

Does Parental Pressure for High Marks Effects Negatively the Secondary Schools Students in Pakistan?

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ABSTRACT

In the Pakistani context, mostly the parents of school-going children are illiterate. They have initiated an unlogical competition between them for their children's high marks in secondary school examination. They want to be proud of their children's high marks, for which they stress their children with do or die situation. This phenomenon creates an atmosphere of exam phobia among the students, due to which mostly the school-going children think about committing suicide. If the suicide is not committed, they prefer to leave the schools forever, as they cannot compensate for the pressure created by their parents for high marks. Thus the school-dropout and suicide intention in school-going children are increasing day by day. This study analyzed different research papers to highlight the problem and provide a theoretical framework for the variables that have to be studied in the context. This study suggested that the principals need to confirm parents' awareness through PTC meetings about their children's harsh effects on their children for high marks. The government should change the examination system, which currently evaluates the student's memorizing capacity to assess the children critically.

KEYWORDS: Exam Phobia; Pakistan; School Dropout; Suicide Intention, Secondary Schools

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Introduction

In the Pakistani community for the last few decades, suicide seems to be a severe problem since a disturbing increase in the suicide rate among teenagers was noted over the previous few years (e.g., Dickson, 2019; Hacker, Collins, Gross-Young, Almeida & Burke, 2008). This study investigates the suicide intention and students' drop out of their schools aimed at a successful solution. In the related literature, the rate of suicide in Pakistan was 2.86 per 100 persons (Dickson, 2019; Hacker, Collins, Gross-Young, Almeida & Burke, 2008). Unfortunately, a rise was noted concerning age, particularly among school-going age children (e.g., Khan & Hyder, 2006). Therefore, suicide was regarded as one of the highest causes of death in Pakistan, where boys outnumber girls (Mayar, 2019). The suicide rate is as high as one person every hour (Rehman & Haque, 2019) created a qualm among the country.

On the other hand, school dropout was noted as a threatening issue in the background, decreasing the gross enrolment rate to 42 percent only at the secondary level, indicated as 72 percent at the primary level (e.g., I-SAPS, 2015). According to facts and statistics, the enrolment rate of 10 million boys at the primary level decreased to just 1.9

million at the higher secondary level. Similarly, it fell to just 1.4 million from 1.8 million (Chaudhry, 2016). That is why Pakistan was put at the second number in the global ranking for out-of-school children and 113th out of 124 countries for human capital index (Ali, 2017).

Different research studies conducted globally have found the possible risk of growing suicidal intention and drop out among students (e.g., Lee, Hong & Espelage, 2010). The noticeable actors highlighted as hostility and impulsivity, anxiety, depression, frustration, and helplessness (e.g., Fennig, Geva, Zalsman, Weizman, Fennig & Apter, 2005; Park, Fenster, Suresh & Bliss, 2006). However, the empirical investigation for the relationship between parental stress for high grades, test phobia, and suicidal intention and students' drop out is too few and far between. This study has investigated the impact of parental stress for high marks on students' dropout and their suicide intention with the mediation of exam phobia in the secondary schools of Mardan district, Pakistan.

Literature review

Different writers thought that parents must have strong aspirations of their children for high academic achievement

(e.g., Benner & Mistry, 2007; Boocock, 1972; Fan & Chen, 2001; Glick & White, 2004; Halle, Kurtz-Costes & Mahoney, 1997; Jacob, 2010; Jodl, Michael, Malanchuk, Eccles & Sameroff, 2001; Ma, Siu & Tse, 2018; Marjoribanks, 1995), but when the parental expectations turn into parental tension due to their illiteracy, they negatively affect the academic. For example, various researchers have found that stress is changeable into anxiety and must be cared out. Anything that induces pressure was called a stressor (e.g., Hazari, 2013; Yerkes & Dodson, 1908); thus, parental expectations are likely stressors. The parental tension is aimed at achieving high scores appropriate by them and the community. This stressor affects students' performance, and their outcomes become crucial (e.g., Khatoon & Parveen, 2009) ends in dropout and suicide intention.

Relationship between parental stress for high marks and students' suicide intention

High marks' parental tension is the second name of academic stress (e.g., Juon, Nam & Ensminger, 1994) triggers in exam phobia and responsible for poor performance. These poorer tests results caused by more stress (e.g., Zwettler, Reiss, Rohrmann, Warnecke, Luka-Krausgrill & Van Dick, 2018) are resulting in suicide intention. In some studies, this suicide intention was also termed suicide ideation (e.g., Arun, Garg, & Chavan, 2017). Therefore, the researchers assumed that academic stress is the predictor for suicide intention (e.g., Wai, Hong, and Heok 1999).

Relationship between parental stress for high marks and students' dropout

More precisely, in adolescent time, parental behaviour contributes more to children's decision-making, such as dropping out of their schools. The students are motivated for school dropout, as the parents lose control over their children (e.g., Handanos & Aktan, 2018). In comparison, the parental presence will minimize school dropout risk factors (e.g., Braley, Slate, & Cavazos, 2009). Similarly, supportive parental behaviours may also lead to their academic achievement (e.g., Handanos & Aktan, 2018; Turner, Chandler & Heffer, 2009). However, parenting influence is not exclusively limited to students' academic performance (e.g., Klein and Pierce 2009; Turner, Chandler & Herrer, 2009). There are more variables such as parental education, cultural status, good reviews to their children, the provision of study friendly atmosphere, etc.

Against the above reality, the parents in the background create a "do or die situation" for students to get high marks (e.g., Khatoon & Parveen, 2009), creating a stressful situation. The traumatic conditions for adolescents result in negative results (i.e., school dropout) in their lives (e.g., Dupéré, Dion, Leventhal, Archambault, Crosnoe & Janosz, 2018). But sadly, the school dropout was not studied in the background as yet to be explored. The researchers reviewed more than 50 studies for "vulnerability stress," of which four have based the student's dropout (e.g., Belsky & Pluess, 2009; Dupere, Leventhal, Dion, Crosnoe, Archambault & Janosz, 2015).

Correlation between parental stress for high marks and test phobia

The different psychologist has termed the test phobia as fear of examination, anxiety, and depression (e.g., Loscalzo, Giannini & Miers, 2018) triggered by the parental stress for high marks. "When this distress becomes so excessive that it genuinely interacts with success on an exam, it is recognized as test anxiety (Thakur & Mahavidyalaya, 2016; p. 782)". Self-efficacy and anxiety can interfere with school success (Roux, 1999).

Parental stress is the main trigger to examination phobia affecting learners' emotional dimensions and addressed as phobic, psychological, emotional, and cognitive components (e.g., Gustems-Carnicer & Calderón, 2013). These elements are based on intense pressure, thinking of failure, worrying about potential outcomes and mental stress, and pessimistic thoughts (Sarason & Sarason 1990). Other than that, test phobia is linked to lower scores, reduced enthusiasm, and excessive stress (e.g., Cizek & Burg, 2006; Segool et al., 2013; Zeidner, 1998). The parents' negative thoughts generate fear of exams and a decreased interest, though interest is the most crucial learning element (Krapp, 1999).

The examination phobia causes specific mental issues in students. The words such as; "high school senior symptoms" and "entrance examination symptoms" have been used to indicate those mental health issues (Deb, Strodl & Sun, 2015). Exam phobia was assumed to be caused by the burden of homework, test method, and teachers' and parents' attitude (e.g., Backović, Ilić Živojinović, Maksimović & Maksimović, 2012; Sarita, 2015). Therefore, the parents should stop this mentality of pressurizing children for high grades. On the other hand, teachers' self-motivation and professionalism (e.g.,

Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink & Hofman, 2012) can get rid of this issue.

Globally, the parents noted with high social support (e.g., Leeves & Banerjee, 2014); however, in comparison, the parents in the background have cut down their children's social lives for the sake of high marks (Deb, Strodl, & Sun, 2015). This intervenes, causing mental trauma in children because stress is the answer to social demands (Gustems-Carnicer & Calderón, 2013). On the other hand, the students feel insecure during school hours because competing for high marks creates competition among students. This environment of competition tends to build exam phobia. It is essential to know how the exam phobia doesn't end even earning high marks. It continues even though the students succeeded in getting high marks even though many other students' parents suspect them favoured by the teachers (e.g., Mukherjee Pandey, 2010).

Relationship between test phobia and students' dropout

The psychological element such as examination phobia decreases the students' interest in their studies and schools while interest is relevant (e.g., Krapp, 1999). The parents should mention their children periodically; if they are highly offensive, they should withhold their encouragement (Smita, 2009) for high marks. This encouragement causes anxiety, low academic performance and promotes students' dropout (e.g., Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Henning, Krägeloh, Dryer, Moir, Billington & Hill, 2018; Umudjere, 2016; Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). On the other hand, the students' intellectual self-concept and academic interest are neglected and important in recognizing academic achievement (Corbière, Fraccaroli, Mbekou & Perron, 2006). Thus all these factors tend to build exam phobia.

Exam phobia has many negative consequences such as; negative self-views, poor performance, low motivation, and intense focus (e.g., Hancock, 2001; King, Mietz, Tinney & Ollendick, 1995; Tobias, 1979; Whitaker Sena, Lowe & Lee, 2007), minimized success expectancy's level, low self-esteem, memory disruption, disruptive classroom behaviour, failing grades, reading difficulties, destructive emotions about the education, and confusion (e.g., Akca, 2011; Arezou, Rusnani, Habibah & Maznah, 2012; Bembenuddy, 2008; Keogh & French, 2001; Kutlu, 2001; Peleg, 2009) which leads in school dropout.

Relationship between test phobia and suicide intention

The growing trend in students' suicide across the globe has drawn many researchers' attention (e.g., Deb, Strodl, & Sun, 2015). Students with test phobia lose their ability to perform best, and this extreme condition is causing students' suicide intention (e.g., Juon et al., 1994; Yamamoto and Holloway, 2010). Exam phobia causes tension and depression, which is the root of suicide. The month of examination produced "yawn," "anxiety," and "examination phobia," leaving students powerless, discouraged, and disheartened to prefer suicide (e.g., Javed, 2011; Susanta, 2019).

DISCUSSION

This study analyzed the relationship between "parental stress for high marks," "examination phobia," students' suicide intention," and students' dropout rates in the secondary schools of Mardan district in Pakistan. This review has found the correlation between the independent as suggested by the researchers, such as; school dropout (Mughal, Aldridge & Monaghan, 2019), suicidal intention (e.g., Khan & Hyder, 2006), examination phobia (Javed, 2011), and parental stress for top grades (e.g., Khatoon & Parveen, 2009) in the Pakistani context.

This study has revealed a strong correlation between the parental stress for high marks and learners' suicide intent of the school-going children. The students have raged against the "parenting stress for top grades" but cannot convey, resulting in students' suicide plans. Different research studies supported these results (e.g., Daniel, Goldston, Erkanli, Franklin and Mayfield 2009; McGirr, Renaud, Burea & Turecki, 2008).

Furthermore, this research has found a high association between parental tension for top grades and students' dropout. Therefore, school dropout can be considered one of the reasons and difficult circumstances for its low literacy rate. The researchers (e.g., Freuchen, Kjelsberg, Lundervold, & Grøholt 2012; Loh, Tai, Chia, & Chia, 2012) have found that these difficult circumstances cause behavioural problems which result in school dropout. Similarly, learners' dropout is vulnerable to environmental stressors (e.g., Bowers & Spratt, 2012; Elder, Shanahan & Jennings, 2015) such as "parenting stress for high marks." Furthermore, a relationship was observed between the "parents' stress for high marks," "students' dropout," and "suicide intention," and "examination phobia." The authors (e.g., Sousa, Santos, Silva, Perrelli & Sougey, 2017) examined 29 papers and linked the social and mental factors to suicidal intention. It was proved that the "parental

stress for high marks" causes "exam phobia" (e.g., Ahmed, 2015; Dupere et al., 2015; Harkness, Bruce, Lumley, 2006; Horesh, Gothelf & Apter, 1999; Lee, Choi, Kim, Park & Shin, 2009; McGirr, Renaud, Bureau & Turecki, 2008), which results in suicidal intention and school dropout.

This study concluded that parents' education could moderate the relationship between the stated above variables. The parents with the educational background will have high expectations of their children positively, but not stressing their children to achieve high marks with a do or die situation, as found by (Khatoon and Parveen 2009). Supporting this analysis, different researchers (e.g., Ahsan, Iqbal & Farooq, 2015; Kainuwa & Yusuf 2013) have linked parents' education to students' education. The results of this study were associated with those mentioned above research studies.

It was revealed that parents' socioeconomic status is a moderator for the correlation between the independent. Parents' socioeconomic solid status will decrease suicide intention and students' dropout in the Pakistani context. The authors (e.g., Carneiro & Heckman, 2003; Kainuwa & Yusuf, 2013; Murray, 2009; Zhang, Liu & Rozelle, 2013) claimed that children with high socioeconomic status have less chance to be a dropout and commit suicide. The finding of this research was consistent with those mentioned earlier research studies.

Conclusion

The parents expect their children to obtain high marks at the secondary school examination, regardless of their skills

and motivation. In reality, the students worry about the anticipated failure in their assigned goals. They assume the risk of stopping the educational budget in case of failure. The parent's mentioned behaviour is creating a mental issue for the learners, such as exam phobia. This exam anxiety leads to loss, and therefore dropout and suicide plan. This research review has shown a high association between parental stress for high grades, exam phobia, students' dropout, and suicide plan. It was assumed that the students whose parents are qualified and have an excellent socioeconomic status were less suffering from examination phobia and school dropout and suicide plans.

It was proposed that these issues might be discussed in parents- teachers' Council (PTC) meetings, and the stakeholders should be made aware of the negative aspects of their tension over their children for high marks. In this way, the students will be encouraged to against their school-dropout and suicide plan. This study suggests that the parents might have high expectations but should not stress their children for high marks with do or die situation. The students might be inspired for high achievement through positive approaches. Thus the rate of suicidal intention and students' dropout will be reduced.

Alongside, this study makes the theoretical contribution of demonstrating an apparent relationship between maternal stress for high scores, examination phobia, suicide intention, and students' dropouts in the Pakistani context as a conceptual framework to be studied.

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