

The Role of teacher autonomy support in adolescent social-emotional wellbeing: A systematic review

Laura Pardoe

University of Southampton, UK

Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), autonomy support is characterized by practices that support students to engage in intrinsically motivated activity. These studies primarily used correlational and longitudinal designs, exploring the relationship between measures of perceived autonomy support and social-emotional outcomes, such as affect, social behaviour and wellbeing. This systematic review synthesizes findings from 32 published studies to examine the relationship between perceptions of autonomy support in education and the social-emotional functioning of adolescent students. Findings indicate that autonomy support is linked to emotions across four domains, self-related, academic-related, peer-related and school-related emotions. The review highlights the role that autonomy-support in teaching plays in contributing to adolescent wellbeing, as well as mitigating negative emotional experiences, such as anxiety and depression associated with controlling teaching approaches. While the evidence in this review suggests a positive relationship between autonomy-supportive teaching and a range of social-emotional factors, it also identifies gaps in the literature, including a need for more experimental and intervention research. This review calls for a greater emphasis on autonomy-supportive pedagogy in secondary education, positioning it as a universal, preventative strategy to support adolescent wellbeing and emotional resilience in an increasingly complex world.

Biography

Laura Pardoe is a trainee Educational Psychologist whose thesis research focuses on the importance of psychological needs in education to support adolescent wellbeing. She is passionate about instigating systemic change so that the educational institutions in the UK reflect the modern challenges and needs of adolescents living in an increasingly online world.

Received: February 15, 2025; **Accepted:** February 16, 2025; **Published:** June 03, 2025
