The relationship between parent’s anxiety and their children’s self-efficacy in primary schools

Elaheh Mazaheri, Azizreza Ghasemzadeh, Maryam Saadat, Soheila Karami, Mahsima Pourshahriari

Abstract

The aim of the study is to investigate the relation between parents’ anxiety and children’s emotional–academic-social self-efficacy, in both genders (girls and boys). showed that mother’s anxiety and boy’s self-efficacy were negatively correlated. Father’s and mother’s anxiety and girl’s self-efficacy were negatively correlated. According to the results parents’ anxiety and children’s self-efficacy were negatively correlated. Higher parent’s anxiety was correlated with lower children’s self-efficacy. The maternal anxiety had more effect on this correlation. The results also demonstrated that self-efficacy in girls were more influenced by both parents’ anxiety, while self-efficacy in boys was just influenced by mother’s anxiety.

1. Introduction

Self efficacy is defined in terms of the belief in ability to achieve goals and overcome difficulties in daily life as a general concept (Shelton, 1990). Ehrenberg (1991) believes that self efficacy is a cultural protection against anxiety (Chan, 2006). Studies have revealed that when anxiety is low in a family, members will have more autonomy and thought will play a more active role in controlling their behavior. But when anxiety enters into a family, they preserve less unity and more individuality and therefore all of the family members are being accounted the same from the aspect of principles and feelings (Pelege-Popko, 2004).

The highest level of performance of the family is when anxiety is low in that system and each of parents builds up a strong emotional relationship with other family members. In some cases women with high levels of anxiety behavior in a way that decreases self efficacy of their toddlers (Jain and Dowson, 2009). Experiments have shown that the time parents suffer from anxiety they won’t be able to establish an effective relationship with their children. On the other hand, children learn basic and essential skills of living including self efficacy which is one the most important of them in family system initially. Therefore, parent’s anxiety affects the process of training skills of self efficacy by them. Regarding the important role of self efficacy in kid’s growth and personality, pervasive and inevitable aspect of anxiety among people and undeniable influence of parents over children, this study sets out to investigate the relation between parent’s anxiety and children’s self efficacy.

2. Research premises:

2.1 premises No. 1

There is a relationship between parent’s anxiety and children’s self-efficacy.
2.2 premises No. 2
There is a relationship between parent’s anxiety and children’s educational self efficacy.

2.3 premises No. 3
There is a relationship between parent’s anxiety and children’s social self efficacy.

2.4 premises No. 4
There is a relationship between parent’s anxiety and children’s emotional self efficacy.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The present research is a typically analytic and descriptive one. In this research, 220 Students of fifth class of elementary school has been randomly and clustered picked out of Tehran's elementary schools, with their parents (See Table 1 for the participants' demographic information).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexuality</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Age (Mean)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Measures

3.2.1 Cattell’s Anxiety Scale

This questionnaire includes 40 items each of which 3 options that are scored from 0 to 2. Those obtaining scores in the 3-7 range are considered to be normally anxious. Score of 8-10 are given by anxious subjects. This scale is being applied to children over 14 (Moret et al., 1993).

3.2.2 Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C)

This questionnaire is a self monitor tool which is being used for ages from 10 to 17 and contains 24 items that can be allocated to three domains of self-efficacy: (1) social self-efficacy (eight items) ;(2) academic self-efficacy (eight items); and (3) emotional self-efficacy (eight items). Each item has to be scored on a five-point scale with 1=not at all and 5=very well. Total self-efficacy and subscale scores can be computed by summing across relevant items. Previous research (Muris, 2001) has yielded some evidence for the validity of the SEQ-C. Validity coefficient of this test is 86% and total self-efficacy scores were positively connected to active coping (r=0.37, P<0.001) but negatively to passive coping (r=-0.29, P< 0.001) and the tendency to make negative causal attributions (r=-0.49, P<0.001) (Muris, 2001).

3.3 Implementation method:

Students of fifth class of elementary school received the questionnaire of children’s self efficacy in absence if their teacher. The time planned for the test was 20 minutes. Firstly, the researcher gave explanations about the questionnaire, the necessity of filling it and honesty principle. Then questionnaires were completed and gathered. In addition, students were given a sealed packet containing 2 Cattell’s anxiety scales for mothers and fathers separately. Students were asked to give them to their parents to fill them in about 3 days and then put them in those packets again to return to their teacher. It is necessary to mention that the presence of teacher while delivering packets was very influential. Finally, 220 complete set of questionnaires including the child’s self efficacy and parent’s anxiety were returned from 350 distributed sets.

3.4 Data analysis

Data collection tools are applied to the student in the class hours, in analysis of data one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), t and Post-Hoc and regression analysis are applied. In the analysis of the data spss 12 pack was used.

4. Result

Premise 1: There is a relationship between parent’s anxiety and children’s self efficacy.
results of correlation test mentioned in Table 2, the rate of correlation between parent’s anxiety and student’s self efficacy is equal to -0.246 and -0.398 (p<0.05). These correlation coefficients are significant statistically. Hence, premise 1 is admitted and it could be concluded that student’s self efficacy decreases by the increase of parent’s level of anxiety.

**Table 2. Correlation between parent’s anxiety and student’s self efficacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father’s anxiety</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>-0.246</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s anxiety</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>-0.398</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Premise 2: There is a relationship between parent’s anxiety and children’s educational self efficacy.

parent’s anxiety with r=-0.148 and r=-0.348 at the meaningful level of P<0.05 has a direct and positive relationship with the student’s educational self efficacy after the link of parent’s anxiety and student’s educational self efficacy is being surveyed through Pearson correlation coefficient and stepwise multiple regression analysis based on tables 3 and 4. In other components, no sensible relationship seems visible and only in the first step given, Mother’s anxiety is predicted to be involved in the equation, elucidating simply 12.1% of changes in the educational self efficacy.

**Table 3. Correlation between parent’s anxiety and student’s educational self efficacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father’s anxiety</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>-0.148</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s anxiety</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>-0.348</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4. Stepwise multiple regression to predict academic self-efficacy from parent’s anxiety**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mother’s anxiety</td>
<td>0.348</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>30.027</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>3.688</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Premise 3: There is a relationship between parent’s anxiety and children’s social self efficacy.

According to table 5 indicate that the correlation between parent’s anxiety and student’s social self efficacy is -0.207 and -0.279 (p<0.05). These correlation coefficients are significant statistically. So, premise 3 is admitted and it is concluded that by rise in parent’s anxiety, children’s social self efficacy decreases.

**Table 5. Correlation between parent’s anxiety and student’s educational self efficacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father’s anxiety</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>-0.207</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s anxiety</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>-0.279</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Premise 4: There is a relationship between parent’s anxiety and children’s emotional self efficacy.

Findings from premise 4 revealed that the correlation between parent’s anxiety and student’s emotional self efficacy is -0.200 and -0.285 (p<0.05). These correlation coefficients are significant statistically. So, premise 3 is admitted and it is concluded that by rise in parent’s anxiety, children’s emotional self efficacy decreases. (Table 6)

**Table 6. Correlation between parent’s anxiety and student’s emotional self efficacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father’s anxiety</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>-0.200</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s anxiety</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>-0.285</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Discussion

According to finding from premise 1, there was no study found to precisely agree or disagree with the premise of this research. However, in a study done by Chen et al.,(2000), it’s shown that parental models have an effect on the level of student’s self efficacy.

It seems that children with anxious training style in their family who are infused with anxiety would be physiological arousal by anxiety and tension that is an indicator of readiness for failure. Unsuccessful experiences and negative temperament lead to the decrease of person’s self efficacy (Schultz and Schultz, 1998). Consequently, parents cause to reduce student’s self efficacy...
through this process. Furthermore, considering that anxiety is insufficiency against potential threats, anxious parents have a low degree of self-efficacy themselves and transfer this to their children. As a result, these parents are not a good pattern to develop self-efficient behaviour in their children. Also, anxious parents do not provide a stimulating. Motivating environment for their children to grow in because they are afraid of imagining an uncertain future and its consequences.

Based on finding of premise 2, educational self-efficacy is the person’s belief about his or her amount of ability to study and get achievements in education. Verbal persuasion is one of the factors which increases educational self-efficacy. Telling students that they have the chance to succeed and progress will generate motivation for becoming successful. Anxious parents who have negative temperaments and excitements might not establish an effective relationship with their children and could not persuade them verbally into achievement. Lack of verbal persuasion is one of the barriers to the creation of self-efficacy. In addition, anxious parents ignore their children’s need of security and psychic relaxation and neglect helping them to solve their problems (Sarason, 1990). This feeling of hopelessness leads to the decrease in belief of being able. On the other hand, people who suffer from anxiety become worried and doubtful about their performance sufficiency, abilities and talents all the times and especially while being evaluated. As a result, anxious parents themselves have this belief of insufficiency and transfer this to their children. Therefore, children will become doubtful about their performance sufficiency.

By analyzing the results of premise 3, social self-efficacy is defined in terms of person’s belief in being able to build up and maintain a successful social relationship. Anxious parents believe that they couldn’t develop a good relationship, therefore they have social anxiety and as a result of this, they won’t be able to establish a good social relationship and this incorrect cycle continues. Consequently, these parent’s children won’t have a good pattern to develop a successful social relationship. Moreover, these kinds of parents don’t provide their children with the chance to build up and experience social relationships since they’re afraid of making mistakes and unfavorable outcomes. It is while people who suffer from anxiety show up more vulnerability. People with higher levels of self-efficacy receive more social support and interaction (Scott and Walczak, 1999), whereas lack of a suitable pattern for social interaction and support by parents may cause decrease in social self-efficacy.

To explain results of premise 4 we can conclude that anxious parents naturally could not control their excitements and are filled with negative excitements more. Stressful states in parent’s stops creation of suitable emotional pattern in children and lack of an appropriate pattern influences in their belief about his/her capability to keep emotional control and show suitable emotional behaviour.

Bandura(1994) believes that people live in psychic environments created by them. For this reason, anxious psychic environments created by parents affect the ability to control thoughts and emotional feelings. Additionally, rise in parent’s negative emotional feelings and transferring them to students may cause reduction in their emotional self-efficacy. Anxious parent’s especially anxious mothers express these emotional states in their family atmosphere and their children use this information as a criterion for judging on whether they are capable of handling a situation. For this reason, they assume that they will have more tension and anxiety in ambiguous conditions and consequently show less self-efficacy and more inability to face with emotional situations.

References:


