The Mediating Influence of Academic Self-Efficacy on Students’ Scholastic Stress and Performance: The Study of Perceived Parental Expectations

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How to Cite:

Publisher’s Note:
International Research and Publishing Academy (iRAPA) stands neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in the published maps and institutional affiliations.

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the role of parental expectation on academic performance and academic stress with mediating effect of self-efficacy. A correlational research design was used for the study. Three hundred students at secondary schools were selected through purposive convenient sampling. Data were collected through the administration of four respective scales: Parental Expectation Scale; Questionnaire on Academic Stress in Secondary Education (QASSE), and Academic Self-efficacy Scale; Academic Performance Questionnaire. The following statistical methods were used to test hypotheses after the data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics; Correlation analysis; Linear Regression analysis; and Independent sample t-test. The findings revealed a positive correlation between parental expectations, academic stress, academic performance, and self-efficacy. Parental expectations were found to have a significant impact on both academic stress and performance. Results of the present study revealed that academic self-efficacy partially mediates the association between parental expectation and academic stress. Male students reported greater levels of parental expectation, academic stress, academic performance, and self-efficacy than females. Academic institutes are recommended to involve parents regarding their parental expectations to overcome the academic stress and increase the performance of students.

Keywords: academic stress, perceived parental expectations, self-efficacy, students' performance

INTRODUCTION

Education is found to be crucial in the development and prosperity of human resources. It promotes a society that is both creative and knowledgeable. It provides new social and economic opportunities for those who have been marginalized in society. As emphasized by the educational philosophy teaching, guiding, research, and growth are the keyways in which information, competencies, and expertise are passed down through generations and it is regarded as the main socio-economic growth of a country or state (Pakistan, 2010). Parents, on the other hand, are thought to have a significant impact on their children’s learning and development, and certain practices, if abided by parents, can provide a pro-social atmosphere for the family in which parents generally achieve their goals and pass on their beliefs and sentiments to their kids. Parents have an important part in the development of a child’s personality (Sroufe, 2001) and they have various aspirations and expectations for their child (Goldenberg, et al., 2001).

Parental expectations are defined as a parent’s confidence and judgment about their child’s future accomplishments based on grades, how much their child learns in class, and their hope that their child would acquire the best education (Neuenschwander, et al., 2007). Previous studies recommend that parental expectations are inextricably linked to a students’ outstanding academic achievement (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Furthermore, they also have a long-term impact on the child’s educational ability until adolescence (Froiland, et al., 2013). Children strive to meet the expectations that their parents placed on them. However, parental expectations may generate stress in the youngster, affecting academic performance. When parents set an unrealistic goal for their children and they are unable to meet it, they experience stress and tension, which can negatively affect their academic performance (Kumar & Jadaun, 2018). Therefore, correlation analysis is used to assess whether there is a significant link between parental expectations and academic tension/stress among children.

According to a recent study, parental expectations vary significantly among racial backgrounds, implying that neither socioeconomic status nor individual characteristics can fully explain why parents have specific expectations. They challenge the relevance of prior performance as a gauge of parental expectations for people of different ethnic backgrounds. For instance, South Africans in a study showed expectations of parents for their child’s long-term achievement in 11th grade were correlated with scores of eighth graders’ literacy for White ethnicities but not for Black ethnicity (Zhan, 2006). Similar findings were obtained in the United States, where minority parents had great aspirations than European American parents, despite minority children’s ninth-grade scores being considerably lower than those of European Americans are.

Parental expectations, in particular, tend to bridge the gap between family background and academic performance, and they can also obscure teachers’ low expectations and reactions (Benner & Mistry, 2007; Zhan, 2006). Many studies have found that a student’s academic performance and achievements are influenced by parental expectations (Trusty et al., 2003). Furthermore, it was discovered through a study that parental expectations are the most reliable and accurate predictor of a student’s academic achievement, despite the
discrepancy accounted for by parental viewpoints and behaviors through a significant difference (Jeynes, 2007).

In addition, parents’ appreciation contributes to successful school performance and certainly affects the relationship between the student’s previous achievement and the parents’ prospects for future accomplishments. Parents who believe their child’s good performance is due to aptitude, ability, or intellect expect their child’s performance to stay consistent because these qualities are regarded as stable values that are challenging for someone to improve (Weiner, 2005). Parents who hold such attitudes consider that a child’s previous academic performance is a reliable predictor of the child’s future academic outcomes. Those who feel that effort is the primary factor in achieving a result also believe that future results could be affected by how much effort was spent in preparing for the test.

Parental expectation toward their children during education is common in every culture in the world. In developing countries particularly in Pakistan, students face a higher level of academic stress that is predicted by high expectations by their parents to become successful people in life. Most of the time parental expectations lead to academic performance. Today, it has become a challenging situation for students to meet the expectation of their parents due to the scarcity of opportunities in the future for the survival of their families. No previous studies uncover this area that how perceived parental expectations predict their student’s academic stress and as well as their performance by understanding the academic self-efficacy’s mediating role. Therefore, the present research aims to fulfill the literature gap. In addition, the findings of this study benefit the future by knowing about how expectations of the parents influence the academic stress of children and investigating how their ability to cope with stress due to expectations for improving their educational performance.

Objectives

• To inspect the mediating role of academic self-efficacy between the perceived parental expectations, academic stress, and performance relationships.
• To study the perceived parental expectations’ impact on academic stress and performance of young scholars.
• To find out the gender differences in perceived parental expectations, academic stress, and performance.

Hypotheses

H₁: There is a positive correlation between the variables; the academic stress and performance are positively correlated with parental expectations and self-efficacy
H₂: There is a positive impact of parental expectation on the performance of the students
H₃: Parental expectation affects the academic stress among students of higher secondary classes
H₄: There is a positive impact of parental expectation on the students’ performance
H₅: Self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between parental expectations and students’ academic stress
H₆: Parental Expectation, Self-efficacy, Academic Stress, and Academic Performance differ significantly with respect to the gender of students

METHODOLOGY

A correlational research design was employed in the current study. A sample size of three hundred (n=300) students was selected using convenient sampling technique consisting of males (n=149) and females (n=151). The demographic characteristics of respondents included gender, education, and socioeconomic status (See Table 1).
Table 1  
Descriptive statistics of participants (n=300)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>49.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>50.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary/ under Matric</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>41.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O levels/ Matric</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>58.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socioeconomic Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper class</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>23.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>55.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower class</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>21.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Tools  

*Parental Expectation Scale*  
The parental Expectation Scale (PES) by Wang & Heppner (2002) was used to measure the degree of parental expectations toward their children. The total numbers of items were 32 with three factors including Personal Maturity, Academic Achievement, and Dating Concerns. The first factor Personal Maturity (PM) consisting 16 items, the second factor Academic Achievement is composed of 9 items while the third factor Dating Concerns was comprised of 7 items. Ratings of the current study lied from not at all expected (1) to very strongly expected (6). The Cronbach’s α for the scale in current study was .75.

*Academic Stress Scale*  
The QASSE, developed by García-Ros et al. (2018) is a Questionnaire on Academic Stress in Secondary Education used to measure academic stress in students. This scale is composed of 30 items. Response rate consists 5-point Likert format such as very low (1) and very high (5). It was used initially designed to assess resources of school stress as well as circumstances and situations that cause academic stress among adolescents. In addition, it was used to measures in previous studies to measure the correlation between stress related to academic activities and psychological and as well as psychological well-being. The Cronbach’s α for the scale in current study was .78.

*Academic Self-efficacy Scale*  
Developed by Sachitra & Bandara (2017) Academic Self-efficacy Scale was used to measure the academic self-efficacy of the students. This instrument was featured with 20 items through the Likert format of a 5-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The Cronbach’s α for the scale in current study was .81.

*Academic Performance Questionnaire*  
The Academic Performance Questionnaire was developed by Yasmeen (2013) to measure the student’s academic performance. The number of items is 38 with 6 factors; comprising six items of Communications Skills, six items of Learning Skills, six items of Academic Motivation, six items of Creativity, and six items of Positive Attitude. It was proposed on the indicators of academic performance. The following 7 items are reversed scored; 5, 9, 10, 20, 26, 29, and 31. The Likert format is developed for taking responses; from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The Cronbach’s α for the scale in current study was .79.

*Procedure*  
Consent from all the participants was taken for the purpose of data collection. Confidentiality of the data was assured to the participants to fulfill the ethical considerations. A booklet was provided to students comprised of four research instruments. Instructions regarding research instruments were given. When the process of data collection was completed, analyses were done through SPSS by using descriptive as well as inferential statistics.

*Data Analysis*  
Following statistical tests were applied to test the hypotheses of the study; Pearson Correlation analysis,
Regression analysis, Mediation Analysis, independent sample t-test designs, and the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). It took almost a period of three to four months to collect data from the secondary schools of Multan and its surroundings.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Table 2 represents the Internal Consistency (reliability) of all the measures used in the study. Results revealed that all the study measures are reliable and valid to use.

Table 2
Internal Consistency of Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 PE</td>
<td>129.10</td>
<td>25.65</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 SE</td>
<td>78.50</td>
<td>11.52</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 AS</td>
<td>104.90</td>
<td>11.40</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 AP</td>
<td>149.80</td>
<td>24.03</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Parental Expectation (PE), Self-efficacy (SE), Academic Stress (AS), Academic Performance (AP)

Parental expectations, academic self-efficacy, academic stress, and academic performance are correlated, as shown in Table 3. The study’s findings confirmed the hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between the variables, showing that academic stress and performance are positively correlated with parental expectations and self-efficacy.

Table 3
Correlation Matrix among Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>PE</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>AS</th>
<th>AP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 PE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 SE</td>
<td>.88**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 AS</td>
<td>.72**</td>
<td>.67**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 AP</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Parental Expectation (PE), Self-efficacy (SE), Academic Stress (AS), Academic Performance (AP)

Table 4 shows the impact of parental expectations on students’ academic stress. It is claimed that academic stress is predicted by the level of perception of parental expectation. The findings of the study indicate that parental expectation affects academic stress among students of higher secondary classes. The $R^2$ value is .511 that shows that the impact of parental expectations on academic stress is 51.1%.

Table 4
Regression analysis showing the impact of Parental Expectation on Academic Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>63.89</td>
<td>2.369</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.971</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>.318</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.715</td>
<td>17.644</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2=.511$, Adjusted $R^2=.509, F=1.299, p<0.05$

Table 5 shows the impact of parental expectations on the academic performance of students at higher secondary schools. As it is hypothesized, that there is a positive impact of parental expectation on the performance of the students, results show that academic performance is predicted to a positive when students perceive their expectations at a high level. High expectation determines a greater level of academic performance. The $R^2$ value is .123 that shows that the impact of parental expectations on academic performance is 12.3%.
Table 5

Regression analysis showing the impact of Parental Expectation on Academic Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>107.477</td>
<td>6.689</td>
<td>16.067</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.350</td>
<td>6.450</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ R^2 = .123, \text{ Adjusted } R^2 = .120, F = 41.607, p < 0.05 \]

Table 6 describes the mediating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between parental expectation and academic stress. Results reported that self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between parental expectations and students’ academic stress. The mediating effect is calculated by Variance Accounted For (VAF), SmartPLS formula. According to Hair, et al (2014), the significance level is described as 1 = No mediation <20%, 2 = Partial mediation >20%, and 3 = Full mediation >80%.

Table 6

Mediating effect of self-efficacy between the parental expectation and academic stress of students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total effect</th>
<th>direct effect</th>
<th>indirect effect</th>
<th>VAF</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PE &gt; AS</td>
<td>.3176</td>
<td>.2365</td>
<td>.0811</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 compares the mean differences in perceived parental expectation, self-efficacy, academic stress, and academic performance between male and female students. The level of parental expectation, self-efficacy, academic stress, and academic performance is higher among males as compared to female students.

Table 7

Gender differences among Parental Expectation, Self-efficacy, Academic Stress, and Academic Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Male (n=149)</th>
<th>Female (n=151)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>146.60</td>
<td>17.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>86.60</td>
<td>10.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>110.20</td>
<td>12.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>163.00</td>
<td>27.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The present study was carried out to examine the influence of expectations of the parents towards students’ scholastic stress and their academic performance by exploring the mediation of self-efficacy of students’ academic conduct between predictor and criterion variables. The need for education is essential for a successful life; therefore, parental hope towards their studying kids seems to be an obligation for their children to achieve good grades. To address this phenomenon this research was carried out using a correlational research design. The sample was taken from higher secondary schools because, in this phase of education, parents are more concerned about predicting their child’s future linking it with achieving the best scholastic grades. According to an assumption, a significant correlation was found between the study variables, and Table 3 reveals that a positive relationship was observed between parental expectation, academic stress, academic performance, and self-efficacy among students at higher secondary schools. Although various previous literature has found that the expectations of the parents are significantly linked with the high academic performance of the students (Zhan, 2006; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010; Danişman, 2017) and those expectations of the parents could have a long-term significant impact on student’s educational achievement since childhood till adolescence (Froiland et.al., 2013) high expectations from parents can be an invaluable tool for adolescent growth.

It was also hypothesized that the expectations from the parents have a significant impact on stress and performance related to education among students. Tables 4 and 5 determine the impact of expectations from the parents on stress and performance related to education among students. The findings of the study depict that academic stress predicted the expectations of the parents toward their children for securing a future to survive in society in a better way. All these hopes and expectations cause stress associated with academics.
Further, academic conduct is enhanced by the perception of parental hope. Those students who perceive more expectations from their parents are performing better academically in their schools. Findings show that the impact of parental hope is significant from a positive perspective (Kumar & Jadaun, 2018).

Molnar (1979) discovered that a child’s academic achievement is influenced by his or her parents’ education and home environment. Although parental engagement improves academic achievement (Holmes, 2013) parents’ high expectations cause students to be stressed (Kumar & Jadaun, 2018; Ma, et al., 2018). Parents frequently set unreasonably high standards for their children, which can result in dramatic outbursts from students in the form of stress, despair, and even suicide. Chohan and Khan (2010) examined the impact of parental education support on students’ academic achievement and self-concept. According to the findings, parental participation in the education of their children has a favorable and consistent impact on academic performance and self-esteem. Matovu (2012) found that gender differences from various faculties exert considerable influence on students’ academic self-concept. It was hypothesized that self-efficacy will be the mediating variable for both parental expectation and academic stress. Table 6 depicts the role of academic self-efficacy in mediating the link between parental expectation and academic stress.

The findings of the study revealed that self-efficacy partially mediates the correlation between the expectations from the parents and the academic stress of the students. In Table 5, the comparison between males and females was revealed between the level of expectations of parents, stress, performance, and self-efficacy in academic conduct. The results indicate that the degree of parental expectation was higher among male students that cause a greater tendency of academic stress and as well as academic performance among males as compared to females. In Asian culture, especially in Pakistan parental expectation is high toward their sons as compared to their daughters due to male dominance. Furthermore, it is investigated that male students have strong beliefs about their capabilities to achieve their goals. In other words, self-efficacy among male students is higher than among females.

The research on academic stress by gender is noteworthy since there is a significant difference in academic stress between female and male students, with research revealing that female students are more stressed than male students are (Misra & Castillo, 2004). The examination system, the amount of homework, and the attitudes of parents and instructors all contribute to academic stress (Backović et al., 2012). Although some parents attempt to compensate their children (Dhull & Kumari, 2015) also they have different hopes for sons and daughters. Asian parents are optimistic for their male children because of the traditional view that boys should perform well enough in school to look after their parents and family in the future.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the current study was to examine how parental expectations affect scholastic stress and academic conduct in secondary school students. A positive relationship was observed between study variables. Instead of their academic behavior, expectations of the students’ parents predict academic stress at a higher level. The findings revealed that academic self-efficacy has a mediating effect on the relationship between parental expectation and student’s stress related to academic conduct. The findings of the study revealed that self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between parental expectations and the academic stress of the students. Male students reported greater levels of parental expectation, academic stress, academic performance, and self-efficacy than females.

Multi-stage sampling techniques should be used to take a sample of the study. Students at secondary schools should be included. Parenting styles can be explored as predictors of academic stress, and academic performance. Moderating effect of self-efficacy can be taken studied in relationship between the parental expectations and the academic performance of the students. A comparative study can also be conducted to explore this phenomenon between the students of public and private sectors at higher secondary levels.

A purposive convenient sampling technique was adopted that might have lessened the external validity of the current study. Data were limited to the students of only higher secondary schools, instead of investigating different levels such as i.e., primary level, secondary level, and higher secondary level school students. Only parental expectation was considered as a predictor of academic stress and scholastic conduct by negative parental styles as a predictor variable in the study.

Competing Interest

The authors have declared no competing interest.
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