

Please cite this paper as follows:

Sarkhosh, H., Sameri, M., & Hasani, M. (2021). Impact of Parental Socio-economic Status on High School EFL Learners' Academic Achievement: Parents' involvement and support in focus. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 9 (36), 135-144.

Research Paper

Impact of Parental Socio-economic Status on High School EFL Learners' Academic Achievement: Parents' involvement and support in focus

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Received: March 09, 2021

Accepted: August 24, 2021

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of multifactorial socio-educational variables of the family in the structural model of predicting the academic achievement of EFL learners and the mediating roles of parents' involvement and perceived autonomy support. The population of the study comprised all the high school EFL students in Urmia, from which 492 students (262 males and 230 females) were selected as the participants through Cochran's formula and stratified random sampling method. The study was conducted with a correlational design, using structural equation modeling method, and the assessment tools were standard questionnaires. The results of data analysis showed that perceived parental autonomy support, parental socio-economic status, and parents' involvement in education are significantly related to language learners' academic achievement. Based on this finding, it is claimed that to improve the academic achievement of language learners, these three variables should be taken into consideration and strengthened as facilitating mediators.

Keywords: *Academic achievement, parents' involvement, perceived parental autonomy support, socio-economic status*

نقش متغیرهای اجتماعی-تربیتی چند عاملی خانواده در مدل ساختاری پیش بینی پیشرفت تحصیلی دانش آموزان زبان خارجی: مشارکت والدین و حمایت از استقلال والدین

هدف این مطالعه بررسی نقش متغیرهای اجتماعی-تربیتی چند عاملی خانواده در مدل ساختاری پیش بینی پیشرفت تحصیلی دانش آموزان زبان خارجی از طریق نقش واسطه ای مشارکت والدین و حمایت از استقلال والدین بود. جامعه آماری این تحقیق شامل کلیه زبان آموزان مقطع متوسطه در ارومیه بود که براساس فرمول کوکران و به روش نمونه گیری تصادفی طبقه ای به عنوان نمونه انتخاب شدند. روش این تحقیق همبستگی با استفاده از روش مدل سازی معادلات ساختاری و ابزار ارزیابی شامل پرسشنامه های استاندارد بود که روایی و پایایی آنها تأیید شد و فراگیران ملزم به تکمیل چهار پرسشنامه بودند. نتایج تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها نشان داد حمایت آزادانه والدین، وضعیت اقتصادی-اجتماعی خانواده و مشارکت والدین در آموزش به طور قابل توجهی با پیشرفت تحصیلی زبان آموزان ارتباط دارد. متغیر مشارکت تحصیلی والدین حدود 71.43٪ از کل رابطه بین متغیر وضعیت اقتصادی و پیشرفت تحصیلی و همچنین 40.89٪ رابطه بین متغیر حمایت آزادانه والدین و پیشرفت تحصیلی را توضیح می دهد. بنابراین، به منظور بهبود پیشرفت تحصیلی زبان آموزان می توان حمایت آزادانه والدین، وضعیت اقتصادی-اجتماعی و همچنین مشارکت تحصیلی والدین را به عنوان یکی از عوامل پیشرفت تحصیلی تقویت و بهبود بخشید.

واژگان کلیدی: پیشرفت تحصیلی، مشارکت والدین، حمایت آزادانه والدین، وضعیت اقتصادی-اجتماعی

Introduction

The non-intellective antecedents of student performance are of great interest to educators and education researchers (Casillas et al., 2012), and research in this area is an important determinant of education policy (Usher & Pajares, 2008). The subject of academic performance in most countries of the world is one of the topics that has occupied the minds of many researchers (Hattie and Anderman, 2013; Stankov and Lee, 2014). In fact, the academic performance of students is one of the important indicators in evaluating the education system, and all the efforts and endeavors of the system are to put this into practice. In other words, society and especially the education system is interested and concerned about the fate of the individual and the successful growth and development of his position and position in society and tries to pave the way for the progress of the individual by removing existing obstacles and facilitating factors (Talsma et al., 2018). According to Rawls (1971), a student's academic performance, which is the cognitive output of schools and educational institutions, means a set of general or specific acquired knowledge or skills in subjects that is usually measured by tests and marks or both.

According to Caprara et al. (2014), one construct which seems to play a role in high school EFL students' academic achievement is the socio-economic status of the family. In fact, due to the positive individual, family and social consequences of students' academic achievement, the study of the factors affecting it is of paramount importance. Thus, numerous studies have been conducted on the role of each of the factors (for instance, family education style) in students' academic performance (Grolnick and Ryan, 1989). Some of these studies suggest that parenting style and parent-child interaction affect their cognitive, emotional, and social development (Grolnick and Ryan, 1989; Ryan and Connell, 1989; Grolnick, Deci and Ryan, 1997). Farrant et al. (2012) state that parents' involvement which supports the child's basic needs motivates students to communicate with parents, follow their decisions, incorporate parental values and behaviors, and lead them to socialization, and finally academic achievement brings about academic progress. Furthermore, family socio-economic status seems to affect students' academic performance. It refers to the position that a person achieves in the social hierarchy in society and is a compound index that expresses a person's work experience and social and economic status in relation to other people in his society, which is divided into three categories: high, middle, and low (Marmot, 2004) status. Sociologists examine the socio-economic status of individuals in terms of income and wealth, job status and education.

Based on the above brief introduction, the current study was an attempt to explore the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' academic achievement and their parental socio-economic status, parents' involvement, and parental support. Thus, the following research question was addressed:

RQ. Do parents' socio-economic status, parental involvement in education, and perceived parental autonomy support predict EFL learners' academic achievement?

Literature Review

According to Crystal (2003), English language has been considered an international language for a long time. Actually, since English is a “global language” and widely used in science and business, the number of English language learners has raised worldwide. As for Iran, English is considered as the most significant foreign language, with an important role in education. English language learning and instruction is, in fact, integrated with lots of individuals' lives such as teachers, students, parents, key stakeholders, policy makers and so on in Iran.

Concerning education at large, parents traditionally think that teachers and schools are the only responsible agents for their children's education and training, and that teachers must enlighten parents on the physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional development of their children (Latif, Rahmany and Hassani, 2013). But, it should be noted that a child's family (i.e. parents) is the most influential part of his/her life. Therefore, parents have a major role in their children's education. Specifically, parents' involvement in and attitude towards a foreign language has a great effect on their children's success in learning the language. This attitude can be passive or active. It is shown that children have a better foreign language achievement if their parents have an active attitude towards the foreign language even if they do not speak the foreign language. The reverse is true too, if parents have a passive attitude towards the foreign language. This is emphasized by Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi and Yarahmadi (2015), who have come to the conclusion in their research that parents can reveal their positive attitudes towards foreign language learning by being a part of their child's learning inside or outside of the school.

Baker (1992) believes that the attitudes of parents towards language learning are particularly significant when predicting the degree of success of children in language learning. In fact, to the degree that parents understand the benefits of language learning and how to improve it, foreign language learning for their children would be more successful. Magwa and Mugari (2017) state that parents play cognitive, social, and emotional roles in the growth of their children. They can shape their self-concepts and promote their language learning through successful cognitive functioning. By modeling attitudes that contribute to the achievement of language learning, parents can play a more indirect role. Keith et al. (1993) have state that parental engagement is especially important when dealing with young children. Parents should help their kids perceive the world and make sense of it. Research in this respect in different countries suggests that there is a positive effect that parents can have on their children in foreign language learning. Concerning parental attitude, bulks of research (e.g., Wang, Deng and Yang, 2016) have shown that learners' personal characteristics are strongly influenced by factors such as their parents', teachers', and peers' attitudes, and that these characteristics include intelligence, aptitudes, motivation, attitude, and socio-cultural experiences on which parents, teachers and peers' attitudes have profound impact.

Regardless of parents' involvement and their parenting style, sociologists have paid special attention to the socio-economic status of individuals in terms of income and wealth, job status and education. Sanghavi (2010) studied the dominant factor in children's academic achievement and found that parents' socio-economic status should be emphasized. Other researchers have used various variables to measure the amount of socio-economic status of the family. Some have included such indices as cultural interactions in the family, parental involvement in education, parental study behavior and style, and family socio-cultural interactions (Jacobsen, 2010). In all cultures, the family is the mainstay of children's educational achievement. Actually, when a child enters school, he/she brings some rules and behaviors which have originated from the family. These rules have great impacts on institutionalized teachings. In fact, among community members, students as individuals have natural sensitivities, feelings and cognitive characteristics to learn. So, one of the important issues faced by parents, teachers and professionals is how to shape the concept of academic achievement among them in terms of these personal factors. Furthermore, identifying the causes of the academic achievement in different settings, even in one individual, is a difficult task that increases the significance of teaching.

Method

Participants

The present research is a correlational study, using structural equation modeling (SEM). According to this design, socio-economic status and parental involvement in education are considered as independent variables, and learners' academic achievement as the dependent

variable. The total population for the study comprised all the high school EFL students in Urmia, that is, 7432 students. From this population, 492 students (262 males and 230 females) were selected as the participants, based on Cochran's formula and stratified random sampling method. The demographic statistics of this sample showed that 4% had a GPA below 15, 30% had a GPA of 16 to 17, 45% had a GPA of 18 to 19 and 21% had a GPA above 19. Moreover, 19% of the students' mothers were employed and 81% were housewives. Also, 38% of their fathers were government employees, 61% were self-employed and 1% were unemployed. As for income, 3% of the household income was less than one million Tomans, 10% was between one to two million Tomans, 63% was three million Tomans and 24% was more than three million Tomans. Concerning education level, 1% of the students' mothers were illiterate, 5% had elementary degree, 22% just passed middle school, 21% had diploma, 31% held a bachelor degree, 17% had a master degree, 2% had degrees higher than master and 1% did not answer this question related to their education. As for fathers, 0% of them were illiterate, 4% passed elementary level, 20% middle school certificate, 21% had diploma, 33% had a bachelor degree, 16% held a master degree, 6% a degree higher than master and 1% did not say anything about their education.

Instruments

Different instruments and scales were used to conduct this study. Below is an elaboration them.

Academic Achievement Scale: In order to collect information about the participants' academic performance, a modified version of Student Academic Performance Assessment Questionnaire postulated by Pham and Taylor (1999) and validated in the field of academic performance for Iranian society, was used. This questionnaire includes 32 questions with five-point Likert scale from very high to very low. Results of the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire for each of its components were measured and reported as follows: 1) Self-efficacy (0.884), 2) Emotional effects (0.935), 3) Lack of consequence control (0.653), 4) Planning (0.790), and 5) Motivation (0.86). Furthermore, the reliability for the whole questionnaire was reported to be 0.837.

Socio-economic status scale: To measure the socio-economic status of students' parents, the indices of fathers' education, mothers' education, fathers' job, mothers' job, monthly income and ownership status, this scale was used (Mackenbach and Kunst, 1997).

Parents' Academic Involvement Scale: Fan (2001) questionnaire was used to measure parental involvement in education. This questionnaire describes parental involvement in communication, participation, supervision, and parents' educational aspirations for their students. It was measured on a Likert degree scale from almost "never" to "almost always". The reliability coefficient of this questionnaire was reported to be 0.734.

Perceived Parental Autonomy Support Scale: This scale designed by Grolenick, Deci, and Ryan, (1997) was also used for the purposes of this study. It contains 42 items with two parent sections (21 items for each) that are quite similar. Participants were required to respond to items of this scale on a 7-point Likert scale ranged from "strongly agree" (7) to "strongly disagree" (1). The reliability of the scale was 0.91.

Procedure

After getting permission from the Ministry of Education, random-stratified sampling was performed, and the participants were sampled by region, level of education, gender, and type of

school. They were classified through inclusion criteria by multi-stage cluster sampling method and then, they were briefed regarding the manner of filling the questionnaires within 20 minutes. After completing the questionnaires, the obtained data were entered into SPSS and were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics (i.e. frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation). Also, the normality of data distribution was determined by Kolmogorov-Smirnov method, and correlation coefficient and analysis of variance were done.

Results

Table 1 below shows the descriptive statistics of the variables under study.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the variables

Academic achievement		Parents' involvement		Socio-economic status		perceived parental autonomy support		آماره ها
SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	Mean and standard deviation
0.442	3.246	0.650	3.403	0.491	2.84	0.582	3.290	
Kolmogrove-Smirov								
0.186		0.203		0.214		0.608		Test statistics
0.001		0.001		0.001		0.200		Sig value
492		492		492		492		Number
Not normal		Not normal		Not normal		normal		Result

The results of mean and standard deviation of research variables in Table 1 showed that the mean of perceived parental autonomy support was 3.290, the mean of parental socio-economic status was 2.84, the mean of parents' academic involvement was 3.403 and the mean of academic achievement was 3.246. Also, the results showed that the research data did not have a normal distribution except for perceived parental autonomy support. In order to evaluate the validity of measuring questions and items, two types of validity (convergent and divergent) were used. The tables below show the validity and reliability of the research measuring instrument after correcting the weak points.

Table 2

Convergent validity of research components and items

Mean of variance	Reliability	Cronbach Alpha	(t-Value)	Sub-categories	Variables
0.812547	0/800544	0/873601	19/047	42	perceived parental autonomy support
0/715480	0/904578	0/249900	23/407	32	Academic achievement
0/912470	0/854432	0/401877	22/40	5	Socio-economic status
0/624783	0/807658	0/453877	37/692	13	Parents' involvement

To determine the reliability, three criteria, that is, Cronbach's alpha coefficient, internal consistency, and factor analysis were used. Acceptable values for Cronbach's alpha were higher

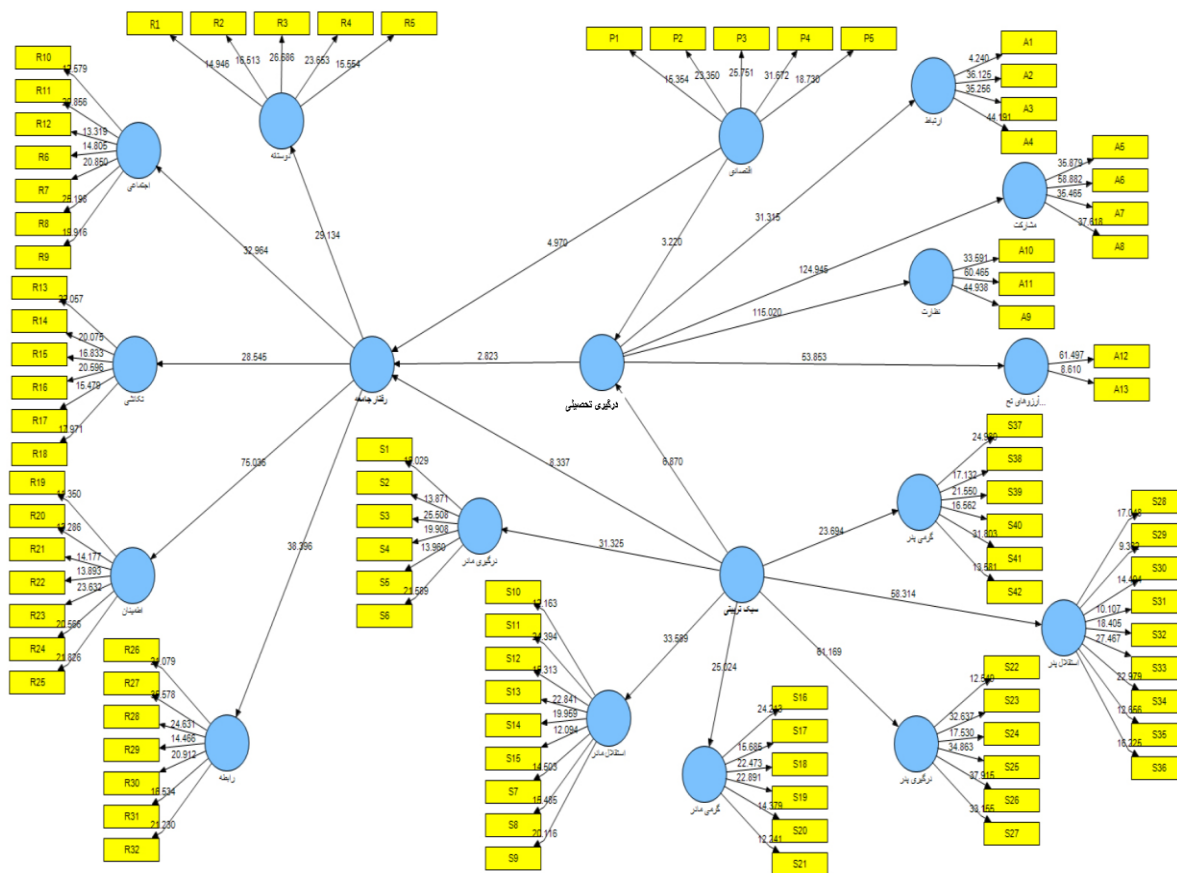
than 0.6 and internal reliability was higher than 0.7. The amount of factor load of the items used to check the internal consistency and its acceptable value was more than 0.4. In other words, questions with a factor load of less than 0.4 or a t-statistic between -1.96 and -1.96 were eliminated (See Table 3).

Table 3
Correlation matrix and divergent validity test

AVE square	4	3	2	1	Variables	Number
0/845				1	Academic achievement	1
0/790			1	0/511	Parents' involvement	2
0/955		1	0/214	0/319	Socio-economic status	3
0/901	1	0/601	0/544	0/306	perceived parental autonomy support	4

Divergent validity was also measured by comparing the AVE root with the correlation between latent variables. The above Table show the divergent validity of the questionnaire.

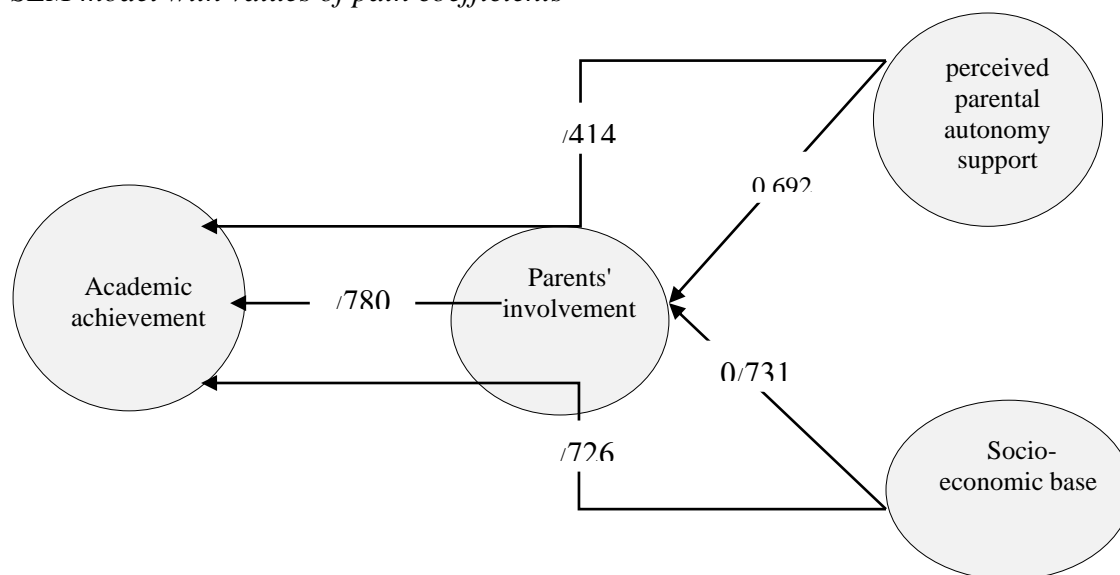
Figure 1
SEM model with significant t-value coefficients



As shown in Figure 1 above, all the coefficients related to the paths between the variables of this research are higher than 1.96, which shows the significance of all paths and the appropriateness of the structural model. R Square (R^2) is a criterion used to connect the measurement part and the structural part of structural equation modeling and shows the effect that an exogenous variable has on an endogenous variable. It is important to note that the value of R^2 is calculated only for the dependent (endogenous) structures of the model, and in the case of exogenous structures, the value of this criterion is zero. R^2 for academic achievement was 0.474 and the educational involvement of parents was 0.641, which indicates the values of high coefficient of determination of variables. The fit of the structural model using t-coefficients is such that these coefficients must be higher than 1.96 in order to confirm their significance at the 95% confidence level. Of course, it should be noted that t-numbers only indicate the correctness of the relationships and the intensity of the relationship between the structures cannot be measured with them. Path coefficients also show the positive or negative effect of one variable on another.

Figure 2

SEM model with values of path coefficients



Considering that in the above figure, the t-values obtained at the 95% confidence level were higher than 1.96, therefore, the questions raised are acceptable. In other words, it can be claimed that the significance coefficient of the three paths between academic achievement, parental involvement and perceived parental autonomy support is more than 1.96, which indicates the significant direct and indirect impact of perceived parental autonomy support and parental socio-economic status on academic achievement of the participants at a 95% confidence level.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of multifactorial training-social-educational factors of family in the structural model of predicting the academic achievement of EFL students in Iranian high schools. The results showed that family atmosphere predicts students' academic achievement. In fact, parents have the most important role in the family and if we consider such effective factors as education, they can make a significant contribution to their children's growth and academic progress in language learners and prevent their academic failure. Actually, when parents are concerned about their children, they are in reality letting them know

that their academic progress is important to them and that they fully support them. This perception of parental support directly affects their mental well-being and academic performance, and causes them to empathize with their parents and try their best to do their own duties, which finally leads to academic achievement. The results are in line with Yeo (2011) who showed parents' behavior and their relationship with children are effective in their academic development and empathy. They are also in agreement with Morris et al. (2009) who found that parents' negative attitudes and interactions with their children's behavioral disorders lead to poor social, academic, and emotional functioning, and with Jacob (2009) who found that high maternal education improves social behaviors as well as children's academic achievement.

In general, the level of parents' education, economic conditions, father's and mother's job can be considered among the factors affecting the quality of learners' behavior and academic achievement. Therefore, the more favorable the socio-economic situation of the family, the better and more advanced the behaviors and academic performance of the language learners will be. In fact, when parents engage or involve themselves in student learning activities, the learner chooses higher educational goals and feels more confident about the ability to progress towards educational goals.

Regarding the mediating role of parents' involvement in education in predicting students' academic achievement based on the socio-economic status of the family, it should be stated that the socio-economic status is like a social framework or container in which individuals' exposure to the social environment is constructed and addressed. According to Duncan et al.'s (2017) conceptual model, students with higher socio-economic status have greater access to high quality schools than students with lower socio-economic status, which reinforces important education-related skills. Roksa and Potter (2011) state that social class differences in success can be considered as a reflection of parenting styles and family resources. Therefore, the more regular the structure of families, the higher the level of socio-economic well-being, and the higher the level of their academic involvement, the more their perceived parental autonomy support are in accordance with educational standards, hence the higher the academic achievement.

Finally, the findings of the study suggest that in evaluating EFL learners' language learning progress, their biographical factors and academic expectations should be gravely taken into consideration.

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