

# A preliminary multimethod evaluation of the Let Grow project in Italy

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## Abstract

Let Grow is a school-family project that encourages parents to nurture children's autonomy in the face of its decline. In this Italian preliminary study, we employed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design with a control group (71 grade 3/4 students; 64 caregivers) and end-of-year qualitative questionnaires following eight project sessions to evaluate the project's application. Children in the experimental classes reported greater self-sufficiency in preparing food and purchasing items and a higher sense of parental trust; caregivers likewise noted gains in food preparation, shopping, brief autonomous play outings, and clothing choice. Qualitatively, 58% of children and 81% of parents wished to repeat the project; 46% of children and 58% of caregivers perceived improved problem-handling, and 82% of children reported learning something new about themselves. Nearly half of children (48%) and parents (47%) perceived shifts toward greater autonomy and trust. Findings indicate acceptable, behavior-level benefits in routine, low-risk activities; effective teacher mediation appears consequential. Stronger causal designs and validated autonomy measures are needed in future studies.

Let Grow ha lo scopo di promuovere l'autonomia dei bambini nei contesti di vita quotidiana, contrastandone il progressivo declino. Questo studio preliminare italiano ha valutato il progetto tramite un disegno quasi sperimentale pre-post test con gruppo di controllo (71 alunni di terza e quarta primaria; 64 caregiver), integrato con questionari qualitativi finali somministrati dopo otto sessioni. I bambini delle classi sperimentali hanno riportato maggiore autonomia nella preparazione dei pasti e nei piccoli acquisti, oltre a una maggiore fiducia percepita da parte dei genitori; analogamente, i caregiver hanno osservato miglioramenti nelle attività quotidiane e nelle uscite autonome. Sul piano qualitativo, il 58% dei bambini e l'81% dei genitori vorrebbero ripetere il progetto; inoltre, il 46% dei bambini e il 58% dei caregiver hanno percepito migliori capacità di gestione dei problemi. I risultati suggeriscono benefici per l'autonomia infantile e la relazione genitori-figli, evidenziando il ruolo rilevante degli insegnanti come mediatori del progetto.

**Keywords:** child autonomy; independence; parental trust; Let Grow project; autonomy-supportive parenting

**Parole chiave:** autonomia del bambino; indipendenza; fiducia genitoriale; progetto *Let Grow*; genitorialità a supporto dell'autonomia

## 1. Introduction

The concept of child autonomy has been foundational in shaping educational philosophies and pedagogical practices across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The term originates from the Greek word *autonomia*, derived from *autós* (“self”) and *nómos* (“law, rule, norm”), meaning “self-legislation,” or the capacity to govern oneself according to one’s own principles (Wermke & Salokangas, 2015). In their review of the literature, Spear and Kulbok (2004) noted that autonomy is commonly described in terms of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive domains. Analyzing its application across individual, family, institutional, and community settings, they identified five defining attributes of autonomy (active, individualized, holistic, contextual, and developmental), which jointly delineate its constitutional characteristics. In modern philosophical and educational contexts, autonomy emphasizes an individual’s ability for self-determination and self-regulation, grounded in responsible living and in the acknowledgment of the importance of interpersonal relationships (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Within this framework, autonomy differs from independence, which denotes the absence of external constraints in an individual who neither relies on nor is subordinate to others (Christman, 2020).

Historically, in the education of children and young people, autonomy has been a central but unevenly developed ideal. Maria Montessori placed autonomy at the core of early childhood education, arguing that intrinsic motivation and natural interests should guide learning, thereby fostering individuality and self-regulation (Montessori, 1948). Similarly, Scouting founder Robert Baden-Powell promoted small-group, experiential, and self-guided activities in natural settings as means to develop self-reliance, responsibility, and leadership (Baden-Powell, 1909). John Dewey likewise regarded autonomy as crucial for cultivating critical thinking and democratic citizenship through child-centered, experiential learning (Dewey, 1938). By contrast, autonomy in psychoeducation has been relatively neglected, arguably because it conflicts with behaviorist models emphasizing external control and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Early work by Piaget (1932) already framed the child’s active engagement with the environment as foundational for autonomy, and Self-Determination Theory later formalized autonomy as a basic psychological need underpinning intrinsic motivation, psychological growth, and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In the present study, we embrace an educational and pragmatic definition of child autonomy that builds upon and connects with these traditional educational, psychological and social characterizations. In educational terms, autonomy is conceptualized as the child’s own, ever-developing capacity and opportunity to assume responsibility of carrying on age-appropriate simple decisions and tasks. These assignments need to be experienced as self-endorsed and self-regulated (Deci & Ryan, 2000), in ways that make children feel as trusted and legitimized by significant adults (i.e., parents and teachers). This description is consistent with Spear & Kulbok’s (2004) tripartite model of autonomy, but contains an educational shift. Rather than focusing on intrapersonal constructs or external behaviors, children’s autonomy is operationalized as a set of ordinary daily practices, with the accompanying parental willingness to grant trust and responsibility and the school predisposition to recognize them as a central part of the child development, worthy of being planned, shared, and told. In this sense, a child’s autonomy is educationally associated with guided, socially empowered opportunities to act, think, and feel as an increasingly responsible and ever-growing individual.

Building on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), we can consider individual autonomy as an emergent property of a set of dynamic and reciprocal relations between an individual and the context in which their education takes place. Children’s opportunities to act autonomously are educationally shaped by reciprocal transactions between the developing person and multiple, nested environmental systems, which in our case are represented by the family, the school, peer groups, the neighborhood, and other broader frameworks (Tong & An, 2024). In the Italian educational context, this mesosystemic linkage is often framed

in terms of an Educational Co-Responsibility Pact (*Patto educativo di corresponsabilità*; Presidenza della Repubblica Italiana, 2007), a partnership in which teachers and caregivers assume shared responsibility for children's education and well-being. The effectiveness of such a pact depends on the ability of schools and families to communicate and pursue shared educational goals, thereby fostering a relationship of trust over time (Buonanno & Dusi, 2023). This shared educational commitment is gradually transferred to children as increasing autonomy and becomes a practical support for personal, civic, and social development (Capperucci et al., 2018). From this standpoint, initiatives that explicitly invite coordinated actions by teachers and parents around children's everyday autonomy can be seen as concrete enactments of such an educational alliance. In fact, autonomy can be seen as the result of ongoing co-regulation between children and the adults who care for and educate them, as well as of the specific opportunities and constraints that emerge from the everyday environments in which they live (Bronfenbrenner, 2010a).

Moving beyond the single classroom to exosystemic and macrosystemic influences on family and school-wide practices, we can trace significant implications for children's opportunities to develop autonomy in recent shifts in parenting cultures and social media-based risk discourse. In fact, recent research and societal changes have raised concerns about the decline in opportunities for children to exercise autonomy (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2018). This trend reflects several interrelated factors, notably the widespread use of social media by parents and relatives, where information about accidents or threats to child safety is rapidly shared and amplified within parenting communities (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). By contrast, everyday instances of children's safe, independent functioning rarely attract attention, creating a skewed informational environment that fosters what Tversky and Kahneman (1973) termed the *availability heuristic*. When judgments rely on "the ease with which relevant instances come to mind" (Tversky & Kahneman 1973, p. 207), frequent exposure to salient narratives of danger brings parents to overestimate the likelihood of adverse events (Lassa et al., 2025). Consequently, inflated risk perceptions may intensify parental fears and lead to unnecessary restrictions on children's independent exploration, with the educational countereffect of constraining self-regulation and autonomous problem-solving development (Perry et al., 2018).

Beyond risk amplification, social media also functions as a space of continual surveillance and evaluation of parenting practices, reinforcing an "intensive parenting culture" (Hays, 1996) and pressures toward heightened attentiveness and involvement (Venard et al., 2024). Recent research by Tate (2023) suggests that idealized portrayals of motherhood intensify social comparison processes and maternal distress, which may prompt compensatory overcontrol or excessive involvement. In family education dynamics, these pressures align with helicopter parenting (LeMoyné & Buchanan, 2011), characterized by frequent caregiver intervention to prevent perceived harm, failure, or discomfort, once again paradoxically associated with reduced autonomy, independence, and self-regulation in children (Wang et al., 2025). These broader dynamics also restrict children's play, contributing to diminished opportunities for free and unsupervised, especially outdoor, play (Ginsburg et al., 2007), a reduction that appears to correlate with increased childhood anxiety and emotional distress (Gray, 2011).

These trends toward overprotection, reduction of autonomous play, and heightened parental surveillance represent not only individual parental choices but broader systemic cultures that restrict children's opportunities for autonomous action in daily life. Taken together, these trends highlight a critical tension in contemporary education and parenting practices, emphasizing the need to reassess and reinforce the value of autonomy within modern pedagogical approaches starting from early childhood years (Cavana, 2011).

## 2. The Let Grow Experience

The Let Grow Experience is an American educational initiative designed to counteract the trend of overprotective parenting and to address the rise in childhood anxiety and reduced self-efficacy. Its main aim is to encourage and support families and children to undertake new, age-appropriate autonomous tasks without adult intervention (Let Grow, 2020). The movement is rooted in the broader Free-Range parenting philosophy promoted by Let Grow’s co-founder Lenore Skenazy, who advocates giving children greater freedom to explore, fail, and grow in real-world contexts, and the initiative has evolved significantly over time (Skenazy, 2021). The concept of rediscovering children’s autonomy gained widespread attention within the American general public in 2008, when Skenazy published a widely discussed column about allowing her 9-year-old son to ride the New York subway alone (Skenazy, 2008). The Let Grow organization itself was founded later, in 2017, by Lenore Skenazy, Jonathan Haidt, Peter Gray, and Daniel Shuchman (Let Grow, 2025a), with the aim of restoring children’s independence and resilience by counteracting societal tendencies toward overprotection. In 2023, the original school program formerly known as the Let Grow Project (Let Grow, 2020) was updated and expanded as the Let Grow Experience (Let Grow, 2025b), a free complete curriculum which offers schools a structured framework to foster autonomy and resilience through real-life experiences. For clarity and historical consistency, the term “Let Grow Project” is retained in the present study as the base of the program described here was the original 2020 project (Let Grow, 2020). Table 1 summarizes the essential features of this original project. The program closely aligns with the social-emotional learning competencies outlined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020) and includes work on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

**Table 1**

*Core elements of the original Let Grow Project (2020) used in this study*

<b>Let Grow element</b>	<b>Description</b>
Student Activity	Students are assigned to do something new on their own (such as walking the dog, baking, or running an errand) without adult supervision but with parental consent. The emphasis is on student initiative and autonomy.
Parent Involvement	Parents are encouraged to support and approve independent activities while resisting the urge to supervise or intervene, fostering trust and mutual confidence.
School Integration	The project is designed to be non-prescriptive and flexible, easily incorporated as a homework alternative or school-wide initiative. It includes adaptable resources like handouts, parent letters, and project lists, and encourages curricular integration (e.g., through storytelling, personal narratives, or cross-curricular connections in STEM and social studies).
Assessment Philosophy	Growth, not perfection, is the goal. Teachers are advised not to formally grade the projects but rather to encourage participation, collect feedback (via surveys), and celebrate milestones.

### ***2.1 Roles and relationships within the Let Grow project***

From an ecological-developmental perspective, the Let Grow Experience can be conceptualized as a school-initiated, family-mediated intervention (Bronfenbrenner, 2010b), where the family and the primary school constitute the central microsystems in which autonomy is scaffolded or constrained on a daily basis. In fact, improving and facilitating relationships between different systems of a child's life is a key component of the project. Each Let Grow assignment provides children with mastery experiences and opportunities for self-reflection, while also offering parents disconfirming evidence that counters exaggerated danger perceptions.

Let Grow places teachers as core educational facilitators of autonomy-supportive initiatives. They organize classroom climates, learning activities, expectations for responsibility, and assign and recognize social roles. In class, teachers provide meaningful rationales for tasks by reframing manageable risks as learning opportunities, acknowledge children's perspectives and emotions, offer different choices via specific handouts, and avoid controlling language and direct comparisons between children, all conditions known to foster internalization and engagement (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). After children have carried out their autonomy assignments, teachers facilitate collective reflection on the individual experiences, providing scaffolding for class discussions so that children can elaborate fears, successes, and setbacks. Additionally, teachers are also free to embed the project into the school primary curriculum (e.g., as part of civic and social education, life skills, math and science, or narrative writing).

The role of the family is to translate children's intentions into concrete opportunities at home and in the neighborhood. Parents stay in charge of finally approving children's autonomous tasks, resisting excessive supervision and observing their growing competence. They structure routines, assign responsibilities, calibrate risk, and signal trust in their children by granting or withholding permissions (Bronfenbrenner, 2010c). In this way, the project operationalizes the core principles of the Educational Co-Responsibility Pact (Presidenza della Repubblica Italiana, 2007) by aligning school and family practices around the shared educational goal of expanding children's everyday autonomy in safe and developmentally consistent ways. The quality of the mesosystemic connections between family and school determines how messages, values, and practices around autonomy are coordinated and plays a crucial role in shaping children's educational trajectories.

Children are the key protagonists of the project. They are positioned as active agents who autonomously think about, propose and negotiate new autonomous tasks, plan and carry them out without adult intervention, and subsequently document, reflect on, and share their experiences with schoolmates and teachers, as part of the Let Grow structured process of developing responsibility and self-regulation.

### **3. The present study**

In summary, we approach child autonomy as a relational, ecologically embedded educational trait that is enacted at the microsystemic level, negotiated within the school-family mesosystem, and is vulnerable to contemporary macrosystemic pressures toward overprotection. The Let Grow project represents a low-cost intervention that seeks to re-open everyday spaces for autonomy by aligning teacher practices, parental permissions, and children's self-perceptions around age-appropriate independent activities (Let Grow, 2025a). On this basis, we expected that participation in the project would primarily affect routine behaviors and parental trust that are most easily renegotiated within families, and that these changes would be reflected in both child and caregiver reports. To assess the effects and perceptions of the Let Grow project among a group of Italian schoolchildren and their families, we set out to explore the following specific research questions from the perspectives of children and parents:

RQ1: Does participation in the Let Grow project lead to changes in parental willingness to support their child’s autonomy, and in both parents’ and children’s perceptions of the child’s autonomy and trust?  
 RQ2: What perceived changes, levels of appreciation, and reasons for appreciation of the Let Grow project can be identified among parents and children who experienced it over a school year?

#### 4. Method

##### 4.1 Participants

The study involved 71 primary school students from the Italian third grade (n = 36; 50.70%) and fourth grade (n = 35; 49.30%). Participants were divided into two groups: 44 students (61.70%) in the Let Grow experience group (one grade 3 and two grade 4) and 27 students (38.30%) in a control group (one grade 3 and one grade 4) from a nearby school, who engaged in the standard Italian social and civic curriculum. In addition, 64 caregivers participated in the study, of whom 41 (64.06%) were associated with students in the experimental group and 23 (35.94%) with those in the control group. Complete demographic details are provided in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Sociodemographic characteristics of participants at baseline*

Baseline characteristic	Children					Parents				
	Total		Control	Experimental		Total		Control	Experimental	
	N	n	%	n	%	N	n	%	n	%
Total	71	27	38.30	44		64	23	35.94	41	64.06
Gender										
Female	37	13	48.15	24	54.55	49	17	73.91	32	78.05
Male	33	13	48.15	20	45.45	14	5	21.74	9	21.95
NS / NB	1	1	3.70	0	0	1	1	4.35	0	0
Mean age (SD)	8.4 (.67)	8.26 (.59)	—	8.52 (.70)	—	41.95 (5.87)	41.96 (6.0)	—	41.95 (5.83)	—
Education level										
Middle school	—	—	—	—	—	11	3	13.04	8	19.51
Secondary school	—	—	—	—	—	28	14	60.87	14	34.15
University	—	—	—	—	—	23	6	26.09	17	41.46
NS	—	—	—	—	—	2	0	0	2	4.88
Place of Birth										
Italy	—	—	—	—	—	52	20	86.96	32	78.05
Abroad	—	—	—	—	—	12	3	13.04	9	21.95
Caregiver role										
Mothers	—	—	—	—	—	49	17	73.91	32	78.05
Fathers	—	—	—	—	—	13	5	21.74	8	19.51
Other	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	4.35	1	2.44

Note. — = not applicable. NS/NB = Not Stated or Not Binary. Percentages are calculated within each group.

##### 4.2 Procedure

The study employed a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest control group design, with unpaired item-level comparisons between T0 and T1 because participants could not be matched across waves. The research was conducted in three classes located in the suburbs of a small town in the Umbria region of Italy. Two additional



classes from a nearby village served as the control group, which did a set of common-good activities as part of the standard Civic Education curriculum (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, 2024). For Grade 3, these activities focused on recognizing shared spaces within the school (e.g., classrooms, playgrounds, and the library), discussing why they belong to everyone, and establishing rotating responsibilities for their care. For Grade 4, the activities extended to common goods in the local community (e.g., the school garden, parks, or other public spaces), where students observed how these spaces were used, identified respectful and non-respectful behaviors, and proposed realistic actions to promote responsible and shared use. The school was selected because it had expressed interest in participating in the Let Grow project and was part of a pre-existing network affiliated with the author's university. Initially, the school principal was contacted via email and telephone to present an overview of the Let Grow project and propose conducting a connected research study. Following this, the principal obtained formal approval from the school board, as per Italian law. After receiving approval, the principal contacted the main teachers of the target classes, inviting them to express their willingness to take part in the project. In November 2024, researchers held a videoconference with the school principal and participating teachers to present Let Grow objectives, review study materials, standardize administration procedures, and explain how to obtain written parental consent. Teachers in the Let Grow group then received a project manual (teacher guide and children's forms). In December, a videoconference was held with parents/caregivers of participating classes. Teachers distributed and collected consent forms, after which the research team administered T0 questionnaires during regular class time in both experimental and control groups. Students were informed that participation was voluntary and anonymous and would not affect grades; completed questionnaires were scanned for analysis.

### ***4.3 Design and classroom implementation of Let Grow***

Let Grow has been intentionally designed to be simple and scalable. Every two to three weeks, during a classroom activity, students of the experimental classes selected an individual autonomy task from a list of suggested examples or created their own based on their wish. They discussed their choice with their parents and agreed upon it. On a designated weekday, teachers did not assign homework and instead encouraged students to work on their chosen task. After completing the activity, students reflected on their experience using a specific project reflective form, noting what they did, how they felt, and any challenges they encountered. Back in class, teachers facilitated an open discussion in which students could share what they learned and explain whether they would change anything about how they carried out the task. This was also an important opportunity to listen to peers and feel included in the class community. This process aims at cultivating a classroom climate that values responsibility, trust, and personal growth, all conditions known to support student engagement and emotional well-being (Niemi & Ryan, 2009). Examples of chosen tasks included going to a store to buy something, preparing a snack or cook a spaghetti dish for the family, or organizing school materials for the next day. The experimental classes did a total of 8 project sessions, from December 2024 to May 2025.

### ***4.4 Instruments***

This was the first ever application of the Let Grow project in Italy. To perform a preliminary evaluation of its results, we employed a set of ad hoc quantitative and qualitative tools to measure children's and caregivers' attitudes toward, and perceived changes in, children's autonomy and trust. The questionnaires were administered at two time points: T0, in December 2024, before the project commenced; and T1, in June 2025, at the end of

the school year. In addition, to gain a deeper understanding of the children's and parents' perceptions, we supplemented the quantitative data with an ad hoc retrospective self-report questionnaire administered at T1 to both the children and their parents of the experimental group.

**Children measures.** A set of 19 self-report questions was drafted to explore children's appreciation of the project, their perceptions of their own autonomy in everyday life and their relationship with parents, particularly in terms of mutual trust and agreement (see Table A1). It combined a set of items aimed at capturing the interpersonal climate within the family, recognizing that autonomy development is embedded in the quality of parent-child interactions. These questions addressed children's perceived agreement with their parents on everyday matters and on the degree of trust they felt their parents were placing in them. A second set of questions focused on the child's perception of autonomy in daily contexts. These included the ability to make independent choices at home, manage personal care tasks without assistance, move independently in familiar or extended environments, and have autonomy in leisure contexts. All of these questionnaires employed a 5-point Likert scale. In the brief T1 retrospective questionnaire, children indicated approximately how many assignments they had completed during the school year and rated how much they enjoyed participating on a 0-10 visual "thermometer" scale. Using yes/no and open-ended questions, they were then asked what they liked and disliked about the project, whether they would like to repeat Let Grow with their class the following year, if and how the activities helped them learn about themselves or handle situations differently, how they felt while doing the autonomy tasks, whether they perceived any changes in their teachers and parents, and what suggestions they had for improving the project.

**Caregiver measures.** Another parental self-report set of 21 questions was designed to assess caregivers' perceptions of their child's autonomy in everyday life, the quality of the parent-child relationship, and the extent to which they trusted the child's autonomous functioning (Table A2). This parental questionnaire paralleled the child questionnaire in both structure and thematic content, allowing the collection of comparable perspectives from both members of the dyad for relational and comparative analyses. For example, while parents were asked how often "My son/daughter prepares breakfast or a snack by himself/herself," children were asked how often "I prepare breakfast or something to eat by myself". In the parent-only questionnaire, there were a set of 5 questions aimed at assessing the caregiver's role as a facilitator or gatekeeper of autonomy and their comfort levels in granting children's autonomy in decision-making, social relationships, mobility, and problem-solving. The qualitative questionnaire used at T1 with parents employed a mix of frequency estimates, yes/no items, and open-ended questions and asked caregivers how often their child engaged in project activities, the child's impressions and spontaneous comments, perceived changes in the child's autonomy and ways of dealing with problems, any perceived changes in their own parental practices and attitudes, and whether they would like the class to continue the project the following year.

## 5. Data analysis

Since all questionnaires are still in the initial stages of domain identification, item generation, and pre-testing, and our sample size was modest, we adopted a conservative approach in the quantitative analysis and we analyzed the data at the item level (Boateng et al., 2018). First, the distribution of the items was investigated using the skewness and kurtosis indices. Then, we examined whether the mean scores for each item in the experimental group of students and in the experimental group of parents changed across the two waves of data collection (T0 and T1), by applying a series of t-tests for independent samples, given that participants were not paired across the two administrations for privacy and practical reasons. For those items that showed a significant difference, we also tested whether such an increase was also observed in the control group, and whether there were any

baseline differences in mean scores between the experimental group and the control group. For items with skewness or kurtosis values falling outside the range of [-2.00; +2.00], the analyses were repeated using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test instead of the t-test; since the results did not differ from those obtained using the t-test, they are not reported here.

Children's open-ended responses were analyzed using inductive content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), a method widely applied in education to systematically identify, categorize, and quantify key elements. Following Huxley (2020), after defining the research questions and sample, we developed a codebook specifying units of analysis, code labels, definitions, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and participant quotes. Two authors independently open-coded transcripts from 20 randomly selected participants, grouping keywords, phrases, or sentences with similar meanings under shared codes. Rare responses (<5%) were grouped under broader codes or labeled "other." Interrater reliability was calculated using PABAK (Byrt et al., 1993) and ranged from 0.86 to 1.00. Using the finalized codebook, two researchers independently coded all responses in a FileMaker database, marking each code as present or absent (non-mutually exclusive, with duplicates counted once). Codes were tabulated by prevalence, with yes and no answers reported as percentages. Occurrences and percentages were presented, and data from the Thermometer Likert scale were summarized with means and standard deviations.

## 6. Results

Our RQ1 examined whether participation in the Let Grow project influenced parental autonomy support and children's autonomy perceptions. While detailed information is provided in additional tables A1 and A2, we are only highlighting significant changes here. Among the 44 students in the experimental group, scores increased on the item "My parents trust me" ( $t(84) = -2.215, p = .029; M(T0) = 4.18, SD(T0) = 1.17, M(T1) = 4.64, SD(T1) = 0.69; Cohen's d = 0.48$ ); this change did not emerge in the control group ( $t(51) = -.476, p = .636$ ), and there were no significant differences between groups at T0 ( $t(69) = -1.619, p = .110$ ). For the item "I prepared something to eat by myself," students in the experimental group also showed higher scores at T1 ( $t(86) = -3.039, p = .003; M(T0) = 2.02, SD(T0) = 1.02, M(T1) = 2.73, SD(T1) = 1.15; Cohen's d = 0.66$ ); no comparable increase was found in the control group ( $t(51) = -1.243, p = .220$ ), and the groups did not differ significantly at T0 ( $t(69) = -.370, p = .712$ ). Similarly, for the item "I went to a store to buy something without being accompanied by an adult," students in the experimental group reported higher scores at T1 ( $t(86) = -3.436, p < .001; M(T0) = 1.59, SD(T0) = 1.04, M(T1) = 2.45, SD(T1) = 1.30; Cohen's d = 0.74$ ); the control group did not show a similar pattern ( $t(51) = -1.249, p = .217$ ), and the groups were comparable at T0 ( $t(69) = -.138, p = .890$ ).

Considering the 41 parents of the experimental group, ratings increased on the item "My child prepares breakfast or a snack by himself" ( $t(76) = -2.501, p = .015; M(T0) = 2.49, SD(T0) = 0.94, M(T1) = 3.03, SD(T1) = 0.96; Cohen's d = 0.58$ ); this effect was not observed in the control group ( $t(47) = -.792, p = .432$ ), and there were no significant group differences at T0 ( $t(59) = -1.073, p = .288$ ). Parents in the experimental group also reported higher scores at T1 on the item "My son/daughter buys something in a store by himself/herself." ( $t(78) = -3.528, p < .001; M(T0) = 1.85, SD(T0) = 0.98, M(T1) = 2.65, SD(T1) = 1.05; Cohen's d = 0.80$ ); again, the control group did not show a similar increment ( $t(48) = -.327, p = .745$ ), and no significant differences between groups were found at T0 ( $t(61) = 1.265, p = .211$ ). Further, for the item "My son/daughter goes out alone to play with friends." parents in the experimental group reported higher scores at T1 ( $t(78) = -2.296, p = .024; M(T0) = 2.13, SD(T0) = 1.24, M(T1) = 2.80, SD(T1) = 1.38; Cohen's d = 0.52$ ); no comparable change was detected in the control group ( $t(47) = -1.093, p = .280$ ), and baseline differences between groups were not significant ( $t(61) = -.681, p = .498$ ). Finally, for the item "I let my son/daughter free to decide what to wear." parents in the experimental group reported higher autonomy at T1 ( $t(77) = -2.356, p = .021; M(T0) = 3.28,$

SD(T0) = 1.04, M(T1) = 3.77, SD(T1) = 0.81; Cohen’s d = 0.53); this pattern did not emerge in the control group ( $t(48) = .506, p = .615$ ), and no significant T0 differences between groups were found ( $t(61) = .436, p = .665$ ).

RQ2 examined participants’ appreciation of the Let Grow project, perceived changes, and the reasons underlying their appreciation. These outcomes were assessed at T1 (end of the school year) using a retrospective qualitative questionnaire. Given the timing, this period was characterized by relatively high student absenteeism. Moreover, most items were open-ended, and some students did not answer all questions, resulting in missing responses across several items.

Thirty-five children reported their level of satisfaction on the thermometer scale. The overall mean value was 7.3 (SD = 2.65). A t-test showed no gender differences. Concerning the wish to repeat Let Grow next school year, a majority of children (58%) and an even larger proportion of parents (81%) expressed interest in repeating the experience. A class-level analysis showed that agreement among children ranged widely, from 33% in Class 1 to full consensus in Class 2. Parents’ responses were consistently high across all classes, with a peak of 91% in Class 2 (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Quantitative analysis of responses to the question: “Thinking about the next school year, would you like to do Let Grow again with your class?”*

	n (valid)	Yes	%	No	%	NA
Children	33	19	58	14	42	2
Class 1	15	5	33	10	67	
Class 2	7	7	100	0	0.0	
Class 3	11	7	64	4	36	
Parents	39	30	81	7	19	2
Class 1	16	12	75	4	25	
Class 2	11	10	91	1	9	
Class 3	11	8	80	2	20	

Note: NA=Not available.

In terms of the project’s appreciation (Table 4), the majority of children highlighted aspects related to autonomy. Specifically, the most frequently reported code was doing autonomous activities, mentioned by 22 children. Additional codes included developing personal autonomy (6 occurrences) and trying new things (5 occurrences).

**Table 4**

*Quantitative content analysis of responses to the question: “What did you like most about Let Grow?”*

Code	n (valid)	Occurrences	NA
Children’s	35		0
Doing Autonomous Activities	-	22	-
Developing Personal Autonomy	-	6	-
Trying New Things	-	5	-
Choosing Autonomy Tasks	-	2	-



Exercising Autonomy in Mobility	-	2	-
Other	-	1	-

Note: NA=Not available. A dash (-) indicates “not applicable.” “Other” comprises idiosyncratic responses that did not fit the predefined codes.

Responses to the question about changes in children’s methods of dealing with situations suggested a moderate level of perceived transformation. Half of the children (46%) reported learning to handle situations differently, while 58% of caregivers noticed a positive change in their child’s problem-solving approach. As shown in Table 5, among children who reported a change, the most frequently mentioned area was becoming better at facing and solving problems (8 children), followed by increased autonomy (4 children). Among caregivers who noticed changes in their children, the most frequently reported areas included increased child autonomy (8 parents), greater calmness and a sense of security in the child (7 parents), and increased reflectivity (5 parents).

**Table 5**

*Quantitative content analysis of responses to the children question: “When you did the Let Grow activities, did you learn to handle things in a different way?”, and caregivers question: Do you think that in the past few weeks your child has learned to deal with problems in a different way? with reported areas of change.*

Code	n (valid)	Yes	%	No	%	NA
Children	33	15	46	18	54	2
Better at facing and solving problems		8	nc	-	-	-
Increased autonomy		4	nc	-	-	-
Other		1	nc	-	-	-
Parents	38	22	58	16	42	1
Increased autonomy		8	nc	-	-	-
Greater Calmness and Sense of Security		7	nc	-	-	-
Increased Reflectivity		5	nc	-	-	-
Increased initiative		4	nc	-	-	-
Increased communication		3	nc	-	-	-

Note: NA=Not available. A dash (-) indicates “not applicable.”

In addition, a large majority of children (82%) indicated that they had learned something new about themselves thanks to the project. Table 6 summarizes the perceived areas of personal growth, with two main areas of improvement: practical abilities (10 children) and aspects related to the development of the self-concept (10 children). Conversely, only a minority of children (24%) perceived changes in their teachers.

**Table 6**

*Quantitative content analysis of responses to the question “When you did the Let Grow activities, did you learn something new about yourself?” with reported areas of improvement.*

Code	n (valid)	Yes	%	No	%	NA
Children	34	28	82	6	18	1
Perceived areas of improvement						
<i>Practical abilities</i>	10	-	-	-	-	-



<i>Self-Concept related</i>	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Improved autonomy</i>	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Other</i>	3	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: NA=Not available. A dash (-) indicates “not applicable.” “Other” comprises idiosyncratic responses that did not fit the predefined codes.

Table 7 shows that these changes were perceived as the teachers giving more trust to the children and allowing for more autonomy.

**Table 7**

Quantitative content analysis of responses to the question: “Do you think your teachers have changed with the Let Grow project?”, with reported areas of change.

Code	n (valid)	Yes	%	No	%	NA
Children	33	7	24	26	76	2
<i>Give more trust</i>		3	nc	-	-	-
<i>Allow more autonomy</i>		2	nc	-	-	-
<i>Other</i>		2	nc	-	-	-

Note: NA=Not available. A dash (-) indicates “not applicable.” “Other” comprises idiosyncratic responses that did not fit the predefined codes.

Table 8 presents the results of the children’s question, “After Let Grow, did the people who look after you treat you in a different way?”, and the caregivers’ question, “As a parent, do you think the Let Grow project has changed anything in the way you relate to your son/daughter?” A total of 48% of the children reported perceiving changes in how their caregivers treated them. They most often mentioned being granted more autonomy (8 children), receiving greater trust (6 children), and noticing that their parents could rest more (4 children). Similarly, 47% of caregivers reported changes in the way they managed their relationship with their child. The most frequently cited shifts included granting greater autonomy and responsibility (11 parents) and expressing increased trust in the child (6 parents).

**Table 8**

Quantitative content analysis of responses to the children’s question: “After Let Grow, did the people who look after you treat you in a different way?”, and parent’s question: “As a parent, do you think the Let Grow project has changed anything in the way you relate to your son/daughter?” with reported areas of change.

Code	n (valid)	Yes	%	No	%	NA
Children	31	15	48	16	52	4
Allowed more autonomy		8	nc	-	-	-
Conceded more trust		6	nc	-	-	-
Parents can get more rest		4	nc	-	-	-
Assigned More Chores		2	nc	-	-	-
Other		2	nc	-	-	-
Parents	38	18	47	20	53	1
Allow for Greater Autonomy and Responsibility		11	nc	-	-	-



Increased Trust In the child	6	nc	-	-	-
Lower Fear and Worry	2	nc	-	-	-
Other	3	nc	-	-	-

Note: Multiple responses were allowed. NA=Not available. A dash (-) indicates “not applicable.” “Other” comprises idiosyncratic responses that did not fit the predefined codes. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Finally, children were asked to complete the sentence, “When I was doing the Let Grow autonomy assignments, I felt...” As shown in Table 9, the most frequently observed responses were associated with positive emotions, such as pride, joy, and contentment (15 children), followed by feelings of being grown up (13 children) and indications of increased self-reliance (8 children). A smaller number of children reported negative emotions such as boredom and tiredness (4 children).

**Table 9**

*Quantitative content analysis of responses to the task: “Complete this sentence: When I was doing the Let Grow autonomy assignments, I felt...”*

Code	n (valid)	Occurrences
Children	33	-
Positive Emotions	-	15
Grown up	-	13
Self-Reliant	-	8
Negative emotions	-	4
Other	-	1

Note. A dash (-) indicates “not applicable.” “Other” comprises idiosyncratic responses that did not fit the predefined codes.

## 7. Discussion

The present multimethod evaluation examined whether recurring, low-risk opportunities for age-appropriate autonomy were associated with changes in children’s everyday behaviors and caregivers’ willingness to grant autonomy (RQ1), and how children and families appraised the experience (RQ2). To enhance clarity, we first summarize the main quantitative and qualitative findings, then discuss plausible mechanisms and contextual factors (including teacher mediation), and finally address areas that did not change together with implications for practice and future research.

### 7.1 Summary of detected changes and perceived trust

Overall, results provide converging, albeit circumscribed evidence of specific positive effects mainly at a behavioral level. At the item level, children in the experimental classes reported greater independence in food preparation and purchasing, together with an increased sense of parental trust. Similarly, caregivers in the experimental group noted improvements in children’s food preparation and shopping, along with permitting short autonomous outings for play and allowing children to choose their clothing.

Qualitative findings complement these patterns by indicating that Let Grow was generally well received by families and students. Many children described the autonomy tasks as affectively rewarding, often associating them



with pride, feeling “grown up,” positive emotions, and self-reliance. In Self-Determination Theory terms, these experiences are consistent with internalization processes that are supported when activities are experienced as self-endorsed and competence-building (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

Given the exploratory nature of this first Italian application, effects should be interpreted cautiously. Nevertheless, baseline scores were comparable, and no significant changes emerged in the control classes, which is consistent with a program-specific pattern concentrated in routine, low-risk activities that families can readily facilitate and children can enact with minimal logistical barriers.

### ***7.2 Mastery experiences, risk recalibration, and internalization as possible mechanisms of change***

A plausible explanation for the observed shifts in behavior and trust is that repeated, low-stakes successes (such as shopping, cooking, or self-organizing) provided children with the opportunity to live mastery experiences (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These experiences may also provide adults with disconfirming evidence against exaggerated danger expectations, thereby recalibrating risk perceptions that are often driven by availability-based judgments (Lassa et al., 2025). In addition, children’s documentation of the experience and subsequent class debriefs may have contributed to the construction of shared narratives of competence and self-reliance. In classrooms, teacher practices that frame activities as self-endorsed and competence-building tend to enhance engagement and well-being (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). These narratives are later shared and referenced by peers and parents, thereby contributing to a shift in perceived norms around autonomy (Venard et al., 2024).

### ***7.3 The role of teacher mediation***

Beyond overall effects, the data point to meaningful between-class variability in children’s interest in repeating the experience. Children’s endorsement ranged from one-third to unanimous agreement across classes, whereas parent endorsement was consistently higher. Within a bioecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 2010b), such variability can be understood as reflecting differences in how the school microsystem operationalized and supported opportunities for autonomy across classrooms. This includes variations in teaching approaches, the extent and quality of scaffolding, the framing of manageable risks, the integration of social-emotional learning elements, and the facilitation of reflective discussion.

From a mesosystemic perspective, teachers functioned as key mediators linking school practices with family-based autonomy experiences. The school-based cycle of joint planning, graduated challenge, and collective reflection can therefore be interpreted as a form of educational mediation that structures proximal processes across contexts. From a sociocultural standpoint, this cycle resembles mediation within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), where the scaffolding provided by teachers helps novel, externally-regulated actions become self-regulated over time.

In this sense, effective teacher mediation may strengthen the quality and continuity of proximal processes through which autonomy is enacted and internalized (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Strengthening teacher professional learning around autonomy-supportive communication and structured cognitive and emotional debrief practices may therefore represent an important lever for increasing both engagement and impact.

### ***7.4 Task selection, contextual constraints, and measurement sensitivity***

Several examined domains did not show significant quantitative changes. For caregivers, these included perceptions of parent’s disposition to grant autonomy in social relationships, their comfort with providing autonomy across contexts, and their willingness to allow the child greater opportunities to address problems independently. For children, no changes were observed in their perceptions of responsibilities such as keeping their

room tidy, using a mobile phone without assistance, playing outdoors without adult supervision, or going to school alone.

Three considerations may account for this pattern. First, Let Grow is intentionally nonprescriptive: tasks are self-selected by children and families, so not everyone chose activities (e.g., tidying, independent play) that would plausibly influence every measured item. Second, some behaviors are embedded in household routines, community norms, and mobility expectation, limiting detectable across-the-board change. Third, measurement and timeframe constraints may have limited sensitivity to subtle attitudinal changes; early-stage items may also be subject to ceiling or floor effects.

If we adopt Spear and Kulbok's (2004) tripartite view of autonomy (behavioral, emotional, cognitive), our trial and related measurements chiefly engaged the behavioral domain. Nevertheless, qualitative reports suggest possible changes in emotional and cognitive aspects (e.g., feeling calmer or more secure; increased reflectivity). Future work would benefit from more sensitive instrumentation and task designs that explicitly elicit cognitive and emotional processing, better supporting children not only in doing autonomous acts periodically, but also in reflecting on expectations, emotions, coping, and meaning making.

## **8. Implications for practice and for future research**

Although based on three classes, these preliminary results underscore the importance of teacher facilitation in shaping how the project is enacted and experienced. Teachers play a key role in supporting autonomy, managing risk, and aligning activities with children and community norms. In the end, the quality of their facilitations and mediations likely contribute to the differences in children's appreciation or boredom for the activities.

Further project improvements could extend to activities that encourage children and their families to better reflect on the significance and worth of independent actions. For example, brief pre/post-task reflections that surface anticipatory feelings and appraisals ("What do I expect? What did I fear? What did I learn? What would I do if..."), teacher-facilitated micro-lessons on planning, coping, and cognitive reappraisal, graduated "challenge ladders" co-designed with parents to titrate risk and build tolerance for uncertainty, class sharing circles that normalize setbacks and perspective-taking, and parent workshops on autonomy-supportive language and risk calibration.

In terms of evaluation, future research should develop and validate multi-domain instruments capturing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive autonomy, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches (e.g., structured reflections, scenario-based assessments, diaries). Designs that are longitudinal and paired, and that include the perspectives of children, parents, and teachers, would strengthen causal inference, ecological validity, and understanding of underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions.

### **8.1 Limitations of the study**

This investigation was preliminary, and the implementation of Let Grow in Italy is still at an early stage. The quantitative and qualitative instruments were likewise in their first iteration and require further tuning and validation to ensure reliability, sensitivity to change, and coverage of the relevant autonomy domains (e.g., behavioral, cognitive, emotional). Effects were observed in a small town in Umbria, within schools already motivated and connected to a local research network. Caution is therefore warranted in replication across diverse ecological niches presenting different contextual and boundary conditions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

With respect to measurement resolution, this preliminary research relied on group-level comparisons, which may have masked meaningful individual changes among a subset of children and their parents (Grammer et al., 2013). To more accurately capture the magnitude and unique individual developmental trajectories associated with Let Grow, future research should employ paired longitudinal designs. Longitudinal approaches can reveal

dynamic, potentially nonlinear change over time that unpaired pre/post comparisons often miss (Whitbourne, 2019). Given the preliminary nature of this study, our sample size and available resources did not allow us to systematically investigate why a minority of parents and children expressed negative views of the project in the open-ended appreciation items. For the same reasons, we did not conduct additional quantitative analyses aimed at explaining items that showed no significant change or decline over time; these non-significant trends are nonetheless reported in Tables A1 and A2 to provide a more balanced report of our results. These aspects could yield crucial insights for the future development of Let Grow and should be better investigated in future studies. Finally, the study did not systematically assess implementation fidelity or dose (e.g., number/difficulty of tasks, quality of debriefs), which limits interpretability of mechanisms and reproducibility. Incorporating fidelity checklists, teacher logs, and adherence measures can strengthen future trials (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).

## 9. Conclusion

These preliminary findings suggest the feasibility and promise of Let Grow in Italian primary schools, while highlighting the need for effective teacher mediation to help children choose appropriate and developmentally coherent activities. In terms of project evaluation, our findings underscore the need for stronger causal designs and further psychometric development.

## Ethics statement

The study was conducted in authentic school settings. Approval was granted by the local board of the Direzione Didattica 2° Circolo “Pieve delle Rose” (Italy), in accordance with Article 277 of Italian Law 297/94, which authorizes schools to participate in or promote research related to educational processes. All procedures were carried out with careful attention to ethical standards and in alignment with the British Educational Research Association’s Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. Consistent with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, written informed consent was obtained from parents prior to the administration of any questionnaires. In addition, children’s assent was secured before their participation in the study.

## Data availability statement

The original Italian data supporting the findings of this study can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Additionally, up-to-date educational materials on the Let Grow Experience can be found on the Let Grow website at <https://letgrow.org>.

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### Competing interests

Author MC currently serves, on a voluntary basis, as a Let Grow ambassador in Italy.

### Use of Artificial Intelligence generated content

The content ideas for this article were developed solely by the authors based on their professional judgement, expertise, and experience. Artificial intelligence tools were used exclusively to perform standard grammar and syntax checks.

### Additional materials

Additional Table A1: Independent Samples t-test Results from the Children’s Questionnaire on Perceived Student Behaviors and Parent Relations Within the Experimental Group.

Additional Table A2: Independent Samples t-test Results from the Parents’ Questionnaire on Perceived Son/Daughter Behaviors and Parent Relationships Within the Experimental Group.

**Table A1**

*Independent Samples t-Test Results from the Children’s Questionnaire on Perceived Student Behaviours and Parent Relations Within the Experimental Group. N=44.*

	Wave	Mean	SD	t-test	df	p-value
I get along with my parents.	t0	4.00	1.14	-1.080	85	.283
	t1 <sup>a</sup>	4.23	0.84			
My parents trust me.	t0	4.18	1.17	-2.215	84	<b>.029</b>
	t1 <sup>b</sup>	4.64	0.69			
My parents let me handle things on my own.	t0	3.80	1.09	-0.745	84	.458
	t1 <sup>b</sup>	3.98	1.16			
I help at home by doing small activities (e.g., setting the table, cleaning ...).	t0	3.32	1.33	-0.592	86	.555
	t1	3.48	1.19			
I tidy up my things (e.g., toys, books, clothes...).	t0	3.52	1.27	-0.350	86	.727
	t1	3.61	1.17			
I prepare something to eat by myself.	t0	2.02	1.02	-3.039	86	<b>.003</b>
	t1	2.73	1.15			
I use a mobile phone by myself to make a call or send a message.	t0	2.43	1.58	-0.705	86	.483
	t1	2.66	1.45			
I use kitchen utensils by myself.	t0	2.20	1.36	-1.648	86	.103
	t1	2.68	1.36			
I use public transportation by myself (e.g., bus, train, subway).	t0	1.27	0.82	-1.112	86	.269
	t1	1.52	1.25			
I pack my school bag by myself.	t0	4.41	1.09	-0.749	86	.456
	t1	4.57	0.90			
I do my homework by myself.	t0	4.27	1.09	0.606	86	.546
	t1	4.14	1.03			
I play indoors without an adult present.	t0	2.73	1.40	0.155	86	.877
	t1	2.68	1.34			

I play outdoors without an adult present.	t0	2.89	1.59	-0.566	86	.573
	t1	3.07	1.42			
I get dressed by myself.	t0 <sup>a</sup>	4.67	0.71	-1.322	85	.190
	t1	4.84	0.43			
I take care of my personal hygiene by myself.	t0 <sup>b</sup>	4.38	1.06	-1.293	80	.200
	t1 <sup>c</sup>	4.65	0.80			
I stay at home alone for at least 30 minutes.	t0	2.75	1.64	-0.036	84	.971
	t1 <sup>b</sup>	2.76	1.41			
I go to school without being accompanied by an adult.	t0	1.36	0.94	0.122	86	.903
	t1	1.34	0.81			
I go to visit someone, do sports, or attend a course without being accompanied by an adult.	t0	1.59	1.15	-0.946	86	.347
	t1	1.82	1.11			
I go to a store to buy something without being accompanied by an adult.	t0	1.59	1.04	-3.436	86	<b>.001</b>
	t1	2.45	1.30			

Note. <sup>a</sup>there is a missing value; <sup>b</sup> there are 2 missing values; <sup>c</sup> there are 4 missing values. Negative *t* values indicate higher mean scores at *t1* than at *t0* (i.e., an increase over time in children's autonomy-related skills).

**Table A2**

*Independent Samples t-test Results from the Parents' Questionnaire on Perceived Son/Daughter Behaviours and their Parent Relationships Within the Experimental Group. N=41.*

	Wave	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> -test	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> -value
My son/daughter helps at home and tidies up his/her own things.	t0	3.33	0.89	-0.656	78	.514
	t1	3.45	0.81			
My son/daughter prepares breakfast or a snack by himself/herself.	t0 <sup>a</sup>	2.49	0.94	-2.501	76	<b>.015</b>
	t1 <sup>a</sup>	3.03	0.96			
My son/daughter manages homework and school bag independently.	t0	3.60	1.32	-1.689	77	.095
	t1 <sup>a</sup>	4.03	0.87			
My son/daughter washes and dresses by himself/herself.	t0 <sup>a</sup>	4.33	1.03	-0.566	77	.573
	t1	4.45	0.78			
My son/daughter goes to school alone (by school bus or on foot).	t0	1.23	0.80	-0.142	78	.888
	t1	1.25	0.78			
My son/daughter buys something in a store by himself/herself.	t0	1.85	0.98	-3.528	78	<b>.001</b>
	t1	2.65	1.05			
My son/daughter goes out alone to play with friends.	t0	2.13	1.24	-2.296	78	.024
	t1	2.80	1.38			
My son/daughter organizes his/her afternoons independently.	t0 <sup>a</sup>	2.59	1.16	-1.573	77	.120
	t1	3.00	1.15			
Considering his/her age, my son/daughter is autonomous.	t0 <sup>a</sup>	3.74	1.12	-0.762	77	.448
	t1	3.93	1.00			
	t0	3.28	1.04	-2.356	77	<b>.021</b>

I let my son/daughter decide what to wear on their own.	t1 <sup>a</sup>	3.77	0.81			
I let my son/daughter choose how to spend their free time at home.	t0	3.85	0.80	-0.539	77	.591
	t1 <sup>a</sup>	3.95	0.83			
When we go on vacation or visit a friend or relative, I let my son/daughter choose which books or toys to bring.	t0	4.45	0.75	0.080	77	.937
	t1 <sup>a</sup>	4.44	0.82			
When we go grocery shopping, I allow my son or daughter to freely select some of the products we need to buy.	t0	3.58	0.93	-0.245	78	.807
	t1	3.63	0.90			
I allow my son or daughter to decide how to meet up with friends.	t0	2.85	1.14	-0.938	78	.351
	t1	3.10	1.24			
I encourage my son/daughter to resolve conflicts with peers without my intervention.	t0	4.15	0.98	-0.893	78	.374
	t1	4.33	0.76			
I encourage my son/daughter to apologize or think of ways to make amends when they do something wrong.	t0	4.38	0.74	-1.051	78	.297
	t1	4.55	0.75			
I feel comfortable allowing my son/daughter to engage in activities outside the home alone or with friends.	t0 <sup>a</sup>	3.38	1.23	0.212	77	.833
	t1	3.33	1.27			
I feel at ease when my son/daughter plays out of my sight in safe spaces, such as the park or courtyard.	t0	3.05	1.15	-0.645	78	.521
	t1	3.23	1.27			

Note. <sup>a</sup>there is a missing value. Negative t values indicate higher mean scores at t1 than at t0 (i.e., an increase over time in children's autonomy-related skills).

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