The Impact of Father-Child Relationships on Child's Cognitive Performance and Self-Esteem

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate issues of consistency in paternal behaviors and children's outcomes over time, and, prospectively, the nature of the relationship between fathers and children's academic achievement. The present study involved 398 children at Time 1, 382 children at Time 2 and 374 children at Time 3. Both family status and family processes were included in the conceptual model. The model investigated how these factors affected paternal behaviors, and how, in turn, these behaviors influence children's attributes and their academic achievement. Person correlation was used to explore consistency in paternal behaviors and children's outcomes over time. Structural equation modeling was utilized to elucidate the effect of family status and family processes on children's academic achievement. The correlational results showed that paternal behaviors were quite stable across time as were children's academic orientation, self-esteem, social adjustment, and academic achievement. The prospective longitudinal findings indicated that father's educational level had direct effects on children's academic achievement. Father's educational level did affect paternal nurturance behaviors. Unexpectedly, both paternal depression and paternal marital happiness had no effects on nurturance parenting. In general, paternal nurturance behaviors were positively related to children's academic orientation, self-esteem and social adjustment. Paternal nurturance behavior had an indirect effect on children's academic achievement through children's academic orientation. In terms of the mediating impact of children's attributes on academic achievement, the present study provided evidence that academic orientation had a positive influence on academic performance in subsequent years. Gender differences were revealed in some father-child dyads in the present study. The result showed that children's self-esteem was not a mediating variable in the relation between father-son dyad. However, a mediating effect for children's self-esteem was found in father-daughter dyad. Implications for parents and educators and suggestions for future research were addressed.

Introduction

Parental influence on a child's behavior and development has been of paramount interest to developmental psychologists for decades. In general, supportive, involved parents have children with high self-esteem, academic success, positive psychological adjustment, social skills, and strong cognitive abilities (Van Lissa, Keizer, Van Lier, Meeus&Branje, 2019). On the other hand, the absence of parental support has been found to be linked with delinquent behaviors and other negative developmental outcomes (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Rollins & Thomas, 1979).

Children's academic achievement has been documented to be influenced by many family factors (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992). Most research on parenting behavior and academic achievement has looked at global parenting styles. When the components of parenting styles are considered separately, Steinberg, Elmen, and Mounts (1989) found that each of three dimensions of authoritative parenting—acceptance, psychological autonomy, and behavioral control—made independent contributions in predicting adolescents' school performance such as grade point average. In their follow-up study, Steinberg et al. (1992) indicated the importance of examining specific concrete parenting behaviors of the parenting style and their developmental effects. The present study will explore the nature of the relationship between specific paternal behaviors such as paternal nurturance, monitoring, and strictness and children's academic achievement and self esteem.

In the late 1970s, there was a new concern with the "new nurturant father," who played an active role in his children's lives. Today, fathers were urged to be involved with their children. A lot of studies have consistently shown that fathers spend much less time with their children than mothers do.

It is interesting to find that in two-parent families with employed mothers, the average levels of paternal engagement and accessibility both are higher than in families with mothers who are not employed. However, research showed that paternal influence on child's development is prevalent. Thus, this study will investigate the relationship of paternal behavior and children's developmental outcomes.

It is common for researchers to assume that parental behaviors change rather markedly as children mature. Continuity and change in parenting behaviors is an interesting topic in the parenting literature. Some theorists assume that parents exert less control, use less supervision, and emphasize more autonomy and achievement as their children grow (Maccoby, 1980; Roberts, Block, & Block, 1984). Thus, the present study will examine consistency and change in paternal behaviors over time.

Given that there is a link between parenting and child's academic achievement, research has tried to identify the mechanisms through which parental behaviors translate into children's academic achievement. In the study by Steinberg et al. (1989), the relation between authoritative parenting and children's academic achievement was mediated through the child's work orientation, self-reliance and identity. Parenting style influenced a child's work orientation, but it was the attitude toward work orientation that directly affected a child's school performance.

In the present study, the mediating roles played by the children's academic orientation, or children's self-esteem in the relation between parenting behavior and children's academic achievement are investigated.

Finally, most research in this area has assessed concurrent rather than longitudinal relations between parental influences and children's outcomes such as academic achievement. The present study will examine change in and stability of paternal behaviors' influence on children's academic achievement over time.

Hypothesized Model

The model in the present study of parental influences on children's academic achievement is illustrated in Figure 1. In light of a synthesis of social status and family process paradigms, the present study includes both family status as well as family processes in the hypothesized model. Paternal education is used as a family status indicator and paternal behavior, paternal depression, and marital happiness are utilized as family process variables.

The conceptual model hypothesized that paternal education has a positive effect on paternal nurturance behavior, parental depression has a negative effect on paternal nurturance behaviors, and paternal marital happiness has a negative effect on paternal nurturance behavior. In turn, paternal nurturance behavior is assumed to have an effect on children's academic orientation and on children's academic achievement. In particular, the model hypothesized that paternal education has both direct and indirect effects on children's academic achievement, the latter through children's academic orientation. Further, the conceptual model also hypothesized that paternal education has an effect on children's academic achievement through paternal nurturance behavior, and through children's academic orientation.

Method

Subjects

This study included a total pf 398 adolescents including 198 females and 200 males and their parents at wave 1. The mean age for the adolescents at Time 1 was 12.42 years. At Time 2, there were 382 adolescents including 190 females and 192 males and their parents. The mean age for the adolescents was 13.43 years at Time 2. At Time 3, a total of 374 adolescents including 186 females and 188 males and their parents were still involved in the study. The mean age for the adolescents at Time 3 was 14.36 years.

Of the 398 families at wave 1, 48% were farm families, and 52% were non-farm families. The majority of families were defined middle- and working-class families, and based on the parents' current occupation, highest grade completed, and socio-economic status.

Procedure

During the first home visit, after the interviewer had reviewed the project and the participating families had signed the informed consent form, the interviewer instructed the father and the target child on how to respond to their respective questionnaires. Each was asked to carefully read the instructions accompanying each set of questions in the questionnaire and, if needed, to request clarification from the interviewer. After each participant finished, the interviewer checked to make sure all questions were answered and, if not, requested the respondent to provide his or her best answer.

The questionnaires were conducted three times in the three years for data collection including paternal depression, paternal marital happiness, paternal education, paternal behaviors, child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem and child's social adjustment. Children's academic achievement was measured by their grade point average from official school records.

Results

Cross-sectional Correlations

The zero-order cross-sectional correlations among all the study variables used in this research were presented for each wave separately.

Time 1 cross-sectional correlations

Paternal variables and paternal behavior at Time 1

Father's education was related to paternal nurturance and monitoring behaviors. There were no significant relationships between father's depression and any paternal behaviors (nurturance, monitoring, strictness) nor were father's marital happiness and any paternal behaviors correlated.

Father's depression was negatively associated with father's marital happiness; in addition. The results also showed that father's depression was negatively associated with child's self-esteem. Of particular interest, the results indicated that father's education level was positively associated with child's academic orientation and child's academic achievement as represented by child's grade point average.

Paternal behavior and children's outcomes at Time 1

For the correlations between paternal behaviors and children's outcomes, the results showed that paternal nurturance behavior was positively related to children's academic orientation, self-esteem, and social adjustment, but not to children's grade point averages. Paternal monitoring behavior also positively associated with children's academic orientation as well as children's self-esteem. Negative associations were revealed both between paternal strictness behavior and children's self-esteem and between paternal strictness and children's social adjustment.

Time 2 cross-sectional correlations

Paternal variables and paternal behaviors at Time 2

Father's depression was positively associated with paternal strictness behavior at Time 2. The findings also indicated that father's marital happiness was positively associated with paternal nurturance behavior at Time 2. Consonant with the findings at Time 1, father's education was positively related to paternal nurturance and paternal monitoring behaviors at Time 2.

Similar to the results at Time 1, father's depression was negatively related to child's self-esteem. It is interesting to find that both paternal marital happiness and paternal education were positively related to children's self-esteem. In addition, consistent with the findings of Time 1, father's education was positively related to both children's academic orientation and children's grade point averages.

Paternal behaviors and children's outcomes at Time 2

Father's nurturance behavior was positively associated with child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem and child's social adjustment at Time 2, the same as at Time 1. Father's monitoring behavior was also positively related to child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem and child's social adjustment. In contrast, paternal strictness behavior was negatively related to child's academic orientation as well as to child's self-esteem. In sum, paternal nurturance and monitoring behaviors had moderately positive relationships with child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem and child's social adjustment, whereas paternal strictness correlated negatively with child's academic orientation and child's self-esteem. The results also showed that there was no significant relationships between any paternal behavior and child's grade point average.

Time 3 cross-sectional correlations

Paternal variables and paternal behaviors at Time 3

Father's depression was positively related to paternal strictness behavior at Time 3. Father's marital happiness was positively associated with paternal nurturance behavior. In addition, father's education was positively related to paternal nurturance as well as paternal monitoring behaviors at Time 3.

Consistent with the results at both Time 1 and Time 2, father's depression had a negative correlation with child's self-esteem at Time 3. Father's marital happiness at Time 3 was positively related to child's self-esteem, as was the case at Time 2, but not at Time 1. Consistent with the findings at Time 1 and Time 2, father's education was positively associated with child's academic orientation and child's grade point average at Time 3. Father's education was also positively related to child's self-esteem at Time 3, as it was at Time 2, but not at Time 1.

Paternal behaviors and children's outcomes at Time 3

Father's nurturance behavior was positively correlated with child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem, child's social adjustment, and child's grade point average at Time 3. Consistent with the findings at Time 2, paternal monitoring behavior was positively associated with child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem and child's social adjustment. There was a negative correlation between paternal strictness behavior and child's self-esteem at Time 3.

Cross-Lagged Correlations

The longitudinal consistency of individual differences in all variables was assessed by intercorrelating the variables between Time 1 and Time 2; Time 2 and Time 3; and Time 1 and Time 3.

Cross-lagged correlations between Time 1 and Time 2 variables

Concerning longitudinal consistency of the parental variables, the parenting behaviors and the child's outcomes variables from Time 1 to Time 2, the values showed a moderate to strong degree of stability over 1 years (Time 1 to Time 2) in paternal behaviors. The autocorrelations for paternal nurturance, paternal monitoring, and paternal strictness behaviors were .64, .52, and .55, respectively. Moderate to strong levels of stability were obtained for paternal depression (r = .67), maternal depression (r = .64), child's academic orientation (r = .54), and child's self-esteem (r = .66). High levels of stability were obtained for paternal marital happiness (r = .78), and child's grade point average (r = .73).

Paternal nurturance behaviors at Time 1 were weakly to moderately and positively related to level of child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem and child's social adjustment one year later (r's ranged from .17 to .31). The results also showed that paternal monitoring behavior at Time 1 was weakly and positively related to child's self-esteem one year later (r = .17). In addition, paternal strictness behavior at Time 1 was weakly and negatively related to child's academic orientation, and child's self-esteem one year later (r's ranged from -.10 to -.12).

Paternal depression at Time 1 was negatively related to paternal nurturance and monitoring behaviors (r = -.12, and r = -.15, respectively) one year later. Paternal marital happiness at Time 1 was negatively related to paternal strictness behavior at Time 2 (r = .-17).

It showed that higher levels of child's academic orientation, self-esteem and child's social adjustment at Time 1 were related to higher child's grade point average one year later (r's were .43, .22, .27, respectively).

Results showed that some of the Time 1 child's variables (child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem, child's social adjustment and child's grade point average) were modestly related to Time 2 predictive variables (parental nurturance, monitoring, and strictness behaviors), suggesting the possibility of bidirectional relations between these variables.

Cross-lagged correlations between Time 2 and Time 3 variables

In terms of longitudinal consistency of the variables from Time 2 to Time 3, the values showed a strong degree of stability over an one year interval in paternal depression (r = .67). High levels of stability were obtained for paternal marital happiness (r = .78). For parental behaviors, moderate to strong levels of stability were found in paternal monitoring (r = .60), paternal strictness (r =.60). High degrees of stability were obtained for paternal nurturance (r = .70). In terms of child's outcomes variables, it showed a moderate to strong level of stability from Time 2 to Time 3 in child's academic orientation (r = .62), child's self-esteem (r = .68), and child's social adjustment (r = .48). In addition, a high level of stability was found for child's grade point average (r = . 87).

A higher level of paternal depression at Time 2 was related to more paternal strictness behaviors (r = .11) at Time 3. Paternal education was weakly related to paternal nurturance (r = .20) and paternal monitoring behaviors (r =. 19) one year later.

A higher level of paternal nurturance behavior at Time 2 was moderately related to higher levels of child's academic orientation (r = .28), child's self-esteem (r = .30) and child's social adjustment (r = .31) at Time 3.

Paternal monitoring behavior at Time 2 was positively related to child's academic orientation (r = .18), child's self-esteem (r = .22) and child's social adjustment (r = .18) one year later. Paternal strictness behavior at Time 2 was weakly and negatively related to child's self-esteem (r = -19) at Time 3.

It also showed that higher levels of child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem, and child's social adjustment at Time 2 were related to higher child's grade point average at Time 3 (r's are .48, .18, .15, respectively).

Results also demonstrated that some of the Time 2 child's variables (child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem, child's social adjustment and child's grade point average) were modestly related to Time 3 parental behavior variables (parental nurturance, monitoring, and strictness behaviors).

Cross-lagged correlation between Time 1 and Time 3 variables

Across the two-year period from Time 1 to Time 3, the values showed a moderate to strong degree of stability over the two years in paternal depression (r = .60), maternal depression (r = .53). High levels of stability were obtained for father's marital happiness (r = .73). For parental behaviors, moderate to high stabilities were also found for paternal nurturance (r = .60), paternal monitoring (r = .50), paternal strictness (r = .46). For child's outcomes variables, the result showed a moderate degree of stability for child's academic orientation (r = .58), child's self-esteem (r = .57), and child's social adjustment (r = .43). High levels of stability was obtained for child's grade point average (r = .77).

It showed the zero-order cross-lagged correlations of the Time 1 predictor measures with the Time 3 criterion variables. Paternal depression at Time 1 was negatively related to paternal monitoring (r = -.13) and positively associated with paternal strictness (r = .12) behaviors at Time 3. Paternal education at Time 1 was positively related to paternal nurturance (r = .20) and paternal monitoring (r = .19) behaviors two years later.

For the relationships between parental behaviors and child's outcomes across the two years, paternal nurturance behavior at Time 1 was positively related to child's academic orientation (r = .21), child's self-esteem (r = .28), and child's social adjustment (r = .23) at Time 3. Paternal monitoring behavior at Time 1 was also positively related to child's academic orientation (r = .13) and child's self-esteem (r = .14) at Time 3. In contrast, paternal strictness behaviors at Time 1 were negatively related to child's self-esteem (r = -.13) at Time 3.

The results also showed that higher levels of child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem, and child's social adjustment at Time 1 were modestly related to higher level of child's grade point average (r's were .45, .24, .30, respectively) two years later.

Results also demonstrated that some of the Time 1 child's variables (child's academic orientation, child's self-esteem, child's social adjustment, and child's grade point average) were weakly related to Time 3 predictive variables (parental nurturance, monitoring, and strictness behaviors).

Structural Equation Modeling Analyses

Prospective longitudinal findings for the structural model

The structural model (see Figure 1) was tested using AMOS for each of the following four dyads: 150 father-son dyads, 144 father-daughter dyads. The path coefficients and goodness-of-fit indices for the model are reported as well as the proportion of variance accounted for.

Figure 2 presented the results of structural equation modeling for father-son dyads. Father's education has a positive effect on child's academic orientation (β = .16, t = 2.04, p < .05) as well as on child's academic achievement (β = .22, t = 2.94, p < .01). Paternal nurturant behavior has a positive effect on child's academic orientation (β = .33, t = 4.29, p < .001). In addition, child's academic orientation has a positive effect on child's academic achievement (β = .41, t = 5.35, p < .001). Thus, the positive relationship between father's education and child's academic achievement was mediated by child's academic orientation. Besides, child's academic orientation was a mediating variable between paternal nurturance behavior and child's academic achievement. A total of 24% variance in child's academic achievement was explained by father's education, child's academic orientation, and paternal nurturance behavior.

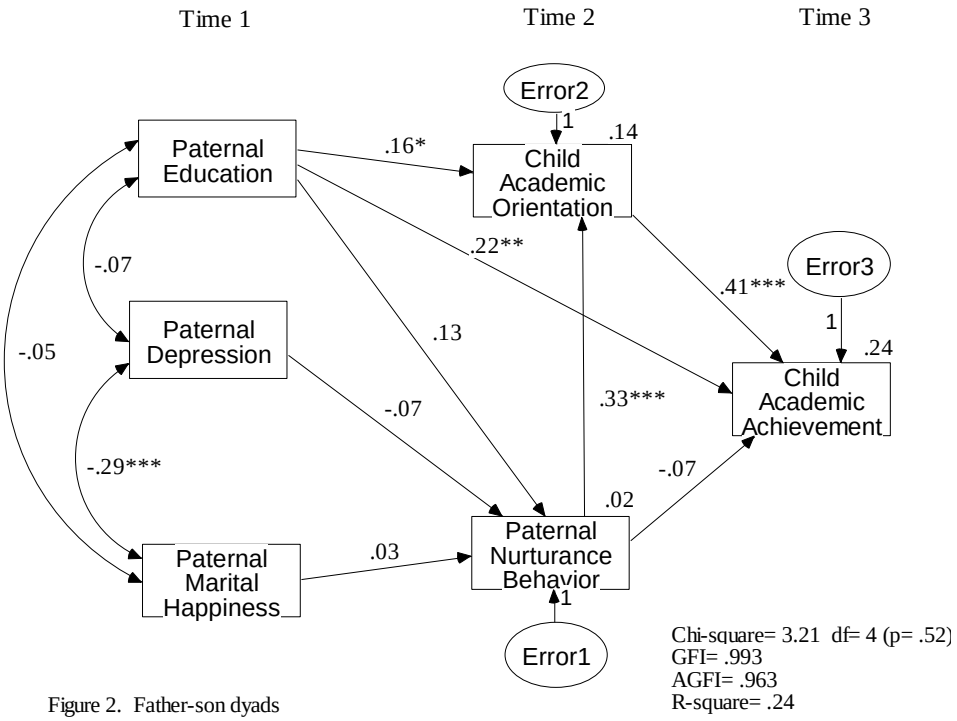

Figure 2. Father-son dyads

In the father-son dyads, the chi-square test was not significant, $\chi_4^2 = 3.21$ ($p = .523$). Therefore, the covariance matrix implied by the structural model did not differ significantly from the covariance matrix of the observed data. Additionally, the goodness of fit index (GFI) was .99 and the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) was .96. Thus, the structural model for father-son dyads fit the data well.

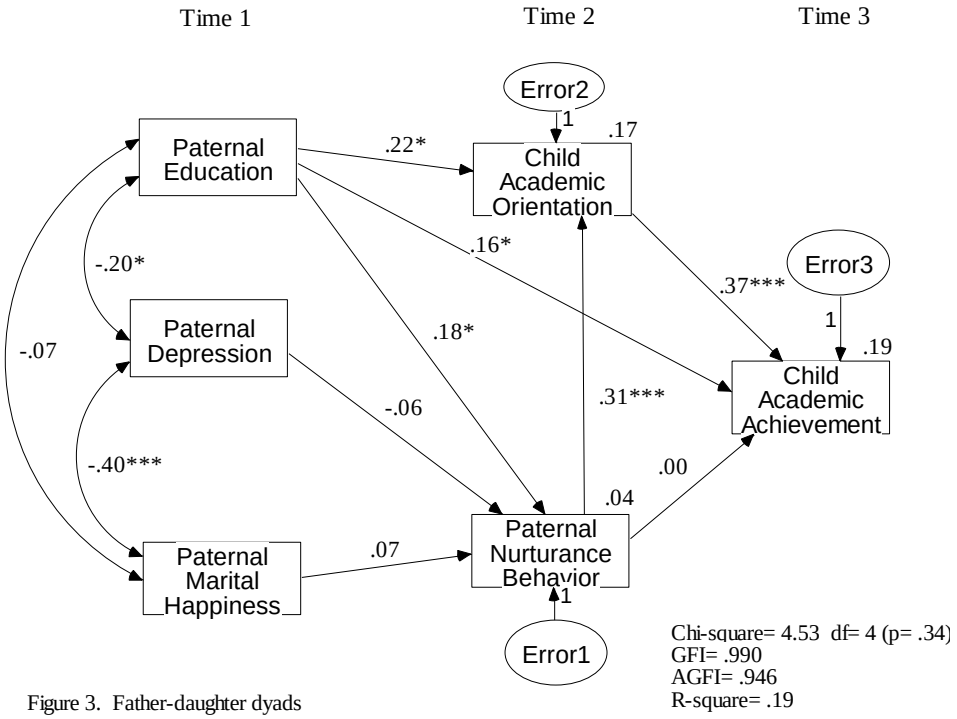

Figure 3. Father-daughter dyads

For father-daughter dyads (see Figure 3), father's education had a positive direct effect on father's nurturance behavior (β = .18, t = 2.10, p < .05), on child's academic orientation (β = .22, t = 2.78, p < .01), and child's academic achievement (β = .16, t = 1.99, p < .05). Father's depression mood and father's marital happiness had no effect on paternal nurturance behavior. Further, child's academic orientation has a direct effect on child's academic achievement (β = .37, t = 4.46, p < .001). The results of the path analysis showed that child's academic orientation was a mediating variable in the relation between paternal education and daughter's academic achievement. In addition, child's academic orientation was also a mediating variable in the relation between paternal nurturance behavior and child's academic achievement. Therefore, there was a path from paternal education through paternal nurturance behavior and through child's academic orientation to child's academic achievement. However, paternal nurturance behavior had no direct effect on daughter's academic achievement. A total of 19% variance in child's academic achievement was explained in the model.

For the father-daughter dyads, the chi-square test was not significant, χ_4^2 = 4.529 (p = .339). This indicated that the covariance matrix implied by the structural model did not differ significantly from the covariance matrix of the observed data. The Goodness of fit index was .99 and the adjusted goodness of fit that takes into account sample size and the number of parameters estimated was .95. Thus, the structural model for father-daughter dyads fit the data very well.

The same model was run for two dyads with parental monitoring in place of parental nurturance. For parental monitoring, the results of the evaluation of the structural model showed that there were no significant relationships between parental education, parental depression, marital happiness and parental monitoring behaviors for the father-son, the father-daughter dyads.

When parental strictness behavior was substituted for parental monitoring in the model, the results of the path analyses indicated that parental marital happiness was negatively associated with parental strictness behaviors in the father-son (β = -.20, t = -2.33, p < .05). However, there were no significant relationships between parental marital happiness and parental strictness behaviors in the father-daughter dyads.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate paternal influence on children's academic achievement prospectively and longitudinally. Three paternal factors, paternal depression, paternal marital happiness, and paternal education that may affect the parenting behaviors of nurturance, monitoring, and strictness which, in turn, might influence children's academic achievement, were examined. The effects of paternal behaviors on children's academic achievement were explored separately by evaluating a structural model for father-son and father-daughter dyads.

Consistency across time

In order to examine consistency, correlations were computed for each of the variables between Time 1 and Time 2, Time 2 and Time 3, and Time 1 and Time 3. Consistent with the previous studies (McNally, Eisenberg, & Harris, 1991; Roberts, Block, & Block, 1984), the present study showed a relatively moderate to high level of consistency in fathers' parenting behaviors. This finding might reflect that individual differences in parental practices are based on their deep-seated beliefs (Kochanska, Kuczynski, & Radke-Yarrow, 1989; Miller, 1988; Sigel, 1985); thus even over the period from early adolescence to mid-adolescence, parental behaviors are quite stable over time. As noted by Goodnow (1988), understanding parental beliefs is important independent of their relation to parenting behaviors.

There was an appreciable longitudinal consistency for children's self-esteem, children's academic orientation, children's social adjustment, and children's academic achievement across the two years. For self-esteem, the present findings are consistent with Block and Robins' (1993) study that there is an appreciable rank-order consistency in children's self-esteem over time. The consistency in self-esteem that found in this study was in accord with Block's (1971) argument that self-esteem follows the developmental pattern of "sameness" which is defined as strong across-time ordering correspondence together with no indication of changes in mean

There was also a difference in grade point averages for boys and girls. Girls' academic achievement was better than boys during this period as evidenced by their school grade point average. There was a significant difference in children's academic achievement over the three waves. A slight decrease was found in children's academic achievement from Time 1 to Time 2, but an increase was revealed from Time 2 to Time 3 for both boys and girls.

This change probably revealed the effect of school transition occurred during this period (Simmons, Carlton-Ford, & Blyth, 1987). The significant decrease in grade point average occurred as adolescents moved from one school to another school. Simmons, Carlton, & Blyth (1987) indicated that GPA seems more continually responsive to change in school environments; with students declining in whatever years they change school. However, the results also showed that as adolescents got accustomed to the new learning environment, their grade point averages increased.

The impact of parental behaviors on children's developmental outcomes

In general, paternal nurturance behaviors were positively related to children's academic orientation, self-esteem and social adjustment. This correlational finding has been found in most of the literature in parenting and children's developmental outcomes (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Rollins, 1987). Parents who use warmer, loving behaviors have offspring who are more academically oriented and who have high self-esteem. For paternal monitoring behaviors, the results also showed positive impact on children's academic orientation and self-esteem. Both paternal strictness behaviors had negative impact on children's self-esteem at each of the waves, and on children's academic orientation at Time 2.

The prospective longitudinal findings indicated that the relation between parental behaviors and children's academic performance is consistent, in part, with findings by previous researchers regarding the important role that authoritative parenting behaviors and parental nurturance have on children's academic achievement (Lamborn et al., 1991; Melby & Conger, 1996; Steinberg et al., 1989; Steinberg et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1992). However, the findings of present study showed that nurturant parenting does not directly affect children's academic achievement, but indirectly through children's academic orientation. Although the effect of parental nurturance on children's academic achievement is indirect, mediated through children's academic orientation, these findings are still consistent with Baumrind's (1971, 1973) claim that the authoritative parenting style characterized by parental nurturance and warmth in parent-child relations leads to several positive developmental outcomes in children.

The prospective findings also showed that parental nurturance behaviors have more effects on daughters than on sons in terms of children's self-esteem. Besides, paternal depression was negatively related to daughter's self-esteem, but not to sons' self-esteem. Consistent with Amato's (1986) findings that marital conflict was negatively associated with self-esteem among elementary school girls but not among elementary school boys.

The mediating impact of children's attributes on academic achievement

Consistent with the findings of DeBaryshe et al. (1993), Eccles and Midgley (1989), and Steinberg et al. (1989), it appears that children's academic orientation holds the most promise for psychological interventions designed to enhance academic achievement in school. The present study provided evidence that academic orientation had a positive influence on academic performance in subsequent years.

The findings concerning academic orientation as a mediator in the relation between parental behavior and academic performance is especially interesting in consideration of controversies over the commonly accepted contribution of self-esteem to children's academic achievement. Although there was a positive correlation between children's self-esteem and academic achievement, the prospective longitudinal findings in the present study showed that the relation between children's self-esteem and school performance was not direct. Similar to the results by Steinberg et al. (1989), children's self-esteem was not a mediating variable in the relation between parental nurturance behaviors and the children's academic achievement in the father-son dyads. However, a mediating effect for children's self-esteem was found in father-daughter dyads.

Implications

The findings of the present study underscore the importance of the family as a context for human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). These results suggest that as adolescents move from one period to another, parents need to find appropriate ways to be involved with and supportive of their children, let the children feel the warmth and nurturance parents need to provide at home. Those nurturing behaviors could stimulate the children's academic orientation and in turn contribute to successful academic performance at school.

The prospective findings indicated that paternal nurturance behaviors influenced children's academic achievement through children's academic orientation. Therefore, fathers appear to play the same important roles as mothers do in their children's lives. How to encourage fathers to take more caring responsibilities as mothers do in order to enhance children's academic performance and self-esteem would be a valuable topic for the school counselors and the policy makers.

Since school is the place where children perform academically, educators need to recognize the importance of the parent-child relationship. Schools should implement more conferences that promote parental behaviors that respond appropriately to the children's academic achievement and encourage positive interactions in the parent-child dyads to enhance future academic success. In addition, since parental educational level is an important influence on children's academic achievement, school teachers or counselors should provide special assistance to those students with less educated parents when they need help.

The findings also showed the impact of school transition on adolescents' school performance; therefore, teachers and counselors should pay more attention to new students to assist them in their school adjustment. Schools may implement a program which allow the older students help the newcomers to adjust and survive in their new learning environment from their own experience and thus to enhance the newcomers' school performance.

The present study found gender differences in adolescents' self-esteem, academic orientation and academic achievement. Girls on average had lower self-esteem than boys; thus how to heighten girls' self-esteem in adolescence is an important issue for both parents and school personnel. On the other hand, boys have lower levels of academic orientation and lower academic performances than girls in the adolescence years. Thus, parents and school personnel should cooperate in helping and encouraging boys to enhance their academic orientation and their academic performance.

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