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Parental Influences on Child Outcomes Across Contexts

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Parental Influence on Child Outcomes Across Contexts

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Introduction

•Parental involvement can relate to the success or lack thereof in children’s formal schooling. Parental influence can vary based on different factors, such as the family’s SES, parental education levels, and parenting practices (Cooper, 2010; Hoglund et al., 2015; Kingston et al., 2013).

•Familial and neighborhood factors can have a direct impact on children as individuals. When the familial and neighborhood factors are considered together, they can have a strong indication of academic and social success (Kingston et al., 2013).

•SES and location of schooling can have an impact on education and degree of parental support, in addition to how children can be faced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in these specific areas.

•This study aims to address the gap in knowledge of how parental involvement relates to academic outcomes in the following ways:

1. Understand the degree to which parents are involved in their children’s formal schooling.
2. Understand how parental involvement can differ based on the context children live in and how this can influence the degree their parents can be actively involved in their academics.
3. Address the specific gap in literature of children’s reports of their own understandings of themselves, their academics and how involved their caregivers are.

Methods & Measures

•The sample consisted of 18 caregivers (ages between 38-66 years; 88.9% White, 5.6% Latinx, and 5.6% Asian American). Among these 18 caregivers, were 10 caregiver-child dyads. The sample consisted of 10 children; ages 7 years old to 12 years old. An additional 8 caregivers completed the survey but did not follow up to do the child interview.

•Caregivers who participated reported completed an online survey on their perceived involvement with their child’s school life, their perception of their child’s relationship with their teachers (Pianta, 2001), and different child outcomes (HBQ; Armstrong et al., 2003).

•Children participants were interviewed and reported on their perception of themselves (Harter & Pike, 1984), in addition to being asked open ended questions about their understanding of themselves, their academic competency and their parents' involvement in their academics.

Results – Themes

What are children’s feelings surrounding school?

•When asked about their feelings of school, children seemed to either thoroughly enjoy school or find it dull and boring. For the children who disliked school, this dislike usually stemmed from being bored of the material or having too much homework.

How do children understand parental involvement?

•According to both the qualitative and quantitative assessment of children and their understanding of their parents’ involvement, they did not seem to notice much of a change from before COVID-19 to the present.

Do children experience support from caregivers?

•Within the quantitative data, it was found that the more a parent is involved, the lower academic problems their child has. This was shown not only in the numbers, but also in how the children and parents alike discussed the degree of parental involvement.

•Typically, when parents are more involved, this can predict school readiness for their children. Although this was not found to be the case in the current study, this does not mean it should be ignored. Looking at the context of the lives these participants are living, many are struggling with COVID-19 and how it has changed their school and general schedules.

•Parental involvement in general was negatively related to both parent and child reported outcomes. This finding is also not typically seen among this demographic, but like school readiness, can be directly impacted by COVID-19. Families have been forced to be in proximity most of the time, when they are used to either being at their jobs or school during the day.

How has COVID-19 impacted children’s school experiences?

•As it has been seen in both the qualitative and quantitative data, COVID-19 has had a large negative impact on most aspects of the caregiver-children’s lives. This can be seen in the quote below, which comes from one of the parents who participated in the current study.

Results – Qualitative

A parent response regarding the ways COVID-19 has impacted her son:

“He has changed drastically this past year because of the pandemic. He was an above average student who loved school, socialized often, and participated in many extracurricular activities often....He smiled often and laughed and enjoyed life... This year he is an average student and “hates” school. It is extremely difficult to get him to complete his work that is “easy” for him, and he has emotional outbursts often...He does not have an opportunity to socialize or participate in extracurricular activities. He seems depressed and has agoraphobia. He has explosive outbursts when we suggest leaving the house even just to go for a drive....He rarely smiles or laughs and when he laughs it seems forced. I have no relationship with his teacher... Most extracurriculars have been cancelled or we do not feel that they are safe with”

•Within this testimony, it can be seen the large negative impact that COVID-19 has had on children who were once joyful and happy to go to school. The lack of interaction with teachers and peers has negatively impacted this child.

Discussion

•Children seem to receive substantial support from their parents in relation to their academics and wellbeing. Within the quantitative data, it was found that the more a parent is involved, the lower academic problems their child has. This was shown not only in the numbers, but also in how the children and parents alike discussed the degree of parental involvement.

•Parental involvement in general was negatively related to both parent and child reported outcomes. This finding is also not typically seen among this demographic, but like school readiness, can be directly impacted by COVID-19.

•According to both the qualitative and quantitative assessment of children and their understanding of their parents’ involvement, they did not seem to notice much of a change from before COVID-19 to the present.

Implications

•Overall, the findings of the current study show that parents can have a large impact on their children and how they are able to perform in school.

- This was seen consistently with both the qualitative and quantitative data that related to how an increase in parental involvement can help with academic problems.

•Other findings were not significant in relation to parental involvement, so further research would need to be conducted to not only replicate this finding, but to further understand how parental involvement impacts academic outcomes across contexts.

•According to the quantitative findings, parental involvement can be both positive and negative for development and education. As the context of the study was potentially undermined by COVID-19, it can be hard to know if the findings are representative of normal times.

•Further investigative research must be conducted to understand how children have been impacted by COVID-19. As these school age years are formative to development, if there are not interventions put in place and support systems available for these students, then the impacts of COVID-19 will extend far beyond the school year it has altered the most.

Please ask Hannah Honig for list of references, if needed.