

Autonomy Support Promotes College Student Online Engagement Through Mastery-Approach Goals and Self-esteem

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What factors relate to college engagement?

Remote teaching due to COVID-19

- Presents obstacles that impede engagement, such as unilateral (one-way) interactions (Shim & Lee, 2020).

Institutional Autonomy Support

- Involves **encouraging students to self-regulate and explore their own interests** (Ryan & Deci, 2017).
- Related to greater self-esteem (Peng et al., 2020) & greater adoption of mastery-approach goal orientations (Zheng et al., 2020).
 - Self-esteem is linked to greater engagement (Zhang et al., 2020).
 - Mastery-approach goals motivate engagement through the development of competence according to intrapersonal evaluation standards (Elliot & McGregor, 2001).

Hypotheses

- We expected that autonomy support would predict greater engagement indirectly through both self-esteem and mastery-approach goals.

Participants & Procedure

- College students completed a one time online survey.
 - $N = 184$, 72.3% female, 22.8% male, 4.3% non-conforming, .05% other,
 - 51.1% white, 48.9% students of color.

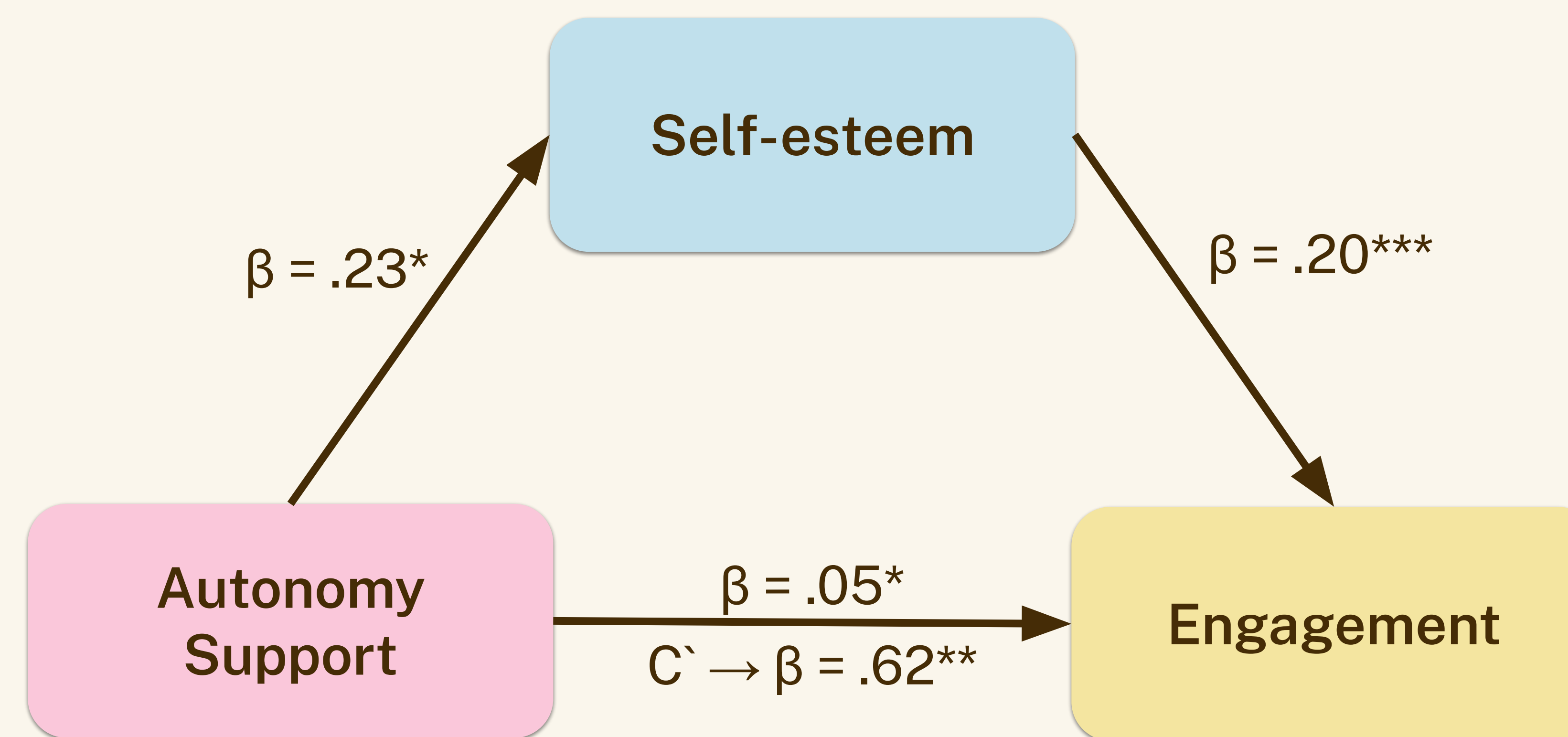
Likert Scales

- *Learning Climate Questionnaire* (Williams & Deci, 1996), *Achievement Goal Questionnaire* (Elliot & McGregor, 2001), *Student Engagement Inventory - College* (Waldrop et al., 2019), *Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale* (Rosenberg, 1965)

Results

- **Greater autonomy support was associated with greater student engagement in both models.**
 - This link was **partially mediated** by self-esteem and mastery-approach goals, respectively (Figures 1 and 2).

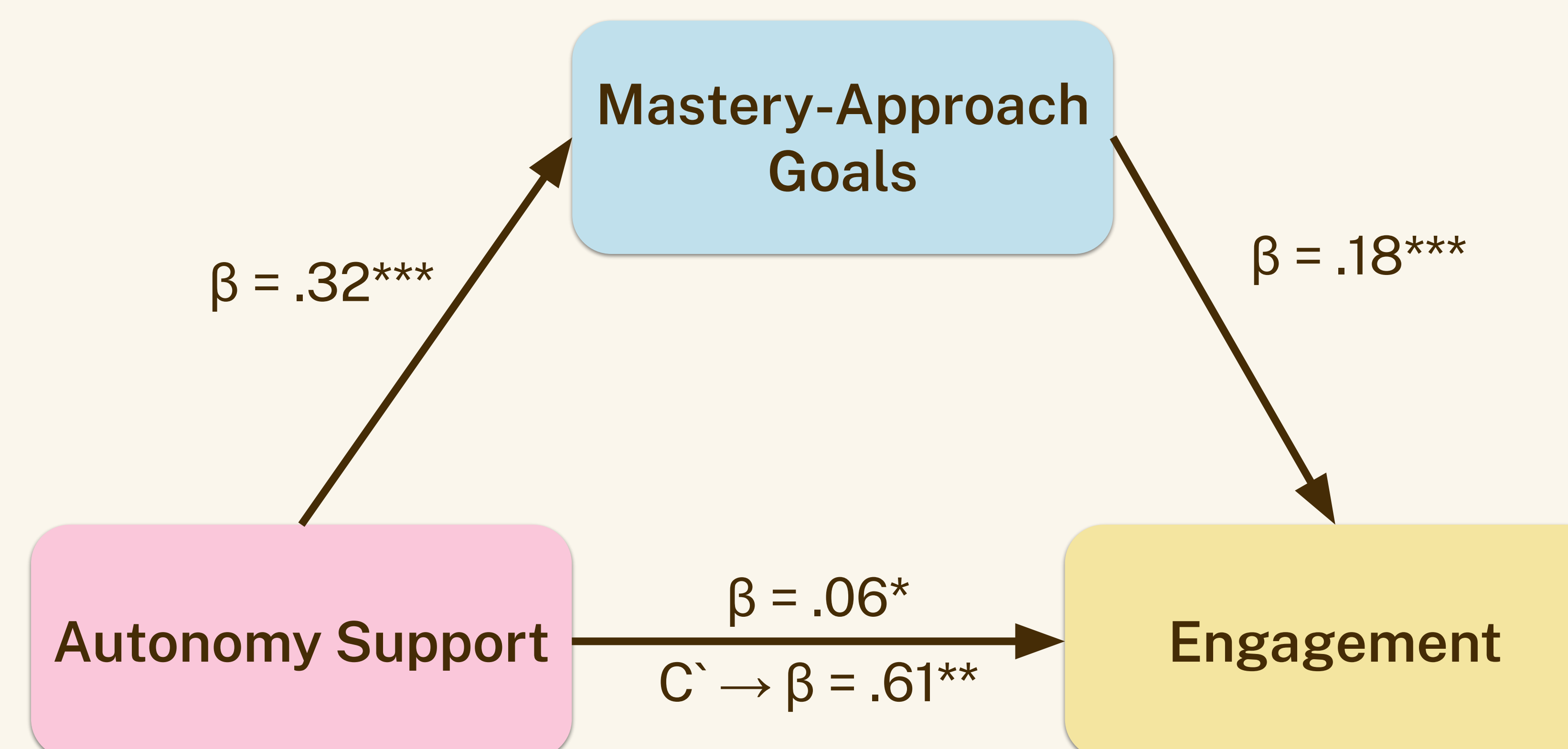
Figure 1
The Mediating Effect of Self-esteem.



Note: * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Self-esteem and mastery-approach goals help us explain the link between autonomy support and college student engagement.

Figure 2
The Mediating Effect of Mastery-Approach Goals.



Note: * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion

- Both self-esteem and mastery-approach goals help us independently partially explain the relationship between autonomy support and college student engagement.
- Generalizability is limited due to the unique circumstances during the pandemic.
- Future studies should examine longitudinal relationships to assess directionality and change in college students over time.
- To help further explain the effects of autonomy support on student engagement, additional academic variables should be assessed (e.g., academic self-efficacy).

Implications for Instructors

- **Instructors can learn how to implement autonomy supportive teaching strategies** (Reeve et al., 2004), encourage adoption of mastery-goals, and help students to grow greater self-esteem.
- A learning environment that fosters students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement may lead to greater academic success (Lei et al., 2018).
 - Such conditions may promote self-esteem, and in turn, facilitate greater academic self-efficacy (Di Giunta et al., 2013).

Conclusion

- Our study provides preliminary support for the mediating effects of self-esteem and mastery-approach goals, respectively, on the relationship between autonomy support and engagement.



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