

Impact of Students' Home Lives on Students' Academic Performance and Discussion of Related
Strategies for Teachers

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2023

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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Abstract

Students' home lives can significantly impact their educational progress and success. Aspects such as the amount of parental involvement, grandparents' support, family structures, number of siblings, financial stability, socioeconomic status, abusive family situations, and spiritual background can all have a major influence on how a student behaves and performs at school. This thesis provides a description of how these various subjects impact students in their education, and it provides some practical steps that teachers can take based on this information. The thesis is supported by information from scholars, who support the idea that parental involvement, which is directly tied to a student's home life, has a large and important impact on a student's academic development.

Key Words: education, academic success, family, parents, siblings, financial stability, support, practical steps

Impact of Students' Home Lives on Students' Academic Performance and Discussion of Related Strategies for Teachers

There are many reasons why students sometimes perform at a lower—or even a higher—academic level compared to their fellow classmates and peers. However, one major factor that affects students' academic performance and success is what the students' home lives are like. This paper will first discuss the various aspects of students' home lives, including parents' and grandparents' support, various family structures, siblings' impact, financial stability, socioeconomic status, abusive or tense family situations, and spiritual background. The paper will then conclude with strategies and best practices for how teachers can adjust their teaching based on their students' home-life experiences.

Students' Home Lives and How That Affects Academic Success

General Parental Involvement

Authors of different articles construct varied definitions of parental involvement. This paper will define parental involvement as “any parental attitudes, behaviors, styles, or activities that occur within or outside the school setting to support children's academic and/or behavioral success in their currently enrolled school” (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006, p. 2). More specifically, this paper will focus on the parents' support and interactions at home with the students, where the parents are dynamically and academically engaged with their children (Assefa & Sintayehu, 2019; Gordon & Cui, 2012; Washington-Davis, 2012). This type of involvement can include actions such as the parents being physically present, being attentive to what their child is learning, and connecting with their child's teacher (Gordon & Cui, 2012). Students often display courage when they feel safe and comfortable with their parents (Wang et al., 2021). Having supportive and encouraging parents, both in emotional and academic aspects, gives students a

safe place to launch their academic ideas, questions, and endeavors. Thus, it is clear that parents' focused involvement at home with their children is impactful for students academically.

There are specific statistics that support this idea, as well. Assefa and Sintayehu (2019) stated that the more parental involvement there is in a student's life, the more that student will achieve. In this same study, the results indicated that, based on the academic ranking of the "30 top scoring and 30 low scoring students," the "students who [academically] ranked from 1st to 10th from grades 8, 10 and 12 were highly involved, supported and followed by their parents on their education" (Assefa & Sintayehu, 2019, p. 46). When students have parents who are deeply involved in their children's lives, it tends to result in those students getting better grades and performing higher on state assessments compared to students whose parents are uninvolved (Washington-Davis, 2012). These pieces of information display the vital role that parents have in impacting their children's academic success.

There are several ways in which parental involvement impacts students' academic success. The first way in which parental involvement is impactful for students' academic success is by increasing students' motivation to complete academic activities and work. Based on a study that was done regarding parental support and students' motivation, when parents supported and motivated their children, their children's self-motivation increased (Froiland, 2011). This research "suggests the potential for empowering parents to foster a precious motivational resource within their children" (Froiland, 2011, p. 148). This displays the reality that parents can have an important impact on their children's motivation, which can lead to their children achieving great things in school.

The second way in which parental involvement impacts students' academic success is by helping to "serve more broadly as a context for children's mental health development"

(Pomerantz et al., 2007, p. 401). In this way, parental involvement can also indirectly impact students' achievement (Pomerantz et al., 2007). Often, having excellent mental health can help a student to have a confident outlook on life, which includes having a positive perspective on homework, school, and various academic topics. While possessing this type of perspective towards academic topics does not always correlate to academic success, it still has strong potential to be a helpful agent in students' academic attainment (Pomerantz et al., 2007).

The third way in which parental involvement impacts students' academic success is by providing support through the parents' own education. Based on a research article about this topic, the type of degree or amount of education that a parent has received can significantly affect their children's academic success. "In the United States, there is more than a 0.5-standard deviation difference in test scores between children whose parents have a college degree and children whose parents have a high school degree" (Harding et al., 2015, p. 60). It can be inferred from this quote that parents who have a higher level of education tend to have more of an impact on their children's success in school. Additionally, "high school graduates whose parents have at least a bachelor's degree are nearly twice as likely to enroll in college than high school graduates whose parents have less than a high school degree" (Harding et al., 2015, p. 60). As this information displays, the educational experience and expertise of a student's parents are instrumental in how well the student does in school and whether the student continues to pursue education in the long run.

The fourth way in which parental involvement impacts students' academic success is through impacting students' involvement with their teachers, which, in turn, impacts students' academic progress in the classroom. The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (2017) said, "When things are going well at home and in the parent-child relationship, the

relationship between the child and the teacher is correspondingly good. However, the teacher-child relationship deteriorates when the child's home life becomes more difficult” (p. 1). Thus, parental support is vital when considering how children interact with their teachers. In considering how this relates to students' success, if students have good rapport with their teachers, they tend to have more of a desire to achieve things in the classroom.

Conversely, if students' parents are not as involved in their children's education, there are negative consequences. First, students can tend to perform lower on various assessments if their parents are not actively involved in their children's learning. For instance, Assefa and Sintayehu (2019) found, “students who were scored below 50% and ranked last 10's from perspective grades were children whose families were less encouraged and involved” (p. 46). Secondly, parents who do not provide warmth and support can negatively affect parent-child relationships (Wang et al., 2021). In these types of instances where students' interactions with parents regarding academics are minimal to none, the students may not have as much of a desire or drive to do homework or other school activities.

As these sources display, parental involvement is crucial to increasing students' academic success, and some of the ways in which it impacts it is through enlarging students' motivation to do school, enhancing their mental health, and increasing their interactions with teachers. These options all, in turn, affect students' academic achievements. However, if parents are not significantly involved in their children's academics, there can be negative effects.

Parental Involvement: Dad's Impact

Although seemingly not as impactful as joint-parent involvement in children's education, a father's involvement in his child's education seems to still be impactful. William Jeynes (2015) said, “The results [from a “meta-analysis”] indicate that the association between father

involvement and the educational outcomes of youth overall is significant statistically” (p. 387). (Baker, 2018) talks about how, after accounting for a mother’s impact on a child’s education, “father–school involvement was positively associated with children’s reading, math, and teacher-rated approaches to learning scores in elementary school” (p. 208). Based on both of these quotes, it can be inferred that a father’s impact, especially in an academic setting, is impactful for his child’s education.

One of the reasons for a father’s impact on his child’s education is the father’s own education. A “father’s education has a larger estimated impact [on test scores], a surprising result since mothers presumably spend more time with their children; perhaps fathers have more say regarding children’s education” (Aturupane et al., 2011, p. 18). As an example, Liam was an 8th-grade student in a local middle school, and he was about to transition to high school, but he had to decide between two potential high schools to attend. Because Liam’s father had more precedence over those types of decisions, he suggested that Liam attend the first of the two schools. According to the quote stated previously, the father’s opinion would be more impactful in Liam’s decision for which high school to attend. Thus, Liam chose his school based on his dad’s suggestion, which may, in effect, impact Liam’s future test scores in high school.

Grandparents as Systems of Support and Encouragement

Many students are able to interact with their grandparents, with different levels of connection, depending on the emotional and physical distance between the students and their grandparents. In some cases, students may only see their grandparents once or twice a year. However, there are other cases where the students may visit their grandparents once a week or a couple of times a month, for example. This type of interaction can be extremely important and impactful on students’ academic success. According to McCluskey and McCluskey (2000),

“Grandparents can promote children's cognitive and academic development in a number of ways. They can: play school with the grandkids and inject happiness and excitement into early readiness activities” (p. 113). This quote displays how grandparents can encourage and motivate their grandchildren to complete academic endeavors. This can often contribute to these students' future academic progress.

Tabor (2016) addressed how juvenile delinquency could be combatted through interactions with grandparents. Tabor (2016) said, “A group of adolescents...were surveyed regarding the identified supports in their lives, and grandparents were most frequently cited as a principal support after the youth's parents” (p. 4). Thus, students who had very difficult experiences at home listed their grandparents as one of their main supports. This displays the immense impact that grandparents can have on their grandchildren's education, as grandparents can often be a strong source of support and encouragement to their grandchildren.

Various Family and Parental Structures

Based on research on the topic, it seems to stand that children who are part of a family with just one mom and one dad seem to perform better than their peers who have other types of family structures, such as two same-sex parents or a stepparent and a biological parent. Family Structure (2020) reported, “Researchers studying family structure have found that children who live with two married, opposite-sex, biological parents, on average, have better educational outcomes than children living in alternate family structures” (p. 1). Additionally, “Research has consistently shown a greater risk of low educational achievement and attainment for children from stepfather and single-mother households than for those from two biological parent families” (Monserud & Elder, 2011, p. 982). However, students who have grandparents as their primary

caregivers tend to perform better than their fellow peers (Garry, 2009). This section will describe specific family structures and how these structures affect students' academic success.

Families with Same-Sex Parents

The first type of family structure to address is the family with same-sex parents. While this is still related to a new field of research, the question still stands: what are ways in which this type of family structure may affect a child's academic success? According to Rosenfeld (2010), there does not seem to be a huge difference between children who are raised by heterosexual parents and those who are raised by same-sex parents. "To the extent that normal progress through primary school is a useful and valid measure of child development, the results confirm that children of same-sex couples appear to have no inherent developmental disadvantage" (Rosenfeld, 2010, p. 770).

However, because heterosexual married couples tend to be significantly rich and "the most legally advantaged type of parents," "their children have the lowest rates of grade retention" (Rosenfeld, 2010, p. 770). Thus, although children with same-sex parents seem to perform at the same level academically compared to their peers with heterosexual parents, children with same-sex parents have a higher potential to be retained in school.

Additionally, although the sheer fact that a family has same-sex parents does not directly affect students' academic performance, the variables, such as family shifts and situation shifts, that come with this type of family may impact students' academic success (Potter, 2012). If a family has same-sex parents, it could mean that the children may have moved or experienced changes in life due to potentially being adopted by these parents (Potter, 2012). This can create tension or uneasiness at home, which then can translate to low productivity and motivation at school. As a caveat to this research, however, there is still a relatively small number of families

with same-sex parents, so new and updated research will still need to be done in order to prove whether this information is true or not.

Families with Only One Biological Parent

“Compared with their peers raised in two-biological-parent families, children growing up in single-parent families typically showed lower levels of academic achievement” (Sun & Li, 2011, p. 542). One of the reasons for this divide seems to be that single-parent households tend to have fewer funds and support than two-parent households (Sun & Li, 2011). When families do not have a lot of assets to support their children, that often means that the students may not have all the necessary materials and supplies needed to thrive in the classroom.

Another reason why students in single-parent households tend to not succeed as much in school is because their parents are “less likely to invest in their social relationships with other parents and school personnel...and, consequently, were less likely to allocate external educational resources” (Sun & Li, 2011, p. 542). If the student’s parents are not actively involved in their child’s education, including talking with other parents and teachers, the child may not be as motivated to do well and may also not have enough resources and tools to do well in school.

A third reason why children in single-parent households may not do as well in school is because of their stress levels due to “family structural instability” (Sun & Li, 2011, p. 543). The family unit helps to provide “a basic sense of security, accountability, and stability,” but when a child does not have that supportive family unit, it can cause children not to be able to depend on a certain level of protection, and it can put “emotional stress on children” (Sun & Li, 2011, p. 543). This can, in turn, cause children to not do as well in school due to the stress that they are under at home.

Families Who Have Experienced Divorce. According to Sun and Li (2009), “about 40% of all American children born to married, two-biological-parent families are likely to experience parental divorce or separation before they reach adulthood” (p. 1528). Thus, based on this quote, divorce is quite a common occurrence in the modern-day family makeup. This causes a lot of potential change, even multiple separations and changes, in these students' lives and families. However, how does this affect these children's academic success and progress? “Compared with peers from two-biological-parent families, children of divorce were likely to have lower standardized test scores..., lower chances of graduating from high school..., and a lower level of educational attainment by adulthood” (Sun & Li, 2009, p. 1529).

There are several reasons for these statistics. First, having a divorce in the family means that there is not as much financial support for the family, since one of the parents is leaving the household (Sun & Li, 2009). Not having this financial support can affect whether students are able to receive the proper supplies for school so that they can succeed in their education. Additionally, not having this financial support could also mean that the children may have to work after school or during the weekends to help provide for the family. This could result in these children not having enough time to finish their homework or other school-based assignments.

Secondly, as Sun and Li (2009) wrote, “residential changes accompanying parental divorce are also likely to cut off a family's social ties to friends, other parents, and school personnel, all of which may further lower children's chances for educational success” (p. 1529). If children lose the support of friends and other people at school, that could be a detriment to the children's mental and physical well-being, which, in turn, can affect their academic success and desire to learn.

Thirdly, changes in family structure through divorce can place extra stress on the children (Sun & Li, 2009). This can cause low motivation and little desire to do school. It can also translate into the children not being able to complete their homework because of stress at home. However, once a family who has gone through a divorce is stabilized, there could be some positive effects on the children, including the ability for children to “regain their senses of security, reduce their chances of experiencing additional residential or school changes, and stabilize family resources” (Sun & Li, 2009, p. 1531).

Families with a Stepparent. While a divorce in the family can greatly affect a student's academic performance, having a stepparent marry into the family can also cause changes in the family dynamic. Based on a study they did about this topic, some authors stated that, “marriage in and of itself has no statistically significant association with academic achievement among children born to single parents” (Usevitch & Dufur, 2021, p. 1217). However, Usevitch and Dufur (2021) stated, “data suggest that...a perceived benefit of parent marriage is more a story of economic resources and selectivity” (p. 1217). Thus, the actual marriage itself may not affect the children in the family, but the fact that the marriage could increase resources that are available to the children could potentially affect the students' success in school.

Grandparents as Caregivers

Although this paper has addressed the impact of grandparents on students' academic success, it is also important to consider how students are impacted if their grandparents are their primary caregivers, as opposed to just being family members that the students visit every so often. Garry (2009) said that, “overall, grandchildren of grandparents who [were] primary caregivers outperformed their peers on Communication Arts of the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP)” (p. iii). This displays the academic advantage that children who are raised by

grandparents can have compared to their classmates. Additionally, in a more specific instance, students' gains in reading can be attributed to grandparents' support as well (Garry, 2009). Additionally, Monserud and Elder (2011) found that "coresidence with grandparents in two biological parent households did not have adverse effects on high school completion and college enrollment, although it was negatively associated with college graduation" (p. 996).

There are a couple of reasons for these statistics. First, "the primary grandparents spent more time assisting their grandchildren with homework, as well as spent more time communicating with school staff" (Garry, 2009, p. 93). Grandparents tend to have less on their plates, as many of them are retired. Thus, this gives them more time and energy to devote to supporting the academic needs of their grandchildren. Secondly, grandparents often "want to provide nurturing and safe homes for their grandchildren" (Garry, 2009, p. 93). This can lead to the grandparents being more actively involved in their grandchildren's academics. Thus, having grandparents as the primary caregivers in a household can significantly improve students' academic success by the grandparents cultivating an inviting home environment and providing support and encouragement to their grandchildren.

Siblings vs. No Siblings

As far as whether sibling relationships impact a student's academic success, there are differing opinions. Some theorists propose that "siblings are not just competitors for parental resources, but that children actually gain interpersonal skills from the presence of brothers and sisters" (Downey & Condon, 2004, p. 334). Often, interacting with siblings can help children learn how to interact well with people at school. Additionally, based on Wei et al. (2016), children with no siblings "were more self-centered and maladjusted than children with siblings" (p. 483). Thus, in this view, having siblings is a benefit because they help to prepare a student for

social interactions, which ultimately helps the student have confidence and good communication.

This provides students with confidence in order to accomplish things well at school.

Most of the research, however, stands with the idea that, when students have fewer siblings, they perform at a higher level academically in comparison to students with more siblings. As Downey (1995) articulated, “the inverse relationship between the number of siblings...and educational outcomes is one of the most consistent findings in the status attainment literature” (p. 746). “Across a variety of samples, methods, subgroups, and educational outcomes, individuals perform better when they have fewer brothers and sisters” (Downey, 1995, p. 746). Wei et al. (2016) pursued this idea even further and stated that, in comparison to other students who have sisters and brothers, students with no siblings performed better academically. Additionally, Li et al. (2021) stated, “by using a large Chinese sample with a four-year span from 2014 to 2017, the current study found one-only children tend to perform better in academic achievements than children with siblings” (p. 5665). Li et al. (2021) also confirmed that these results seem to be consistent with other studies that have been done in other countries as well.

Based on the information stated above, we can conclude that, although students with no siblings have as many social and relational skills, they still tend to perform better academically. There are several reasons for this. First, according to the “resource dilution model,” “parental resources that affect one’s educational success are finite and will be diluted by the addition of siblings” (Li et al., 2021, p. 5666). Downey (1995) stuck to this model and declared that “either parental resources, or something highly correlated with parental resources, is largely responsible for the lower educational performance of children in large versus small families” (p. 754). Downey and Condrón (2004) also confirmed this theory: “on average, children do not benefit

from having siblings because siblings dilute rather than provide resources” (p. 334). Thus, families with fewer children tend to have more resources to help support the children’s education, which can increase the students’ potential success in the classroom. One of these parental resources would be that parents could provide their children with “more educational opportunities” (Li et al., 2021, p. 5666).

Secondly, students with no siblings tend to do better academically because their “intellectual development, confidence and mature behavioral patterns will be enhanced,” as they are receiving “full attention from their parents” (Li et al., 2021, p. 5666). The parents are able to pour deeply into their child and support him or her well, and the parents do not have to try to split their parenting between multiple children.

Thirdly, students who do not have any siblings “ha[ve] more positive relationships with their parents including more parent-child communication, and higher parental academic expectations expressed towards the child—both of which have been shown to positively affect child’s academic achievement” (Li et al., 2021, p. 5666). Because this child is the only one that the parents have, the parents are able to interact and communicate with their child often, but there also is often a higher pressure for the child to do well academically, since there are no other children to follow.

A fourth reason why children with no siblings tend to achieve more academically is because “studies have found that parents of [only] children have significantly higher educational expectations of their children than parents with more than one child” (Wei et al., 2016, p. 485). Thus, based on this quote, children who do not have any siblings tend to perform higher academically because the parents tend to set high bars of success for their child. One thing to realize when digging a little deeper into this is that, as the article mentions, parents who have

only one child merely have one time, or opportunity, to get things right, and thus, they have a unique parenting style (Wei et al., 2016). Because these parents only have one kid, they technically only have one chance to make the right decision for their child's schooling, only one chance for their child to be successful at school, and only one chance for their child to get a good job, and, in turn, support his or her parents. This information helps to explain why parents of only children may have this high academic expectation, which can, in turn, potentially increase their child's academic progress and success.

Another reason why students with no siblings tend to do better in school is because the student's parents can primarily focus on helping only one child instead of working with all of their children at the same time. Wei et al. (2016) stated, "mothers of [only] children reported helping the child complete homework assignments and talked directly with the child about school-related topics more frequently than parents of multiple children" (p. 484).

Thus, as these reasons display, a student's academic success is heavily impacted by whether that student has any siblings, since that, in turn, affects how much the parents support and encourage the student. In general, the research shows that students seem to do better academically when they do not have any siblings.

Financial Stability

The next major way in which students' academic achievement can be affected by their home lives is through their families' financial stability. Morrissey (2014) said, "family income during childhood has substantial impacts on academic achievement" (p. 741). There are several reasons why a family's finances can impact a student's success at school.

Time

First, the level of income that a family has impacts the amount of time that a student's parents can invest in their child and his or her education. Family Structure (2020) affirmed, "taken together, the bulk of evidence suggests positive relationships between parental involvement and child educational outcomes" (p. 3).

This idea is especially relevant when specifically considering mothers' jobs and their impact on their children's academic success. A mother's job is quite impactful in how her child performs in school. "Children whose mothers work full-time and/or have fluctuating work schedules also exhibit significantly higher levels of behavior problems" (Johnson et al., 2012, p. 747). However, this only seems to be true in situations where mothers work at manual labor jobs. As far as mothers' jobs, "full-time work has negative consequences for children only when it is in jobs that do not require cognitive skills" (Johnson et al., 2012, p. 747).

From these quotes, it stands to reason that, if a parent has a full-time, hard-labor job, it would be hard for the parent to be majorly active at home with the children, since the parent would be exhausted after coming back from work. However, if the parent has a cognitively based part-time job, the parent may not be as physically exhausted and may be able to engage more at home. Additionally, Johnson et al. (2012) found that people in cognitively based jobs have more opportunities to get raises, which could reduce stress that parents may have regarding getting enough money at work. This reduced stress can help the parent feel more relaxed, which in turn, can increase the time that the parent is able to interact with and help his or her child with academics. Thus, differing levels of jobs and income impact the amount of time that parents can give to help their child with homework and other educational related projects.

Technology

Secondly, a family's financial stability can also impact the technology that their children have access to at home. One of these aspects of technology is internet access. "Availability of internet connection at home or school...[has a positive impact] on academic success," (Erdogdu & Erdogdu, 2015, p. 26). When children have good internet connections at home, those children can easily complete any online exercises, homework, or other activities that are assigned during the week. Additionally, as has been seen in recent years, if there is a need for school to be held online, these children would be able to easily transition to an online form of learning. However, if students do not have the necessary technological resources, they may not be able to learn as readily or have as many opportunities to grow educationally.

Other Resources

Thirdly, a family's financial stability also affects a variety of resources and possessions that a student is able to have or not. The first type of resource is the space at home where students study, namely their rooms. Like one of the articles on this topic says, a "student's possession of his/her own room at home [has a] positive [impact] on academic success" (Erdogdu & Erdogdu, 2015, p. 26). If students have their own rooms, they gain the opportunity to do their homework and assignments without any interruptions, which can lead to greater academic success.

The second type of resource is the type or mode of transportation that the student has. For example, if a family has limited transportation, it may be difficult for them to get all of their children to school on time, especially on days when the children wake up late and miss their bus. This, in turn, affects the children's academic success, since they are missing vital classroom activities and instruction. Morrissey (2014) took a "generally disadvantaged sample" of students

and reported that “higher rates of school absence and tardiness may be one mechanism through which low family income impacts children’s academic success” (pp. 741, 752).

The third type of resource is the access to and opportunity for doctor appointments and other medical related items and services. When students’ families have low incomes, the students have less opportunities to go frequently to doctor appointments or to be supported with medical services, such as getting braces (Cheng, 2006). One of the reasons for this is because, if families have lower incomes, they most likely will not have the funding to pay for medical insurance (Cheng, 2006). Newacheck et al. (1998) confirmed that “children without health insurance coverage were six times as likely as insured children not to have a usual source of care” (p. 514). If students do not have access to medical facilities and options, they can tend to experience more pain, less comfortability, and additional sicknesses and infections. Experiencing these types of symptoms can inhibit students’ focus in school and their desire to complete work. Thus, financial stability has a major impact on a student’s academic achievement, specifically whether the family is able to provide the time, technology, and other resources and possessions necessary for a student’s success in school.

Socioeconomic Status

While financial stability has a significant impact on a student’s academic success, socioeconomic status—or SES—can also be majorly influential in a student’s interactions and progress at school. In an article about the relationship and effects of socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and children’s academic success, the authors said that, according to research that was done, “the results demonstrate that SES negatively moderates both the relationship between academic socialization and academic achievement, and the relationship between home-based involvement and school behavior” (Duan et al., 2018, p. 1). Additionally,

Monserud and Elder (2011) said that “families with higher socioeconomic status (SES) have more monetary as well as nonmonetary resources to facilitate children's educational success” (p. 983).

SES seems to especially impact how much students' parents are invested in their children's schools. “Relative to high-SES parents, low-SES parents are less likely to get involved at their children's schools, and instead prioritize other types of at-home involvement, such as helping with homework” (Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017, p. 1695). Based on this statistic, families with a lower SES may not be as involved in school parties, field trips, or other school-related activities, which can cause students from these families not to be well-connected with their teachers and classmates. This can result in students not feeling wanted or seen, which impacts students' desires to participate and to do well in class. Thus, it stands to reason that a student's socioeconomic status tends to negatively impact the student's academic success and interactions.

Because students' SES often negatively affects students' success at school, it seems “that parental involvement activities are highly beneficial for junior school students in families with low SES,” based on a survey that was taken (Duan et al., 2018, p. 1). The thought that the inclusion of activities for parents to get more involved with their students is helpful for students suggests that SES does significantly impact students' interactions at school, which consequently affects the students' academic success.

Abusive/Tense Family Situations

While SES can be impactful in a student's academic life, abusive or tense situations in the household can affect a student's performance and interactions in school. First, school children can be significantly impacted by how their parents act with each other. If the parents are

consistently fighting or arguing, the children will be negatively impacted, but if the parents have a loving, caring relationship with each other, the students will be positively impacted. According to research from Cardiff University (2005), “children living in a family environment marked by frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflicts between parents are at greater risk for deficits in academic achievement than children living in more positive family environments” (p. 1).

While abusive situations can include parental arguing and fighting, these situations can also include alcohol abuse and misuse. When parents at home are misusing alcohol, that can have a trickle-down effect to their children, and it can affect the children’s academics as well. Jennison (2014) said, “self-reported school difficulties were associated with...parental misuse of alcohol over the life course” (p. 210). Thus, the fact that the parents misused alcohol caused the children to misuse alcohol, which was a detriment to the children’s schooling, especially including the students’ behaviors at school.

Spiritual Background

Jeynes (2003) confirmed, “religiously committed urban children performed better on most academic measures than their less religious counterparts, even when controlling for SES, race, and gender” (p. 44). Hidayah (2021) found “that religious worship contributes strong evidence on learning discipline, motivation and academic attainment” (p. 303).

There are several reasons why religious involvement tends to positively impact students’ academic success. First, there is a “tendency for religious people to abstain from behaviors that are often regarded as undisciplined and harmful to academic achievement” (Jeynes, 2003, p. 46). Behaviors such as “drug and alcohol abuse” and “[engaging] in sexual behavior or becoming pregnant while...still teenagers” tend to not be as common among those who are “religiously committed” (Jeynes, 2003, p. 46). Because religious students tend to abstain from behaviors that

can be harmful or hurtful to themselves and others, it makes sense to state that they have a better chance of doing well in school. This is because religious students sometimes tend to be more focused on academics in comparison to their peers, who may be distracted due to engaging in unwise activities. Additionally, religious students may tend to be more responsible and trustworthy, which means that they may be more likely to complete their schoolwork regularly and successfully.

A second reason why religious involvement positively affects students' academic success is because students who are religiously involved tend to have less stress in life, and if they do have stress in their lives, they tend to have good coping mechanisms to deal with it (Radzi et al., 2014). Based on research, it seems that those who are religiously committed, such as those who participate in "religious rituals such as prayers, meditation and reading sacred texts are reported to have lowered anxiety and depression" (Radzi et al., 2014, p. 315). Having faith in the Lord and spending time with Him helps to increase one's peace and decrease one's anxiety in life. Having less stress in life can, in turn, can lead to an increase in a student's confidence and success in school.

Thirdly, religious involvement tends to positively impact students' academic success because "religious people are more likely to have an internal locus of control" (Jeynes, 2003, p. 47). Since Christianity is popular in the United States, Jeynes (2003) stated the information in the context of Christianity. In this belief system, there is a large emphasis on the Holy Spirit (Jeynes, 2003). The view is that Christians have the Holy Spirit inside of them, which gives believers the power to regulate themselves (Jeynes, 2003). According to Jeynes (2003), "educational researchers have found a rather consistent relationship between possessing an internal locus of control and performing well in school" (p. 47). Thus, based on this evidence, students who are

religious and specifically Christians in this case, tend to do better at school because of their internal locus of control. This internal locus of control can help students to focus their minds and bodies on the tasks at hand and not be distracted or out of control in the classroom.

Fourth, students who have a religious faith tend to have what is referred to as a “religious work ethic” (Jeynes, 2003, p. 46). Jeynes (2003) affirmed that there is a clear correlation between both work ethic and pious responsibilities, but some researchers think that this correlation is too highly emphasized. Especially because “an ethic of ‘leisure’ is becoming more prominent in Western society,” working hard and doing the best that one can is an important skill to have, and it helps to positively increase students’ academic achievement (Jeynes, 2003, p. 46). When students have this type of work ethic, it can encourage other students to work hard, which helps to create an environment of students who are ready to learn and grow academically.

Practical Steps for Teachers

While all of this research and information is intriguing and helpful to know, it is also important for teachers to be aware of practical ideas of things they can do to help increase students’ success and achievement in the classroom. First, teachers should encourage the school to provide family support and intervention to the families who need it. If there are students whose parents are struggling financially or personally, the school can come alongside that family to assist them. This, in the long run, will help to positively affect those children and how they interact in the classroom. Along this same line of thought, the teachers should encourage schools to do more to help increase and encourage parental involvement and family involvement, since that is such an integral part of a student’s education and learning.

Secondly, teachers should strive to understand each of their students and their backgrounds. Having this empathy and understanding helps to build a connection between the teacher and the student. It also helps the teacher know how to best help each individual student.

Thirdly, it is important for teachers to have training on how to cater their teaching based on various struggles or successes that the students are dealing with at home. If teachers have this foundational knowledge of how to structure a lesson plan and classroom environment based on students' needs, the teachers will be well on their way positively impacting students' academic success.

Fourth, it is important for teachers to be aware of various warning symptoms of things such as a student being in an abusive home or in an otherwise dangerous home situation. Teachers should help to protect the safety and well-being of the students in their care. Additionally, teachers are mandatory reporters, so if they find out that something inexcusable is taking place at home, they need to help to solve that problem. Because of these reasons, teachers need to be knowledgeable of warning signs and then act upon them when needed. Having this awareness and acting upon it will both help the child to succeed and help to increase the teacher's understanding and peace of mind.

Additionally, teachers can provide resources to students and families regarding how to prevent certain behaviors and situations and how to help their children interact well with others at school. The teacher can also provide advice for how to foster a safe, loving home environment, which will, as this paper has shown, encourage students to do well in school.

Conclusion

Students' home lives drastically impact their academic success. First, parental involvement at home is significantly impactful for students' progress in school. There are several

ways that parental involvement increases this academic progress, including increasing students' motivation, helping to improve students' mental health, providing background of parents' education, and impacting students' involvement with the teacher. There can also be negative effects if there is not a strong presence of parental involvement in students' homes.

Secondly, grandparents' support can have a strong impact on students' academic development, including helping to combat juvenile delinquency. Thirdly, various family structures can have positive, neutral, or negative impact on students. This category included the impact of grandparents as caregivers, as well as the impact of same-sex parent families and other types of families. Fourth, not having siblings can positively impact students' academic success. Additionally, financial stability, socioeconomic status, abusive and tense family relations, and spiritual background significantly impact students' academic achievement in school. Finally, there are several practical steps that teachers can take to implement this information into the classroom, including having training for adjusting instruction based on student needs. Creating instruction to address students' needs based on their home lives is an important, vital, and timely issue that teachers need to be aware of and integrate more often into school classrooms.

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