

## Empowered to Choose: Investigating Job Autonomy and Parental Burnout in the Context of Work–Family Conflict

Brielle R. Croke and Adam H. Smiley\*

Department of Psychological Science and Neuroscience, Belmont University

**ABSTRACT.** From the lens of the self-determination theory, when individuals experience greater job autonomy, they tend to experience greater well-being, work satisfaction, and less job burnout (Autin et al., 2021; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Fernet et al., 2010). However, less is known about how job autonomy relates to family life. We built on previous research and considered the association between job autonomy and parental burnout along with work–family conflict. We hypothesized that greater job autonomy would be associated with less parental burnout, and that strain related to work–family conflict (i.e., hours worked outside the home, being unmarried, number of children under the age of 5, and higher percentages of childcare responsibility) would have a main effect on parental burnout. In an original survey of 243 U.S. parents recruited via Prolific, we found that higher job autonomy ( $\beta = -.21$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI =  $[-.39, -.15]$ ) predicted significantly less parental burnout. This pattern remained even when controlling for other measures of work–family conflict. Other measures of work–family conflict did not significantly predict more parental burnout. These findings indicate the importance of job autonomy in the lives of working parents.

**Keywords:** job autonomy, parental burnout, self-determination theory, spillover theory



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Over 3.5 million U.S. parents experience parental burnout in some capacity (Roskam et al., 2018), with a burnout rate much higher than many other developed countries (Roskam et al., 2021). Parental burnout is harmful to both parents and children; parental burnout increases the likelihood of escape ideation, neglectful behaviors, and potentially other harmful actions toward one's children (Mikolajczak et al., 2021). Working parents need to juggle responsibilities at home and at work. The number of working parents in the United States has increased dramatically over the last half century, driven in large part by an increase in working mothers. Nearly 75% of mothers were in the workforce as of 2017, up from 47% in 1975 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). In addition to a changing workforce, work experience for parents is

changing due to greater flexibility offered by remote and hybrid working opportunities (Punjwani & Campbell, 2024; Wigert et al., 2023). In the context of a changing workplace, we sought to identify whether greater job autonomy protects against parental burnout.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers have identified and examined the phenomenon of “quiet quitting,” where an employee does the bare minimum at work (Lu et al., 2023). However, some scholars argue that this term is not new but rather a new way of describing classic symptoms of job burnout such as work disengagement and job neglect (Afrahi et al., 2022). Job burnout occurs when an individual experiences chronic stressors at work due to who they work with or their job responsibilities (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). The symptoms of job burnout and parental burnout are

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similar, but rather than distancing from work colleagues and responsibilities, parental burnout is characterized by exhaustion, increased emotional distance between parent and child, and a parent's feeling of being unproductive in their parenting strategies (Mikolajczak et al., 2018). Parental burnout and job burnout are connected, and it is possible that these two conditions may trigger each other (Wang et al., 2021). For instance, an increase in parental burnout could lead to job burnout.

Spillover theory is one explanation for the link between an individual's work and family life. Both work-to-family time-based conflict and work-to-family strain-based conflict may contribute to an individual's stress when trying to balance responsibilities between the work and family domains (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Negative spillover occurs when stressors within the domain of work spill over to the domain of family (Lee et al., 2021). Research has shown that when an individual experiences social stressors at work, for example, their spouses report more withdrawn and negative marital behaviors (Pluut et al., 2022). In this case, social stress in the work domain is an example of negative spillover into the family domain. Similar findings exist when examining the role of time-based conflict (Lott & Wöhrmann, 2022). Individuals who face high work demands experience negative spillover into their own work-life balance (Lott & Wöhrmann, 2022). Moreover, research shows that in dual-income households, negative spillover not only affects the individual but also negatively impacts their partner (Lott & Wöhrmann, 2022). Although spillover can be negative, positive elements of one's workplace may also affect an individual's family life.

Past research has indicated that multiple factors in the workplace, such as mentorship, inclusive leadership, and family-supportive supervisory behaviors can contribute to positive spillover at home (García-Salirrosas et al., 2023; Hu et al., 2019; Zhu & Chen, 2022). Positive spillover is defined as experiences in the workplace that positively influence an individual's home environment (Zhu & Chen, 2022). For example, workplace mentoring relationships not only contribute to growth in personal skill development in the workplace but are also associated with an improved home life (Hu et al., 2019). Increased personal skills learned in mentorship, such as active listening and effective communication, could benefit an individual in their skills as a parent or partner at home (Hu et al., 2019). Additionally, inclusive workplace leadership, where leaders exhibit openness, accessibility, and availability, can increase positive behaviors, skills, and values in both the workplace and in interactions with family (Zhu & Chen, 2022). Lastly, when considering work-life balance and the importance of job satisfaction in remote

work, family-supportive supervisory behaviors have been shown to positively contribute to job satisfaction, a relationship mediated by work-to-family positive spillover (García-Salirrosas et al., 2023). This means that when a supervisor chooses to support employees in their family responsibilities, it spills over into family life by making an employee feel more supported in their family role, which then makes the employee more satisfied with their job.

Research on what makes work enjoyable and meaningful can inform what factors might create positive spillover from the workplace to family life. Self-determination theory is a framework for understanding what motivates people in the workplace, but it has been used in other areas since its creation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The theory is based on three principles: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Autonomy refers to an individual's sense of initiative, ownership, and action. Competence refers to the need for experiencing mastery and effectiveness within one's interactions and activities, and relatedness is the feeling of belonging and connection with others. According to self-determination theory, when all three needs are met, an individual can psychologically develop, specifically growing in intrinsic motivation. Because this theory is closely related to motivation, it has been used to inform initiatives in the workplace such as extrinsically motivating employees with bonuses for performances or seeking to intrinsically motivate them by increasing their job autonomy (Gerhart & Fang, 2015; Good et al., 2022). A meta-analysis conducted by Good and colleagues (2022) focused on salesperson performance, finding that across multiple studies, intrinsic motivation was more significantly associated with salesperson performance than extrinsic motivation even when controlling for sample characteristics. More specifically, one of the studies used in the analysis was conducted at two Fortune 500 companies, in which a self-selected incentive and a common quota incentive system were implemented at both companies (Bommaraju & Hohenberg, 2018). Results showed that across all experiments, individuals who set sales goals based on self-selected incentives significantly improved their sales performance compared to the groups that operated on the quota system. Additionally, results showed that performance did not decline immediately after conditions were removed, meaning that those who operated on a self-selected incentive system, in line with intrinsic motivation, continued to see the positive effects for a time even past using the incentive system.

In an early model of workplace motivation, Hackman and Oldham (1976) stated that job autonomy was one of the five key characteristics to a successful

workplace environment, describing job autonomy as the degree to which an individual can choose how and when they fulfill job responsibilities. When an employee becomes intrinsically motivated to perform a task, it is known as autonomous regulation (Manganelli et al., 2018). Past research has identified multiple areas in which autonomous regulation relates to positive outcomes, such as overall well-being, greater work satisfaction, less burnout, and more meaningful work (Autin et al., 2021; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Fernet et al., 2010). For example, Autin and colleagues (2021) investigated the relationships between work-related autonomy, relatedness, competence, and meaningful work in a diverse sample of employed adults in the United States. Both autonomy and relatedness directly predicted intrinsic motivation and indirectly predicted work meaning through identified regulation, when an individual chooses to engage in a behavior due to personal value and importance even if the task itself is not enjoyable.

Job autonomy has also been shown to impact parents and their home environment, contributing as positive spillover (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2020; Slep et al., 2018; Sok et al., 2014). Many workers report feeling that they do not spend enough time with their partner and kids, and these time constraints may be worse for individuals who are single-parents or live in a dual-earner household due to lack of childcare (Bianchi et al., 2006; Kim, 2018). When examining parents who work both inside and outside of the home, results showed that when employees worked from home, they experienced less work–family conflict compared to the days when they worked in the office (Darouei & Pluut, 2021). On days when parents experienced more work–family conflict, they also reported more negative emotions toward their place of employment the following morning (Darouei & Pluut, 2021). Flexibility and remote working may be a factor of job autonomy that significantly impacts parent–child interactions (Darouei & Pluut, 2021; Kim, 2018). Working from home and part-time employment is associated with more frequent parent–child interactions for mothers and fathers, and in low-income households, mothers who worked from home reported greater overall well-being (Kim, 2018). Some research, however, has shown that parental burnout might actually be greater when a parent works part-time or at home due to an increased number of parent–child interactions (Lebert-Charron et al., 2018; Roskam et al., 2018). Emotional exhaustion scores in maternal burnout were significantly lower for employed mothers compared to unemployed mothers and mothers who were employed part-time (Lebert-Charron et al., 2018). However, this finding was not extended to other parental burnout dimensions including depersonalization and decrease of personal

accomplishment, which was also examined in the study. The Lebert-Charron and colleagues (2018) study contradicts the previously mentioned studies, suggesting that factors related to job autonomy could increase parental burnout due to increased parent–child interactions.

Other factors in addition to work outside the home that relate to parental burnout include marital status, having young children, and responsibility for childcare. In a study of parents with preschool-aged children, marital satisfaction was associated with less parental burnout, which was mediated by support from partner coparenting, indicating that high marital satisfaction can alleviate parental burnout through a supportive coparent (Lu et al., 2024). Mikolajczak and colleagues (2018) also found a significant relationship between parenting-related exhaustion and the level of marital satisfaction and quality of the co-parenting relationship, in that lower levels of marital satisfaction and poorer quality of the co-parenting relationship are related to higher levels of parental burnout. Additionally, greater exhaustion experienced by one parent has been found to be associated with higher levels of support from the other parent, indicating that strong relationships between partners are important in protecting against stressful aspects of parenting (Gillis & Roskam, 2019). In a study of parental burnout in the context of multiple sociodemographic factors, emotional exhaustion was found to be higher among parents with young children compared to older children (Le Vigouroux & Scola, 2018). In addition, having many children was a risk factor for emotional exhaustion and emotional distancing (Le Vigouroux & Scola, 2018). Similarly, a study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic found that child age was a predictor of parental burnout, specifically that in cases where there was at least one child under 4 years of age, higher parental burnout levels were observed (Giraldo et al., 2022). In addition, research has found an increased risk in parental burnout for those in Western countries in part due to individualism (Roskam et al., 2023). Parents tend to carry out parenting responsibilities on their own rather than with others in individualistic countries, known as low task sharing, which has been found to mediate the relationship between individualism and parental burnout (Roskam et al., 2023).

In the present study, we examined the relationship between job autonomy, work–family conflict, and parental burnout. We hypothesized that greater job autonomy would be associated with less parental burnout, and that strain related to work–family conflict, measured by a greater number of hours worked outside the home, being unmarried, a greater number of children under the age of 5, and higher percentages of childcare responsibility, would be associated with greater parental burnout.

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## Method

### Participants

Participants were recruited through Prolific. To participate in the study, individuals had to be employed, 18 or older, live in the United States, and be a parent with at least one child under the age of 18 living in their household. Screening tools in Prolific were used

to only recruit participants who met these criteria. Two participants reported not having any children under 18, and they were excluded from the study. There were 5 participants excluded from the study due to failing the attention check. The attention check was a single question within the Parental Burnout Assessment in which participants were asked to select “somewhat disagree” to demonstrate they were paying attention. If a participant did not select the requested answer, they were then excluded from the study. The total sample size after excluding participants for failing the attention check or not having children in their household under the age of 18 was 243 ( $M_{age} = 39.13, SD_{age} = 7.05$ ). Participants’ demographics can be found in Table 1. Participants received \$1.00 paid through Prolific for their participation.

**TABLE 1**

**Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants**

Sample Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	87	35.8
Women	155	63.8
Non - Binary / Third Gender	0	0.0
Prefer Not to Say	1	0.4
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	0.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	14	5.8
Black/African American	43	17.7
Hispanic/Latino(a)	16	6.6
White	148	60.9
Mixed Race/Two or More Races	19	7.8
Other	2	0.8
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Yes (Married)	176	72.0
No (Unmarried)	60	24.0
Other	6	2.5
Prefer not to answer	1	0.4
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Full-time (40 hours or more)	192	79.0
Part-time (less than 40 hours)	51	21.0
<b>Number of minors living in household</b>		
One	102	41.9
Two	92	37.8
Three	33	13.6
Four	11	4.5
Five or more	5	2.0
<b>Number of children under 5 living in household</b>		
None	137	56.0
One	78	32.0
Two	22	9.0
Three or more	6	2.0

*Note.* *N* = 243. Participants were on average 39.13 years old (*SD* = 7.05).

### Materials

#### Job Autonomy Assessment

To gather data on job autonomy, participants were asked to rate seven statements from the autonomy subscale of the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction at Work Scale on a five-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*; Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, participants would be asked to rate the following statements: “I am free to express my ideas and opinions on the job” and “I feel like I can make a lot of input in deciding how my job gets done.” The seven items of the autonomy subscale from the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction at Work Scale were averaged to form a composite score of job autonomy. This subscale scale showed good criterion validity as it correlated as expected with other work-related variables (Olafsen et al., 2021; Van den Broeck et al., 2010) and was invariant across samples in multiple countries (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). The Cronbach’s alpha in our sample ( $\alpha = .81$ ) indicated the scale had strong internal reliability.

#### Parental Burnout Assessment

To gather data on parental burnout, participants were asked to rate 23 statements from the Parental Burnout Assessment on a five-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*; Roskam et al., 2018). For example, participants would be asked to rate the following statements: “I feel completely run down by my role as a parent” and “I’m no longer proud of myself as a parent.” The 23 items in the Parental Burnout Assessment would form a composite score to assess parent burnout. The Parental Burnout Assessment showed good criterion validity as it correlated as expected with other parenting and family structure variables (Roskam et al., 2018). The Cronbach’s alpha in our sample ( $\alpha = .95$ ) indicated high internal reliability.

### Work and Family Demographics

Participants also responded to questions related to their gender identity (*man, woman, non-binary/third gender, and prefer not to say*), age (text entry), race/ethnicity (select all that apply), and marital status (*yes, no, other, and prefer not to say*). They also entered whole numbers to indicate their number of hours worked outside the home per week, number of hours worked inside the home related to occupation, number of children under the age of 18 living within the household, number of children under the age of 5 living within the household, percent of the childcare responsibility they were personally responsible for, and the percent of their household income they personally contribute (see Table 1).

### Procedure

Prior to data collection, approval was received from the IRB. A Qualtrics survey containing informed consent, debriefing language, and the scales listed in the previous section were linked to the Prolific website. Participants completed the informed consent process by indicating whether they were 18 or older, read the information given about the study, and wanted to participate in the study. Only participants who selected *yes* to all three screening questions were allowed to participate in the study. Participants then answered the survey questions. The order of the survey was counterbalanced so that half of participants were given the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction at Work Scale (Deci & Ryan, 2000) first and the other half saw the Parental Burnout Assessment (Roskam et al., 2018) first. After completing demographic questions, participants could view the debriefing information at the end of the survey and then were redirected to Prolific for payment.

### Results

Data was analyzed using R. Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted on distributions of continuous study variables (i.e., job autonomy,  $W(241) = .98, p < .001$ ), parental burnout,  $W(241) = .89, p < .001$ , number of hours worked outside the home,  $W(241) = .87, p < .001$ , childcare responsibility,  $W(241) = .87, p < .001$ , household income responsibility,  $W(241) = .92, p < .001$ , childcare responsibility,  $W(241) = .87, p < .001$ , to identify if study variables assumed a normal distribution. Distributions for variables departed significantly from normality. Due to the skewness of these distributions, non-parametric tests were used to conduct statistical analyses. Three participants' results were identified as outliers due to z-scores that had an absolute value greater than 3, indicating that their score was greater than 3 standard deviations from the mean on the given assessment, but their data was kept in as results were not meaningfully altered when removing data.

A Spearman's correlation was used to test initial relationships between key variables and parental burnout (see Table 2). The results of a Spearman's correlation indicated a significant negative relationship between job autonomy and parental burnout,  $r(241) = -.28, p < .001, 95\% CI = [-.39, -.15]$ , meaning that higher job autonomy was associated with lower parental burnout scores. A multiple linear regression was also conducted, predicting an individual's parental burnout score from job autonomy and the following z-scored covariates: number of hours worked outside the home, marital status, number of children under the age of 5, percentage of childcare responsibility, and gender (see Figure 1). Although gender was not a

TABLE 2

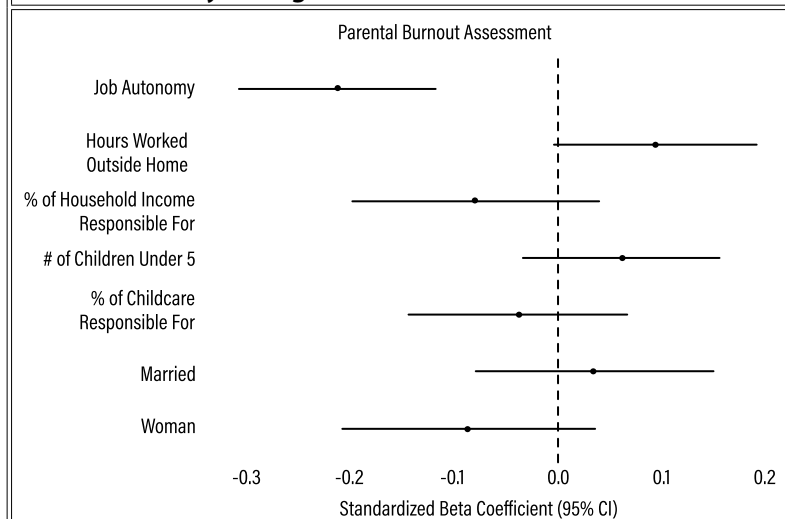
Study Variables Correlation Matrix

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Parental Burnout	1.85	0.79				
2. Job Autonomy	3.44	0.75	-.28**			
			[-.39, -.15]			
3. Personal Childcare Responsibility (%)	64.10	30.49	-.00	-.01		
			[-.13, .12]	[-.14, .11]		
4. Personal Household Income Responsibility (%)	64.34	29.11	-.14*	.00	-.14*	
			[-.26, -.01]	[-.12, .13]	[-.26, -.02]	
5. Hours Worked Outside the Home	26.29	18.30	.08	.02	-.18**	.15*
			[-.04, .21]	[-.11, .14]	[-.30, -.05]	[.02, .27]

Note. M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

FIGURE 1

Job Autonomy Is a Significant Predictor of Parental Burnout



Note. Dots represent the point estimate for each beta coefficient; whiskers (lines) represent the 95% CI.

primary variable of interest in this investigation, it was included as a covariate as mothers have been shown to have higher levels of parental burnout than fathers (Roskam et al., 2018). Both gender and marital status were dummy coded to create binary variables that could be used in the regression model. Assumptions were checked by plotting residuals as well as checking that residuals followed a normal distribution within a Q-Q plot, supporting normality. In line with our hypothesis, there was a significant negative correlation between job autonomy and parental burnout with the other variables controlled ( $\beta = -.21, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI} = [-.31, -.12]$ ). This means that for every one standard deviation increase in job autonomy, there was an associated .21 decrease in parental burnout with all other variables held constant. Contrary to our hypotheses, we found that parental burnout was not significantly predicted by hours worked outside the home ( $\beta = .09, p = .06, 95\% \text{ CI} = [.01, .19]$ ), marital status ( $\beta = .03, p = .57, 95\% \text{ CI} = [-.08, .15]$ ), number of children under the age of five ( $\beta = .06, p = .21, 95\% \text{ CI} = [-.04, .16]$ ) percent of household income responsible for ( $\beta = -.08, p = .18, 95\% \text{ CI} = [-.20, .04]$ ), and percent of childcare responsible for ( $\beta = -.03, p = .48, 95\% \text{ CI} = [-.15, .07]$ ).

### Discussion

In this study, we examined whether job autonomy and other demographic variables related to work–family conflict were correlated with parental burnout. In line with our hypothesis, we found that greater job autonomy was correlated with lower parental burnout and that variables related to work–family conflict (greater number of hours worked outside the home, being unmarried, a greater number of children under the age of 5, higher percentages of childcare responsibility) would be associated with higher parental burnout scores. This relationship held even when controlling for other demographic variables related to work–family conflict. Although the positive relationship between job autonomy and parental burnout held even when controlling for other demographic variables related to work–family conflict, demographic variables related to work–family conflict were not significantly associated with parental burnout.

As mentioned previously, participant data related to work–family conflict were also examined through distributions for number of hours worked outside the home, percent of personal childcare responsibility, and number of children under the age of 5 and 18. Although these distributions departed from normality, these distributions covered a wide range of variability indicating that people with both lower and higher levels of strain-based and time-based work–family conflict were included in the study. This is a strength of our study as this suggests

we not only had participants who experienced low strain but also those who experienced higher levels of strain in terms of their work–family conflict.

Although previous research has not focused on the specific association between job autonomy and parental burnout through the lens of self-determination theory, the literature does point to positive outcomes associated with greater job autonomy (Gerhart & Fang, 2015; Good et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2020). These positive outcomes include greater overall well-being, greater work satisfaction, and less job burnout (Autin et al., 2021; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Fernet et al., 2010). The findings of this study demonstrate that the benefits of job autonomy may extend to parenting as well.

Other demographic data related to work–family conflict were not significant predictors of parental burnout. However, job autonomy remained consistent in its negative association with parental burnout even when controlling for variables related to work–family conflict. This suggests that job autonomy, which can be exemplified by input, flexibility, and agency in the workplace, may be a significant factor in the home lives of working parents. When parents have more job autonomy, they have more frequent parent–child interactions (Kim, 2018). Greater job autonomy and less time working outside the home may give parents the ability to be fully present with their kids when needed, creating a more solidified boundary between a parent's work life and home life.

It is interesting to consider why no significant relationship was found between some study variables and parental burnout. For example, past research points to higher parental burnout for individuals with young children, and it is interesting that our study did not show a significant relationship between participants with children under 5 and parental burnout (Le Vigouroux et al., 2022). One possible explanation could be a third variable that is unaccounted for in this study. For example, the severity of parental burnout has been linked to personality traits in parents, such that certain personality traits are more strongly associated with parental burnout when an individual is caring for a child under the age of seven, specifically in parents with lower scores in neuroticism and openness (Piotrowski et al., 2023). Because personality was not studied in our study, we do not know the impact that a parent's specific personality has on the burnout, or lack thereof, they experience in caring for a young child.

Additionally, when examining the findings of childcare responsibility, it could be possible that certain individuals enjoy childcare tasks more than others and therefore decrease the risk of experiencing parental burnout based on their personal preference. Specifically,

research has shown that although men and women may both positively perceive childcare tasks, women tend to prefer childcare responsibility tasks more than men (Bleske-Rechek & Gunseor, 2022). A difference in preference to childcare responsibility may contribute to the extent to which an individual experiences parental burnout when carrying out childcare responsibilities. Post-hoc analysis of data in the current study revealed differences between men and women in perceived income and childcare responsibilities. Despite working nearly the same number of total hours per week, women reported greater childcare responsibility by an average of 28%, with women indicating responsibility for 74% of childcare whereas men reported an average of 46% perceived responsibility. These roles were reversed in income responsibility, in that men responded being responsible for 76% of income, and women responded that they were responsible for 57% of household income. Interestingly, in both cases of childcare and income, average responsibility rating between men and women sum to be greater than 100%, indicating that both men and women may overclaim responsibility, which could occur due to a parent's primary focus on their own responsibility (Schroeder et al., 2016). This post hoc finding suggests that gender may still play an important role for parents and could be examined in further research.

Additionally, perhaps those with more job autonomy are privileged in other ways, such as being more educated and therefore having higher pay. Similarly, the job sector that an individual works in may influence how much autonomy they have. Perhaps certain industries, such as self-employment, may lead to more autonomous work.

An additional limitation to our study was the way in which some measures were operationalized. Due to focusing on participants' marital status rather than broadening the scope to partner status, for example, we may have missed information that would have been helpful in analyzing the results. Future research should consider the implications of operationalizing participants' marital and/or partner status so that data is as accurate as possible. The job autonomy assessment, though a well-tested measure, was limited in items and focused more on input in the workplace. To extend findings to ideas such as flexibility and remote-work, future research should use a broader measure for job autonomy and/or consider specific factors of autonomy that may reduce job burnout. For example, items in this study focused more on input in how one goes about their work, but it may be helpful to do more research on the influence of other specific factors related to autonomy such as flexibility, learning and development opportunities, or

the presence of personal goals within the workplace to understand the more distinct role these specific factors play in an individual's perception of their job autonomy. It is also important to acknowledge that using quantitative measures to assess work and family life does not fully capture the experience of participants' life as a parent. For example, two individuals may be very similar in their childcare responsibilities and perceived job autonomy, but one individual may feel very overwhelmed and the other may evaluate their work-life balance as satisfactory.

Future studies could examine how differences in job autonomy within the same industry relate to parental burnout. It is also possible that parenting responsibilities and associated burnout may influence the employment decisions individuals make, so including variables related to employment status in future research may be helpful in gaining a better understanding of participants' work-related experiences and contextualizing results. Future studies using longitudinal or experimental methods would be useful for examining the causal relationship between these variables in addition to qualitative approaches (e.g., focus groups, observation, open-ended interviews), which could introduce new perspectives or yield different results. This study was also conducted exclusively with respondents in the United States, so further research in other countries is needed to establish the generalizability of these findings.

Overall, our findings extend self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020) into the domain of parenthood. Parents play a vital role in their children's lives, and the nature of their work influences how they relate to them. By identifying the link between job autonomy and parental burnout, we demonstrate the importance of having control over one's work life as it may have implications at home as well. Parents seeking to thrive at work and feel energized in their interactions with their children should consider the autonomy offered to them by different careers and positions. Furthermore, employers seeking to retain their employees and keep them happy should consider that the implications of job autonomy may extend beyond the workplace. Among various work-family conflict factors, job autonomy stands out as a meaningful influence in the life of a working parent.

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*Author Note*

Brielle R. Croke  <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7851-4392>

Adam H. Smiley  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5479-6102>

Materials and data for this study can be accessed at

<https://osf.io/gz62n>

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Brielle R. Croke, Belmont University, Nashville, TN.

Email: [briellecroke@gmail.com](mailto:briellecroke@gmail.com)

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