AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND CHILD SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN KARACHI, PAKISTAN

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ASIA e UNIVERSITY
2023

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A Thesis Submitted to Asia e University in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2023

ABSTRACT

Parental involvement and a child's social-emotional learning (SEL) are vital factors in a child's holistic development. This study emphasizes the essential role of parental involvement in children's SEL development in Pakistan, highlighting the need for context-sensitive approaches. It explores the critical, yet under-explored, link between Pakistani parental involvement and the social and emotional development of children aged 5-10 years. It also examines how disparities in socioeconomic backgrounds affect parents' priorities for their children's SEL. There is a significant gap in understanding how Pakistani parents contribute to their children's SEL growth. Hence the objectives of this study are to provide a comprehensive overview of how Pakistani parental involvement affects their children's SEL, and how socioeconomic background influences the priorities Pakistani parents assign to different aspects of children's SEL. A mixed-method research design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive view of how parental involvement affects SEL outcomes. Key findings reveal significant socioeconomic disparities between the Orangi and Southern districts of Karachi, influencing parental involvement. Hypothesis testing yielded the results that Pakistani parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds have a broader understanding of SEL, encompassing a wider range of skills such as emotional regulation, empathy, and self-advocacy compared to parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Regarding the influence of SES and culture, limited access to resources and chronic stress associated with low SES might hinder Pakistani parents' ability to provide consistent and responsive support for their children's social-emotional needs. However, in Karachi the Orangi district parents were found to be responsive and involved despite their lower SES. Lastly, Pakistani parents often prioritize social skills like cooperation and respect for authority, reflecting the collectivist nature of Pakistani culture, especially in lower SES areas. These findings emphasize the need for context-sensitive approaches to provide effective support.

Keywords: Parental involvement, child social-emotional learning (SEL), child's development, Pakistan

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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……
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(27 May 2024)

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfillment of the PhD degree is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the program and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

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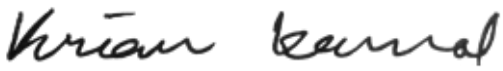

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would have not been possible without the interest, help and encouragement of many people.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my husband Ali Saif. He has been a constant source of encouragement and help for me throughout this journey. He was always there to provide me with technical support and would also keep my spirits high in moments of distress. I would also like to thank my colleagues, and extended family members who made this research possible, and who made the data collection an enjoyable experience.

A special note of thanks goes to my supervisor, Professor Dato' Paduka Dr Mohamed Anwar Bin Omar Din, for his invaluable guidance and support. His expertise and insights have greatly enriched this study.

I am also grateful to Prof. Dato' Dr. Hj. Mohamad Nasir Bin Hj. Saludin for reviewing my project and providing me with valuable feedback. His constructive criticism and input have significantly enhanced the quality of this research.

Most of all, I would like to thank my family and friends who have been patient and understanding, and have offered both emotional and practical support.

Last but not the least; I want to thank my beautiful sons, Rumi Kabir Ali and Khalil Gibran Ali who are a constant source of content and happiness in my life. Their infectious energy and radiant smiles have been a continuous source of motivation and joy, inspiring me to complete this endeavour.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECCE	Early Childhood and Care Education
PE	Parental Engagement
SED	Social Emotional Development
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
PEQ	Parental Engagement Questionnaire
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

For centuries and to date it has always been a firm belief that parental influence has direct and indirect effects on a child's life. And many studies have even proved this concept, that not only family involvement influences a child's personality but it also greatly affects the child's education (Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

According to Koch (2018), parental interaction and involvement play a crucial role in the social and emotional development of children. The involvement of parents in early childhood education has a substantial impact on the advancement of both academic and non-academic accomplishments in preschool-aged children. These achievements include factors such as school attendance, behavioural patterns, and the enhancement of executive functioning skills.

Hence, one might posit that social and emotional learning assumes a pivotal part in the holistic welfare of children, encompassing their moral progression, academic drive, and educational achievements (Elias et al., 1997; CASEL, 2016).

In the present era, technology propels the world forward. Consequently, every nation must attain technological and economic prowess in the worldwide information-driven economy. This is essential for aligning with global educational and occupational benchmarks and for equipping the nation's youth to thrive within the international economic arena. Parents hold the responsibility of not only fostering academic excellence but also nurturing the well-rounded growth of their children. Collaboratively, schools and parents need to deliberately and proactively foster the growth of both academic aptitude and socio-emotional competencies in youngsters.

Advocates for social and emotional intelligence assert that emotional intelligence stands as a concept distinct within psychological realms encompassing personality and cognitive capacities. This concept holds the promise of unearthing significant revelations about the underpinnings of various phenomena entwined with affective states, cognition, and emotions. (Law, et al., 2004; Salovey & Sluyter, 1997; Schutte et al., 2001).

By employing affectionate and receptive parenting techniques, parents establish a foundation for promoting optimal social, emotional, and cognitive development throughout infancy and throughout subsequent stages of growth. It is well established that parents matter greatly for their children's growth, development and success in the practical world as well as in academia.

The practice known as "serve and return" refers to the prompt and effective response of parents to their infants' demands. Over time, this reciprocal interaction aids in the development of self-regulatory skills in children. The developmental trajectory of children involves a transition from a state of complete dependence on adults to a gradual acquisition of autonomy and self-regulation in terms of their physical, cognitive, and emotional capacities, according to the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000).

During the developmental stages of childhood, the establishment of trust in parents and other primary caregivers contributes to the overall cultivation of a pervasive sense of well-being and security. According to Ainsworth and Bell (1970), this phenomenon diminishes individuals' apprehension towards novel circumstances and facilitates the cultivation of developmentally beneficial inclinations to investigate their environment.

In recent times, emotional intelligence has gained prominence in the realm of Psychology concerning young children (Goleman, 1998; Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002; Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2007; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Advocates of emotional quotient contend that it occupies a distinctive space within psychological domains linked to personality and cognitive capabilities. They propose that this framework holds promise for yielding substantial insights into the origins of diverse phenomena that are intricately linked to cognition, emotions, and feelings. (Law, et al., 2004; Salovey & Sluyter, 1997; Schutte et al., 2001).

A study by Green et al. (2019) explores the link between parental involvement and children's social-emotional development, highlighting the mediating role of emotional clarity. It delves into how parents' communication about emotions can contribute to children's ability to understand and express their own feelings effectively.

According to research, there are numerous variables that might affect a child's emotional intelligence, including peer relationships, stressors in the home and community, academic performance, and parenting methods. The degree and advancement of children's social, emotional and holistic development could be strengthened or hindered by the impact and effects of these variables.

In comparison to other mentioned influences, it is strongly believed that the kind of parenting style is the most impactful on children’s emotional intelligence. (Richberg & Fletcher, 2002).

Parents are the first caregivers and guide for children. They are the first humans that the child has an interaction with, hence their actions and behaviour plays

a significant role in the child's overall development. There is abundant literature which emphasizes on the importance of Early Childhood Care and Development. The young brain is constantly changing its size and shape in responses to everything it encounters. New environments, life experiences interactions with parents and relationships can all affect the way the complex brain circuits are wired. As Sanders and Sheldon (2009) state "Parental involvement is critical for a child's social and emotional development and appropriate behaviour in school."

1.1 Background of the Study

Parental involvement is crucial for children's social-emotional development, yet in Pakistan, this area remains under-explored. As the largest and most populous city, Karachi reflects significant socio-economic disparities that deeply influence parental priorities and participation. Parents in affluent areas may have more resources and time to invest, while those in lower-income districts like Orangi often face challenges that limit their ability to engage fully.

1.1.1 Socioeconomic Background of the Orangi and Southern District of Karachi

The socio-economic backgrounds of the Orangi District and the Southern District of Karachi present a stark contrast, reflecting the broader economic disparities within the city. Orangi, one of the largest informal settlements in Karachi, is predominantly inhabited by low-income families. The residents face numerous challenges, including limited access to basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation, and healthcare. Educational facilities are often under-resourced, and many children in Orangi work part-time to support their families, which can affect their educational and social development. The employment opportunities in Orangi are primarily in low-wage, informal sectors, which perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

In contrast, the Southern District of Karachi, which includes affluent areas such as Clifton and Defense, is characterized by higher socio-economic status. Residents of this district enjoy better access to quality healthcare, education, and recreational facilities. The population in the Southern District often has higher educational attainment and engages in professional or managerial occupations, resulting in a higher standard of living. Children in these areas benefit from a range of extracurricular activities and resources that support their social and emotional development.

1.1.1.1 The Condition, Attitudes and Tendencies of the Parents in Orangi and Southern District Towards Involvement and Child Social Emotional Learning

Orangi District

In Orangi District, the socio-economic challenges significantly impact parents' conditions, attitudes, and tendencies towards involvement in their children's social-emotional learning (SEL). Many parents in Orangi face financial instability, working long hours in low-paying jobs to make ends meet. This economic pressure limits their availability to actively participate in their children's education and SEL activities. Despite these challenges, parents in Orangi often recognize the importance of education and emotional development. However, their involvement tends to be constrained by a lack of resources and support systems. The community’s limited access to quality educational materials and extracurricular programs further hampers parents' ability to engage fully in their children's SEL.

Southern District

In contrast, parents in the Southern District of Karachi generally have more favourable conditions and attitudes towards involvement in their children's SEL. These parents typically enjoy higher socio-economic status, with better access to resources such as quality education, healthcare, and extracurricular activities. Their higher educational attainment and professional backgrounds often lead to a greater awareness of the importance of SEL. Parents in this district are more likely to participate in school activities, seek out enrichment programs, and provide a supportive home environment conducive to their children's emotional and social development. They have the means to invest time and resources into their children's education, fostering a positive attitude towards active involvement in SEL.

Comparative Tendencies

Comparatively, parents in Orangi tend to emphasize basic educational needs and may struggle to prioritize SEL due to economic constraints. Their involvement, though earnest, is often reactive and driven by immediate needs rather than proactive engagement. Conversely, parents in the Southern District exhibit proactive involvement, with a tendency to integrate SEL into daily routines and long-term educational goals. They are more likely to seek expert guidance and employ structured strategies to enhance their children's SEL.

Understanding these differing conditions, attitudes, and tendencies is crucial for developing tailored interventions that address the unique needs of each district. In Orangi, initiatives that provide resources and support for parental involvement in SEL could bridge the gap caused by economic limitations. In the Southern District, programs that further enrich and expand SEL opportunities can build on the existing

proactive engagement of parents. By recognizing and addressing these disparities, policymakers and educators can foster more equitable SEL development across Karachi's diverse socio-economic landscape.

Thus, understanding the development of enhanced emotional and social intelligence on a child's life and its apparent susceptibility to environmental impacts, comprehending the progression of heightened social-emotional intelligence in children becomes crucial. As skills can be cultivated and honed, the refinement of personality traits might necessitate subtler nurturing through interpersonal exchanges. For children, paramount interactions occur within the parent-child dynamic, as these interactions can significantly contribute to such development (Alegre, 2011).

The phrase "Parental Involvement" refers to the active participation and engagement of parents or caregivers in their children's lives, education, and overall well-being. It encompasses various activities and behaviours through which parents become integral parts of their child's development, support their academic progress, and promote positive outcomes. Parental involvement plays a crucial role in forming a child's educational success, social-emotional development, and their life trajectory.

1.1.2 Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement, also referred to as the Framework of Six Types of Involvement

The work done by Joyce Epstein in the early 90's emphasized on the collaboration between schools and families and hence shed more light on the concept of parental involvement**.** The model acknowledges the diverse ways families can contribute to their children's education. It outlines six key categories of involvement, each fostering a different aspect of a child's learning experience.

Parenting: This type focuses on creating a supportive home environment that promotes learning. Practices include establishing routines, setting clear expectations, and discussing schoolwork with children.

Communicating: Two-way communication between parents and teachers is crucial. This involves attending conferences, staying informed about school policies, and maintaining regular communication regarding the child's progress.

Volunteering: This type involves parents actively contributing their time and skills at school. It can involve volunteering in classrooms, helping with school events, or serving on parent committees.

Learning at Home: This type encourages parents to actively participate in their child's learning outside of school. It includes activities like helping with homework, reading together, or providing enriching experiences related to schoolwork.

Decision-Making: Parental involvement in school decisions is encouraged. This might involve participating in school board meetings, joining parent advisory committees, or advocating for policies that benefit student learning.

Collaboration with the Community: This type emphasizes working together with schools and community organizations to create a supportive environment for all students. It could involve collaborating on initiatives that address social or emotional needs of students, fundraising for school resources, or connecting with local businesses to provide educational opportunities.

By addressing these six categories, Epstein's model provides a framework for fostering a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to parental involvement.