

Impact of Parental Support on the Academic Performance and Self Concept of the Student

Ms Bushra Iqbal Chohan and Rehana Masrur Khan

Abstract: This study examines the impact of educational support given by the parents on the academic achievement and on the self concept of grade 4 public school students. The aims of this study were (a) to examine the linkage between academic achievement and educational support provided to the child at home and, (b) to determine whether this support directly or indirectly effects child's self concept. The data regarding parental support, its effects on the academic achievement and the self concept were collected from a sample (N =305) of grade 4 students in the urban primary and elementary public schools. The sample students who have or have not parental support were compared on two measures, (a) the annual school result report and, (b) the self concept scale. The self concept was measured twice i.e. before one month of annual school examination and after one month of announcement of annual results. The findings of the study revealed that parents' contribution to their children's education has a consistent and positive effect on academic achievement and on the self-concept.

Keywords: parental support, self concept, academic achievement

Introduction

Over the past several decades, scholars are concerned with the poor academic performance of children. The research studies revealed that various factors are responsible for scholastic failure of students, such as low socio-economic background, student's cognitive abilities, school related factors, environment of the home, or the support given by the parents and other family members (Khan & Malik, 1999; Fan, 2001; Gonzalez- Pienda, Nunez, Gonzalez- Pumariega, Alvarez, Roces and Garcia, 2002)

Generally, schools are considered as places which provide appropriate learning environment for a child, but importance of parents and community cannot be ignored. Parents, adult family members, and siblings contribute significantly to various components of personality of the child particularly and in improving his/her academic performance.

The pivotal role of parents still continues as it has been recognized by the teachers and parents themselves that they are essential for complete development of the personality and career of their children. Gonzalez- Pienda, et al.,(2002) indicated that “without the children's parental support, it is hard for teachers to devise academic experiences to help students learn meaningful content” (p.281). In home settings, the learning processes occur explicitly or consciously, often in an informal way. Parents teach and train children early in their lives, the fundamental skills, attitudes and values necessary for day-to-day living (UNESCO, 1992). The unwritten knowledge being conveyed by parents to their children, is specific and to a certain degree, specialized, i.e. that which would enable the children to cope successfully with the requirements of the immediate confines of homes and the community.

Parental Support and Academic Achievement

Fan (2001) demonstrated that parents' educational aspiration for their children proved to be strongly related to students' academic growth. Research studies have found that parental educational level has a significant impact on child's learning, (Khan & Malik, 1999). Similarly, Schneider and Lee (1990) linked the academic success of the East Asian students to the values and aspirations they share with their parents, and also to the home learning activities in which their parents involve with them. In fact, all parents have desired to do something better for their children according to their available resources. But the extent and effectiveness of parental support depends on a variety of reasons, such as, ethnicity, family income, and home environment and their awareness about the importance of education.

Research studies indicated that socio economic status is correlated strongly with parents' educational ambition for their children. Khan, Khan and Zubairi (1999) stated that “interacting with and sharing the child's activities is affected by level of parents' education and income” (p.92). In the families with low socioeconomic status, majority of the illiterate parents do not have understanding of the requirements of their children's education. Some poor parents make some arrangements for helping their children in studies and to do their home assignments, while others rely on school for the education of their children, as they do not have enough resources to spend extra money on home tuitions etc. This results poor performance in academic achievement of their children.

The findings of the study conducted by Okpala, Okpala, and Smith (2001) also supports the view that economic circumstances are significantly correlated with academic achievement.

Research studies indicated that the nature of the parental support change at different age levels of children. Gonzalez-Pienda et al. (2002) have found that parental support is likely to decrease as children move from primary to middle and then to high school grades. Similarly, a research study by Fan, (2001) showed that children also develop sense of responsibility and perform better as they grow older. The study indicated that those students whose parents had higher expectations for their children's academic achievement performed better from the beginning of their academic career and accelerated faster in their academic progress during the transition period of middle to high grades.

The children also seek emotional support from parents when they face some academic problems at school. Educated and sensible parents always encourage their children and give proper guidance in school related matters, but illiterate and economically deprived parents may act violently and thus upset their child more. A study by Repetti,(1996) indicated that

“children described themselves as more demanding and difficult with their parents on days in which they had earlier perceived more problems with peers, such as being teased by another child or feeling excluded by friends, or more academic problems, such as receiving a poor grade or having difficulty with schoolwork”,(p.1477).

Parental Support and Self Concept

The “self” is considered as a fundamental concept from the very beginning in personality theories of psychology. It is used generally in two different ways, I and Me. William James (1890 as cited in Funder,2007), has explained a significant division between these two aspects. The self ‘I’ as an agent, conducts basic functions, as self regulation, self evaluation etc. “me” as an object, represented in self concepts, in how we see over selves. During the course of development, “the child attains gradually richer concept of himself or herself as an active agent, “I” separate from other people and

objects, and “me” that has defining features and qualities reflected in multiple self-concepts” (Mischel, Shoda, & Smith, 2004, p.293). Thus, the self-concept is said to be a set of planned self-attitudes that are relatively established and "characteristic" of an individual (Demo,1992, p.303).

Research studies have indicated that parental support factors have significant contribution in the development of positive self regard that is statistically related to academic achievement of the students (Franco and Levitt, 1998; Mahaffy, 2004; Gonzalez-Pienda et al., 2002). Similarly, McMartin, (1995) indicated that failure in school plays a significant role in formation of child’s negative self-image.

Generally, parents are not directly involved in the teaching-learning activities in school. They are only expected to provide the financial and other material support for the children’s schooling. The interactions among parents and their children are influenced by the socioeconomic and cultural factors of that particular society in which they survive. For instance, the way a family manages the learning activities of its children at home is dependent upon parents’ socioeconomic position and their resources in term of money and time.

Parental support is a multidimensional construct, (Fan 2001). Research studies have presented some theoretical frameworks for parental support, (Gonzalez-Pienda et al. (2002); Fan, 2001). Researchers have reported that some dimensions of parental support may have more visible effects on students' academic achievement than others. Gonzalez-Pienda et al. (2002) stated that parental support criteria were developed according to six dimensions that are strongly associated to students' behavior at school and the attitude towards learning.

“The six dimensions are (a) parents' expectations about their children's achievement, (b) parents' expectations about their children's capacity to achieve important goals, (c) parents' behaviors that reveal interest in their children's school work, (d) parents' degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their children's level of school achievement, (e) parents' level and type of help provided when their children do homework, and (f) parents' reinforcement behaviors of their children's achievements. Research studies have pointed out that some dimensions of parental involvement may have more noticeable effects

on students' academic achievement than others” (p.259).

Out of six dimensions that are discussed above, this study focuses on 5th one that is “parents’ level and type of help provided when their children do the homework”.

Homework can be defined as “tasks that are assigned to students by teachers and are meant to be performed during nonschool hours” (Cooper, 1989a as cited in Eilam,2001, p. 692). A student is supposed to complete his/her homework at home, parents or other family members may be involved in the process of helping or guiding the child. They either help the child in doing the home task assigned by the teacher or facilitate him/her in relation to difficulties in syllabus. Research studies indicated that parental support in doing home tasks has significant effects in students’ achievement, (Singh, Granville, Sandra, & Dika, 2002; Eilam,2001).

According to Pakistan Social and Living Measurement (PSLM) Survey (2007-08), the overall literacy rate (age 10 years and above) is 56% (67% for male and 44% for female) in 2006-07¹. In a country where nearly half of the population is still illiterate, it is very hard for children to seek proper guidance in academic matters after the school hours. When parents have not themselves been to school and remain illiterate and innumerate, the school cannot expect that they will understand its aims or activities. The lack of parental support creates major problem for school and the child also.

In the context of Pakistan, where the majority of the parents is illiterate, and the teacher is also psychologically distressed due to a number of financial and job related problems, the lack of proper parental support to child create big hurdles in improving the quality of education. If parents are educated, and have better understanding of how to break a problem into parts, or know more effective motivational techniques, then they can help their children more effectively. A study conducted by Voorhis (2003) demonstrated that those students who reported more parental involvement in connection with daily homework, doing their homework assignments more regularly. The findings of this study support the effects of family involvement in student accomplishments in the

¹ Source: Economic Survey 2008-09, Finance Division, Economic Advisor Wing, Islamabad

middle grades.

The general purpose of this study was to examine the effect of parental support the children received during their late childhood in relation to academic growth and self concept. On the basis of the review of the relevant literature, the specific research objectives of this study were to: (a) see the impact of parental support in helping the child in studies and doing homework on the academic performance of the grade 4 students, (b) explore the relationship of parental support with the self concept of the grade 4 students, (c) assess the indirect effect of parental support on the self concept of the grade 4 students after failure. The period of late childhood (9-11) was selected for study because children of this age group judge themselves on abilities and achievements and academic performances are of particular concern at this age, (Demo,1992, p.310). Furthermore, this period corresponds to the time when various components of the child's self-concept coalesce to yield the general affective sense of self-worth referred to as self-esteem (Harter, 1983 as cited in Franco & Levitt,1998, p.316).

Method

The study was descriptive in nature and quantitative methodology was applied to achieve the study objectives. This study examined the effects of parental support on the academic outcomes and self concept of the students (N =305) enrolled in grade four of the forty two, urban, public primary and elementary schools in Rawalpindi city. Public schools in Rawalpindi city serve majority of economically deprived population, because those having better socio-economic status, living in this area send their children to private schools.

Annual school result record of the sample students was taken as a measure of academic performance. The result record of annual examination held in March 2009 of the grade four in the sample schools was taken for this purpose. For the study of self concept of the students, Beck Youth inventory² for self concept (BSCI-Y) was adapted.

² The Beck Youth Inventories of Emotional and Social Impairment included five self-report inventories used to assess anxiety, depression, anger, disruptive behavior, and self concepts in children between the ages of 7 and 14 years old. These inventories may

The Urdu translation of the scale with an addendum containing questions about parental support was administered to the sample students. Three questions were asked from the students to gauge levels of parental support in relation to do the homework and resolve the academic problems. Students were asked whether their parents help them in doing the homework and facilitate them in case of any difficulty in studies. In case of response in negative they were asked about any help arranged for these studies. The self concept scale was administered to the sample before one month of annual school examination in February of 2009. The same students were reassessed by the same scale after one month of the announcement of their annual school results in May 2009.

Analysis

Following the collection of data and coding of completed surveys, the statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 13.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). t-test and bivariate statistical analyses were carried out to demonstrate how the family support effects the academic achievement and self concept of students of grade four.

There were total 305 cases taken from the grade four of the public elementary and primary schools of Rawalpindi city, 185 students reported that their parents have made some arrangements for helping them in studies. Among these, 98(53%) students have informed that their parents have arranged some kind of tuitions for their help in studies, 54(29%) have told that their parents compel their elder siblings to help them in studies, whereas, only 33(18%) students reported that their parents themselves are educated and guide them in academic matters. The other group of students (N= 120) reported that they have not any kind of support from parents or other family members.

The report of the annual school examination has revealed the significant differences among the two groups i.e. those who have support and those who have not any support from parents or other family members.

be used, separately or in combinations.

Table 1: Detail of academic status of the sample students in annual examination (N=305)

	Total no.	Fail	pass
Have support	185(60.6)	10(5.4%)	175(94.5%)
No support	120(39.3%)	107(89.1%)	13(10.5%)

The table 1 shows that from the group 1(have support), 175(94.5%) students have passed and only 10 (5.4%) students have failed in annual examination. Whereas, the group having no parental support is shown high percentage of failure. Only 13 (10.5%) students have passed while 107 (89.1%) failed in annual examination.

In order to measure the degree of relationship between family support and academic performance of students in final examination, correlation among them was computed.

Table 2: Correlation between parental support, self concept level of student before and after final examination and academic achievement (N=305)

	PS	AS	SC-1	SC-2
Parental Support (PS)	-	-	-	-
Academic status (AS)	.841**	-	-	-
Self concept before exam (SC-1)	.329**	.260**	-	-
Self concept after exam (SC-2)	.515**	.492**	.870**	-

** Significant at .000 (2-tailed)

All correlations displayed in table 2 are significant at 0.01 level. It can be concluded that parental support has significant positive impact on the academic achievement and self concept of the students, while at the same time the highly significant correlation between self concept scores before and after examination depicts that parental support has also an indirect impact on the self concept of the students.

Table 3: Comparison of group 1 (have support, N=185) and group 2 (no support, N=120)

Groups	Academic status		self concept before exam		self concept after exam	
	Mean	t-value	Mean	t-value	Mean	t-value
Have support	5.95		47.96		49.93	
vs		27.11**		6.07**		10.46**
No support	5.11		42.98		40.93	

** Significant at .000

A significant mean difference ($t=27.11$, $p<.001$) in academic status was found between the two groups i.e. the groups of students have support and without support. The mean difference in self concept score before examination was also significant between the two groups ($t=6.07$, $p<.001$). Similarly, the findings of t-test for self concept after examination revealed significant results ($t=10.46$, $p<.001$).

In order to measure the indirect impact of parental support on the self concept of the students, paired t-test was performed on the two groups separately.

Table 4: comparison of self concept score before and after examination

	Have support		No support	
	Mean difference	t-value	Mean difference	t-value
Self concept after exam vs Self concept before exam	1.11	-4.29**	-2.93	8.25**

** Significant at .000

The table 4 revealed the significant mean differences between the self concept scores before and after examination of both groups. The findings of t-test for the self concept scores of the two measures revealed significant results. The positive sign of the t-value of the group having parental support indicates that the average self concept

score of the students has raised after succeeding in examination. Whereas, the negative sign of the t-value of the group having no parental support indicates that the average self concept score of the students decreased after failure in examination. It can be concluded that parental support has an indirect impact on the self concept scores of the students also.

The above statistical analysis shows that the overall parental support variable was related significantly to academic performance and self concept of the sample of the grade 4 students. Children who reported adequate support from their families were more likely to show better performance and succeeded in examination and also get better scores on the self concept scales. Moreover, the parental support has an indirect significant impact on the self concept of the students, with respect to their academic achievement. The analysis reveals that after annual examination, the level of self concept changes with the performance of students. Those who passed the examination, their self concept also increased. Whereas, a significant decline has occurred in the self concept of failures.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed the significant impact of parental support on the academic achievement as well as on the development of self concept of the children. The results have reflected a developmental sequence, such that earlier family support processes enable the child to establish a better academic status and positive self concept which then contribute to the maturation of his/her personality and career.

The study shows that parental support in doing home work and other academic activities has significant impact on the academic performance of the students. The findings of this study support the findings of the studies conducted by Singh et al., 2002 and Eilam, 2001. Similarly, the study also supports the findings of Franco and Levitt, 1998; and Mahaffy, 2004, that parental support has significant impact on the self concept of the students. Moreover, the study reveals the significant effect of success or failure in examination on the self concept of the students, this result is similar to the findings of the study by McMartin, 1995.

The results reveal that more than 50% of the children from the group 1 (have support) received private tuitions after school. In some cases, where the elder sibling has also been to school, the parents often ask them to help the younger ones but in such

circumstances the elder child bears sense of double responsibility as he/she has to concentrate on his/her own studies along with guiding the siblings.

Nearly 40 % children reported that they do not have any support from parents. This finding reveals that many parents believe only the school is responsible for teaching their children and they cannot be of any help for their children's education, or it may be because of their limited financial resources as the entire sample schools located in the economically deprived areas of Rawalpindi city.

On the other side the findings of the study also portray the ineffective role of public school teacher. Majority of the teachers of our public schools especially at primary level is not very serious and committed to their duties. The parents, who wish to educate their children, cannot just rely on school learning. They have to make some additional arrangements for their children to achieve success. As majority of our population is illiterate and cannot provide proper coaching at home to their children, it is a matter of great concern for them to arrange some additional source for their children within their limited income.

In a situation, where the majority of the parents is illiterate and economically depressed, the responsibilities of the school and the teacher increases more than the normal situation. The teachers should be more caring and consider their students' needs and interests and should help them in defining their personal goals. They should have the missionary zeal in performing their duties. Moreover, they should encourage students in a manner that they perceive themselves as efficient individuals through their own effort and responsibility for the learning process.

As with many other studies in the context of parental support, this study also had some limitations. The first one is concerned with the focus of the study; only one dimension of parental support was taken for study purpose, i.e. parents' level and type of help provided when their children do homework. One must therefore be careful in generalizing the findings of this study to the general concept of parental involvement. Moreover, the precise definition and measurement of different dimensions of support provided by the parents are still not in agreement and questionable. Research studies are not very clear about the construct of parental involvement, and the measurement of this construct has often been inconsistent and disputed,(Fan, 2001). Further, the study has

been conducted with local convenience sample. The external validity of the findings from the convenience sample is largely unknown. Researchers often inquired the extent to which results based on the small convenience samples can be readily generalized to the broad student population. But the large scale studies have their own implications. For instance, in such studies, some data about disadvantaged groups were deliberately exaggerated so that more stable estimates could be obtained for these minorities.

The literature review demonstrated that socioeconomic status of the parents and the age of the students are main contributing factors in the extent of support provided by the parents. Further research in this area could explore the significant role of these factors.

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Correspondence

Name: Ms Bushra Iqbal Chohan, Rehana Masrur Khan

Email: rehamasrur@yahoo.com