



Internet viewing and children's academic achievement with reference to punishment patterns exercised by the parents

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to study the association of children's Internet viewing and their academic achievement with the punishment patterns exercised by their parents. Two schedules, one for mothers and the other for children, were developed to collect personal, demographic information and punishment patterns exercised by the parents as well as children's internet viewing behaviour.

The sample consisted of 300 children (150 boys and 150 girls) studying in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades and their mothers. Academic achievement of children was obtained from school records. The analysis of data also showed that parental disciplinary practices significantly affected children's academic achievement.

Keywords: Internet viewing, academic achievement, parental punishment patterns, parental disciplinary practices, primary school children

Introduction

Discipline arises from the need to bring about a balance between what an individual wants to do, what he or she wants others to do, and the limitations and restrictions demanded by society or by the hazards in the physical environment. Hurlock (1987) [2] opined that the popular concept of "discipline" is synonymous with "punishment."

According to this concept, discipline is used only when the child violates the rules and regulations set down by parents, teachers, or elders in charge of the affairs of the community in which the child lives. Schwartz (1982) [6] stated that there are some consequences of behaviour which result in lowering the strength or rate of behaviour. These consequences are called "punishment" and may otherwise be mentioned as "negative reinforcement."

Generally, parents punish children for various reasons such as telling lies, not studying, disrespecting elders, and misbehaving. Parents usually consider punishment important for their children's better future. Several studies reported that poor school performance of children was one of the reasons for exercising punishment by parents (Kusuma, 1987; Rao and Manohari, 1991). Parents' concern about children's academic performance becomes more during elementary school years, since this is the beginning period of academic adjustment. The factors associated with academic performance of today's children are different from those of earlier generations.

Internet is often blamed by parents for children's poor academic performance. In yester years television was believed to negatively effect children's academic performance nowadays internet viewing through mobile have taken its place. Hence in order to reduce the amount of internet viewing by the children and also to improve their academic performance, parents have to exercise certain disciplinary practices. The importance of research findings on the effects of punishment on children in the fields of child rearing, human development and education are obvious. In order to know the relationship among parental disciplinary practices, children's internet viewing behaviour

and their academic achievement, the present research was conducted with the following hypotheses.

Hypotheses

H₁: Pupils would not differ significantly in their amount of internet watching depending on the type of punishment exercised by their parents.

H₂: Pupils would not differ significantly in their academic achievement depending on the type of punishment exercised by their parents.

Method

Sample

The sample of the study constituted 300 pupils (150 boys and 150 girls) studying third, fourth and fifth grades in recognized English medium schools in Kanpur city and their mothers. A two-stage stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the sample.

Tools

Two schedules, one for mothers and the other for pupils, were developed to collect internet viewing behaviour as well as punishment patterns exercised by the parents. Information about academic achievement was obtained from the school records.

Procedure

After selecting a random sample of 300 pupils, their house addresses were collected from school records. Both children and mothers were interviewed using respective schedules after establishing a good rapport. The data thus collected was pooled and scored. Necessary statistical techniques were used to study the impact of independent variables on dependent variables.

Results and Discussion

The sample consisted of three hundred pupils with equal number of boys (150) and girls (150). The age group of the sample ranged from 8 plus to 11 plus years.

It is found that equal number of pupils were selected from each gender (N = 150) and grade (N = 100) to enable comparison. The mean age of pupils was found to be 9.36 years with a S.D. of 1.023. Mothers' age ranged from 20 years to 42 years with a mean age of 33.15 years (N = 300; SD = 3.10).

The mean viewing time of children per day as given by their mothers was found to be 209.51 minutes with a standard deviation of 79.38. The mean viewing time of children according to their self-reporting was 211.820 minutes (S.D. = 81.54). This showed that children were spending reasonably a large amount of time on social media through internet. In order to find out the extent of agreement in the estimation of viewing time by children and mothers, the coefficient of correlation (r) was found to be 0.972, which showed a high degree of correlation. Because of high correlation value, the average of the viewing time given by pupils and their mothers was calculated for each child and it was considered as mean viewing time of the child per day for analysis purpose.

The academic achievement of pupils was obtained by taking the percentage of marks secured by them during the academic year. The mean academic achievement of pupils was found to be 63.36 with a standard deviation of 19.99. The mean academic achievement score showed that the sample was a little bit skewed towards higher academic achievement status. The higher socio-economic status might be one of the contributory factors as better economic status ensures better facilities for learning.

Punishment exercised by the parents when their children disobeyed the regulations was considered as another variable of the study.

It is found that majority of mothers (39.67 per cent) mentioned that if children disobey parental regulations, they punish them orally by scolding. Next to it, 27.33 per cent mentioned that they gave punishment sometimes orally and sometimes physically. Withdrawal of speech/rewards was the type of punishment exercised by 21.34 per cent of mothers. Very few mothers (8.33 per cent) mentioned that they gave physical punishment and only 3.33 per cent mothers told that they did not give any punishment at all to their children. Thus, it can be noted from the data that except a few parents, almost all parents were exercising one type or the other type of punishment in order to control their children's behaviour.

To find out the impact of these punishment patterns on children's Internet viewing time, the null hypothesis "Children would not differ significantly in their amount of internet watching depending on the type of punishment exercised by their parents" was tested by using F-test.

It can be inferred that pupils do differ significantly in their amount of internet watching depending on the type of punishment exercised by their parents. The F-value (53.502) was found to be significant at 0.01 level. Hence, the null hypothesis framed with this regard was rejected. Children who received no punishment and also those who received always physical punishment watched internet for longer time, that is 297.77 minutes and 269.10 minutes respectively. The least amount of internet watching (141.54 minutes) was by those pupils who received withdrawal of speech/rewards as punishment from their parents. Children who received only oral punishment watched internet for less time (157.13 minutes) when compared to those children

who received both physical and oral punishment (237.67 minutes).

Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) found that children who had unsatisfactory

relationships with their families and/or with their peer groups tended to retreat from those social interactions into internet viewing. While watching television, they could leave real life problems behind them atleast for a short time and possibly reduce tension in their lives. Heavy internet watching by those children who received only physical punishment may be due to escapist fantasy seeking. The results revealed that leaving the children without any punishment also resulted in excessive internet watching. Gupta (1987) ^[1] stated that parents who enforce too restrictive and permissive atmosphere at home not only likely to sow seeds of tension, anxiety and repression in their children but also cause maladjustment among them. Manohari (1991) also found that a child who has more freedom than he can handle will get into trouble. Thus, it seemed that withdrawal of speech/rewards and only oral punishment were good punishment patterns for controlling children to watch internet for a reasonable amount of time. The second hypothesis formulated was that "Children would not differ significantly in their academic achievement depending on the type of punishment exercised by their parents".

F-test was used to analyse the above hypothesis.

It is found that the F-value calculated (49.89) was a very high value and was significant at 0.01 level. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and it can be said that pupils do differ significantly in their academic achievement depending on the type of punishment exercised by their parents. Children who received severe physical punishment scored very low in their academic achievement (36 per cent). Next to it, 52.07 per cent of marks were scored by those children who received no punishment from their parents, thereby depicting extremes of disciplining (i.e. strict discipline) exert harmful effect on the academic achievement of children.

Further it was noticed that the best method of punishment seemed to be of withdrawal of speech/rewards which enabled children to secure high achievement (85.30 per cent) and of those who received sometimes oral and some times physical punishment. Similar results were found by Robert, William, David and Patricia, (1996) ^[4]. They found that mild punishment combined with reasoning is the most effective discipline response to children's misbehaviour.

Conclusions and Implications

The results of the present study yielded the following conclusions. They are:

1. Children do differ in their amount of internet watching depending on the type of punishment exercised by their parents. It was evident that children who received no punishment and also those who received always physical punishment watched internet for longer time.
2. Children do differ significantly in their academic achievement depending on the type of punishment exercised by their parents. It was found that both extremities of disciplining will have harmful effect on children's academic achievement. A judicious punishment of withdrawal of speech/rewards enabled

pupils to secure high achievement. Those who received oral punishment and sometimes physical punishment also secured high achievement.

From the results of the study, it can be noted that in order to improve children's academic achievement consistent type of discipline was good rather than extremities. Parents as well as teachers can be educated regarding this aspect. It can be carried out in Parent Teacher Association meetings.

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