

RELATIONSHIP OF PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS AND EMOTIONAL STABILITY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, research has been conducted on the relationship between parental expectations and academic performance, but there have been few on parents' expectations having a relationship with emotional stability among secondary school students. The present research aims to investigate this relationship. The present research hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between parental expectations and emotional stability among secondary school students. A sample of N=268 (n = 31 Males, n = 237 Females) was recruited from various schools in Karachi through convenience sampling. The Parental Expectations Scale, a subtest of the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Frost, 1990) and the Emotional Stability Scale by Khurshid & Khurshid (2018) were used. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 22. Results showed that a weak correlation exists between parental expectations and emotional stability ($r=0.113$) among secondary school students. The implications of this research are important for educational psychologists, counsellors, teachers and parents to help identify and manage reasons behind poor academic performance and emotional instability of students.

Keywords: Parental Expectation, Emotional Stability, Secondary School Students

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 20 years, research has been conducted to understand the important environmental factors that contribute to the school performance of a child. They found that a student's environment plays an essential role in contributing to academic success (Marchant et al., 2001).

Today, education is an important factor in the well-being of an individual's life, which is why parents are concerned about the education of their children. This level of involvement depends on factors like the parents' culture, socioeconomic status and personal experiences. In the Pakistani culture, parents play a greater role beyond an emotional support system. They tend to make most of a child's life decisions, such as the choice of school, subjects, career path and where to work. They invest a large portion of their income and savings into the education of their child so that he/she has access to all opportunities. As a

result, Pakistani parents tend to have relatively higher and often, unrealistic expectations from their children (Ahmed, 2010).

It has also been observed that these parents expect their child to score the highest marks in all subjects, get awarded the 1st position in class each time, excel at all extracurricular activities and get distinctions in board exams. With such high expectations placed on them, the children start perceiving their performance negatively. No matter how good their performance may be, when the parents show any disappointment, children start believing they have not achieved anything. All of their hard work and achievement then amounts to nothing in their eyes. As a result, they show greater psychological distress than those perceiving low parental expectations (Crystal, et al., 1994). Starting from shame and guilt for disappointing the parents, it evolves into low self-

esteem, and lack of self-confidence and turns into major concerns like insomnia, stress, anxiety, depression, changes in personality, suicidal thoughts and eventually into attempted and successful suicide. Research on high school students in Pakistan found that more than 50% had either active or passive ideation of attempting suicide (Dawn, 2018). The WHO estimated a suicide rate of 9.1 per 100,000 among 15-29 years of age in Pakistan, in 2014. With such high suicide rates becoming more common among Pakistani youth (WHO, 2014), it is now imperative to identify factors that are at play, so that they may be managed. In a collectivistic society, parents are one of the most important factors that play a role in the success or failure in all aspects of life, especially academia.

In our society, a perception of 'failing' has strong links with suicide. It shows that academic performance might increase in importance with each succeeding school year. Students in the next movement of research were more likely to report a view of 'failing', and this was able to expect suicidal thoughts and behaviour over the succeeding year.

Students self-evaluate themselves that they will be getting low grades or might fail the exams will lead them to emotional instability (Martins et al., 2010). Getting good grades opens the way to different opportunities and parents want their children to have every possible opportunity.

We can say that parents do not want to see their children go towards failure. Most parents want their children to be successful obviously, but studies indicate that parents can hurt their children by expecting too much from their children. Some parents tend to enforce unrealistic expectations on their children. If parents impose realistic amount of expectations on their children it would be a good motivator for children this would help them to achieve more but when the pressure is too intense, it will affect the child emotionally and physically.

In the same way, emotional stability can affect academic performance either positively or negatively. The positive way that this anxiety can increase the students' effort to perform well but at the same can affect them negatively, as well as weaken their performance, which can lead to various symptoms like withdrawal, avoidance and worst of all it can also decrease one's marks and low grades in academics.

A significant correlation was found between emotional stability and academic performance

among the students (Trapmann et al., 2007). According to a cross-sectional on emotional instability, around 6% of children are likely to experience emotional stability between the ages of 7-19 years whereas 25% of the people are likely to experience little emotional instability between 20 years (Stringaris & Goodman, 2009). Longitudinal research on emotional instability which assessed emotional instability found that there was a significant result in age differences and emotional instability. During early adolescence (10-14 years) there is a strong relationship between emotional instability and early adolescence age (Larson & Lampman-Petratis, 1999) but it decreases during late adolescence range (13-18 years) (Larson et al., 2002).

Today, students are more ambitious and to adjust to the competitive society, they are working hard. On the darker side there is great emotional pressure in the form of tough competition; being among the top rankers of the class to getting a high-paying job, which may result in losing control of their emotion, leading to unstable and maladjusted personalities. The inability to control one's emotions can result in disturbances within family life and misbehaviour with classmates, teachers, siblings and others around them which can be dangerous for society.

Thus, it is important to understand that emotional stability is essential for the growth and development of students. Teachers are essential in helping facilitate students about how they (students) can control, maintain and positively develop their emotions. Several researches have been conducted to highlight the importance and understanding of the phenomenon of emotions, along with the various aspects of emotions.

Significance of the Research

It is necessary to conduct this research to bridge the literature gap that currently exists with regards to parental expectations impacting the perceived academic performance and emotional stability of adolescence in Pakistani students. With research into topics such as this one, psychologists and educationists can understand the role of environment, and more specifically, parents in the academic success or failure of a child, which will additionally affect the psychological wellbeing of a child. With more and more cases of nervous breakdowns, diagnoses of depression, suicidal ideation and suicide prevalent among Pakistani

students, it is essential to understand any and all factors that may contribute to a student's collapse. Considering the current student population is meant to lead the Pakistani society and country into a brighter future, it becomes crucial to protect these assets in all ways: physically, socially, psychologically and emotionally.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of the current research is that due to environmental and other personal or social factors, parents place high expectations on their children with regards to academic achievement. When they are unrealistic, it has a huge impact on the self-esteem of children and their levels of stress and anxiety increases as they try to fulfil expectations. Students then start viewing their own performance through their perception of the parents' eyes instead of as academic success on its own. More often than not, due to those unrealistically high expectations, they believe they have fallen short which leads to another set of problems, namely emotional instability and psychological distress.

According to Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, the identity vs. role

confusion stage occurs during adolescence, from about 15-21 years. The adolescents are becoming more independent, and begin to look at the future in terms of career opportunities and relationships. During this time, parental expectations increase as they begin to pressurize children to become what they (the parents) desire. This causes stress and anxiety as adolescents are generally unable to pursue their dreams, leading to impulsive behaviour and emotional distress. Research shows a positive relationship exists between parental expectations and adolescents' academic performance. However, little attention has been paid to the negative influence of parental expectations on adolescents' emotional wellbeing. A research indicated that high parental expectations were positively associated with adolescents' academic performance, and also positively associated with depression (Ma, Siu, & Tse, 2018). This suggests that there is a correlation between expectations of parents and academic performance and a correlation with depression. When students perform poorly in academics, their emotional stability may be affected, turning into psychological stress, depression or other psychiatric disorders.

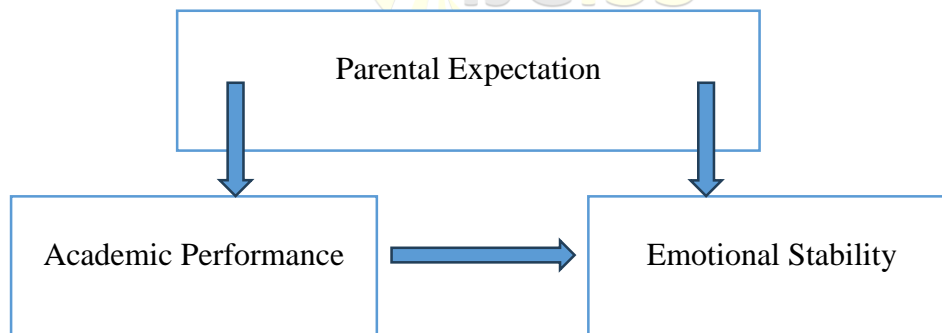


Figure1. The theoretical framework of the research illustrates the relationship between parental expectation with academic performance and emotional stability.

In light of the above-mentioned literature and theoretical framework, the purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between Parental Expectation and Perceived Academic Performance and Emotional Stability among Secondary School Students.

Research Hypotheses

Following are the research hypothesis that was formulated for the present research.

1. There will be a significant relationship between parental expectations and emotional stability among secondary school students.

METHOD

Research Design

The current research is quantitative, using the correlation approach. The survey method will be used in the present research.

Participants

Table 1

Percentages and Frequencies of the Demographics Properties of the Participants (N=268)

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Age in Years		
12 Years	3	1.1
13 Years	81	30.2
14 Years	93	34.7
15 Years	55	20.5
16 Years	26	9.7
17 Years	10	3.7
Gender		
Male	31	11.6
Female	237	88.4
Grade		
8 th Grade	97	36.2
9 th Grade	104	38.8
10 th Grade	67	30.0
Educational System		
Cambridge Assessment International Education	117	43.7
Board of Secondary Education	142	53.0
Federal Board	4	1.5
Other	5	1.9

Note. F= frequency, %= percentage

The above-mentioned table indicates the details of the participants regarding various demographic variables.

Measures

The following measures have been used in the present research.

Consent Form

The participants were asked to sign their consent for participating in the research before the measures were administered. The participants were briefly told the purpose of the research and were explained their right to withdraw at any moment. They were given assurance that their information

The target population for this research were secondary school students. The participants N = 268 (n = 31 males, n = 237 females) were students of grades 8, 9 and 10 from various schools in Karachi. A convenient sampling technique was used in this research.

would be kept confidential, during and after the research.

Demographic Form

Demographic information of the participants was collected using this form. The following demographic was collected in this research: age, gender, grade, name of school and education system.

Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS)

To assess students' perceptions of parental expectations, a modified version of the Parental Expectations Scale, a five-item subtest of the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) (Frost et al., 1990) was used. Participants indicated how much they agreed with each of the statements about their parents' expectations, rated on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat agree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). The internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .76.

Emotional Stability Scale

To assess the emotional stability of the subjects, the Emotional Stability Scale developed by Khurshid & Khurshid (2018) was used. The scale has 22 items which are scored on a 3-point Likert scale (1 = no, 2 = can't say and 3 = yes). Reliability as checked by Cronbach's alpha was .60 for this scale.

Procedure

This research was carried out by first getting permission to use the different scales from their authors via email. Then permission was taken from the Institute of Professional Psychology Bahria University to conduct the research. Data was collected at various dates as allowed by the relevant school authorities.

Participants were first requested to sign an informed consent in which they were briefly informed about the purpose of the research, and their right to withdraw from the research anytime they

want. This was followed by the demographic form. After acquiring consent and demographic information, the Parental Expectations Scale, a subscale of the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Frost et al., 1990) was administered to measure the parental expectations that the participants face. Along with the Emotional Stability Scale (Khurshid & Khurshid, 2018) was then administered to measure the participants' emotional stability.

All participants were given the same set of instructions, to carefully read each item before marking their response, and to ask for assistance in case of a query regarding an item or scale. Once the participants had completed responding, their forms

were collected. The data was then entered into the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A total of 280 forms were administered, out of which 12 were discarded due to incomplete responses. The data from the 268 forms was analyzed using SPSS to find out the relationship between the variables.

RESULTS

The data analysis was done through the calculation of the reliability of the measures. Further Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Regression Analysis was performed to find the relationship between Parental Expectations and Emotional Stability among participants.

Table 2
 Descriptive statistics and alpha reliability coefficients (N=268)

Variables	Items	<i>a</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>S_k</i>	<i>K</i>
Parental Expectations	5	.766	3.8754	.84330	-.698	-.132
Emotional Stability	22	.606	2.2130	.26984	-.247	-.183

Note. PE= Parental Expectations, PAP= Perceived Academic Performance, ES= Emotional Stability, *S_k*=Skewness, *K*=Kurtosis

The table above shows the Number of Items, Alpha Reliability, Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis for the three scales used in the research.

Table 3
 Correlations between Parental Expectation, and Emotional Stability in secondary school students (N = 268)

Variables	Parental Expectations	Emotional Stability
Parental Expectations	-	
Emotional Stability	.113	-

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table above shows that there is a weak correlation between parental expectations and perceived academic performance among secondary school students. There is also a weak correlation

between parental expectations and emotional stability among secondary school students disproving the research hypotheses.

Table 3
 Simple linear regression shows predicting the role of Parental Expectation, and Emotional Stability in secondary school students (N = 268)

Variables	<i>R</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	95% CI	
						<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Parental Expectation	0.113	0.013	45.644	3.400	0.066	42.292	48.995

Note: *R²* =R Square, *B* =Beta Coefficient,, *CL*=Confidence Interval, *LL*=Lower Limit, *UL*=Upper Limit

The above table presents a model summary for a regression analysis. This is the correlation coefficient between the dependent variable and the independent variable. In the present research, the R-value is 0.113, indicating a relatively weak negative

correlation between parental expectation and emotional stability. It indicates that a unit change in the predictor variable of parental expectation will result in a significant change in the criterion variable, emotional stability, with a predictive percentage of

1.3%. $F(3,400) = 0.113$ indicates a considerable amount of variance in parental expectations. Results indicate that parental expectation is a significant predictor of emotional stability.

DISCUSSION

The current research aims to examine the relationship between parental expectations with emotional stability among secondary school students. From the results presented in the previous section (Table 3) using SPSS, it has been observed that a weak correlation ($r = 0.107$) between parental expectations and emotional stability among secondary school students led to the rejection of the research hypotheses.

Parental expectation towards their children's academics is somewhat dependent on the parent's actual educational achievements. In Asian households, it is commonly seen that parents set extremely high expectations and pressure children, as compared to other ethnic groups. Parents tend to expect their children should achieve more (Spera et al., 2009) and fulfil their wishes in terms of careers (Tang et al., 1999). In return, Asian children find it their social and moral duty to be successful for the sake of their parents' expectations (Yu & Yang, 1994). While it can be a good motivator, at the same time it can also lead the children to worry if they are unable to meet the expectations of their parents in terms of grades and other academic achievements (Costigan et al., 2010). These parental expectations are sometimes reflections of their values, standards related to the school, teachers, academic goals, and future expectations of academic achievements (Wilder, 2014). Some research has identified that with the increase in the grade level, the frequency and intensity of parental involvement decrease. Possible reasons for such decreases can be that schools are distant from homes, differences in the curriculum, sometimes the employment of the children at the higher level of education, parents being involved with the younger siblings and most importantly, time the children try to establish a separate and distant identity and as a result get freedom from parents.

Comparing the findings of this research with prior research, a meta-analysis has highlighted cultural distinctions within Asian cultures. While parents in these cultures often hold high academic expectations, they may not provide direct support or assistance. This phenomenon contrasts with Chinese

culture, where parents may openly express their expectations but offer less emotional support (Peng & Wright, 1994; Wu & Chao, 2011). This research demonstrated a weak positive correlation between perceived academic performance and parental expectations, potentially influenced by these cultural nuances.

Additionally, the relationship between parental expectations and perceived academic performance is intricate, as various mediators are involved. Parental involvement, child learning behaviours, and a child's perceived academic competence all play roles in translating parental expectations into academic outcomes (Presnal et al., 2017). However, academic achievement is not solely dependent on parental expectations; individual factors such as future orientation can also contribute to academic success (Bowles & Terry, 2008). While high parental expectations can serve as a motivator, they can also lead to stress and anxiety. Asian-American children, for instance, may experience academic success but struggle with psychological adjustment due to the pressure of fulfilling their parents' high expectations (Choi et al., 2015; Qin, 2008). The stress resulting from unmet parental expectations can lead to reduced self-confidence and even depression (Ang & Huan, 2006).

Interestingly, this research identified a weak negative correlation between academic performance and emotional stability. This suggests that higher academic performance could lead to emotional instability, including stress, anxiety, and depression. It's possible that the pressure to achieve academically, driven by parental expectations and societal demands, contributes to these negative emotional outcomes. Similarly, other studies have linked high parental expectations to student psychological suffering due to communication. Thus, parent-child relationships and parenting styles must be considered when assessing parental expectations and mental health. A longitudinal US research found that parents with higher aspirations and expectations than their children may develop depressed symptoms.

Furthermore, the way parental expectations are communicated can impact a student's psychological well-being. High parental aspirations that surpass a child's aspirations may lead to depressive symptoms over time. This emphasizes the importance of considering the parent-child relationship and parenting style when examining the

effects of parental expectations on mental health. The role of friendships in psychological well-being cannot be ignored. Positive friendships provide emotional security and companionship, promoting academic and non-academic development. However, friendship is essential to young psychological well-being because it provides connection, affection, emotional security, and companionship (Parker et al., 2005). Children and adolescents form lifelong friendships that help them comprehend and appreciate others' opinions, which fosters empathy (Dewalt et al., 2013). Positive, stable, and strong friendships throughout school and adulthood increase prosocial conduct, leadership, and emotional support (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). In contrast, problematic friendships can lead to maladjustment and negative attitudes toward school (Liem & Martin, 2011; Zimmer et al., 2012).

In the 21st century, the educational system is becoming very competitive and challenging for students. Thus, for a successful educational performance, career and future professional life, students need to cope with studies at educational institutions and if needed they have to go further for help. If the help is not available at home then the students go outside of the home and they are more likely to join an academy, tuition or coaching center where they can learn and solve their problems. The situation depends on the will and the financial condition of the students. However, in research, a significant difference was found between the achievement of students belonging to tuition and non-tuition groups. Students of low achievement motivation improve their achievement in science subjects by receiving private tuition (Gafoor & Sunnummel, 2007). Previously in collectivistic cultures, like Pakistan, children were completely dependent on their parents who helped guide and develop them. Therefore, parents in Pakistan tended to be more controlling and in turn, expected more from their offspring (Triandis, 2001). When these individuals felt that they were not coming up to the expectations of their parents, their self-esteem and self-confidence suffered, which had a negative impact on their emotional stability. However, due to changing cultures and societal trends, students now care less about their parents' opinions and so do not suffer when they do not meet the high expectations expected of them.

Limitations

The current research had some limitations that must be taken into consideration when future researches are conducted in this area. As convenience sampling was used, the sample is not gender-representative. Since the sample used in this research was limited to secondary school students, the results cannot be generalized to students of other levels.

Recommendations

It is recommended that an established scale for perceived academic performance be used for more accurate results. Future studies should take a gender-equal sample and an equal sample from government and private schools. To counteract this limitation, their academic records may be confirmed with their school records, Factors like cognitive ability, educational experiences of children and the learning environment also contribute to explaining differences in student motivation, learning and academic performance. Therefore, upcoming researchers should also examine these.

Implications

Adolescents are the foundation of a strong and successful nation and the facilities provided by parents come with high expectations from the child. When students start perceiving their academic performance negatively, it causes an adverse effect on their emotional stability leading to depression, anxiety, interpersonal issues, irritability, hostility, frustration, anger and other behavioural issues – impacting daily functioning, memory, self-regulation, emotional intelligence and cognition.

Without research like this one, the trend of setting up children for failure with unrealistic expectations will not break and future generations will keep suffering. The current research can create awareness among parents of the consequences of unrealistic expectations, while teachers and educational psychologists can understand that parental expectations play a role in the academic performance of a student. Workshops for parents can be developed to help them differentiate between realistic and unrealistic expectations so that they can facilitate their child reaching maximum potential, instead of failing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present research contributes to the understanding of the complex interplay between parental expectations, emotional stability among secondary school students. The weak correlations we observed emphasize the need to consider multiple factors, including cultural norms, parental communication, and individual characteristics. Future research could dive deeper into the specific mechanisms driving the relationships identified in the present research and consider longitudinal designs to better capture the dynamic nature of these associations in the evolving educational setup.

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