

The Impact of Parental Involvement in Schools on the Self-Esteem of Arab Children in Israel

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Abstract

The present research aims to explore the relationships between parental involvement and children's self-esteem and the impact of this involvement on the self-esteem of children. The difference between the parental involvement of Arab mothers and fathers is additionally investigated. The current study targeted a population of 210 Arab Palestinian parents and their child rennin Israel. The results indicate that parental involvement impacts children's self-esteem; moreover, the involvement of mothers is much higher than that of fathers in all components of parental involvement. These results may encourage an increased interest in the role of fathers' involvement in schools on Arab children in Israel. The current analysis suggests that policies and workplace practices that enable parental involvement may be important for the development of children's self-esteem. The ongoing imbalance between the involvement of mothers and fathers in their children's schools suggests a continuing need for such policies and practices to encourage this involvement in Arab society in Israel. The study suggests the examination of mediating factors, such as parent-teacher relations, in future research; further investigations could examine if mediating variables specify the correlation between parental involvement and children's self-esteem and if these variables enrich it.

Keywords: parental involvement, children's self-esteem, Arabs in Israel, involvement of mothers and fathers

Introduction

Under the influence of modernization, the Arab sector in Israel has changed socially to become more involved in the educational system (Friedman & Fisher, 2003). Through positive involvement, parents can influence the educational development of their children; parents can shape and develop their children's educational abilities and encourage them to be more interested in learning. Overall, the issue of parental involvement in schools is significant; more specifically, this issue is essential to the Arab s in Israel. It is important to investigate parental involvement in the Arab schools in Israel empirically with reference to cultural and ethnic aspects. Moreover, self-esteem of children, which is positively correlated with various desirable characteristics in the educational system, is examined in the current study. This study aims to determine if a positive correlation exists between parental involvement (mothers versus fathers) in schools and children's self-esteem among the Arab population in the State of Israel.

Parental Involvement

Research literature has offered various definitions of the term "parental involvement". Waxman Fisher (1998) defined parental involvement as the inclusion of parents in children's educational and social world and maintained that the involvement of parents in school must be constant. This inclusion includes essential principles that maintain a mutual relationship between children and their parents. Another definition reported by Seginer (2006) consists of parental involvement in extracurricular activities as well as engagement in the school framework in terms of social and organizational aspects and school policy. Fisher and Friedman (2009) have reported a distinction between active and passive parental involvement in their children's world.

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These authors defined passively involved parents as those who are not openly active but who are considered to be involved in schools as they are familiar with educational content in addition to children's social interactions and decisions. In contrast, Fisher and Friedman defined active involvement as overt involvement in events and practical operations in schools. Parental involvement, which has a considerable and undeniable effect on children, was found to be dependent on many aspects of children's lives. In this study, these variables are controlled to reveal the impact of parental involvement on the self-esteem of the Arab population in Israel.

The Arab Minority in Israel and Parental Involvement in Schools

Arab Palestinian citizens in Israel are considered to be a minority, which has no basis on their traditional existence. Therefore, the Arab minority, aspiring to establish its identity and future through new means, has adopted education as an alternative for successful educational development in modern society (Rinawi, 1996). The Palestinian minority in Israel has cultivated this direction; for example, Mari (1978), who focused on Palestinian education in Israel, claimed that the Palestinian citizens of Israel have regarded education as an alternative to the deprivation of their lands since the establishment of Israel in 1948. The Palestinian citizens focused on alternative means for compensation, such as education and socioeconomic development. Currently, the Arab minority (82.1% Muslim, 9.4% Christian and 8.4% Druze) is influenced by the progress of modernization in relation to Jewish society and Islamic-Jewish relations throughout the world (Shapira, Arar, & Azaiza, 2011).

Since the beginning of the new millennium, Israeli parents have begun to consider parental involvement (Fisher, 2003). The Palestinian Arab minority in Israel has also been influenced by this change. Factors that led this minority to become involved in schools include changes in sociocultural aspects (Arar, 2012) as well as education and achievement gaps between the Arab and Jewish educational systems (Arar & Abu-Asbah, 2013). Moreover, Arab society moved from a traditional society to an ambitious society, which encouraged Palestinian parents in Israel to become more involved in education to develop their socioeconomic and educational mobility (Arar & Abu-Asbah, 2011).

Parental Involvement and Children's Self-Esteem

While examining the impact of parental involvement on children's self-esteem, Parker and Benson (2004) have shown in their research results a positive correlation between parental support and adolescents with high self-esteem.

Overall, parental involvement constitutes an essential factor in successful academic achievement and personality development (Toran-Kaplan, 2004). This is especially important for Arab Palestinian parents in Israel who have particular characteristics. There is a lack of information about the involvement of mothers and fathers among the Arab population in Israel as this topic has been ignored in research. The present exploratory study aims to fill this gap in knowledge.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- Is there a difference in the level of parental involvement between fathers and mothers?
- Is there a positive correlation between parental involvement and children's self-esteem?

Method

Population

The current study targeted a population of 210 Arab Palestinian parents in Israel and their children who studied in ten Arab Schools in North Israel (106 fathers and 104 mothers). The mean age of the parents was 41 years ($M=41.5$, $SD=2.3$). The parents were asked to participate voluntarily and invited to complete a parental involvement questionnaire.

A random sample of parents of 107 boys and 103 girls from grades two to six was selected.

Only parents who submitted all parts of the questionnaires were taken into account.

Research Tools

For this study, a multiple-choice questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was anonymous and aimed to measure the level of parental involvement in the educational system. The parents were asked to answer statements according to a Likert scale of five levels (1 = very seldom to 5 = always). The questionnaire comprised two parts. Part one consisted of forty closed-ended questions regarding personal information (age, gender, socio-economic situation, number of children) and parental involvement at school and at home. This questionnaire, which was parallel to the Toran-Kaplan (2004) questionnaire for Jewish parents, considered the following topics: home involvement, parents' attitude toward the school, school involvement and parental involvement when there were problems and during school activities.

Part two of the questionnaire aimed to measure the dependent variable, the children's self-esteem, and consisted of ten statements, including "I feel I have a number of good qualities" (Rosenberg, 1965). After reverse coding positively worded items, a total self-esteem score was calculated by summing up all responses, with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-esteem. The internal consistency alpha in the current sample was 0.82.

Procedure

After receiving consent from the parents, the researchers distributed the 210 questionnaires in parents' native Arabic language randomly for the purpose of the research. The parents completed the questionnaires anonymously and returned them. This process was completed within one month.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 10.0). Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to calculate factors related to parental involvement and children's self-esteem. Factor analysis was used to calculate the impact of parents' educational involvement on self-esteem and the difference between the educational involvement of mothers and fathers.

Results

Pearson's correlations between factors related to parental involvement and children's self-esteem are shown in Table 2. The results indicated that parental involvement ($r = 0.18$, $p < .001$) and home involvement ($r = 0.21$, $p < .01$) were positively associated with children's self-esteem. Similarly, scores for parents' attitude toward the school ($r = 0.24$, $p < .01$), school involvement ($r = 0.22$, $p < .001$) and parents' involvement during school activities ($r = 0.13$, $p < .01$) were positively associated with children's self-esteem; however, no correlation was found between parental involvement when there were problems and children's self-esteem ($r = 0.11$, n.s). Note. Table 2 at the appendix "

Factor Analysis

The analysis revealed that a significant difference in parental involvement existed between mothers and fathers ($F(1, 209) = 13.14$, $p < 0.001$). This factor is much higher among mothers than fathers in all components of parental involvement.

Additionally, the effect of the general involvement of parents on children's self-esteem in schools ($F(1, 209) = 8.04$, $p < 0.01$) is significant.

Discussion

In the present study, the manipulation of the data proves the expected impact of parental involvement on children's self-esteem and the difference in involvement between mothers and fathers.

It was found that the more parents were involved in education, the higher the self-esteem of their children.

The findings of the present research, which support those of Parker and Benson (2004) and Toran-Kaplan (2004), indicate a positive correlation between parental support and adolescents with high self-esteem.

These findings are related to those of Hui-Chen Huang and Mason (2008) who suggested those parents' attitudes and activities with regard to their children's education affect children's self-esteem and personalities in a positive way.

There appears to be general agreement in research about the effects of parental involvement in children's education. Children's attitude towards school becomes more positive, and they gain more self-esteem if parents and schools work together (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

The results show that a difference existed in parental involvement between mothers and fathers; this factor was much higher among mothers than fathers in all components of parental involvement.

This finding is related to previous research, which claimed that mothers are more involved than fathers (Power, 1985). Additionally, while fathers may be more involved in their children's lives, evidence suggests that mothers are mainly responsible for childcare and education (Doucet, 2013).

The level of fathers' involvement is not homogenous across societies, and no research has been conducted regarding the involvement of mothers and fathers among Arabs in Israel. However, the current study suggests that parental involvement, especially among Arab mothers in Israel, constitutes an important component in successful education. Although Arab mothers believe their involvement contributes positively to an improvement in their children's education because they support children in their educational process, the involvement of fathers is less noticeable. Arab society regards education as a female profession; therefore, the involvement of mothers is more traditional and acceptable in Arab society in Israel.

Regarding gender roles, this result may encourage an increased interest in the role of fathers within the Arab family, which has grown culturally (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, & Lappegard, 2014). Moreover, this result could encourage fathers to share the responsibility with mothers, which may benefit children directly and improve mothers' well-being with regard to childcare and education (Kiernan, 2005).

This study provides an in-depth look at one particular aspect of parental involvement related to the self-esteem of elementary school children in Arab schools in Israel.

In conclusion, this is the first study to examine relationships between parental involvement and children's self-esteem among the Arab population in Israel.

From a policy perspective, this analysis suggests that policies and workplace practices that enable parental involvement may be important for the development of children's self-esteem. The ongoing imbalance between the involvement of mothers and fathers in their children's schools suggests a continuing need for such policies and practices to encourage such involvement among the Arab society in Israel.

Limitations and Future Research

This research is a cross-sectional study; further work examining the relationship between parental involvement and children's self-esteem would benefit from the use of multiple measures including longitudinal design. Moreover, the present study does not discuss mediating factors between parental involvement and children's self-esteem, such as parent-teacher relations. Further investigation could examine if mediating variables specify the correlation and enrich it.

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*Appendix***Table1. Factors in parental involvement and self-esteem**

Factor	Alpha coefficient	Mean*	SD
Home involvement	a =0.8	4.55	0.91
Parents' attitude toward the school	a =0.76	4.02	0.89
School involvement	a =0.78	3.99	1.02
Parental involvement when there were problems	a =0.82	3.98	1.1
Parental involvement during school activities	a =0.84	4.08	0.87
General parental involvement	a =0.8	4.12	0.95
Children's self-esteem	a =0.82	3.92	0.9

*The scale of answers range between 1 and 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high.

Table 2. Correlations between parental involvement and children's self-esteem (N=210)

Factor	Children's self- esteem
Home involvement	.21*
Parents' attitude toward the school	.24*
School involvement	.22**
Parental involvement when there were problems	.11
Parental involvement during school activities	.13*
General parental involvement	.18**

* This indicates that the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** This indicates that the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).