

## A Short Review of the Relationship between Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Performance

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Received: 20 October 2021

Revised: 21 November 2021

Accepted: 19 December 2021

### Abstract

Parental involvement in the education of their children is a key function of child total functioning as well as their academic success. This paper review the research literature on the relationship among parenting practices such as parenting style, parents' expectations, parental home and school involvement activities and students' academic performance with the focus on elementary and middle school level. To conduct a comprehensive review on above relationship, researchers have used JSTOR data base and Google Scholar. The reviews of empirical researches indicate that different constructs of parental involvement play an important role in various ways. Several studies however indicate a decline in parental involvement during the middle or above school levels. Furthermore, the review indicates that authoritative parenting style is positively associated academic performance across all school level, although this finding is not consistent across ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic status. Parental home based and school based involvements have also been positively related to academic performance with some inconsistency. One the other hand parental expectations for their child educational attainment have the strongest impact on academic performance compared with other types of parental involvement constructs such as participation in school events, parent-child communication, and help in homework.

**Keywords:** Parental Involvement, Parenting Style, Parents' Expectations, Parental Home Involvement, School Involvement, Academic Performance.

### How to cite the article:

*H. Adhami Sayadmahaleh, A Short Review of the Relationship between Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Performance, J. Practical Soc. Psyc., 2021; 2(6): 01-06,*

### Introduction

Educational researchers have long been interested in the positive effect that parental involvement may have on the academic achievement of their children (e.g., Epstein, 1991 ;Fan & Chen, 2001). The perception that parental involvement has positive effects on students' academic achievement has led to a voluminous body of literature about parental involvement (Jeynes, 2003; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Policymakers and researchers seem to have agreed that parental involvement is a critical ingredient for children's academic success (Graves & Wright, 2011; Mattingly et al., 2002). Parents who are active participants in their children's education are thought to promote children's social, emotional and academic growth (Green et al. 2007). Parental involvement in education of their children is a key function of child total functioning as well as their academic success. Parental involvement practices

at home or at school have been found to influence children's academic performance (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Hill & Craft, 2003). Parents play a dynamic role to enhance their children's academic outcomes. They provide financial support, emotional support, motivational support and facilitate the sources (e.g., Books, Newspaper, and Educational toys etc.) to ensure their children's better academic performance. Despite the importance of parental involvement in students' education, the operational term of parental involvement has not been appeared consistently in different research studies.

Parental involvement can be defined as any interaction between parents and children at home or with the school to ensure that the children's academic performance is going in a positive way. Feurstein (2000) defined parental involvement as activity encompassing a wide range of behaviors discussing school activities with children to attending parent-teacher conference. Moreover,

Holloway et al. (2008) defined parent involvement as the initiation of home based behaviors like monitoring homework as well as school based activities such as attending school events and communication with teachers. In a more constructive way, Ralph McNeal Jr. (2001) listed four elements of parental involvement. One of the most important element of this model was parent child discussion. Other elements of Ralph McNeal Jr. model were parents' involvement in Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), direct engagement in school activities and monitoring children's progress. Furthermore parental involvement has been constructed in various research studies as representing different parental practices and behaviours such as parent child discussion (e.g., Christenson et al., 1992), parental expectation for their children academic achievement (e.g., Hall et al.,1997; Syb et al.,2008; Sanders & Sheldon,2009), parents' participation in school activities (e.g., Barnard, 2004; Stevenson & Baker,1987), and different parenting styles (e.g., Dornbush et al.,1987; Steinberg et al.1992). This inconsistent construct of parental involvement makes it difficult to arrive at any general conclusion across studies. On the other hand research studies also show inconsistent findings. Some research studies revealed a positive relationship between parental involvement and students' achievement (Barnard, 2004; Christenson et al., 1992; Singh et al., 1995) and others reported no measurable to negative effect of parental involvement on academic achievement (Keith at al., 1986; Tokac & Kacayoruk, 2012). Keeping in mind this contradictory constructs and outcomes of parental involvement, in this paper an attempt has been made to synthesize the research literature on the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement of students with focus on elementary and middle level. In addition, which parental involvement construct is more effectively associated with students' academic performance have also been emphasized in this paper.

## REVIEW PROCESS

To conduct a comprehensive review of the literature on the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic performance, researchers have used JSTOR data base and Google Scholars. The search was not limited to a particular date range. The following terms were used as keywords to reflect parental involvement in education: Parental involvement, Parental home based involvement, parent school partnership, parent participation in school activities, parenting styles, parent child discussion and parental expectation or aspiration. On the other hand academic performance included Grades, GPA (Grade Point Average), Math achievement test,

Reading achievement test, English achievement test, and Science achievement test.

## Parenting style and Academic performance

One of the most important construct in the development of students' social and academic achievement has been termed as parenting style. Parenting style is defined as a complex set of behaviors, attitude and emotional climate in which parents raise their children (Shut et al., 2011; Darling and Steinberg, 1993). Boumrind (1978) identified three primary parenting typologies as authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. In addition, Maccoby and Martin (1983) added one more dimension named indulgent. After factor analysis of data on these basic typologies Baumrind (1991) characterized parenting style in two dimensions: demandingness and responsiveness. Authoritative parents are both demanding and responsive in nature. They show affection with their child and support their exploration and pursuit of interests (Baumrind, 1978; Dornbush et al., 1987; Maccoby and Martin, 1983). Authoritarian parents are demanding but not responsive. They show a low level of interest, lower affiliation and not interested in open communication with their child (Baumrind, 1978; Dornbush et al., 1987; Maccoby and Martin, 1983). Permissive parents are responsive but not demanding and on the other hand indulgent parents are neither demanding nor responsive (Dornbush et al., 1987; Maccoby and Martin, 1983). In this section, an overview of the relevant research studies on parenting style and its impact on student outcomes have been presented in brief. A majority of research studies have concluded a positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and students' academic achievement (e.g., eg. Dornbush et al., 1987; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1991), on the other hand authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are negatively related to academic outcome (Baumrind,1978; Dornbush et al.,1987; Maccoby,2000). In a very earlier study, Baumrind (1967) found that preschool children of authoritative parents were more active, prosocial and achievement oriented but preschool children of permissive parents show low self reliance and under competence. Baumrind (1991) again examined this relationship during adolescence and concluded that school outcomes were positively associated with authoritative parenting style as found in earlier preschool students. In another study, Dornbush et al. (1987) developed and tested a reformation of Boumrind's (1978) typology of parenting styles. They concluded that authoritarian and permissive parenting style was negatively associated with both male and female adolescents. Parental affection was also found to

be one of the strongest predictors of students' school achievement, for example in a study Deslands et al. (1998) found that parental democratic support is a strong predictor of school achievement for both males and females. Jaynes(2007) meta analytical study also approved this strong positive association between parenting style ( defined as supportive, helpful and maintaining an adequate level of discipline ) and academic performance for secondary school students.

In another study, Steinberg et al.(1992) found that authoritative parenting tends to a better school performance(GPA) and school engagement of adolescents, further they concluded that these parents also influence their children's through their direct involvement in school activities such as attending parent teacher meetings, helping in homework, and by setting and maintaining high performance standards. In the same vein, Nyarko (2011) found that both mother's and father's authoritative was positively related to the academic achievement of secondary school students. In another study, Paulson (1994) explored the influence of parenting style (demandingness and responsiveness) on the achievement of early adolescents. Both maternal and paternal demandingness and responsiveness predicted the achievement positively. Deslandes et al. (1997) conducted a study with two instruments developed by Steinber et al. (1992) and Epstein et al. (1993). They concluded that adolescents who perceive their parents as being firm, warmth, and democratic in nature, performed better at secondary school than their peers. This result also conforms the association reported by other researchers (e.g., Dornbush et al.,1987; Kim, 2002). In a study, Marchant (2001) reported that parenting styles (demandingness and responsiveness), parental involvement (values and participation in school functioning), and teaching styles (demandingness and responsiveness) factors significantly predicted their children's school achievement. These findings also confirm the association between supportive environment and academic achievement at early level of adolescence.

Adaptation of academic strategies also is affected by parenting styles. For example, investigation of Aunoka et al. (2000) shows that adolescents from authoritative families applied most adaptive achievement strategies on the other hand adolescents from neglected families applied maladaptive and task avoidant strategies. Further Aunoka et al. (2000) concluded that these strategies were significantly associated with academic performance. Parenting styles were not only related with achievement but also moderated the parenting practices. The relationship between

parental involvement practices (eg. monitoring and helping in homework) and adolescents' school achievement have been found better for authoritative parents (Paulson et al., 1998; Steinberg et al.1992)

### **School-based Parental Involvement and Academic Performance**

Parents' school based involvement refers to parents' participation in school activity such as Parent Teacher Organisation (PTOs), volunteer work, visit to classroom and interaction with class teachers. A substantial amount of research studies have shown that parents' involvement in school is associated with children's academic performance in various ways. Parents' school involvement positively affects school environment and classroom learning (Pena, 2000). In addition, parental school involvement not only enhances the teacher efficiency but establishes a good school community relationship also (Henderson,1987; Pena, 2000). Within an elementary school context, parents are more likely to visit the classroom and make interaction with class teachers. Such visits and interactions increase parents' knowledge about the curriculum, enhance mutual understanding and increase the effectiveness of parental involvement at home (Comor, 1995; Epstein, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004).

In a study, Deutcher and Ibe (2000) found a positive relationship between parents' volunteering at school and motivational level of students. They also concluded that students whose parents regularly kept contact with teacher were more motivated to search extra information about a topic not only in school but outside of school also. Miedel and Reynolds (1999) conducted a longitudinal study to investigate the association between parent involvement in intervention and children's later school competence. Results of this study indicate that number of activities in which parents participated in preschool were significantly related to academic achievement and lower rate of grade retention at 8th grade. Using data from Chicago longitudinal study, Barnard (2004) reported that parental school involvement activities such as communication with the school, help in class activities and participation in school activities were significantly associated with lower rates of high school dropout, greater likelihood of completing high school and achieving a high grade. Further, this study revealed that parent involvement in elementary school provides long lasting benefits to children throughout high school. An important trend has been found by the researchers that the parents of early school aged children are likely to be more involved in school activity rather than the parents of older children (Epstein and Dauber, 1991; Stevenson and Baker,

1987). Parents' positive attitude towards teachers, school and child education at elementary level also tend to enhance academic performance and such parents make contact with teachers when students have academic or behavior problems (Topor, 2010). In a study, Shumow et al. (2004) found that the level of parents' education positively associated with parents' involvement in high school. Increase in parents' education level gradually tends to increase parents' involvement in school (also found in Stevenson and Baker, 1987). Further Shumow et al. (2004) concluded that parents' involvement in school was positively related to how skilled students feel during class, their grade attainment and long term academic expectations.

In a study McNeal Jr. (2014) found that parental involvement in PTOs (Parent Teacher Organizations) meeting is strongly associated with 8th grade students' science achievement but it has weak to non-significant relationship with absenteeism, homework and truancy. Using data from the National Longitudinal study of Adolescent Health, Mo and Singh (2008) concluded that parental involvement at middle school had a significant effect on students' engagement at school. Students whose parents stay connected with the school are likely to have higher school engagement and better performance. The level of parental involvement and its impact on students' academic achievement has not been found in the same way for elementary schools to upper school levels. Some researchers have reported that the strength of the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement tend to decline from elementary level to upper school level (Singh et al, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001).

In a meta analytical study at middle schools, Hill and Tyson (2009) found that parent's school based involvement activities such as volunteering at school and attending school events were moderately associated with achievement, whereas Fan (2001) reported, communication with school teachers have a negative relationship with students' academic achievement. In the same way, Tan and Goldberg (2009) reported that parental direct involvement at school (e.g., Attending PTA, helping in the classroom, contact with class teachers, and attending school functions) were positively associated with early adolescents' school enjoyment but had a negative association with overall grades. Further, they indicated that negative association was held only for those students whose parents had a belief that their children did not need help in school. In a study, Tokac and Kacayoruk (2012) found that parents attending school events have a negative effect on middle school students' math achievement. The reason behind this adverse effect they suggested

that the parents' collaboration might make the students feel pressure and this pressure affects the students' achievement. Furthermore, McNeal Jr (2001) addressed the influence of parental involvement at secondary school and concluded that PTO involvement and monitoring were positively associated with behavioral outcome (reduced likelihood of truancy and dropping out) while inversely related to cognitive outcomes such as lower science achievement.

### **Parental Expectation/Aspiration and Academic Performance**

Parental expectation and aspiration have been used interchangeably in most of the research studies. Taken together, expectation and aspiration are those belief or judgment that parents have about their children's future academic performance which could be reflected in high grades, high level of schooling attained or college attendance (Shute, 2011; Goldenberg et al., 2001; Glick & white, 2004). Parental expectation or aspiration have appeared as a variable in many parental involvement studies and generally have been found to play important role in children's academic performance. For example, parental expectation as one of the most important predictor of academic achievement has been found in various meta analytical studies (e.g., Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeyens, 2007; Wilder, 2014). Further, these meta analytical studies concluded that parental involvement appeared to have a more significant impact at elementary school level than later school level. When parents keep high expectation for their children then they are more likely to provide resources such as books and other educational materials, help in home work and engage in cognitive enrichment activities such as a trip to the zoo, library etc. (Alexander & Entwistle, 1996). Similarly, Sanders and Sheldon (2009) found that students, whose parents showed high educational expectation to their children, discussed with their children about school and future plans and monitored their homework, had a tendency to get a higher grade in English and reading achievement tests. In general, students whose parents hold high expectation from them, perform better in school and persist longer in school than children whose parents hold relatively low expectation (DavisKean, 2005; Pearce, 2006). Furthermore, Eccles et al. (1982) assessed the parents' expectation on middle age children's achievement self-concept and belief. They found that parental expectation indirectly affects students achievement by parents' influence on their child's abilities and capabilities, which in turn enhance academic competency belief and sense of efficacy. In a study of 9-16 years old children, Benner and Mistry (2007) found that parental expectation was

associated with students' perception of academic skill and ability to learn a new concept in math reading achievement, which in turn related to children's achievement. Moreover, Halle et al. (1997) and Syb et al. (2005) concluded that parents who show higher expectation and place a higher value on their child's educational attainment tend to be more engaged in achievement related activities such as help in reading, sending them to the extracurricular lesson and monitor their educational progress. In a longitudinal study, using data from Chicago longitudinal study Gill and Reynolds (1999) found that children who reported that their parents expected them to do well in middle school, scored significantly higher in reading and math achievement. In another longitudinal study of 6-13 years aged children conducted by Putchick et al. (2009), was demonstrated the long-lasting effect of parental expectation on children's expectation. They concluded that parental educational expectations influenced their children's academic performance five years later via mediating effect of children's expectations, even controlling the children's baseline academic achievement.

### **Home based Parental Involvement and Academic Performance**

Home based involvement includes strategies like communication between parents and children, creating a learning environment at home, monitoring and helping in homework. In a study on secondary school students, Zakaria (2013) found that interaction and communication, parenting practices, leisure, openness, and acceptance were the predictive factors of parental involvement and had a positive relationship with students' achievement. Students may perceive their homework activities as less difficult and more enjoyable when parents are involved. For example, Leon & Richards (1989) concluded that when parents assist their children in homework then they student enjoy doing homework. Using self-determination theory as a theoretical framework for investigating the role of parents in the quality of motivation that students adopt toward homework, Katz et al. (2011) concluded that parents' behavior such as competence, beliefs and positive attitude towards the task of homework, support the children's psychological needs and these needs positively related to children's autonomous motivation for doing homework. Parents' positive attitude toward their role raised academic performance also. For example, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) found that parents' positive attitude toward their own role in their child's education, influenced their involvement which was reflected as child's wellbeing and good academic performance. Similarly, Cooper et al.

(1998) found that parents' attitudes toward homework were positively associated with students' higher grades in elementary school. In another study Hill and Craft (2003) found that parent's engagement in child's home activities was a significant predictor of math achievement score among elementary school students.

In a study on middle school students, Shui-Chu and Willms (2009) reported that parents from a different level of family background provided an almost similar level of home supervision. They also concluded that parents' discussion with children about school related activities at home had the stronger relationship with academic achievement rather than parents' participation at school. In a study, Regnar (2009) found that parents academic monitoring positively predicted mastery goal of middle school students. Clark (1993) concluded that if parents monitor their children's behavior after school then children were more likely to achieve high grades in school. In the same way, Keith et al. (1993) conducted a study on middle school students and found a positive relationship between parental involvement in homework checking and students' academic performance. They Further concluded this achievement tend to high when parents monitor their children's activities such as television watching.

A study drawn upon ecological perspective, Tam and Chan (2009) concluded that parents' provision of guidelines and structure were positively related to children's efficacy beliefs in academic performance as well as self-regulated learning among elementary school students. Research studies show that the benefit of parent's involvement varies according to students' school level (Regner, 2009; Seginer, 2006; & Jeynes, 2007). Despite these positive impact of parents' involvement in home based activities, some researchers have highlighted that parental home based involvement create null to negative outcomes also. For example in a study Pezdek et al. (2002) found, parent involvement in homework activity is unrelated to children academic performance. Similarly, Fan and Chen (2001) reported that parental involvement in the home as measured by parental supervision is not significantly associated with academic achievement across middle school. This inverse pattern also emerged in Jeyens (2005) meta-analysis, which reported no relationship between parents' involvement in home activities and academic achievement among elementary school students.

### **CONCLUSION**

The research studies on parenting practices as related to students' academic achievement have focused on several important parenting constructs

such as parental involvement in home activities, participation in school events, monitoring and communication with children, parenting style and educational expectations. In terms of these parenting practices, the research studies suggest that when parents are actively involved in their children's educational activities, show affection to their children, participate in school events, democratic and responsive in nature, and keep positive educational expectation then students' academic performance becomes higher. Although the conclusion that parental involvement has a positive impact on students' academic performance is an intuitively appealing concern for educationist but there is still a great deal of inconsistency and contradiction in the empirical research literature. Moreover, the multifaceted construct of parental involvement and the different measurements for academic performance contributed to the inconsistency and contradiction make it difficult to come to general conclusion. Apart from this, the psychological variables of students like students' will to learn, their ability, inclination towards academics perseverance and other relevant variables have not been considered in the studies reviewed. This may also be the cause of inconsistent and contradictory findings in the studies mentioned in the review.

In term of parenting style, the research studies indicate that authoritative parenting style to be positively associated with students' academic achievement across all school level. However, some of the studies have concluded that this association is not consistent across ethnicity, culture and socioeconomic status (Dornbush et al.,1987; Steinberg et al. 1992; & Leung et al.,1998). Authoritative parenting was positively associated with Grade Point Average for white families but not for Asian, Black, and Hispanic (Dornbush et al., 1987; Steinberg et al. 1992). In addition some researchers have claimed that parental expectations for their child educational attainment have the strongest impact on academic performance compared with other types of parental involvement construct such as participation in school events, parent child communication and help in homework (Fan, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Singh et al., 1995). Furthermore, studies also reveal that parents' educational

expectations have a significant impact at elementary level than in later grades (Jeynes, 2007).

Parents' home based involvement and school based involvement have also been found positively related to academic performance. In home based involvement strategies such as checking homework or helping in homework has been found inconsistently associated with academic achievement as compared to other types of home based involvement. Parents' School based involvement including volunteering at school, visiting the school, and attending school events are also positively associated with the academic performance but this association becomes weaker when students move from elementary school level to upper school level (middle or high school). At upper school level schools are large and complex, students have multiple teachers and it becomes difficult for parents to build warm relation with each teacher and spend sufficient time in school. Moreover at upper school level students become more independent and responsible so they do not want their parents to visit the school (Stevenson & Baker, 1987).

Overall, most of the view of authors and finding of the studies in this literature review have concluded that parental involvement, whether at home or at school, have a positive relationship with students' academic performance. Furthermore, the impact of this positive relationship tend to fall as children get older or as they entered in higher schools level but we can't deny the importance of parental involvement practices during the entire period of students' schooling to ensure their positive development and better academic performance.