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Changes in Parent Engagement and Aspirations during High School for Emotionally and Behaviorally Challenged Students in Multan

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Abstract

The scholastic achievement of high school students is significantly affected by their parents' engagement at home and school-related expectations. We examined whether changes in these aspects during secondary education were linked to academic performance, contrasting students with emotional or behavioral issues (N=777). Our results showed that parental involvement at home remained stable throughout high school for both groups. A comparable decrease in parents' educational aspirations was noted across both groups during this time frame. For students facing increased emotional and behavioral challenges, substantial correlations were discovered between enhanced home-based parental participation and improvements in both parental expectations and grade point average. In comparison, the control group demonstrated significant but minimal correlations among these variables.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Adolescents, Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties, Parental Expectations, Multan.



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1. Introduction

Studies have demonstrated that parental engagement in a child's schooling can contribute to improved academic performance. Although the majority of existing studies have concentrated on primary school pupils, the significance of parental involvement persists as student's transition into secondary education. Despite the expectation that parental engagement might decrease as teenagers mature and become more self-reliant, its importance remains (Pomerantz et al., 2012).

However, some studies suggest that parental involvement continues to play a crucial role during high school, especially regarding interactions between parents and children and their shared activities (Rowe et al., 2016). However, there is a scarcity of studies examining the patterns of parental involvement across time for high school students (Monti et al., 2014). Furthermore, students facing emotional or behavioral challenges are significantly more prone to encountering poor educational and professional outcomes, including lower academic performance, higher rates of suspensions and expulsions, and increased likelihood of not graduating from high school (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015).

Considering the significant role parental engagement plays in forecasting students' academic performance, it is crucial to investigate how fluctuations in parental involvement throughout high school may correlate with students' emotional or behavioral challenges and ultimately influence academic outcomes. Various forms of parental participation in education exist, such as communication between parents and teachers, assisting with homework, and showing up at school events. These different types of involvement may evolve or exhibit diverse levels of engagement within secondary school environments (Rafiq, Afzal & Kamran, 2022).

Hill and Tyson (2009) proposed a framework for parental involvement in secondary education, categorizing it into three main areas: home-based, school-based, and academic socialization. Recent research involving secondary students (Duppong Hurley et al., 2024) and those with emotional and behavioral challenges (Duppong Hurley et al., 2024) has validated this three-domain model. Additionally, these studies identified a more detailed six-factor model. This expanded framework includes two types of school-based involvement (communication between parents and school, and parental participation in school events), two forms of home-based involvement (assistance with homework and home activities), and two aspects of academic socialization (discussions between parents and children about education, and parental educational expectations for their children). The majority of research on parental involvement typically focuses on one or more of these six domains. Notably, home-based parental involvement and parental expectations may be particularly relevant for high school students.

Research has shown that educational activities conducted at home, such as providing enriching experiences or taking children to cultural venues like museums, correlate with academic performance for students in both middle school (Shah et al., 2016) and high school (Reese, 2021). Parental involvement at home, including offering encouragement, supervision, and support, is linked to ninth-grade students developing positive attitudes towards school, which subsequently influences their determination to graduate from high school (Mena et al., 2015). Additionally, parental engagement in educational activities at home during eighth grade is associated with students having higher educational aspirations in subsequent years (Jafarov, 2015).

Studies have shown that the academic expectations or aspirations parents hold for their children serve as a powerful indicator of scholastic success (Englund et al., 2004; Froiland & Davison, 2014; Jeynes, 2018; Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020). Investigations have revealed that these parental expectations regarding their child's academic future are more strongly correlated with educational

outcomes than other forms of parental engagement, such as communicating with schools or overseeing homework completion (Fan & Chen, 2001; Froiland & Davison, 2014; Yan & Lin, 2005).

Studies show that when parents have high expectations for their high school children's future careers or education, it often leads to better outcomes for these young people (Catsambis, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020; Yan & Lin, 2005). However, some research has found that parental aspirations for their children did not significantly predict academic performance when other factors were considered in the analysis (Carpenter II, 2008; Huguley et al., 2021). A recent meta-analysis examining parental expectations and academic achievement from kindergarten through twelfth grade revealed that parental expectations were equally important for high school students as they were for elementary school students (Jeynes, 2018). This finding suggests that parental expectations continue to play a crucial role in the academic success of secondary school students.

A significant knowledge gap exists regarding whether parental involvement in school, which shows promise for the general student population, functions similarly for high school students experiencing emotional and behavioral challenges. Studies have shown that the quality of relationships between parents and adolescents, particularly concerning conflict, is associated with a higher likelihood of externalizing and internalizing issues (Duppong Hurley et al., 2024; Hillekens et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024). Research specifically examining parental engagement in education for students at risk of emotional and behavioral problems has yielded inconsistent results (Rafiq, Iqbal & Afzal, 2024). For instance, an analysis of a national, longitudinal dataset revealed that families of students with emotional and behavioral disorders exhibited reduced levels of parental participation in school activities, less volunteering for school services, and lower satisfaction with school services compared to families of students with other disabilities (Wagner et al., 2012).

Contrary to other findings, Wagner et al. (2012) observed increased involvement in teacher discussions and greater assistance with homework among families of students experiencing emotional and behavioral challenges. However, a contemporary investigation focusing on high school students with heightened emotional and behavioral issues revealed substantially reduced home-based activities and academic expectations in comparison to their peers without such difficulties. This study, conducted by Lambert et al. (2022), found no notable disparities in school communication or self-assurance when aiding with homework between the two groups.

The research also revealed that activities at home and parental expectations were significant predictors of academic performance, with parental academic expectations explaining approximately 41% of the variance in predicting grade point average (GPA). Limited research has explored potential fluctuations or consistency in home-based involvement and parental expectations during high school years. It is believed that parental involvement might decrease as students age, due to typical increases in adolescent independence (Brauer & Foust, 2020) and students' transition to larger schools with fewer chances for parents to engage with teachers (Jensen & Minke, 2017). Nevertheless, given the multifaceted nature of parental involvement (Hill & Tyson, 2009), it is conceivable that while certain aspects may diminish, others could remain constant or even increase (Jensen & Minke, 2017).

A study by Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) investigated the consistency of parental involvement from grades seven through eleven in three areas: communication between schools and parents along with volunteer work, involvement at home (such as homework supervision), and

discussions about future planning and course selection. Their findings revealed a decline in both school-based and home-based parental engagement, which aligns with the expected increase in students' independence. In contrast, research conducted by Wang et al. (2019) observed an increase in home-based activities from seventh to eleventh grades, specifically in establishing a structured environment for completing school tasks and connecting educational pursuits to future goals (Rafiq, Kamran & Afzal, 2024).

Research by Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) revealed a notable increase in parents discussing academic matters and prospects with their children, indicating that academic socialization may not decrease during secondary education as much as other forms of parental involvement. Additionally, a comprehensive analysis conducted by Pinquart and Ebeling (2020) uncovered correlational evidence suggesting that parents' expectations for their children's educational achievements remained consistent over time. Limited research focusing on the general high school population has explored the relationship between changes in parental involvement throughout secondary education and student outcomes.

Research by Wang et al. (2019) revealed that despite an overall decline in GPA from seventh to eleventh grades, several factors were associated with GPA improvements from middle school to high school. These factors included enhanced frequency and quality of preventive communication between parents and teachers, establishing structure at home, promoting child autonomy, and connecting educational activities to future success. Additionally, the study found that increased parental involvement in specific areas correlated with a reduction in student problem behavior. These areas encompassed providing structure for schoolwork completion, emphasizing the link between education and future success, and engaging in preventive communication with teachers (Afzal, Rafiq & Kanwal, 2023).

In contrast, research by Mistry et al. (2010) showed limited support for a connection between mothers' educational expectations for their children, measured at two different times, and their child's academic performance. Despite the scarcity of studies examining how the consistency of parental expectations and home-based activities affects high school student's academic success, the significance of these two factors in predicting scholastic outcomes (Afzal & Rafiq, 2022). Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014) indicate that gaining a deeper understanding of how these elements evolve during the high school years could be valuable for creating and timing interventions at the family level.

The issue may be particularly significant for families of students experiencing emotional and behavioral challenges, as they might face more obstacles to school involvement Musendo et al. (2023) and have shown reduced participation in their child's activities at home (Lambert et al., 2022).

The increased potential for adverse outcomes for students with emotional and behavioral challenges—together with their generally lower levels of parental involvement in school—makes it all the more critical to study changes in parental educational expectations and home-based involvement that might occur during the high school years. Research on the overall populace of high school students has produced mixed results (increasing, decreasing, stable) for parental expectations (Jeynes, 2024; Mistry et al., 2009) and homework related activities (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015; Wang et al., 2022).

To date, we are not aware of any studies that have looked at the trends in home-based activities not connected to homework, like parents and adolescents working together on educational activities in the community and at home. This explorative study aimed to achieve two things; (a)

to look into whether home-based parental involvement and parental educational expectations evolve over time from ninth to eleventh grades for students with emotional and behavioral difficulties compared to peers in the general population, and (b) to consider whether any such changes in home-based parental involvement and parental educational expectations might be linked to academic performance in school. To get at the second aim of this study, we examined not only the overall change in parental involvement and expectations across time but also the change at the individual level—both inter-individual (between different parents) and intra-individual (for the same parent over time).

2. Methods

Under the typology of positivism, cross sectional method was used in this study. The data were collected from the secondary school students of Multan District enrolled in 2023-2024 session. The data were also collected from the parents of these students.

Table 1: *Demographic details of the participants*

Characteristics	Emotional and Behavioral difficulties
Female	35.3%
Male	52.0%
SES Score	M= 0.08 SD= 0.69
School contacted due to poor Students' performance	46.1%
Student repeated a grade in school	15.3%

3. Students with Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties.

An approach used in earlier studies ((Duppong Hurley et al., 2020; Lambert et al., 2022) was replicated in this research to identify the group of students with emotional and behavioral difficulties among our study sample. An inclusion strategy was used that involved two parts. In the first part, we used the following four parent-report variables related to student emotional or behavioral difficulties: (a) whether the student had been suspended or expelled from school; (b) the extent to which the student felt anxious or depressed; (c) whether the school had contacted the parent about the student's behavior; and (d) the extent to which the student had behavior problems in school.

We considered a student to have elevated emotional and behavioral difficulties if two or more of the above variables were endorsed by the parent and identified, resulting in 602 students. Students with a previous diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder were also included in the second part of our selection strategy, which resulted in identifying an additional 175 students. The total number of identified students equals 777.

4. Analytic Sample

The study's sample consisted of 4,036 secondary school students and their families. Among the student participants, 777 (17.6%) met the criteria for emotional and behavioral difficulties, while the remaining 3,259 students represented the general population without identified disabilities. As illustrated in Table 1, the process of group identification revealed differences between the two groups that aligned with previous research on students with emotional and behavioral challenges

(Bradley et al., 2008). Students categorized in the group with emotional or behavioral difficulties were predominantly male, had lower Socioeconomic Status (SES), were more likely to have repeated a grade, and had a higher likelihood of receiving school calls regarding academic issues.

5. Data Analysis

This research had two main objectives: First, to investigate potential changes in home-based parental involvement and educational expectations for students with emotional and behavioral challenges compared to their peers in the general student population between grades nine and eleven. Second, to explore the relationship between these changes in parental involvement and expectations and students' academic performance at school.

To assess changes between individuals over time, we calculated correlations for the constructs at ninth and eleventh grades, separately analyzing students with emotional and behavioral challenges and those in the general population. These correlations indicated how parents' positions on the constructs shifted over time in relation to their peers. Essentially, we sought to determine whether parental involvement changed uniformly across families in the sample or varied between them. Stronger correlations signified less inter individual change (greater consistency) from ninth to eleventh grades. While these correlations provided insights into relative changes between individuals across time, they did not reveal how individuals changed in relation to themselves—specifically, whether parental involvement or expectations increased or decreased over time, and to what extent.

To investigate this issue, we calculated the disparity between scores from eleventh and ninth grades for each construct and employed linear regression to examine the score changes. Although analyzing change scores has certain constraints due to the difficulty in establishing the assumptions of the analysis (Robitzsch & Lüdtke, 2023), This framework was selected due to its more plausible assumptions compared to other models (such as analysis of covariance) and its ease of interpretation for readers familiar with linear regression. Initially, we examined individual-level changes separately for students experiencing emotional and behavioral challenges and their counterparts in the general student population. To assess this, we employed a constant-only regression model (without predictors) to analyze change scores. In such a model, the constant term represents the average change score, which, if statistically significant, indicates a meaningful change over time for the group under consideration.

Next, we conducted a comparison of individual changes between students experiencing emotional and behavioral challenges and their counterparts in the general student population to determine if the temporal progression differed between these groups. To assess this, we employed two models: an unconditional model with group affiliation (emotional and behavioral difficulties versus peers) as the sole predictor, and a conditional model incorporating additional variables to account for group disparities in student gender, race or ethnicity, and family socioeconomic status. A significant regression coefficient for group membership would indicate divergent patterns of change over time between the two groups. To investigate the relationship between changes in parental involvement, educational expectations, and academic performance, we calculated correlations among change scores for home-based parental involvement, parental educational expectations, and student grade point average (GPA).

Discussion

Learners facing emotional and behavioral challenges continue to encounter worrying outcomes in their secondary education (Robitzsch & Lüdtke, 2023; Wagner & Newman, 2012). When aiming to enhance educational outcomes for this particular group of students, multiple factors must be

examined, including the role of parents. Research indicates that increased parental engagement in educational activities often correlates with better academic results for high school students, particularly in areas such as home-based support and academic socialization. However, there is a lack of information regarding how parental involvement changes throughout the high school years for families of students experiencing emotional and behavioral challenges (Rafiq et al., 2024).

In analyzing temporal correlations, moderate associations were observed between ninth and eleventh grades for home-based parental involvement and parental expectations, with similar patterns for both student groups. Regarding individual changes over time, comparable shifts in parental involvement and expectations were noted for both groups from ninth to eleventh grades. Notably, a slight but significant decrease in parental expectations occurred for both students with emotional and behavioral challenges and their peers during this period. This finding diverges from previous research, which reported either stable or increasing parental expectations throughout high school years for the general student population.

Research examining academic socialization revealed an increase in parent-child discussions about educational course planning and future career paths as children grew older. These studies utilized questions to assess the frequency of such conversations between parents and their offspring (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015). Nevertheless, this research concentrated on a slightly different element of academic socialization: parents' expectations for their children to earn a bachelor's degree. Although both are considered components of the academic socialization realm (Hill & Tyson, 2009), their functioning might vary. Several meta-analyses examined the specific impact of parental expectations or ambitions. Jeynes (2024) Comparative analyses revealed that parental expectations held similar significance across elementary and high school levels. However, due to the non-longitudinal nature of the studies, they were unable to directly address the question of stability over time.

6. Conclusion

This research indicates that while families of secondary school students with emotional and behavioral challenges exhibited lower parent involvement scores, they showed comparable changes in home-based parental involvement and expectations for their child's future from grades nine to eleven when compared to the general student population. Additional studies are necessary to confirm and expand upon these findings. Further research should explore whether interventions designed to enhance parental involvement among typical high school students are equally effective for families of students with emotional and behavioral difficulties, given the similar stability patterns observed between the two groups. The potential link between improvements in home-based parental involvement and increases in GPA and parental expectations offers promising avenues for future research focusing on high school students with emotional and behavioral challenges.

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