Parental Involvement and Procrastination: A Correlational Study on School Students

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to study the relationship between parental involvement and procrastination on a sample of 500 adolescent students. The sample consisted of 500 secondary school students (250 girls and 250 boys) studying in ninth and tenth classes (aged 13 to 15 years). These students were subjected to measures of procrastination given by Lay (Form G, 1986) and Academic Procrastination (Milgram & Amir, 1998) and three measures of Parental Involvement Scale including cognitive stimulation, cognitive behaviour and personal involvement developed by Trama, 1998). The hypothesis that there would be negative relationship between procrastination and parental involvement has been supported in case of total sample, for boys only in case of general procrastination, and for girls in case of academic procrastination, and general procrastination and all parental involvement variables except for father's cognitive behaviour and father's cognitive stimulation. The results reveal that boys are less tolerant towards interference by parents in their studies as compared to girls. This explains insignificant relations obtained for academic procrastination on all parental variables for boys.

Introduction

The term “parental involvement” has been used as a general term which may encompass several activities such as tutoring, monitoring, effective use of time for study at home, reinforcing behaviours established in school, participating in school-related committees, and the like.
Researchers have used this term to refer to substantially different types of activities such as going to school activities and events (e.g., Becker & Epstein, 1982; Stevenson & Baker, 1987), number of contacts between families and schools (Iverson, Brownlee & Walberg, 1981), verbal encouragement or interactions regarding school work (Marjoribanks, 1983; Watson, Brown & Swich, 1983; expectations of school performance (Parsons, Adler & Kaczala, 1982; Seginer, 1983; Hess, Holloway, Dickson & Price, 1984), direct reinforcement of improved academic performance (Karraka, 1972), general academic guidance and support (Bloom, 1984), and students perceptions of the degree to which their parents influence their after high school plans and monitor their daily activities and school progress (Keith, Reimers, Fehrmann, Pottebaum & Aubey, 1986). Though some theorists have attended to specific dimensions of parental involvement (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Lareau, 1987; Epstein, 1990), most of them have used global measures, as their main aim was to establish the mediating role of parental involvement rather than to study its specific effects as such.

Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) have defined parental involvement as, the dedication of resources by the parent to the child within a given domain. Such a definition recognizes that there is a difference between parents’ overall involvement with the child and involvement in the child’s education. It also stresses the multidimensional nature of parent involvement in that several resources can be considered (Cone, DeLawyer & Wolfe, 1985; Epsein, 1990).

As mentioned earlier parental involvement is domain-specific, it is necessary in the child's schooling. Grolnick & Slowiaczek (1994) define it as the allocation of resources to the child’s school endeavours. It denotes the extent to which and the ways in which parents take a keen interest and actively participate in their child’s schooling, Grolnick & Slowiaczak (1994) have given three dimensions of parental involvement, behavioural, personal, and cognitive/intellectual involvement.

1) Behaviour involvement is manifested by parents through their overt behaviour like going to school to meet the teachers, participating in parent-teacher meetings, etc. If the child experiences this behaviour the parent may be modeling the importance of school. Further, such behaviour may provide the parent with information so that she can help the child manage his or her schooling (Baker & Stevenson, 1986).

Finally, if the teacher sees the parent as involved, she may be the conduit for effects for example she may attend to the child more.

2) Personal Involvement- while parents’ overt behaviour is one way in which children experience parents’ resources, children may also have a more affective experience of the parent as providing resources to him, and this effect may be separate from that described
above. Parents’ personal involvement includes the child’s affective experience that the parent cares about school, and has and enjoys interactions with them around school. Such a perception may convey a positive feeling toward school and the child. Personal involvement includes involvement in the academic and social life of the child. This includes activities such as knowing about the child’s day-to-day activities, his whereabouts, friends, what he usually does at school, how well he gets along with others, how well he is doing in studies, how regular and apt he is in his schoolwork, how well he performs in examinations, and the like.

If the child is aware of his parents’ interest in his life, it provides emotional support, assurance and reliance to the child.

3) Cognitive/Intellectual involvement- It involves exposing the child to cognitive stimulating activities and materials such as books and current events, it represents a historically new role for parents in promoting their children’s cognitive development (Lareau, 1987). Exposure to cognitively stimulating materials would bring home and school closer together and help the child practice skills useful for school. Keeves (1972) demonstrated a relation between intellectual interests and activities in the home and children’s achievement.

Parental stimulation has been defined by Belsky, Goode, Most (1980, p.1169) as “efforts to focus the infant’s attention an objects and events within the environment. These attempts can be physical or verbal in nature”. By directing the child’s attention to specific objects and activities, parents try to stimulate the child’s thought and expression in ways that may augment his/her academic learning.

Apart from the above categories of involvement a fourth category namely cognitive behaviour has also been suggested. Instead of directly stimulating the child cognitively, parents may themselves engage in various types of cognitive activities such as reading newspaper, books, magazines or going to the library, and the like. These types of parental activities have been explored by some researchers such as Moos & Moos (1981), Howell & McBroom (1982), and Griswold (1986). Parents’ cognitive/intellectual behaviour may permit modeling to occur and children may tend to adopt similar attitudes and values towards intellectual activities as their parents have.

Both mother and father play an important role in shaping child’s personality and attitudes. However, mothers are more involved than fathers on each of the above domains of parental involvement. Tradition has usually favoured mother’s influence, since child rearing is generally considered as primarily the mother’s privilege and responsibility. But father’s involvement has also
been found to be crucial in child's cognitive development. Researchers have found that the absence of a father can adversely affect cognitive (Juby & Farrington, 2001; Santrock, 1972; Teachman, Day, Paasch, Carver & Call, 1998), moral (Daum, 1983), and social development. (Angel & Angel, 1993; Clark, Vandell, McCartney, Owen & Booth, 2000). It can also have a negative impact on peer relations (Mitchell & Wilson, 1967), self-concept (Parish & Taylor, 1979), self-esteem (Miller, 1984), masculine development (Beaty, 1995), and academic achievement (Nesengani & Mboya 1999; Murray & Sandqvist, 1990).

In comparison to mothers, fathers have been found to interact with their young children less frequently (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Lytton, 1980), to initiate different types of interactions, and to be less involved in caregiving (Belsky et al., 1984; Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Lamb, 1976; Lytton, 1980).

In a research by Russell and Russell (1987) it was found that there are major mother/father differences, but most fathers make a significant contribution to their child's socialization, although they did not appear to take major responsibility for their day-to-day care or needs. Given the affective quality of their relationships with their children, fathers are obviously in a position to exert considerable influence, especially as their children become older and caregiving becomes less important.

Both parents exert a considerable influence on the child though in a different manner. However, the recent upsurge in child developmental studies focuses on the role of fathers as well in childrearing. So, it would be equally important to study the role of fathering and its related variables. Keeping this in account, it was considered necessary to study both maternal and paternal involvement in the domains of cognitive stimulation, cognitive behaviour as well as personal involvement.

The role of parental involvement in procrastination is a relatively new concept. Parents form the most potent source of contact with the phenomenal world of experience for their children. Their beliefs, attitudes, interest, likes, dislikes affect their children in many ways. The requirement of the current parental involvement meant that the respondents be children who reside at home, are exposed daily to proactive, reactive and incidental behavior of their parents with regard to their schoolwork as well as their peers, their social life, and are still of an age that accepts parental authority and involvement in their studies and other aspect of their life.
According to Senecal, Koestner and Vallerand (1995), "Procrastination typically involves delaying the start of a task until one experiences distress about not having performed the activity earlier".

Procrastination is typically common in the academic domain as is clear from the incidence of procrastination in academic domain. Estimates indicate that 80% to 95% college students engage in procrastination (Ellis & Knaus, 1977; O’Brien, 2002). Even for the average student, procrastination is considerable, representing over one-third of their reported daily tasks (Pychyl, Lee, Thibodeau, & Blunt, 2000). Rothblum, Solomon, and Murakami (1986, p.387) defined academic procrastination as, “the tendency to (a) always or nearly always put off academic tasks, and (b) always or nearly always experience problematic anxiety associated with procrastination.”

Academic procrastination has received more research and professional interest than other kinds of procrastination, decisional, neurotic, and life-routine procrastination (Milgram, Gehrman, & Keinan, 1992). There is evidence that procrastination results in detrimental academic performance, including poor grades and course withdrawal.

Milgram and Toubiana (1999) in a study on academic procrastination among seventh and eighth graders found a modest inverse relationship between current parental involvement in their children’s school work and their children’s academic procrastination for mothers (r=-.26), but not for fathers (r=-.10). Children procrastinated less in their school work when their mothers were involved. However, high paternal involvement was no more strongly related to children’s academic procrastination than low (r=-.09 and r=-.07 respectively, not significant) and the same for high versus low maternal investment (r=-.25, and -.19, respectively, p<.01).

Ferrari & Olivette (1994) in a study of procrastination among college students (females) found that permissive fathers (perceived as accepting without use of parental authority) were unrelated to the procrastination scores of their daughters. However, parental authority style perceived by daughters to be associated with their mothers was unrelated to the child’s procrastination scores, although dysfunctional procrastinators had mothers who reported to be indecisive. In addition, mothers of procrastinating daughters tended to be avoidant procrastinators themselves.

On the basis of these findings, it is expected that when parents are highly involved in the schooling of their children, the latter would tend to exhibit lesser procrastination. So, it is expected that all the dimensions of parental involvement, viz., personal involvement, cognitive stimulation, and cognitive behaviour would show a negative association with children's procrastination, both general and academic procrastination. Moreover with no Indian studies
available on procrastination as related to parental involvement, it becomes all the more important
to study it in Indian context.

The investigator has thus, studied general as well as academic procrastination as given by

Methodology

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that there would be negative relationship between procrastination and
parental involvement.

Sample

Sample of the present study consisted of 500 secondary school students (250 girls and 250
boys) selected from different coeducational schools of Rajasthan studying in ninth and tenth classes
(aged 13 to 15 years). Children coming from intact two parent families and those residing with
their parents were included in the sample. Moreover, the present investigation was restricted to
those English medium schools where one tends to find children coming from middle to upper
middle class families.

Tools Used for the Present Study

The tools used in the present study were as follows:-

1. The Procrastination Scale-GP (Form G, Lay 1986) - This is a twenty item questionnaire to be
answered by marking true/ false options. It is used to assess the procrastination of students
as a generalized trait Lay (1986) found the cronbach alpha coefficient to be 0.82. Form G is a
synthesis of earlier forms A and B. People above the median are considered high
procrastinators and, those below the median are taken as low procrastinators.

2. Academic procrastination scale-APS (Milgram & Amir, 1998). This self report scale assesses
academic procrastination in three equally important academic assignment categories
(homework, test, and papers). It has been used with middle school and high school students
(Milgram & Amir 1998), and college students and their parents(Milgram et.al, 1998), and
found to possess high internal consistency(alphas beyond .90) and convincing construct
validity. Item analysis of the scale, separately for students, father and mother, justified
retaining all items by Milgram. In all, there are 27 items (8 items concerning preparation for
tests, 11 items concerning home work and 8 items concerning preparation for term papers).
Most items are phrased in the direction of procrastination but at least 3 items in each category are phrased in the reverse direction.

The alpha reliability of the scale was examined on Indian population by the investigator which was found to be .70 for boys (N=100), .76 for girls (N=100) and .74 (N=200) for the total samples of secondary school students.

7. Parental Involvement Scale-PINS (Trama, 1998). Three subscales to be used in this research project are as follows:

- Parental Involvement Scale- Cognitive Behavior (PINS- CB). It consists of 26 statements (13 each for mother form and father forms of the scale) to be answered by marking only one of the four alternatives given against each statements.
- Parental Involvement Scale - Personal (PINS-P). It consists of 60 statements (with 30 each for mother and father form).
- Parental Involvement Scale- Cognitive Stimulation (PINS-CS). It consists of 32 statements (with 16 each for mother and father forms of the scale). Score of 1, 2, 3 and 4 are assigned to each of the four alternative answers given against each item out of which the subject has to encircle one. High score indicates high parental involvement and low score indicates lower parental involvement.

For estimating alpha reliability, the author administered the scales to a group of students studying in fifth, sixth, ninth and tenth class and obtained values are as follows;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mother form</th>
<th>Father form</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mother form</th>
<th>Father form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PINS-CB</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PINS-P</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>PINS-CB</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Upper elementary level Secondary level**

**Procedure**

The aim of the present investigation was to study the effect of parental involvement on procrastination in secondary school children. For this purpose, 500 students of ninth and tenth classes (age group of 13-15 years) from different schools of Rajasthan were included in the sample.
Initially only two questionnaires, Lay's Procrastination Scale (Form G), Parental Involvement Scales and, finally Academic Procrastination Scale were given in two sittings in small groups. Respondents from single-parent families were excluded and only those from two-parent families were included in the research. The scoring for different tests was done as per the details given in their respective manuals / articles. The means and standard deviations of all subjects on each variable were obtained. Correlations were computed between procrastination and other variables.

Results and Discussion

Means and standard deviations for all variables were calculated for the total sample (N=500), boys (N=250), and girls (N=250) separately and are presented in the table I.

**TABLE-I**

Mean and Standard Deviations for the Total Sample, Boys, and Girls on all variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Total Sample (N=500)</th>
<th>Boys (N=250)</th>
<th>Girls (N=250)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>GP</td>
<td>6.158</td>
<td>2.932</td>
<td>6.616</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>76.732</td>
<td>9.417</td>
<td>78.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PINS-CB(M)</td>
<td>30.578</td>
<td>6.137</td>
<td>30.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PINS-CB(F)</td>
<td>34.720</td>
<td>6.107</td>
<td>35.132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>PINS-CS(M)</td>
<td>52.476</td>
<td>6.407</td>
<td>51.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>PINS-CS(F)</td>
<td>53.946</td>
<td>7.808</td>
<td>53.708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>PINS-P(M)</td>
<td>96.996</td>
<td>11.953</td>
<td>93.548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>PINS-P(F)</td>
<td>92.534</td>
<td>16.165</td>
<td>91.984</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE-II Coefficients of Correlation of General Procrastination and Academic Procrastination

With other Variables (N=500)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>G.P</th>
<th>AP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>GP</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.313*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>.313*</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PINS-CB(M)</td>
<td>-.183*</td>
<td>-.123*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PINS-CB(F)</td>
<td>-.099**</td>
<td>-.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>PINS-CS(M)</td>
<td>-.166*</td>
<td>-.149*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>PINS-CS(F)</td>
<td>-.108**</td>
<td>-.089**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>PINS-P(M)</td>
<td>-.293*</td>
<td>-.177*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>PINS-P(F)</td>
<td>-.169*</td>
<td>-.129*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.01; ** p<.05

For total sample Table II shows a significant negative correlation between procrastination (general and academic) and parental involvement (cognitive behaviour, cognitive stimulation, and personal involvement for both mother and father) whereas, among boys all parental involvement variables show a significant negative correlation with general procrastination. None of the parental involvement variables show significant correlation (Table III) with academic procrastination whereas all parental involvement variables have significant negative correlation with girls' academic procrastination. In case of general procrastination among girls, it has a significant negative correlation with mother's cognitive behaviour involvement, father's cognitive stimulation, and personal involvement of both parents.

The hypothesis that there would be negative relationship between procrastination and parental involvement has been supported in case of total sample, for boys only for general procrastination, and for girls for academic procrastination, and general procrastination and all parental involvement variables except for father's cognitive behavior and father's cognitive stimulation. By and large, the hypothesis has been supported by the present results.
TABLE-III Coefficient of Correlation of General Procrastination and Academic Procrastination with Other Variables for Boys and Girls Sample

* p<.01; ** p<.05

Studies have consistently found that parents who are more involved in their children’s education have sons and daughters who experience greater social success (Epstein, 1990; Fehrman, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994; Olmsted & Rubin, 1983; Reynolds, 1989; Stevenson & Baker, 1987; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992).

Procrastination is believed to be the result of either two extremes of child rearing: an overindulgent parent encouraging underachievement or an over demanding parent encouraging a rebellious lassitude. Indecision and avoidant procrastination may be ways of rebelling against the controlling demands made by an authoritarian parent such as father (Ferrari & Olivette, 1994).

For boys cognitive behaviour involvement is a more effective method of teaching them the right habits as compared to girls. For girls cognitive behaviour and cognitive stimulation both have insignificant relation with their general procrastination but it has significant relationship with mother’s involvement on both of these factors. This reveals that for girls’ mothers seemed to play a more meaningful role in determining procrastinating behaviour (general). A possible reason for this may be that as they grow older, girls begin to identify themselves with their mothers. So when mothers show involvement in the education of their children, older daughters especially are more motivated by such maternal actions. They begin to realize the importance that their mothers attach.
to educational outcomes, and consequently, they too, tend to adopt similar attitudes toward
cognitive outcomes as their mothers have. This in turn makes them realize the importance of being
motivated to do certain tasks which results in lesser procrastination.

An alternate explanation can be that as daughters grow up they tend to share their
thoughts, emotions, secrets more with mothers. Girls tend to become closer to mothers also
because it is the mother who teaches them to cope up with changes during adolescence.

Father’s cognitive behaviour has a significant negative correlation with general
procrastination in case of boys which is insignificant in case of girls as discussed above. Boys also
tend to interact more with fathers or outside world than the girls.

As far as mother’s cognitive stimulation is concerned it has significant negative correlation
with girls’ general as well as academic procrastination for the same reasons cited above. All the
parental involvement variables (cognitive behaviour, cognitive stimulation and personal
involvement of both parents) correlated significantly with boys’ general procrastination and not
with academic procrastination. This is probably because it is much easier for parents to keep a
watch on their boys in day-to-day activities like getting up early, replying to message in time,
posting letters timely, rather than on academic activities. Any interference by parents in boys’
academic activities is resisted by them because they feel that parents do not understand present
day studies and thus, cannot help them in any way. Boys are less tolerant towards interference by
parents in their studies. This explains insignificant relations obtained for academic procrastination
on all parental variables.

However, this is not true in case of girls where all parental involvement variables have
significant negative correlation with academic procrastination. Probably this is because daughters
are usually more dependent on their parents compared to sons. Since girls require more
reassurances from time to time, parents’ cognitive stimulation may satisfy this need of theirs, and
affect their academic procrastination. Infact, they may perceive such verbal reinforcements and
statements as encouraging to perform well in academics. They might feel that their parents are
showing interest and concern for doing academic tasks more effectively which may lead them to
delay lesser on academic tasks.

Also with the changing cultural context where girls are encouraged to study and perform
well cognitively by parents because they want their daughters to play significant role and occupy
crucial positions in the society, greater involvement is ensured by parents. This also explains
significant negative relations between parents’ personal involvement and academic procrastination among girls.

A modest inverse relationship between current parental involvement in their children’s school work and their children’s academic procrastination was also reported for mothers in a study by Milgram and Toubiana (1999) on seventh and eighth graders.

Parental autonomy support predicts persistence through students’ feelings of autonomy. Perceived parental involvement and support have specific roles in predicting students’ self processes and achievement and highlights the importance for intervention of sustaining parental involvement and support for college students (Ratelle et al., 2005).

It can be safely concluded that parental involvement plays a crucial role in determining a child’s procrastinatory habits. If the parents involve themselves actively in their child’s life whether it is academic, social or personal it results in lesser procrastination among children. However, these results vary with gender of the child and the kind of activities, parents involve themselves in.

References


Abbreviations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>GP</td>
<td>General Procrastination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Academic Procrastination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PINS-CB(M)</td>
<td>Parental Involvement-Cognitive Behavioural-Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PINS-CB(F)</td>
<td>Parental Involvement-Cognitive Behavioural-Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>PINS-CS(M)</td>
<td>Parental Involvement-Cognitive Stimulation-Mother</td>
</tr>
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