

IMPACT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT, TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP, AND RESILIENCE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KANG WON PROVINCE, IN SOUTH KOREA

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Abstract: This study investigated the impact of parental involvement, teacher-student relationship, and resilience on the academic performance of middle school students in Kang Won Province, South Korean. The study's participants consisted of students selected from three middle schools in Kang Won Province, South Korea. The research measures employed included the Parental Home and School Involvement Scale, Teacher-Student Relationship Inventory, and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale 25. Results from multiple regression analysis showed that perception of parental involvement and resilience are significantly and positively associated with academic performance. However, teacher-student relationship was not found to be significantly related to academic performance. The results also demonstrated that, overall, both male and female students did not believe that their parents were highly involved in their lives; likewise, they did not think highly of the quality of their relationship with their teachers. On the other hand, they reported themselves as being highly resilient. The results also demonstrated gender differences in their perceived teacher-student relationship in that male students' perception of their relationship with their teachers is more positive than female students' perception. The results indicated no significant gender differences in reported parental involvement and resilience.

Keywords: Resilience, Academic Performance, Parental Involvement.

Introduction

Challenges and problems in everyday living contribute to the risk of failure in academic development and educational achievement for children in the 21st Century. Family dissonance, poverty, violence, interpersonal relationship and other environmental factors are potential threats for them in their academic development and educational achievement. In upper elementary and middle schools, high level of parental involvement and the quality of teacher-student relationship can impact the academic performance of middle school students (13-15 years of age).

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There has been a dearth of studies in the Asian setting which investigated the impact of parental involvement and teacher-student relationship on students' academic performance. Nevertheless, it is obvious that parental involvement is of paramount importance because children spend more than 90% of their time under parental influence. As parents are the primary and therefore the most important teachers for their children, it is important to understand the underlying parent-child relationship that supports their children's achievement and positive educational outcomes.

Apart from the importance of the parent-child relationship in children's academic performance, it is also important to note the role that the teacher-student relationship plays in children's achievement and positive educational outcomes. The teacher-student relationship is a multi-dimensional process that involves cognitive, psychological and social aspects. In terms of the social dimension of this relationship, it is noted that students who like their teachers tend to attain better grades. Psychologically, children who are resilient do well and achieve academically despite adversities. These resilient children demonstrate specific strengths and attain an advantage from protective factors which aid them in overcoming unfavourable circumstances such as individual hardships, family problems, and environmental barriers. There are many programs designed and conducted to determine if resilience-training improves children's academic performance. Some of these programs include the Perry Pre-school Project, the Penn Resiliency Program, and the Big Brothers and Big Sisters Program. The Perry Pre-school Project is structured as a classroom type program that emphasizes social development, language, numeracy and literacy, to promote children's readiness for school. The Penn Resiliency Program has been designed to promote optimistic thinking; children are taught relaxation, decision making, assertiveness, and negotiation skills. The Big Brothers and Big Sisters Program is essentially a mentoring program in which children are mentored by grown-ups.

Resilience in the South Korean context

In the past half century, South Korea has evolved from an agrarian-based nation into an industrial power house. Rising education standard has contributed to this change. Korean society is highly competitive and parents as well as the government place great value on education. Korean students also exhibit high commitment and resilience in learning. South Korea's dynamic private sector also played a crucial role in complementing parent, government, and student commitment to the education sector. Most Korean students recognize the value of education and spare no effort in ensuing that they acquire the best academic achievement possible. Their high resiliency has helped South Korean middle school students overcome various adversities by inculcating vital traits that act as barriers against obstacles encountered both in the education system and in their life.

The present study has been designed to investigate the impact of parental involvement, quality of teacher-student relationship, and level of resilience on the academic performance of middle-school students in Kang Won Province, South Korea. Figure 1 presents the study's conceptual framework.

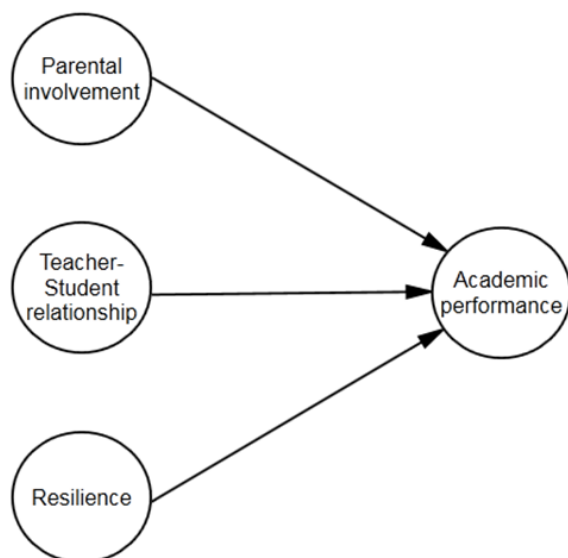


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Korean Students' Academic Performance as a Function of the Influence of Their Perceived Level of Parental Involvement, Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship, and Resilience

Based on the conceptual framework, it is hypothesized that perceived parental involvement, quality of teacher-student relationship, and level of resilience have significant positive influences on the academic performance of middle-school students in Kang Won Province, South Korea, such that the higher their level of perceived parental involvement, the more positive their teacher-student relationship, and the more robust their resilience, the higher their level of academic performance.

Methodology

Participants

The sample consisted of 305 participants of whom 118 (38.7%) were males and 187 (61.3%) were females. Their ages range from 12 years and younger to 16 years and older, with a mean age within the range of 13 to 14 years. These participants were recruited from three different schools in Kang Won Province, South Korea, and who voluntarily filled in the study's questionnaire.

Material

The present study employed a survey questionnaire consisting of four parts.

Part 1 of the survey questionnaire consisted of items written to tap the demographic characteristics of gender, age, and academic performance in the previous semester. It should be noted that 'academic performance' in this study is operationalized on a 5-point grading scale in which the students' raw scores in their mid-term and final assessments were converted into the following letter grades: 90-100=A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D, 0-59=E.

Part 2 of the questionnaire consisted of the *Parental Home and School Involvement Scale* (PHSIS), adapted from Lee's 2012 study. The scale consists of 10 statements that reflect parental involvement with children at home and at school. Specifically, the statements measure the frequency of parents' participation in various school- and education-related activities, as perceived by the student participants. Direct school involvement is based on perceived behaviors that involve parents in school settings (e.g., attending parent-teacher meetings, interacting with teachers inside the classroom, attending school functions, etc.). Interpersonal involvement focuses on the perceived time spent by parents with their children, such as the sharing of stories, reading, and playing games. Each of the 10 items was to be scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Regularly*, and 5 = *Always*, with high scores reflecting high parental involvement in both home and school.

Part 3 of the questionnaire consisted of the *Teacher-Student Relationship Inventory* (TSRI), developed by Ang in 2005 (N. B.). The TSRI consisted of 14 items with three subscales: instrumental help, satisfaction, and conflict. Each item was to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Almost never true*, 2 = *Seldom true*, 3 = *Sometimes true*, 4 = *Often true*, and 5 = *Almost always true*, with scale scores calculated by summing across all the items from the three parts. The interpretation of the score is as follows: (a) high scores for *instrumental help* means that the student willingly views the teacher as a resource who can be approached by the student for support, advice, and sympathy; (b) high scores for *satisfaction* means that the student is satisfied with his or her teacher-student relationship; and (c) high scores for *conflict* means that the student perceives conflict between him or her and the teacher.

Part 4 of the survey questionnaire consisted of the *Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale 25* (CD-RISC-25) (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The CD-RISC-25 is a self-rating scale in which the subject is directed to respond to each of the 25 items with reference to the previous month. If a particular situation has not arisen during this time, the response should be determined by how the person thinks he or she would have reacted. Each item was to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = *Not true at all*, 1 = *Rarely true*, 2 = *Sometimes true*, 3 = *Often true*, and 4 = *True nearly all the time*, with a full range of scores from 0 to 100. Higher scores reflect greater resilience.

Procedure

Upon obtaining permission from the administrators of the selected middle schools in Kang Won Province, South Korea, the researcher sought the assistance of the school administrators and teachers in distributing the survey questionnaire to the targeted students from each school. Only those students who volunteered to fill in the questionnaire, signed the informed consent form, and who received permission from their parents/guardians to participate in the study were given the questionnaire to complete. Prior to filling in the questionnaire, they were assured of their anonymity as well as confidentiality with respect to their responses. They were also informed of their freedom to withdraw from filling in the questionnaire at any time.

Results

Multiple Regression Analysis to Test the Hypothesized Regression Model

In order to test the impact of parental involvement, quality of teacher-student relationship, and level of resilience on the participants' academic performance, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The analysis involved regressing the criterion variable of 'grade point average' on the predictor variables of parental involvement, quality of teacher-student relationship, and level of resilience. The results of analysis are presented in Figure 2.

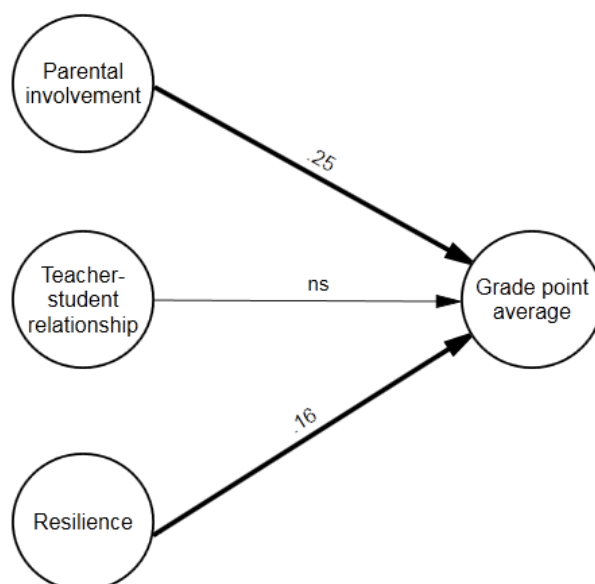


Figure 2: Regression Model of Participants' Academic Performance (GPA) As a Function Their Perceived Parental Involvement, Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship, and Level of Resilience

The results showed that the predictor variables of 'parental involvement' and 'resilience' were significantly and positively associated with the participants' academic performance (GPA). Thus, the more the participants perceived their parents to be involved in their lives, and the more resilient they reported themselves to be, the better their academic performance (i.e., higher GPA) (Beta = .25 and Beta = .16 respectively). Their perception of the quality of their relationship with their teachers was not found to be significantly related to their academic performance.

Discussion

Regression analysis yielded two significant path coefficients between parental involvement and resiliency with GPA. These findings suggest that the higher the student participants' perceived level of parental involvement and the more resilient they perceived themselves to be, the better their academic performance. These findings are in line with the study's hypotheses and lend further support to the

important roles that parental involvement and resiliency play in the students' achievement of academic excellence.

As stated earlier, past studies have pointed out that strong involvement by parents can generate positive results in terms of their children's academic performance (e.g., Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Hong & Ho, 2005). More specifically, within the Korean setting, the present study's findings are in line with Lee's (2012) finding of a positive relationship between parental involvement and academic performance which suggests that the greater the involvement of parents in their children's school work, the better is their children's academic achievement. Parental involvement can consist of a number of appropriate strategies and approaches such as school participation, parent-teacher interaction, support for learning activities at home, guidance for children in the selection of courses, monitoring of academic progress, introduction of parental values, and availability of support at home (Gonzales-De Hass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005). As such, education is considered to be a shared responsibility, and children's academic performance is often the result of their family's involvement and commitment. As mentioned earlier, the goals, aspirations, and expectations of parents have also been integrated into the notion of parental involvement and have been associated with their children's academic performance.

The study's finding of a positive relationship between resiliency and academic performance appears to be an important by-product of South Korea's transformation from an agrarian nation into an industrial economy. As mentioned earlier, a major contributor to this change is the rising education standard in the country which many stakeholders believe is largely responsible for the rapid transformation of the country into an industrial powerhouse. Due to the highly competitive nature of Korean society, parents and government put great value on education, resulting in Korean students exhibiting high commitment and resilience in learning. Such academic resilience has enabled these students to face and deal with various setbacks and challenges encountered in their academic endeavors. According to Leadbeater and associates (2005), those aspects of academic resilience that have been identified as critical for improving academic performance include attention, value, effort, deep strategies, and meta-cognitive strategies. These resiliency characteristics were clearly demonstrated in the present study with the finding that the higher the student participants' resiliency, the better their academic performance.

The finding that the students' perception of the quality of the teacher-student relationship exerted no significant influence on their academic performance is surprising. A plethora of past studies has clearly indicated that young individuals who have good relationship with their teachers tend to consider their teachers as a strong resource for the achievement of academic excellence (Howes, Phillipsen, & Peisner-Feinberg, 2000). However, the present study's finding showed no significant relationship between these two variables. A possible reason for this could be due to the nature of the Korean education system which is very different from that of most Western countries. As elucidated earlier, Korean culture does not encourage close relationship between students and teachers. The educational system is both authoritarian and rigid, with students expected to respect and obey their teachers unquestioningly. In addition, the educational system inculcates fear of teachers when

mistakes in the classroom are made. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the punishment that students receive when they do not meet their teacher's expectations far exceeds the compliments they get when they do well. Given the harshness of the student-teacher relationship in Korean classrooms, it is no wonder that Korean students do not easily form close relationship with their teachers, or perceive such relationship as having any important impact on their academic performance.

Implications of the Study's Findings

The findings from the present study carry a number of important implications for enhancing the academic performance of Korean middle school students. First, the finding that the students perceived their parents' involvement as being low, together with the finding of a positive relationship between parental involvement and their GPA, suggests that if their parents were more involved in their education both at home and at school, they could achieve better academically. These findings point to the important role that parental involvement plays in contributing to the overall quality of children's academic performance. Schools can also play a role by developing and promoting programs that encourage parents to be more involved with their children's education. For instance, they can facilitate workshops to educate parents for optimal parenting styles as well as communication skills. Effective communication with their own children can enhance their understanding of their children's educational as well as life needs.

The findings that the student participants' resiliency is positively related to their academic performance even when they perceived parental involvement and quality of relationship with their teachers to be low, suggest that it is their resiliency that motivate them to do well despite their perceived lack of support from parents and teachers. These findings provide insight into how improvement in the quality of both parental involvement and teacher-student relationship can help strengthen children's resiliency further and, thus, better improve their academic performance. From the parents' perspective, a closer and warmer relationship with their children that involves lots of smiles and hugs to comfort their children, listening with interest, and showing empathy to help express their feelings and identify themselves could serve to build up their children's resiliency. From the teachers' perspective, they should re-think their attitudes toward their students in the classroom and replace their traditional authoritarian and rigid style of student interaction with a warmer and healthier environment that inculcates self-control, self-regulation, and resiliency in their students.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. First, the regression analysis is essentially correlational and not experimental. This study did not involve the manipulation of the primary variables. As such, the regression results can only be interpreted in terms of relationships and not of causality. Second, the student sample employed for the study was drawn from only one area – Kang Won province in South Korea. Given the specificity of the sample, the external validity of the findings is questionable. Third, the dependent variable of academic performance was tapped by only one variable – the student's GPA. There are, in fact, other measures of academic performance such

as the MAP test which was designed to determine each child's instructional level and their academic growth in the areas of reading, language, arts, and math. Moreover, ongoing assessments during the school year can yield measures of students' academic progress.

Conclusion and Avenues for Future Research

The primary aim of this study was to investigate how the factors of perceived parental involvement, teacher-student relationship, and resilience influence Korean middle school students' academic performance. While the findings are partially in line with the study's hypotheses, there is clearly room for further research into other variables that may also impact on school children's academic performance. For school children, middle school period is an important period for experiencing important life changes that involve laying their academic foundation for high school and college. Such changes may involve influences not only from parents and teachers but also from friends, peers, and the social environment. For example, a study found a positive relationship between adolescents who experience positive peer relationship and their academic performance. Finally, it is hoped that the findings of this study would encourage parents, teachers, and school administrators to consider making changes to the way they interact with their children, as well as to decrease the societal-imposed pressure to 'succeed academically at all costs.' Such a change in attitude may go some way in helping young Korean children grow healthily – physically, psychologically, and socially.

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