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ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, MENTAL HEALTH AND PARENTING PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Abstract

The study explored the effects of parenting practices on mental health of elementary school students and their academic performance by comparing parents-reported and students'-reported parenting practices. The study consisted of a sample of 246 students of 12-15 years' of age taken from seven elementary schools of Multan by using multi-stage convenience sampling technique. The students filled-in three questionnaires measuring eight dimensions of parenting. The Parenting Practices Scales, Academic Performance Rating Scale, and Children Mental Health Scale, while the parents of sampled students completed only the parenting dimensions of questionnaire. The results indicated positively significant relationship of mental health of students and academic performance with six parenting dimensions out of eight; monitoring, trust, time together, disclosure, negotiation, and consistency, while negative relationship with parent/students conflict and parental punishment. Standardized regression model demonstrated that mental health of students and their academic performance are significantly predicted by all parental practices except punishment and parent/student conflict. Comparison between parents-reported and students' reported parenting practices showed positively correlated responses of the both. However, the students'-reported parenting practices were found more closely associated with their academic performance and mental health as compared to that of parents'-reported practices.

Keywords: Parenting Practices, Mental Health, Academic Performance, Elementary School Children, Monitoring, Social Etiquettes, Personality Development

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Introduction

Apparently, it is a social responsibility and religious obligation on parents to look after their children. They are responsible for proper brought up and wellbeing of their children physical, social, psychological and as well as mental. Okpala, Okpala & Smith, (2001) were of the view that parents play a significant role in bringing up their children and nurturing their mental health.

In Muslim society mother's lap is assumed to be the first school or institution of learning where children learn etiquettes, mannerism and moral values to build their later life. Therefore, one may say that personality development of children seems to be associated with parenting practices during early years which Piaget referred to (infancy) pre-operational stage of life.

An extensive literature exists individually on mental health, parenting styles & practices and academic performance and learning achievement of elementary school students. However, Gadsden (2003), and Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow & Fendrich (1999) revealed significant impact of parenting styles and practices on academic performance of school students, their adjustment in school(s) and behavior.

Similarly, the study of Gadsden (2003) affirmed that increased association and cooperation of parents with their children; proper monitoring of their activities and trust enhanced their academic performance. While the results of the study of Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple, & Peay (1999) found that the students were mentally healthy and academically high achievers who were supervised regularly and involved in some activities by their parents with due social liberty.

Similarly, Duncan (1994) anticipated adjustment of students in schools' environment through moral and psychological support of family. It further backs the concern of parents to support their children at school leaving an effect on their academic performance and learning achievement.

Consistency between parenting practices (particularly, monitoring and trust) and academic performance of students was found Hill & Craft (2003). It was also reported that parents played an effective role in education of their children who were consistently concerned to their activities.

In the same way Entwisle & Hyduk (1988) described role of parents to be significant in academic success of their children. However, Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, (1999) viewed parenting practices as determinants of students' behaviors. They asserted that involvement of parents in negative activities and such attitude towards education appeared to be linked with negative behavior and low performance of their children in schools; whereas, positive attitude resulted in enhanced academic performance of students (Rim-Kaufman, Pianta, Cox, & Bradley, 2003).

The above discussion demonstrates that a few researches have focused different aspects of the phenomenon under discussion. Therefore, this study –academic performance, mental health and parenting practices of elementary school students was justifiably conducted.

Research Methodology

Participants of the Study

Participants were 246 elementary school students, their parents and teachers. All of the children were males between 12-15 years' age and their mean age was 13.83(SD=1.74). They were contacted at seven elementary schools of Multan, Pakistan through convenient sampling technique. Parents belonged to 34-47 years age group, and mean of their age was 42.63(SD=6.51); with different level of education and economic status.

Research Instruments

Parenting Practices Scale

Parenting practices were measured using Dimensions of Parenting Scale (Smith & McVie, 2003). It has eight subscales measuring eight different parenting practices namely; monitoring, trust/autonomy, and parents/child conflict, time spent together, disclosure, parental punishment, negotiation, and consistency. The responses were obtained on scores from 0 to 3, and the scores were added up to get a total score on each subscale.

The Academic Performance Rating Scale (APRS)

The Academic Performance Rating Scale (DuPaul & Rapport, 1991) has 19 items with 5-point rating scale. This scale is a teacher-reported measure where teachers rank the academic performance and behaviors of children in the classroom. Higher scores indicate higher classroom academic performance. As the present study intended to measure only academic performance and no other behaviors, only two items on the APRS measuring child's actual classroom academic performance were used: "accuracy of the child's completed written math work" and "accuracy of the child's written language arts work". These two items were highly correlated ($r = .84, p < .001$). A classroom academic performance was obtained by calculating the mean score on two items.

Me and My School (M&MS) for Assessing Mental Health

Deighton (2012) constructed the scale to measure the mental health of school children for the Me and My School Project. It is a child-reported measure with 24-items. It has two subscales; emotional problems and behavioral problems. Children are instructed to rank how often they feel and behave a certain way in response to series of negatively and positively phrased items. Responses are obtained on 3-point rating scale; never, sometimes, always. Higher score shows the high level of mental health.

Procedure of Data Collection

Data were collected from the 246 school children, their teachers and parents. After obtaining the consent from all of the participants, children completed parenting dimension and mental health tools in classroom settings; parents completed parenting dimension measure delivered to them by their children closed in envelope; and teachers reported about academic performance on two items during school time. Children were clearly instructed in the classroom how to response on all items. Instructions for teachers and parents were clearly written on the tools to be filled by them. Confidentiality for responses on all tools was ensured to the participants of the study. The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS-17 version.

Data Analysis and Results of the Study and Discussion

The collected data were analyzed through SPSS-17 version for finding correlation between different variables. The results of the study are demonstrated below in tabular form.

Table-1: Correlation showing the (a) relationship of Children/Parents-reported Parenting Practices with Academic Performance & Mental Health, (b) relationship b/w Children & Parents' Score on Parenting Measure

Parenting Practices	Children Outcomes						Correlation b/w Child & Parents
	Academic Performance			Mental Health			
	Child	Parent	Composite	Child	Parent	Composite	
Monitoring	.61**	.53**	.65**	.71**	.63**	.68**	.50**
Trust / Autonomy	.47*	.42*	.45*	.51*	.46*	.55*	.33*
Parent/Child Conflict	-.29	-.21*	-.24	-.22	-.25	-.18	-.05
Time Together	.52*	.50*	.58*	.63**	.53**	.65**	.37*
Disclosure	.51*	.44*	.53*	.56*	.47*	.53*	.41*
Parental Punishment	-.20	-.17	-.24	-.16	-.29	-.19	-.17
Negotiation	.45*	.43*	.46*	.53*	.41*	.57*	.38*
Consistency	.44*	.45*	.49*	.53*	.48*	.56*	.39*

Table-1 shows the correlation coefficients for the scores of children-reported and parent-reported parenting practices with academic performance (first two columns), and with mental health (4th & 5th columns). Results indicate the significant correlation coefficients of parenting practices except parental conflict and punishment with academic performance and mental health of students.

However the children- reported scores are found to be more associated with their academic performance and mental health as compared to that of parent-reported. Therefore, it affirms that different parenting dimensions adopted by parents have different effects on behaviors of students at school.

Effective parenting practices like monitoring, trust in relationship, spending time together, negotiation with consistency are found positively associated with academic performance and mental health of students.

Findings demonstrate negative relationship of child/parent conflict and parental punishment with wellbeing of students and their achievements in schools. Consistent with these findings, the composite correlation column further presents evidence that most of the parenting practices are positively correlated with academic performance and mental health of elementary school students.

The overall findings are in accordance with the findings of Patterson, Reid, and Dishion, (1992) who reported that parents who have conflicts with their children –their desires and activities, and punish them to control their behaviors develop negative behavioral tendencies among their children.

Children become aggressive that disturb their performance and psychological wellbeing. Contrary to this, effective parenting is way to produce psychologically healthy and academically sound children. Such parents supervise their children properly which results in enhanced academic performance and mental health of elementary school students.

Table-2: Standard Regression Model showing impact of Parenting Practices on Children Academic Performance

Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	P
(Constant)	6582.41	159.19		4.62	.002**
Monitoring	.632	.068	.577	4.50	.000**
Trust /Autonomy	.412	.093	.401	2.31	.024*
Parent/Child Conflict	.163	.025	.151	0.79	.241
Time Together	.362	.063	.299	1.99	.043*
Disclosure	.474	.058	.391	3.01	.007**
Parental Punishment	.185	.050	.074	1.31	.104
Negotiation	.343	.075	.208	2.07	.015*
Consistency	.416	.011	.372	2.82	.001**

$R^2 = 0.64$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.49$, ($F(8, 238) = 11.59$, $p < 0.001$), * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$,

The table-2 reveals that dependent variable of academic performance is 64% explained by the independent variables of parenting practices as indicated by the value of $R^2 = 0.64$. A significant F -value for the standard regression model ($F(8, 238) = 11.59$, $p < 0.001$) also depicts that model significantly explains the outcome variable.

Examining the t -values from the table is also an indicative of the notion that parenting practices are significantly contributing in the prediction of academic performance except two of the dimensions; child/parent conflict and parental punishment.

Table-3: Standard Regression Model showing impact of Parenting Practices on Children Mental Health

Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	P
(Constant)	6301.02	141.03		3.60	.000**
Monitoring	.512	.041	.468	3.93	.000**
Trust/ Autonomy	.259	.014	.208	1.98	.037*
Parent/Child Conflict	.104	.009	.015	0.83	.403
Time Together	.361	.078	.302	3.47	.000**
Disclosure	.516	.062	.459	4.08	.000**
Parental Punishment	.236	.089	.167	1.81	.113
Negotiation	.305	.082	.237	2.41	.018*
Consistency	.374	.047	.313	2.01	.024*

$R^2 = 0.69$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.58$, ($F(8, 238) = 14.71$, $p < 0.001$), * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$,

Table-3 reveals that dependent variable of mental health of children is 69% explained by the independent variables of parenting practices as indicted by the value of $R^2 = 0.69$. A significant F -value for the standard regression model ($F(8, 238) = 14.71$, $p < 0.001$) also depicts that model significantly explains the outcome variable. Examining the t -values from the table is also an indicative of the notion that parenting practices are significantly contributing in predicting mental health of students except two of the dimensions; child/parent conflict and parental punishment.

Findings from regression analyses from tables-2 and 3 are in line with the findings of Eccles and Harold's study (1996) who reported that the value of parent's attitudes toward education of their children remain unrealized for a long time; however, apparently attitudes are accounted for parenting styles and hence they affect relationship between parents and children. Parenting practices affect learning of students in and out of the school.

Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom (1993) suggested parenting practices to be aligned with achievements of children in schools, their classroom behavior, and students-teacher relationship. The findings of the study of Kerr and Stattin (2000) also support the findings of this study. They asserted that parental control and monitoring become more effective when feel comfortable in discussing and sharing their emotions with parents.

Conclusion

The results indicated positively significant relationship of mental health and academic performance of elementary school students with six parenting dimensions of the eight: monitoring, trust, spending time together, disclosure, negotiation, and consistency; while parent/child conflict and parental punishment show negative relationship. Mental health and academic performance of elementary school students are predicted by parental practices except punishment and parent/child conflict.

Comparison between parent-reported and child reported parenting practices showed that responses of both parents and children on parenting practices were positively correlated with each other. However, the child-reported parenting practices were found more closely associated with their academic performance and mental health as compared to that of parent-reported practices.

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