Parental School Involvement and Barriers to Involvement in Relation to School Age Child Anxiety and Interpersonal Relationships

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Abstract

The study was to investigate potential gender differences in parental barriers to involvement and school involvement, and in child anxiety and interpersonal relationship. An interview and survey was given to the school age children (36 boys; 56 girls) and 92 mothers and fathers. Results showed that there was a weak relationship between parents’ school involvement and child anxiety and mothers’ school involvement and children’s interpersonal relations.  Parents’ school involved more anxiety and enhance interpersonal relationships with their peers.

*Keywords:* parental barriers to involvement, school involvement, child anxiety, child interpersonal relationship

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        There is a lack of research that connects parental barriers to involvement and school involvement to child anxiety and interpersonal relationships. There is also inadequate amount of information about the association between child anxiety and interpersonal relationships. Some studies indicate that parental school involvement is associated with child’s academic success; others report that increased parental academic control and structure decrease children’s academic success (Karbach, Gottschling, Spengler, Hagewalk, & Spinath, 2013). Given the mixed findings about parental involvement this study was designed to specifically to examine parental involvement and the affects it has on the child’s anxiety and interpersonal relationships within families with school age children.

Karbach, et al., (2013) described how parents’ Autonomy supportive practices, achievement-oriented control and pressure, structure, and emotional responsivity influence children’s academic success. Data from the Cognitive Ability, Self-reported Motivation, and School Achievement (CoSMoS) study of 334 twins measured the child’s perceptions of perceived parental involvement and their cognitive abilities. The results suggested that parental control and structure were negatively related to child academic achievement, whereas parental autonomy, responsively, and achievement-oriented involvement were positively related to child’s academic success.

Cheung & Pomerantz (2011) examined parents’ involvement in children’s learning in the China and the United States. The participants were 374 American and 451 Chinese children. The data were collected four times in six months. The children completed two questionnaires each time. The main findings in the study described the differences between parents’ involvement and achievement between the United States and China. The implication of the study can be beneficial for parents to be involved with their child learning and achievement.

       Mireaulty, Rooney, Kouwenhoven, and Hannan (2008) described the oppositional behavior and anxiety in community sample of elementary school children and middle school children. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between anxiety, gender, and oppositional defiance and anxiety. There were two sample sizes in the study; 200 participants in an elementary school and 192 participants in from middle school. The study was collected by a self-report and a 15 minutes questionnaire for the children. It is important for parents and teachers to be aware of their students and child’s anxiety and it’s possible link to oppositional behavior.

       Khodayarifard, Anshel and Brinthaupt (2006) examines the relationship between attributional style and trait anxiety with preadolescent children and the difference of attributional style and trait anxiety between female, males, and age-related changes. Data from Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ) and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children- Trait Form assessed 428 students and measured attributional style, trait anxiety, and academic performance. Result suggested a negative relationship with trait anxiety and attributional style for the girls and no relations of trait anxiety to attributional style for boys.  Result also suggested that girls had no significant relation between academic performance and attributional style; boy’s had a negative relationship between academic performance and global attributions and between trait anxiety and academic performance.  The implications of the study can be beneficial to teachers because a teacher’s opinion can affect the child’s attributional style, which then may affect the academic performance and trait anxiety of the child.

Anthony (2012) described ways that children can help his or her students when it

comes to problem solving with their friends at school. Anthony states that learning how to be a friend is one of the developmental tasks of the elementary years. In the article, Anthony explains about four different social skills builder to help all the students become more aware of the impact that they have on the other children at school, but only three were mentioned in the article. They are friendship reading, the kindness jar, and a filling a bucket. The friendship reading is when the students have conversation with another student about bullying and social issues. Kindness jar is when the teacher has two jars label kind and unkind. Each time students did or saw a kind of unkind activity they place a marble into one of the jar. At the end of the week, the teacher would graph both jars and talk about it with the students.  Filling a bucket is when children pretend that they are carrying an invisible bucket that can be fill with kind words or actions.

Thompson (2005) stated that children have the ability to choose a suitable companion from the age of one year and on.  Though it is not known why a child as young as a year old would choose to be with another child, in the article Thompson states that generally children are able to recognize the basic factors of friendship, such as trust and the give and take of those part of the friendship without the parent’s management of their relationships. Thompson also recognizes the shifting dynamics of the children based on the age of the child’s age.  The implications of the study can be beneficial to parents because it provides information on how parents can promote the development of friendship by providing optimal opportunities for their child to meet other children and model behaviors that the child can transfer to his or her relationships with others.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential gender differences in parental, barriers to involvement and school involvement, and in child, anxiety and interpersonal relationships. Rationale for these expected gender differences? Additionally, other research studies have focused on parental involvement in relation to children’s academics; this study is to examine the association between parental involvement and the child’s anxiety and interpersonal relationships.  It is predicted that mothers will report higher level of school involvement than fathers.  Fathers will have lower level of barriers in involvement than mothers.  We hypothesize that mothers will have higher level of school involvement and lower levels of barriers to involvement than fathers.  We further hypothesize that boys will have lower reports of anxiety than girls and girls will report having higher interpersonal relationships than boys.

**Method**

**Overview**

A correlational design was chosen to examine the relationships between parents’ barriers involvement and school involvement to child anxiety and child interpersonal. This design was chosen for this study to examine a relationship between the two parent predictor variables and two child outcomes variables. Additionally gender difference for the variables were examined independent variables are the parent’s gender and the child’s gender. There are four dependent variables, which are parents’ barriers to involvement, parents’ school involvement, child anxiety, and child interpersonal relationships. The two predictor variables are parents’ barriers to involvement and parents’ school involvement. The two outcomes variables are child anxiety and child interpersonal relations. There are four level measurements for this study and all four variables will be measured at the ordinal level.

**Procedures**

Data was collected by research assistants, local parents within the community network. Once approved by the Institutional Review Board and parental consent was obtained, children were interviewed by research assistants within the child’s home. Before beginning the interview, the study was explained to the child and the research assistant read a child assent form informing the child that they would be participating in an oral and written portion. The oral and written responses would measure the parenting styles, family relationships, self-concept, wellbeing, and family activities. The children were informed by the research assistant that they had the ability to skip or stop the interview at any moment, with no penalty. Data was also collected from the parents, after parents read and signed a written informed consent letter. Research assistants conducted a survey and interview with one parent at a time. Parents were also informed that they had the ability to skip or choose to not respond to items within the survey or interview, with no penalty (Coyl-Shepherd & Hanlon, 2014).

**Participants**

The study used non probability sampling because the sample that was used was not selection by random selection. The participants of the study consisted of children and their parents. The children’s ages ranged 7-13 years, with a mean age of 9.47 years. The mothers’ ages ranged 23- 53 years, with a mean age of 37.81 years and the fathers’ ages ranged 25-62 years, with a mean age of 39.85 years. Among the children there were 36 boys (39.1%) and 56 girls (60.9%). Their sample size of fathers was 92 and mothers were 92.

Among the children participants a majority were Anglo, 60.0%.  Hispanic participants were 20.0%, 8.9% were Asian, and 11.1% of participants were other ethnicities. A majority of parents’ ethnicities were Anglo, around 65.75%. Approximately 86.4% of parents were biological parents to the child.  Majority of fathers completed some college, 29.0%, and others completed a 4 year college education, 27.0%. Thirty nine and a half percent of mothers completed some college and others completed a 4 year college education. Fathers that participated worked an average of 38.96 hours, ranging from 0.00-80.00 hours. Mothers worked an average of 23.44 hours, ranging from 0.00-80.00 hours.

**Materials**

       This study included of the *Barriers to Involvement* measure ( Freeman, Newland, & Coyl, 2008). This 16-item measures parents’ barriers involvement with their child such as their work schedules, household responsibilities. Sample items included, “I feel that I don’t get to do all of the things I like to with my child because of stress in life” and “I feel that I don’t get to do all of the things I like to with my child because of lack of resources or money”.  The items were answered on a Likert scale 1 (*disagree*) to 5 (*agree*). By adding up the values of higher scores suggest greater barriers to involvement. Responses to each of the items provide a scores for each parents (mothers’ alpha = .82 and fathers’ alpha =.85). This measure provides quantitative data about parents’ barriers involvement.

        The second variable measure *School Involvement (*Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007) is a 5 item measures parents’ school involvement with their child such as helping. Samples items included “Regarding my child’s school progress I read with this child” and “Regarding my child’s school progress  I talked with this child about his/her school day”. The items were answered on a 1(*disagree*) to 5(*agree*).  Responses to items for parents’ school involvement were summed for a total school involvement scores for each parent (mothers’ =.85 and fathers’ =.76). This measure provides quantitative data about parents’ school involvement.

        The third variable measured Child Anxiety subscale of the *Behavioral Assessment System for Children* (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004). This 13-item measured assesses child anxiety. Sample items included “I worry about little things” and “I often worry about something bad happening to me” The items were answered on a True or False scale and N(*never*) to A(*almost always*). Responses to items for anxiety summed up of a total for the child's’ anxiety alpha = (child =.86). This measure provides quantitative data about child anxiety.

        The fourth variables measure Child Interpersonal subscale of the *Behavioral Assessment System for Children* (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004). This 6 item measures assesses child interpersonal. Sample items included “Other people make fun of me” and “Other kids hate to be with me”. The items were answered on a (T) or (F) scale and N(*never*) to A(*almost always*).  Response to items for interpersonal relationships summed up of a total of child’s interpersonal relationships (child =.87). This measure provides quantitative data about child interpersonal relationships.

**Results**

        The purpose of this study was to investigate potential gender differences in parental, barriers to involvement and school involvement, and child, anxiety and interpersonal relationship. A pair samples t-test was used to test these hypotheses. Father barrier to involvement has a mean of 39.31 (SD= 10.65) and mother barrier to involvement has a mean of 39.85 (SD= 10.33). Father school involvement has a mean of 20.18 (SD= 3.23) and mother school involvement has a mean of 22.01 (SD= 3.47). Boy anxiety has a mean of 47.30 (SD= 8.47) and girl anxiety has a mean of 49.57 (SD= 9.81). Boys interpersonal relationships has a mean of 52.23 (SD= 11.11) and girls interpersonal relationships has a mean 53.76 (SD= 8.00).

(see Table 1).

        The paired samples t-test failed to show a significant mean difference between mothers’ and fathers’ barriers involvement, t (72) = -0.73, p > .05. The paired samples t-test showed a significant means difference between mothers’ and fathers’ school involvement, t (85) = -4.30, p < .05 (see Table 1). The t-test for independent samples did not show a significant mean difference between boys’ and girls’ anxiety, t (85) = -1.10, p>.05. The t-test for independent samples did not show a significant difference between boys’ and girls’ interpersonal relations, t (88) = -0.76, p>.05 (see Table 1).

The research question for the correlational analyses was, whether there was an association among mothers’ and father’s parent barriers to involvement and school involvement and children’s anxiety and interpersonal relations. There was a weak, negative statistically significant relationship between fathers school involvement and child anxiety, r (85) = -0.23, p< 0.05. There was a weak, negative statistically significant relationship between mothers’ school involvement and child anxiety, r (85) = -0.23, p< 0.05 (see Table 2). There was a weak, positive statistically significant relationship between mothers school involvement and children’s interpersonal relations, r (85) = 0.24, p< 0.05 (see Table 2).

**Discussion**

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether gender differences exist in parental barriers to involvement and school involvement and the relationship it has to child anxiety and interpersonal relationships. We hypothesized that mothers were more likely to have a higher school involvement and greater barriers to involvement than fathers.  The results of the t-test indicated a higher mean score for mothers compared with fathers’ school involvement.  The results of the t-test for parent barriers to involvement indicated no difference between mothers and fathers.  We hypothesized that girls would have greater anxiety than boys, however, the results of the t-test for child anxiety indicated no difference between girls’ and boys’ anxiety.  We hypothesized that boys are more likely to have higher interpersonal relationships than girls, however, the results of the t-test for child interpersonal relations indicated no difference between boys and girls.

Associations between mothers’ and fathers’ school involvement and child anxiety were weak and negative, indicating that as mothers’ and fathers’ school involvement increase child anxiety scores will decrease.  The associations between mothers’ school involvement and child interpersonal relationships was weak and positive, indicating that as mothers’ school involvement increased the child interpersonal relationship scores increased.

None of the previous research we reviewed on child anxiety and child interpersonal relationships in relation to parental school involvement and barriers to involvement matched our findings. A strength the study’s methodology had was that it used both quantitative and qualitative data.  This is strength because interviews can help understand the response the individuals selected on the survey.  Another strength is that the study consisted of both mothers and fathers this is a strength because it provides a better understanding in whether school involvement and barriers to involvement varies from mother to father.

For future research study, researchers should look at child anxiety and interpersonal relationships with the parents’ barriers to involvement and school involvement in a longitudinal study. That way we can see if the parents will have school involvement with their child later on in the study. This study should be more of a diverse population so the researchers will know if other races are involved with their child because in the study there are more Anglo participants than any other races. It is important for parents to consider about getting involved with their child school activities because the child will experience less anxiety and interpersonal relationships with their peers.

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*Appendix*

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Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics, Alphas, and t tests for* *Parents’ Barriers to Involvement and School Involvement and Child’s Anxiety and Interpersonal Relationships*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | a | M | Mdn | Mode | SD | t | Sig. |
| Father Barrier to Involvement | .85 | 39.31 | 39.00 | 39.00 | 10.65 | -0.73 | 0.24 |
| Mother Barrier to Involvement | .82 | 39.58 | 40.00 | 37.00 | 10.33 |  |  |
| Father School Involvement | .76 | 20.18 | 20.00 | 20.00 | 3.23 | -4.30 | 0.00 |
| Mother School Involvement | .85 | 22.01 | 23.00 | 25.00 | 3.47 |  |  |
| Boy Anxiety | .86 | 47.30 | 47.00 | 50.00 | 8.47 | -1.10 | 0.14 |
| Girl Anxiety |  | 49.57 |  |  | 9.81 |  |  |
| Boy Interpersonal Relationships | .87 | 52.23 | 56.00 | 59.00 | 11.11 | -0.76 | 0.23 |
| Girl Interpersonal Relationships |  | 53.76 |  |  | 8.00 |  |  |

*Note*. Fathers n= 92; Mothers n=92; Boys n= 36; Girls n= 56 For the Alpha, Median, and Mode reliability is calculated from the total child sample.

\*p<.05, \*\* p<.01

Table 2

*Correlations Between* *Parents’ Barriers to Involvement and School Involvement and Child Anxiety and Interpersonal Relationships*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Child Anxiety | Child Interpersonal Relationships |
| Father Barriers to Involvement | 0.09 | -0.01 |
| Mother Barriers to Involvement | 0.05 | 0.17 |
| Father School Involvement | -0.23\* | 0.14 |
| Mother School Involvement | -0.30\*\* | 0.24\* |

*Note*. \*p<.05, \*\* p<.01