

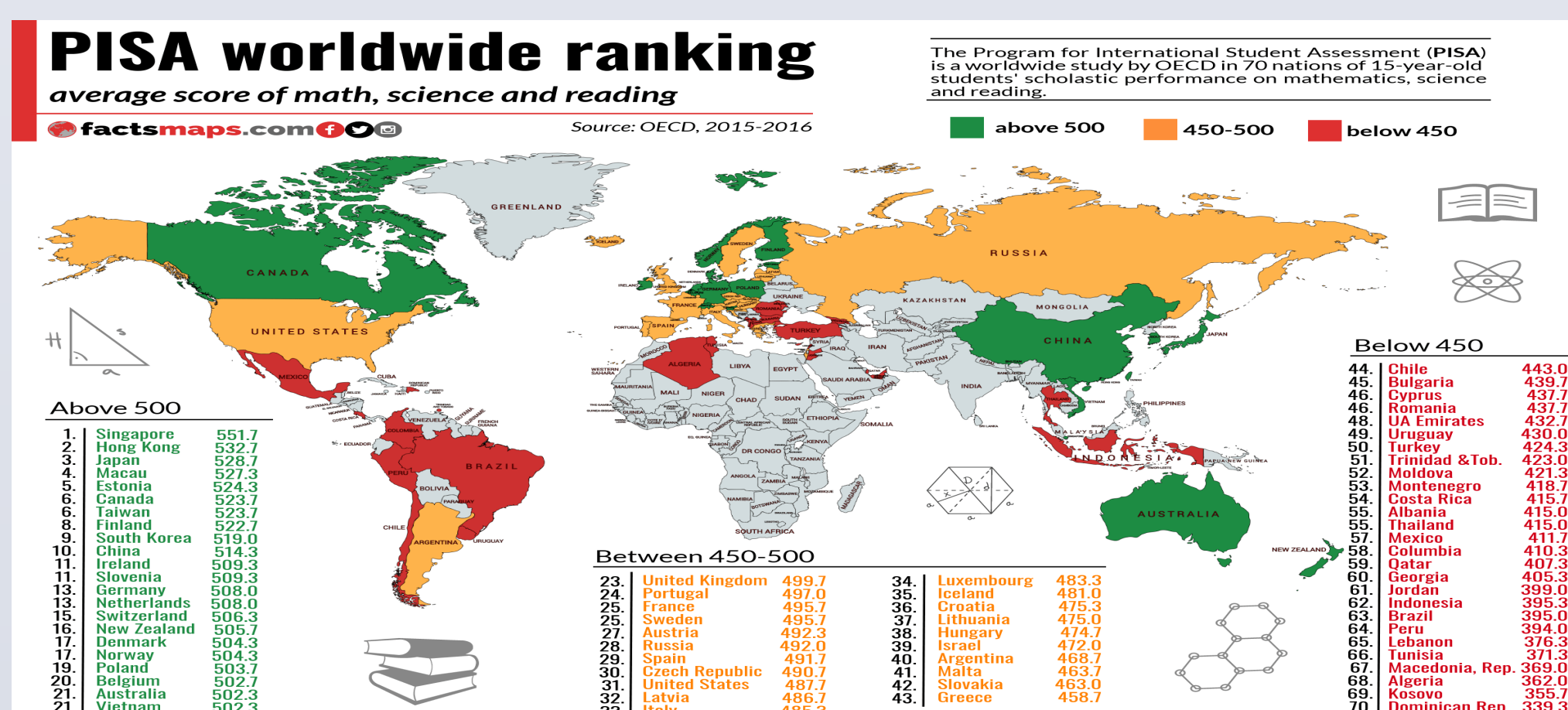
The Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement in Adolescents

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Abstract

Academic achievement in the US is not only failing to meet its previous standards, it is also far below the international standard. It is widely believed that academic achievement in adolescents is greatly influenced by parental involvement. This study utilized a secondary analysis of survey data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) study. A sample of 3,308 participants from Wave IV of the Add Health study were included. Parental behavioral and emotional support were found to be associated with higher grade-point average and fewer unexcused absences. Most notably, parental emotional support was found to be more highly correlated with academic achievement than parental behavioral support. This finding is important to the understanding of parenting practices. The key implication being that parents may need to adapt the focus of their efforts to the emotional needs of their children. Social workers can play a large role in parental practices and adolescent academic achievement by providing psychoeducation on emotional support and resources to assist families in meeting their full potential. Familial relationships and academic success both greatly impact a person's lifelong success and well-being.



Introduction

Purpose of Study:

To increase knowledge related to the various components that make up parental involvement and determine which aspects have the greatest effect on academic achievement.

Research Question:

What is the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement in adolescents?

Hypotheses:

- 1) Academic achievement in adolescents will increase as parental involvement increases.
- 2) Emotional support from parents will be more highly correlated with academic achievement than behavioral support.

Literature Review

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory explains how the capacity of a child to learn in the classroom is affected by the relationship between the family and the school (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Components of Parental Involvement:

Educators have identified parental involvement as the primary way to improve academic achievement (Jeynes, 2016). Previous research has found mixed results for the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement. This is likely due to how parental involvement is defined. Parental involvement often includes school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and academic socialization (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Demographics:

Studies have shown that age, ethnicity, and parent's gender all play a role in parental involvement (Chao, 2000; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Karbach et al., 2013; Kim & Rohner, 2002; Otani, 2019).

Limitations and Gaps in Research:

Existing research is not generalizable to the whole American population. In addition, parental involvement has often been measured by quantity rather than quality (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Empirical, quantitative data is missing from the research (Fan & Chen, 2001). Academic achievement is typically measured by GPA and should include other types of measurement.

Methods

Research Design:

This study was a secondary data analysis of surveys collected by the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health). The Add Health Study is the largest, most comprehensive longitudinal survey of adolescents in existence. The study sample contained adolescents in grades 7 through 12.

Sampling Method:

The Add Health Study utilized a stratified, random sample of students from all of the high schools in America. 80 high schools were selected from a sample frame of 26,666. Participants were excluded from the current study's sample if they failed to answer all of the parental involvement or academic achievement questions or if they had less than 2 parents. This resulted in a final sample size of 3,308 adolescents.

Measures:

Independent Variables: Parental involvement was defined as emotional and behavioral support from mother and father. Eight questions were used to measure behavioral support from each parent. Three questions were used to measure emotional support from each parent. Scales were created using this data.

Dependent Variables: Academic achievement was determined by creating a grade-point average from the 4 grades (English, Math, History, Science) adolescents reported. It was also measured by whether or not the student had ever repeated a grade, been suspended/expelled from school, and how many unexcused absences they had.

Results

Higher levels of both parental behavioral and emotional support were associated with higher GPA.

Higher levels of both parental behavioral and emotional support were associated with lower amounts of unexcused absences.

Overall, parental emotional support was found to be more highly correlated with academic achievement than parental behavioral support.

Older, male, minority citizens, on average had a lower GPA than other participants.

Younger participants who scored higher on parental behavioral and emotional support had lower amounts of unexcused absences, but gender, minority status, and citizenship status were not significant predictors of unexcused absences.

Table 2

Regression Model for Grade-Point Average & Unexcused Absences

Predictor	Grade-Point Average		Unexcused Absences	
	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)
Constant	3.100 (.134)***		-2.773 (.907)**	
Age	-.022 (.007)**		.372 (.049)***	
Male	-.217 (.025)***		.285 (.166)	
Minority	-.165 (.026)***		.085 (.176)	
Citizen	-.087 (.027)**		.103 (.183)	
Parental Behavioral Support	.035 (.004)***		-.082 (.028)**	
Parental Emotional Support	.011 (.003)**		-.081 (.021)***	

Reference groups: Female, Nonminority, & Noncitizen. ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05

Conclusion

This study found that higher levels of parental involvement, determined through behavioral and emotional support, were associated with higher academic achievement, measured by both GPA and unexcused absences. Therefore, the first hypothesis that academic achievement in adolescents increases as parental involvement increases was supported by the findings of this study. The second hypothesis that parental emotional support would be more highly correlated with academic achievement than parental behavioral support was also supported. Parental emotional support was more highly correlated with higher GPA than parental behavioral support. Additionally, parental emotional support was more highly correlated with lower amounts of unexcused absences than parental behavioral support.

Implications for Future Research:

Future research should measure academic achievement by incorporating longitudinal data such as long-term outcomes measured by higher education completion and career success. In addition, a focus on the quality of parent-child interactions rather than the quantity, would strengthen this body of knowledge. Further research into the finding that citizens had lower GPA than non-citizens would be beneficial to this subject area. Lastly, future studies should also consider how society could better support students in order to decrease the decline in academic performance as they age.



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