

Impact of Parent-Adult Relationship on Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement among University Students

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Abstract: The present study examined the impact of parent-adult relationship on self-esteem and academic achievement among university students. Research has indicated that the relationship of students with their parents greatly influences their self-esteem and academic achievement. This study was purposefully designed to investigate this area of concern. For this purpose, the study attempted to answer the question about whether or not there was a significant impact of parent-adult relationship on self-esteem and academic achievement. Using a correlation design, the study surveyed a sample of 200 university students about their relationship with their parents and their general feelings about themselves. Demographic information, including students' CGPA, was gathered. To examine correlation between the variables, Correlation Analysis and t-test were utilized. Results of the study revealed that parent-adult relationship was significantly positively correlated with students' self-esteem. However, there was a non-significant relationship between parent-adult relationship and academic achievement.

Keywords: Parent-Adult Relationship, Self-Esteem, Academic Achievement, University Students

1. INTRODUCTION

The term parent-adult relationship refers to the unique and enduring bond between a caregiver and his or her adult child. To understand the parent-adult relationship, we must look at the ways that parents and adults interact with one another physically, emotionally, and socially. Many psychologists believe that the relationships between parents and adults are very important in determining who we become and how we relate to others and the world.

For children, their relationship with their primary caregivers plays a central role in their emotional, physical, psychological, and cognitive development. As they grow older, children learn to become independent and autonomous but their relationship with their parents still has a profound impact on their self-esteem and academic achievement (Rostad & Whitaker, 2016; Edwards, Sheridan, & Knoche, 2010). Relationship problems like basic personality differences and parents providing unsolicited advice tend to cause problems. It may be that these kinds of tensions are longer-term, and reflect deep-seated conflicts that a person just can't escape, whereas conflicts about life styles, education or finances can be put off to the side if one makes an effort.

Theorists in developmental psychology examine the parent-adult relationship as an important tool

in understanding how individuals develop over time. Freud (1915) believed that adult development was largely defined by the relationships that adults share with their parents. For example, if an adult female struggles in intimate relationships with males, Freud probably would have blamed it on an unhealthy relationship with her father. Similarly, Erikson's psychosocial theory of development proposes that infants who have caregivers meeting their basic needs will grow into trusting adults, but infants whose needs are not met will develop feelings of mistrust in future relationships (Erikson & Erikson, 1998).

Another research explored the role of parent-child relationship, self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy in determining academic stress (Mulyadi, Rahardjo, & Basuki, 2016). The purpose of this study was to measure the influence of parent-child relationship, self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy on academic stress in homeschooling students. Subjects were 87 homeschooling students in Tangerang. Results of the study showed that the academic stress experienced homeschooling students is affected by a constellation of parents-child relationship, self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy. However, self-esteem has a direct influence towards academic stress, while the others do not. Mean while, the fear of not being

able to meet their own academic expectations is the condition which can explain their academic stress, instead of the fear of not being able to meet their tutors' academic expectations.

Another study on the associations between the parent-child relationship and adolescent self-worth demonstrated that parent-child closeness and parental-expressed affection were both phenol typically associated with adolescent self-worth. Associations could not be attributed to genetic relatedness between parent and child. Data were cross-sectional, so the direction of effects cannot be confirmed but findings support the notion that positive parent-child relationships increase adolescent self-worth (McAdams et al., 2017).

According to a research by Mohammadi and colleagues (2017), family function and structure has the greatest impact on young people and adolescents and is the main factor influencing their growth. As a result, parental style can influence students' academic performance. The researchers also recommended that families use consistency and intimate parenting to enhance their children's confidence and academic success. Results of their research demonstrated that there is a negative relationship between authoritative, disorganized parenting styles and self-confidence and academic achievement. On the flip side, there is a significant relationship between self-confidence and academic achievement.

In a study conducted by Sudhakar and Nellaiyapen (2016), it was shown that parents who regularly talk and read to their children usually produce children with the largest vocabularies, the highest intelligence scores and the best academic grades. Additionally, parents who reason with their children while making requests for obedience usually end up with more civil children. Results of the study proved that there exist a significant relationship between academic achievement and parent-child relationship.

Rostad and Whitaker (2016) demonstrated the long-term psychological effects of parental care or neglect on children. The parent-child relationship affects patterns of attachment, security, anxiety and depression in adulthood. Results of the study proved that individuals function best when their parents are engaged in and concerned about their daily activities.

Furthermore, evidence shows that parent-child relationship plays an important role in the

development of autonomy (i.e. the capacity to take care of one's own basic needs) in the child. Children's survival skills and psychological development depend on parental warmth and sensitivity. Parental interactions including affection, physical closeness, unconditional regard, and sensitivity affects the children's cognitive growth over time. Research has identified that positive early relationships between children and caregivers contribute to neural connections that facilitate children's long-term developmental success (Edwards, Sheridan, & Knoche, 2010). Parental support for children has beneficial for the development of many positive cognitive and social outcomes and allow children the freedom to be expressive, initiating, and self-directed.

Research on reasons for the poor academic performance of children revealed that various factors are responsible for scholastic failure of students, such as low socio-economic background, student's cognitive abilities, school related factors, environment of the home, or the support given by the parents and other family members (Fan, 2001). Generally, schools are considered as places which provide appropriate learning environment for a child, but importance of parents and community cannot be ignored. Parents, adult family members, and siblings contribute significantly to various components of personality of the child particularly and in improving his/her academic performance.

Parent involvement in a child's early education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance (Hara & Burke, 1998). Specifically, children whose parents are more involved in their education have higher levels of academic performance than children whose parents are involved to a lesser degree

1.1. Rationale

The present study aims to investigate the impact of parent-adult relationship on self-esteem and academic achievement among university students. As the relationship between a child and their parent is believed to influence all spheres of the children's lives, it is assumed that a positive parent-adult relationship is related to high self-esteem among students in their late teens and twenties.

Additionally, the purpose of the study is to discover the impact of parent-adult relationship on academic achievement of university students. Children who grow up in a supportive, warm

family environment have the self-confidence and discipline to maintain their grades throughout their academic years. Hence, students with strong ties to their parents will prove to have higher academic achievement as compared to those students who have a weak relationship with their parents.

The present study also aims to compare and contrast the differences in strength of parent-adult relationship among male and female university students, as well as among students from high and middle social classes. This study will be useful in revealing whether or not the relationship of adults with their parents differs based on the gender and socioeconomic status of students.

Furthermore, the association between family support and academic outcomes is well-documented among Western cultures, but not across other cultures. There is a strong need to develop the literature on the set topics in other cultures as well. Therefore, the present study aims to examine how parent-adult relationship quality relates to students' academic achievement and self-esteem among Pakistani students in particular. This will provide valuable addition to the literature on these topics in an Eastern society for comparison with the literature found through research on Western societies.

Additionally, the location of the research is Rawalpindi and Islamabad where limited studies of this sort have been conducted in the past. Thus, it is hoped that this study will be a valuable addition to the literature on the topics of parent-adult relationship, self-esteem, and academic achievement based in Pakistani society.

2. METHOD

2.1. Objectives

1. To study the relationship between parent adult-child relationship and self-esteem.
2. To study the relationship between parent-adult relationship and academic achievement.
3. To discover the difference in strength of parent adult-child relationship with respect to the demographic variable of gender.

2.2. Hypotheses

1. There is a significant relationship between parent-adult relationship, self-esteem and academic achievement.
2. Male students show difference in strength of parent-adult relationship as compared to female university students.

3. Female students have a stronger relationship with their mothers as compared to male students.

2.3. Operational Definitions

2.3.1. Parent-Adult Relationship

The parent-adult child relationship consists of a combination of behaviors, feelings, and expectations that are unique to a particular parent and a particular adult child. The relationship involves the full extent of an adult child's development. It is also basically (a) a feeling mixed or torn in the relationship. Or (b) experiencing both positive and negative sentiments towards a parent or grown child. (Luescher and Pillemer, 1998).

2.3.2. Self-Esteem

According to Branden (1992), self-esteem is confidence in our ability to think and to cope with the challenges of life. For the present research, self-esteem has been operationalized according to Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale in which he defines self-esteem as the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object (Rosenberg, 1965).

2.3.3. Academic Achievement

According to Travers (1970), academic achievement is the result of what an individual has learned from some educational experiences. Tinambunan (1988) defined academic achievement as the student's grasp of some body of knowledge or proficiency in certain skills. For the present study, academic achievement has been operationalized according to the demographic variable "Cumulative GPA", in which a CGPA of 3.5 or above is indicative of high academic achievement.

2.4. Instruments

2.4.1. Parent Adult-Child Relationship Questionnaire

The Parent Adult-Child Relationship Questionnaire (PACQ) was developed in 1999 by Peisah and his colleagues. The Parent Adult-Child Relationship Questionnaire is a 26-item questionnaire that measures the filial relationship between parent and the adult child, from the adult child's point of view. It is divided into two subscales assessing relationship with mother and relationship with father, comprising 13 items each (Peisah et al., 1999). The instrument can be self-administered and is applicable to both sexes. The items are answered on a four-point scale (very true, moderately true, somewhat true, and not true at all)

2.4.2. Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale

Rosenberg’s (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is a 10-item self-report measure of global self-esteem. It consists of 10 statements related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. The items are answered on a four-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Several items (i.e. 2, 5, 6, 8, 9) in this scale are to be reverse scored as, giving “Strongly Disagree” 1 point, “Disagree” 2 points, “Agree” 3 points, and “Strongly Agree” 4 points. Scores for all ten items are summed up, keeping scores on a continuous scale. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem. The scale is proven to be a reliable and valid measure of self-esteem.

2.5. Sample

Convenience sampling was used to select the sample for the present research as the participants were selected based on their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researchers. Students from different higher education institutes of Pakistan, such as International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), Foundation for Advancement of Space and Technology (FAST), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), and Riphah International University, were asked to fill out the research questionnaire. Both male and female students filled out the questionnaire from every selected university. The sample size was 200 students (N=200). The sample consists of an equal distribution of both genders, i.e. 100 participants were male students and 100 participants were female students. The age range of the participants was between 17-28 years. The sample included students of both undergraduate and graduate programs, such as BS, MA/MSc, and MS/MPhil. The participants were briefed about the importance of the research. They were reassured that their responses would remain confidential and only used for research purposes. Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to filling out the questionnaire.

2.6. Procedure

For the present study, survey method was used. Quantitatively-scored questionnaires were filled out by the participants as instruments of the research. The instruments used in the study were the Parent Adult-Child Questionnaire (PACQ) and Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale. This study consisted of a sample of 200 students (N=200) who willingly participated in the study. They

were aged between 17-28 years. The sample was taken from various departments of the different universities of Pakistan. Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to filling out the research questionnaire. A demographic section was filled out by the participants including their age, gender, qualification, semester, CGPA in last semester, institute of study, socioeconomic status, marital status, etc. Responses were gathered from the students who were selected on the basis of convenience sampling.

3. RESULTS

In order to fulfill the objectives of the study and to test the formulated hypotheses, the following statistical analyses were performed. Parent Adult-Child Relationship Questionnaire consisted of 26 items. The Cronbach alpha (α) reliability for Parent Adult-Child Relationship Questionnaire was 0.78. Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale consisted of 10 items and the Cronbach alpha (α) reliability for this scale was 0.66. The reliability coefficients for the Parent Adult-Child Relationship Questionnaire and Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale indicate high reliability.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Analysis for Demographics Data (N=200)

Variable		F	%
Age	17-20 years	85	42.5
	21-24 years	110	55.0
	25-28 years	5	2.5
Gender	Male	100	50
	Female	100	50
Qualification Level	Undergraduate	193	96.5
	Graduate	7	3.5
Socioeconomic Status	Middle	162	81
	High	38	19

Information about demographic variables was collected along with the responses from the participants (N=200). It comprised of information regarding the student’s age, gender, qualification level, and socio economic status. Table 2 shows that most of the sample was aged between 17-20 years (f=85, 42.5%) but majority of the sample was aged 21-24 years (f=110, 55%), while a small minority was aged 25-28 years (f=5, 2.5%). Table 2 also shows that the sample consisted of an equal distribution of males and females, i.e. 50% males and 50% females. Greater number of students were of undergraduate level (f=193, 96.5%) as compared to graduate level (f=7, 3.5%). Similarly, greater number of students belonged

to middle socioeconomic class (f=162, 81%) as compared to high socioeconomic class (f=38, 19%).

Table2. Correlation between Parent-Adult Relationship and Self-Esteem (N=200)

	1	2
Parent-Adult Child Relationship	-	0.58**
Self-Esteem		-

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

To find the correlation between parent-adult relationship and self-esteem, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was calculated. It is evident from table 3 that the Correlation between parent-adult relationship and self-esteem is significant ($r = 0.58$).

Table3. Comparison of Strength of Parent-Adult Relationship between Male and Female Students

Variable	Gender				t(198)	p	d	95% Confidence Interval	
	Male (n=100)		Female (n=100)					Lower	Upper
	M	SD	M	SD					
Parent Adult-Child Relationship	51.73	8.67	57.05	9.98	4.02	0.000	0.569	-0.79	-2.71

Note: SD = standard deviation, M = mean, N = population size, n = sample size

Table 3 shows mean, standard deviation, and t value for parent-adult relationship in comparison with two genders, i.e. male and female. The results indicate significant ($p=0.000$) mean differences between male and female students in strength of parent-adult relationship. Female students are proved to have stronger relationship with their parents ($M=57.05$, $SD=9.98$) as compared to male students ($M=51.73$, $SD=8.67$), $t(198) = 4.02$.

Table4. Impact of Parent-Adult Relationship on Academic Achievement

Variable	Academic Achievement				t(198)	p	95% Confidence Interval	
	High (n=97)		Low (n=103)				Lower	Upper
	M	SD	M	SD				
Parent Adult Child Relationship	55.24	9.85	53.59	9.54	1.20	0.439	-1.06	4.35

Note: SD = standard deviation, M = mean, N = population size, n = sample size.

Table 4 shows mean, standard deviation, and t value for parent-adult relationship in comparison with academic achievement. The results indicate non-significant mean differences between high and low academic achievers in strength of parent-adult relationship. High academic achievers are not proved to have

stronger relationship with their parents ($M=55.24$, $SD=9.85$) as compared to low academic achievers ($M=53.59$, $SD=9.54$), $t(198) = 1.2$.

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to prove that a significant relationship exists between parent-adult relationship and self-esteem, as well as between parent-adult relationship and academic achievement. The present study also aimed at describing how the strength of parent-adult relationship varies with gender. The study also aimed at comparing the strength of relationship of male and female participants with their fathers. It also aimed at comparing the strength of relationship of male and female participants with their mothers.

For the present study, Cronbach alpha (α) reliability for Parent Adult-Child Relationship Questionnaire and for Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale indicates higher liability of both scales.

The study focused on investigating the impact of parent-adult relationship on self-esteem among university students. The results showed that parent-adult relationship and self-esteem are significantly related to one another. When students have a positive and warm relationship with their parents, their evaluation of their self-worth rises and this leads to high self-esteem.

These findings are supported by the research work of Roberts and Bengtson (1993) which proved that parental affection benefits children in developing their self-esteem and coping skill in problematic areas. A sample of 293 participants was asked about their relationship with their parents. Results indicated that parent-child affection made a significant contribution to self-esteem in late adolescence and early adulthood. Early displays of parental affection led to high self-esteem and provided long-term psychological benefits for sons and daughters in adulthood.

Another supporting research is that of Shanmugam and Hutagalung (2014) who conducted a descriptive-analytical research on students of Birj and University of Medical Sciences. The sample was 364 students (200 students were female and 164 of them were male)

Who were selected randomly. Data was collected with the help of two questionnaires including the questionnaire of parenting style and self-esteem inventory. The data were analyzed and findings suggest that among the

364 participants, there was a positive relationship between coherence and intimate parenting styles, self-confidence and academic achievement. Moreover, there was a negative relationship between permissive, authoritarian, disorganized and rejecting-neglecting parenting styles, self-confidence and academic achievement.

The present study also investigated the difference in strength of parent-adult relationship between the two genders, i.e. male and female. Results showed that female students had an overall stronger relationship with both their mothers and fathers as compared to male students.

Study outcome is confirmed by the research of Weber and Welch (2001). Their study investigated the quality of relationships between college students and their mothers and fathers, and its correlates with their self-esteem and academic achievement. A sample of 386 students completed the self-administered questionnaire. The results showed that girls seemed to establish better relationships with both parents as compared to boys. Results also showed that the quality of parent-child relationship showed positive significant relations with self-esteem. Participants with good quality relationship with their parents were found to have a higher self-esteem compared to others.

With regards to gender differences in parent-child relationships, females tend to establish a better relationship with their mothers and fathers as compared to their male counterparts (Rozumah & Sheereen, 2009). This is consistent with previous research that indicates females perceive a more positive quality relationship with their parents as compared to males (Tam & Yeoh, 2008).

The present study also investigated the impact of parent-adult relationship on academic achievement. The findings indicated that parent-adult relationship does not significantly impact academic achievement of university students.

A possible explanation for this is that the sample consisted of only 200 university students from a limited number of institutes in Pakistan. If the sample size were increased, more significant results might be obtained that indicate a positive relationship between parent-adult relationship and academic achievement.

Another possibility is that since the participants were all university students who were not

provided any incentive in filling out honest responses, the responses obtained from them might be unreliable and inaccurate. Unreliable responses can also lead to non-significant results.

Parental strictness plays an important role in ensuring academic achievement of students in Eastern societies. On one hand, this leads to better academic results but on the other hand, this adversely affects the bond between parents and children. This may be another reason why the present study was unable to discover a significant relationship between academic achievement and parent-adult relationship.

Another explanation for the non-significant relationship between academic achievement and parent-adult relationship is that the present study was carried out in an Eastern society, where academic achievement is affected by many other factors besides parental relationship, such as sibling rivalry or support, self-motivation, peer pressure, etc.

In contrast, the impact of parent-adult relationship on academic achievement has been proven to be significantly high according to Western researches (Weber & Welch, 2001). A study was conducted by Yuan, Weiser, and Fischer (2016). The findings of the study revealed the significant impact of parental support on the academic achievement as well as on the development of self-concept of the participants.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the impact of parent-adult relationship on self-esteem and academic achievement. One of the most important factors that affect the different life areas of individuals is their relationship with their parents. In this study, the relationships of adults with their mothers and fathers and its correlates with their self-esteem and academic performance was examined. Findings showed that participants generally had strong bond with both of their parents. Those participants who had stronger relationship with their parents tended to have higher self-esteem. They performed better in their academics as well.

The way parents raise their children influences the development of their self-esteem. Stronger relationship with parents boost the self-esteem level in an individual. Results of the study show variation in the strength of parent-adult relationship between male and females. Female have a stronger relationship with both parents as

compared to males. Conducting this research in another society and with a greater sample size may generate different results.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

- The data was collected from a sample of 200 students, which is not enough to yield more significant results that may have been generalized to the whole population. It is suggested that future studies on the same variables be conducted with greater sample size for more generalizable results.
- The present study included only 17-28 years old university students. The small age bracket is a limitation of the study. Future studies should be designed with different age brackets, such as children and adolescents, to investigate their relationship with their parents, as well as their level of self-esteem and academic achievement.
- The present study is based on self-reporting instruments that bear the possibility that some students might have felt hindrance in understanding the wording of the items as well as others. Some students might also hesitate to provide the exact information due to the presence of the researcher. It is recommended to the future researcher to focus on using different methodologies, besides survey method, like qualitative and longitudinal studies for further examination of these variables.
- The sample consisted of only university students who sometimes lack motivation for responding. There can be some other variables as well which may affect the responses of the individual, like their emotional or mental state at the time of gathering responses. These factors may affect the reliability of the data. It is suggested that in future researches, incentives be provided to the students to encourage their honest and willing participation in the research.
- The sample only consisted of students who were regular attendees of universities. It did not include students who study privately from their home. For future research, it is suggested that the same variables be compared on a sample consisting of both private and regular students.
- The present study focuses on only a few universities from the Islamabad and

Rawalpindi region. It is suggested that in the future, university students from institutes all over Pakistan should be targeted with an increase in sample size in order to gain true representation in the sample which will yield generalizable results.

- The present research was conducted in Pakistan which is an Eastern society where people generally tend to have a strong relationship with their parents. This may lead to cultural biasness so to ensure that the findings of the study are cross-culturally valid, it is recommended that a similar study on the same variables be conducted in a Western society as well.
- Convenience sampling technique was used to gather the data in which participants were selected on the basis of their nearness and availability to the researcher. It is suggested that future research on the same variables be conducted using random sampling technique, which is more reliable.

IMPLICATIONS

- The current study opens doors for further investigation. Much work is needed to be done with the same variables, i.e. parent-adult relationship, self-esteem, and academic achievement.
- The findings of the study can be useful and generalizable for students all over Pakistan in demonstrating that their relationship with their parents has a strong impact on other areas of their life as well.
- Study findings could be helpful in further investigation of the same variables in terms of cultural and racial variation among Eastern and Western societies.
- Future studies can be done on the same variables with different populations, such as children, adolescents, married individuals, rural people, and people of low socioeconomic status.

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