonomous, and worthy of respect—attributes that directly feed into the development of self-esteem (Ericson et al., 2021; Koroleva, 2023). In line with this, Emerson found that adolescents with intellectual disabilities who had higher levels of personal agency reported fewer mental health problems and greater subjective well-being (Emerson et al., 2023). Similarly, Grigoryeva emphasized the importance of internal control mechanisms in predicting adaptive outcomes among adolescents with limited health capacities (Grigoryeva et al., 2022). Thus, self-advocacy not only bridges external support and self-perception but also acts as a protective factor in environments where adolescents may otherwise feel disempowered or invisible.

Importantly, the mediating role of self-advocacy in this study provides empirical validation for the view that parental encouragement may not influence self-esteem in a vacuum, but rather operates through a set of evolving psychological processes. Adolescents internalize the messages they receive from caregivers, transforming them into personal beliefs, skills, and behavioral strategies. Encouraging parenting facilitates the development of advocacy skills, which in turn allow adolescents to navigate social, academic, and emotional challenges with greater confidence and assertiveness. This is congruent with Wahyuni's observation that self-esteem in youth with mental disabilities was directly linked to parental attitudes and was further reinforced by the youth's ability to participate in decision-making (Wahyuni, 2024). Similarly, McMahon's randomized trial demonstrated that interventions targeting both parents and adolescents led to significant gains in self-expression and emotional adjustment, confirming the interactive nature of external support and internal agency (McMahon et al., 2023).

Cultural dynamics may also provide insight into the consistency of these findings across different settings. For example, Lim found that adolescents in the United States who viewed their parents as supportive had more positive self-images, indicating the universality of parental encouragement as a psychological resource (Lim et al., 2021). Kusumaningrum's study also found that parents who provided open and informed communication about sensitive topics like reproductive health significantly boosted their children's self-confidence (Kusumaningrum et al., 2022). These parallels suggest that regardless of cultural context, parental encouragement plays a universally beneficial role in shaping youth identity and advocacy capabilities.

Other studies have similarly emphasized the need for systemic support in fostering adolescent self-esteem. Chernova argued that pedagogical interventions should aim to promote social success among adolescents with disabilities by leveraging both school-based and family-based resources (Chernova, 2022). Hamilton emphasized the need for co-facilitated parenting programs that empower both parents and children, thus creating a shared space for emotional and behavioral growth (Hamilton et al., 2024). These perspectives further corroborate the present study's model, which places the parent-child dynamic at the core of adolescent development and frames self-advocacy as a critical process through which self-worth is cultivated.

The positive outcomes associated with the three key constructs—parental encouragement, self-advocacy, and self-esteem—also align with broader theories of adolescent development. Dutta emphasized the importance of identifying resilience-promoting factors in chronic illness management, suggesting that internal traits like self-advocacy can buffer against functional impairment (Dutta & Salamon, 2020). Similarly, Ouyang found that adolescents with a confident outlook on the future exhibited fewer behavioral problems, suggesting a feedback loop between perceived agency and psychological outcomes (Ouyang et al., 2023). Adolescents who advocate for themselves are more likely to set achievable goals, resist negative influences, and maintain a positive self-concept—especially when their family environment is affirming and structured (Shodiq, 2023).

The findings also resonate with previous literature on the role of parenting styles and family systems. Nagar identified strong correlations between parenting style, adolescent adjustment, and self-concept, emphasizing the long-term impact of parent-child interactions on mental health (Nagar & Ahmed, 2024). Likewise, Yusuf found that permissive parenting styles were negatively associated with adolescent confidence, underscoring the need for balanced and encouraging parental involvement (Yusuf et al., 2020). Encouragement, as a parenting behavior, occupies a middle ground between excessive control and neglect, allowing adolescents to grow independently while feeling emotionally secure.

Finally, the interaction between parenting, self-advocacy, and self-esteem appears to be critical in preparing adolescents with disabilities for adulthood. As Tikhomirova has pointed out, adolescents with disabilities require intentional collaboration between parents and educators to foster the skills necessary for professional and personal self-

determination (Tikhomirova & Volosova, 2021). This finding complements those of Ustilaît, who reported that effective communication between mothers and adolescents with intellectual disabilities positively influenced social development and identity formation (Ustilaît & Petrauskienė, 2018). The current study contributes to this growing body of knowledge by confirming that the developmental trajectory of adolescents with disabilities can be positively influenced by specific and measurable parental behaviors—namely, encouragement—and by fostering psychological competencies like self-advocacy.

Despite its strengths, the present study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design prevents any definitive conclusions about causality among the variables. While the mediation model is statistically supported, longitudinal research is necessary to determine whether parental encouragement truly precedes changes in self-advocacy and self-esteem. Second, all data were collected using self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias or limited introspective accuracy, especially in adolescents with certain cognitive impairments. Third, the sample was drawn exclusively from adolescents with disabilities in Germany, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sociocultural or educational contexts. Additionally, variations in disability type, severity, and functional capacity were not deeply analyzed in this study, although they may significantly influence both self-advocacy and self-esteem outcomes.

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to examine the developmental pathways between parental encouragement, self-advocacy, and self-esteem over time. It would be beneficial to explore whether specific parenting behaviors are more effective at different stages of adolescence or depending on the type of disability. Research should also investigate other potential mediators or moderators, such as peer support, teacher relationships, or cultural values, to better understand the complex interplay of influences on adolescent self-esteem. Moreover, mixed-methods approaches incorporating qualitative data could provide deeper insight into how adolescents experience parental encouragement and develop advocacy skills in diverse real-world contexts.

Practitioners, educators, and policymakers should prioritize family-centered interventions that encourage parents to adopt supportive and empowering behaviors. Parenting programs should explicitly teach strategies for fostering autonomy, listening to adolescent voices, and validating emotional experiences. Schools and disability

service organizations can reinforce these efforts by incorporating self-advocacy training into curricula and providing mentorship opportunities that allow adolescents to practice decision-making and self-expression. A collaborative model that includes families, educators, and mental health professionals can create an environment in which adolescents with disabilities feel empowered, valued, and capable of achieving personal growth and success.

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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Ethical 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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