Role of Parents in Social Development of Early Learners

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Abstract

This research study was conducted to explore the role of parents in social development of early learners. The study was based on the following objectives; to identify the social skills of early graders, and to investigate parent practices used for social development of their children. The study was conducted on parents (both mother and father) and their children studying in early childhood education at ten schools in Channi Goth, Tehsil Ahmedpur East, District Bahawalpur. Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect the data from the parents. The researcher administered questionnaire personally and the response rate was hundred percent. The researcher visited the early childhood class rooms to get social skills data from the children by observation. Additionally, this research study examined the frequency, mean, and standard deviation. The researcher developed observation sheet to test these strategies in natural setting. The observation sheet has two main options, yes and no which were designed to validate the given strategies. The observation results by the researcher revealed that children have some areas of strength in their social skills development, but they have difficulty in a number of areas of understanding and following rules, comprehending and respecting the rights of others, and responding positively to social cues from peers. The results of parent's response regarding child's social skills development suggest that parents have positive perceptions, and feel that their child is cheerful and understands people's social cues, and doesn't feel difficulty behaving and understanding the feelings of peers. On the other hand, the results of parent's practices regarding social skills development indicated that parents generally supportive of their children's social skills development by volunteering their time and involving in their children's education and social activities. It is suggested that parents need to evaluate their parenting practices for social skills development in children. The government also needs to take some action to establish a promising environment in school and at home to develop healthy social skills among students.

Keywords: Parental engagement, Early childhood, Parental support and behavior, Parent-child relationship and social competence

INTRODUCTION

Social development is a process in which a child learns to interact with others, be able to express their emotions, and become independent (Isaacs, 2013). The speed and nature of social development vary from age to age and mental abilities of children (Mendelson et al., 2016). Social development is a process which is monitored carefully by parents (Shaker et al., 2020). Social development help child to build self-esteem, language skills, and strengthen learning skills (Erozkan, 2013). Children's behavior and personalities will be negatively impacted by growing up under unfavorable circumstances (Ahmed et al., 2023). Children of highly supportive parents show higher levels of social skills and lower levels of aggression (Labella and Masten, 2018). The role of the mother as an educator represents a crucial resource to the development of the child's individual identity (Eccles, 2005).If a mother has a good and effective communication with children due to which children can empathize and sympathize, and children have honesty (Hidayah et al., 2021). Maternal warmth, paternal warmth, and paternal co-parenting have connection between mother father relationships and social skills of child (Lee, 2022).
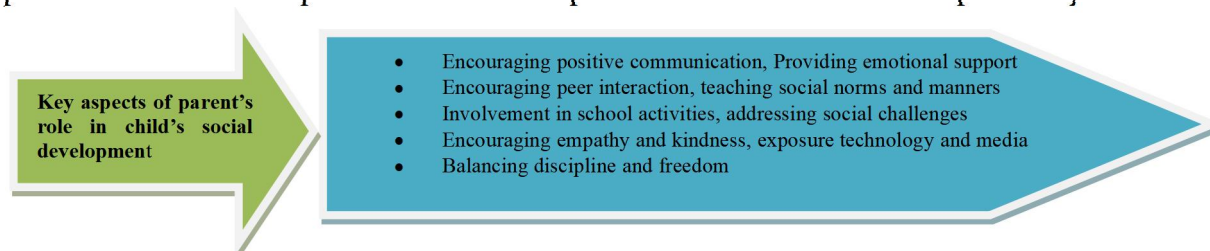
Pakistan's educational system faces several challenges, some stemming from the institutions themselves and others due to parental negligence (Maul et al., 2019). This is why many social development issues arise that may affect the children at early childhood education level. The role of parents is very important in social development of children. There is a need to study the role of parents in social development of children at early childhood education. The associations between role of parents in the educational and psychological have been investigated in detail, yet the child's social development as positive and negative are less understood (Chernyshenko et al., 2018). When there is a mental health problem in mother, then child has negative social developmental (Rajadhyaksha, 2021).

A study conducted by Xiao et al.(2017) focusing on the associations between parental emotional regulation strategies and certain aspects of parenting and child behavior. The results indicate that a high-quality home environment during early childhood predicts positive outcomes in preschoolers, including higher cognitive and language scores, reduced behavioral problems, and increased social skills.. The study uncovered lower levels of cognitive, social, and emotional development in children whose parents experienced severe psychological distress. These effects were found to be mediated by the educational levels and socioeconomic status of the parents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

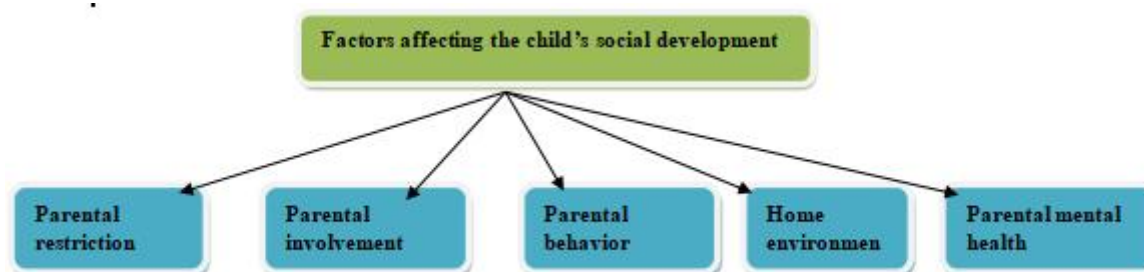### Parent's role in Child's Social Development

According to Rivas-Drake and Witherspoon (2013) reported that parents have been assigned a key role in how children develop their sense of social values. Parenting techniques are very important and are anticipated to have an impact on how children develop socially.

Key aspects of parent's role in child's social development

- Encouraging positive communication, Providing emotional support
- Encouraging peer interaction, teaching social norms and manners
- Involvement in school activities, addressing social challenges
- Encouraging empathy and kindness, exposure technology and media
- Balancing discipline and freedom

Factors Affecting Parent's Role in Child's Social Development

Various factors influence parental practices in promoting a child's social development, encompassing socio-economic status, neighborhood, risk behavior, and community settings

and activities. Limited access to socio-economic resources can lead to disruptive or negative social behavior in children.

Monitoring children's technological usage by parents is linked to the social development of the child. As per Lee (2013), correlations exist between parental restrictions and the extent of children's internet usage. Studies have identified a robust correlation between parental practices and the likelihood of young people engaging in risky behaviors. Risk behavior, defined as the inclination to participate in potentially hazardous or risky social actions, is a key consideration in this context (Azmawati et al., 2015).

Parental Involvement

Investigating the correlation between father involvement and cognitive development during early and middle childhood, Banerjee et al. (2010) discovered that heightened cultural exposure and greater parental engagement were predictive of enhanced educational outcomes, as measured by cognitive and academic performance.
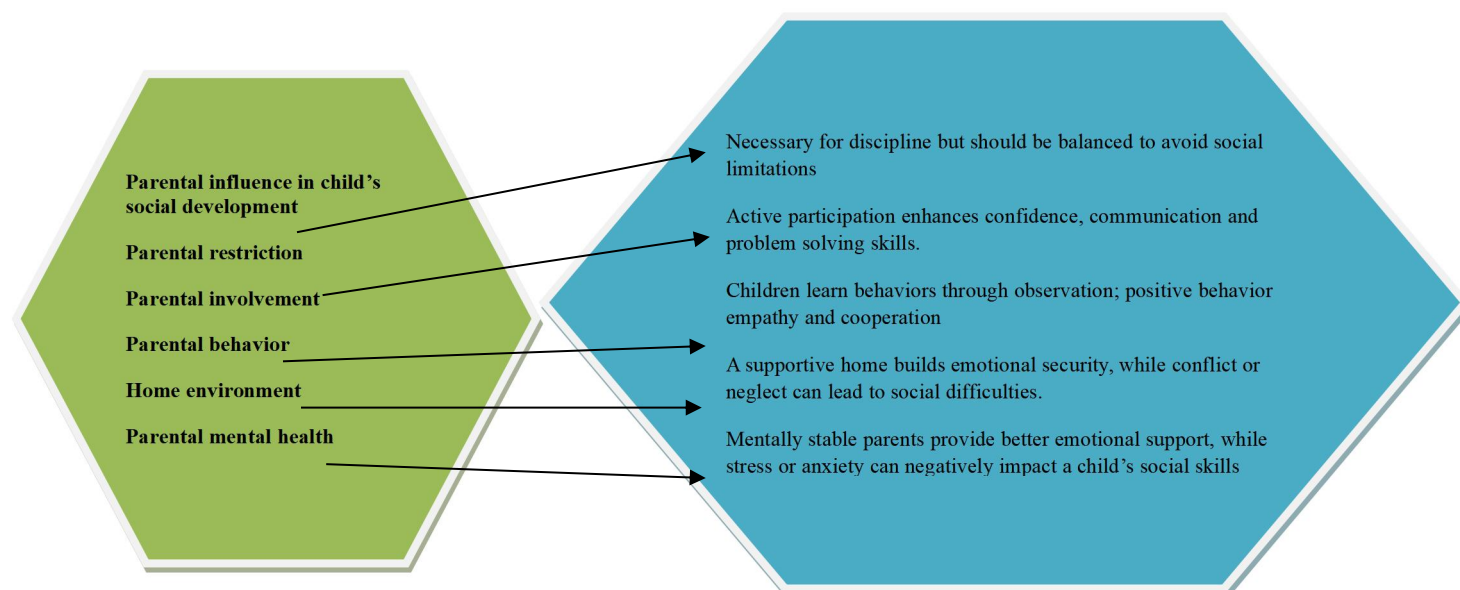
Parental Behavior

The study carried out by Lam et al.(2018), explores both positive and negative aspects of parenting, encompassing both warmth and hostility. It suggests that these contrasting elements can significantly influence the development of a child's executive functioning. Executive functions involve cognitive processes such as decision-making, problem-solving, and impulse control.

Home Environment

The study by Harden and Whittaker (2011) focuses on the effects of the home environment during the first two years of a child's life on their developmental outcomes during the preschool years.

Parental Mental Health

Smith (2004) revealed evidence linking parental mental health problems to adverse developmental outcomes in children. Specifically, mothers diagnosed with depression reported heightened challenges related to their child's academic, cognitive, and social functioning. Moreover, the results of another study indicated that depressive symptoms influenced the quality of parenting, directly impacting subsequent behavioral and cognitive functioning in children (Jackson and Scheines, 2005).

Parental influence in child's social development

Parental restriction

Parental involvement

Parental behavior

Home environment

Parental mental health

Necessary for discipline but should be balanced to avoid social limitations

Active participation enhances confidence, communication and problem solving skills.

Children learn behaviors through observation; positive behavior empathy and cooperation

A supportive home builds emotional security, while conflict or neglect can lead to social difficulties.

Mentally stable parents provide better emotional support, while stress or anxiety can negatively impact a child's social skills

Objectives of the Study
- To identify the social skills of early graders
- To investigate parent practices used for social development of their children.

Research Questions
- What are social skills observed in the early graders?
- Does child feel difficulty to participate in group activities or games?
- Does child often quarrel with siblings and other peers?
- What are parenting practices used by parents?
- Do parents check their child's activities with their siblings and other peers?
- Do parents attend parent-teacher meetings at their child's school?
- Do parents give opportunities to play with other children of their age?
- Do parents provide plenty of time and guidance for development of social skills?
- What is the role of parent practices on the social development of their children?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
This study was quantitative in nature. The survey was conducted on parents including both father and mother. In this survey design, the tool of data collection was questionnaire. Naturalistic observation is useful for obtaining the regular daily activities in classrooms (Rajadhyaksha, 2021). Therefore, the observation method was used to get information about children studying in private and public schools at ECE level.

Population of the Study
The population details are as follows.
- All 394children (male & female students) who were studying at ECE level at ten public and private schools   located in Channi Goth, a rural area of district Bahawalpur, and
- Their parents (father & mother).

Sample of the Study
The sample was drawn using the lottery method. Three respondents were selected: parents (both father and mother) and their child studying at the ECE level in each of ten schools in Channi Goth, a rural area of district Bahawalpur. There was a total of ninety respondents used in the study.

Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was observation and questionnaires. The questionnaire is best tool to collect a lot of information in a short period. Parents were asked questions to answer the questionnaire. The child observation was conducted by the researcher.

Descriptive Analysis of Child's Social Skills Development

Table 1: *Analysis of Child's Observation by Researcher regarding Social Skills Positivity*

Item #	Statement		Yes	No	Mean	SD
1	He/she is a cheerful child.	f	19	11	1.63	1.13
		%	63.33	36.67		
3	He/she reacts positively to neutral or friendly interactions from peers.	f	19	11	1.73	1.18
		%	63.33	36.67		
6	He/she expresses suitable emotions to aggressive acts from peers.	f	20	10	1.33	0.82
		%	66.67	33.33		
7	He/she obey the rules and regulations.	f	21	9	1.30	0.77
		%	70	30		
8	He/she loves making friends.	f	20	10	1.33	0.82
		%	66.67	33.33		

Table 1 presents the researcher's assessments of children's social skills positivity. Researcher has observed that most of children under observation were cheerful (Mean 1.63, SD 1.13). The results also show that most of children respond positively to friendly approaches by peers (Mean 1.73, SD 1.18).. The most of children display appropriate emotions to aggressive acts by peers has mean score (M=1.33, SD=0.82). The children obey the rules and regulations has (M=1.30, SD=0.77), love making friends and also often interact with his/her peers (Mean 1.33, SD 0.82).

Table: 2 *Child's Observation by Researcher regarding Social Skills Negativity*

Item #	Statement		Yes	No	Mean	SD
1	His/her eye contact in face-to-face situations is abnormal or missing-	f	9	21	1.30	0.77
		%	30	70		
2	He/she does not understand people's social cues, e.g., facial expressions.	f	7	23	1.23	0.68
		%	23.33	76.67		
3	He/she seems unhappy with adults.	f	8	22	1.377	0.87
		%	26.67	73.33		
4	He/she feels difficulty in group or team activities or games.	f	8	22	1.27	0.73
		%	26.67	73.33		
5	He/she acts without thinking.	f	9	21	1.30	0.77
		%	30	70		
6	He/she is not accepted by other children to participate in their games.	f	9	21	1.30	0.77
		%	30	70		

Table 2 presents the researcher's assessments of children's social skills negativity. Researcher has observed that most of children keep eye contact in face-to-face situations has mean value (M= 1.30, SD= 0.77). The children understand social cues and doesn't feel difficulty behaving and understanding the feelings of peers has mean value (M=1.23, SD= 0.68). The children don't seem unhappy and sad (M=1.37, SD=0.87).The results also show that children also don't feel

difficulty in group or team activities or games (M=1.27, SD=0.73). They act don't without thinking (M=1.30, SD=0.77). The results show that children are accepted by other children in games (M=1.30, SD=0.77).

Table 3:   *Parents response regarding Child's Social Skills Positivity*

Item #	Statement	Relation		Never	Some-time	Very Often	Always	Mean	SD	Average Mean	SD
1	He/she is a cheerful child.	Mothers	F							3.28	2.91
				2	3	8	17	3.33	2.93		
			%	7	10	27	57				
		Fathers	F	4	2	7	17	3.23	2.89		
			%	13	7	23	57				
2	He/she can say when feeling sad or angry.	Mothers	F							2.97	2.61
				4	6	10	10	2.87	2.53		
			%	13	20	33	33				
		Fathers	F								
				3	4	11	12	3.07	2.70		
			%	10	13	37	40				
3	He/she responds positively to Neutral or friendly approaches by peers.	Mothers	F							2.97	2.61
			%	4	6	10	10	2.87	2.53		
				13	20	33	33				
		Fathers	F								
				3	4	11	12	3.07	2.70		
			%	10	13	37	40				
4	He/she is empathic towards Others when others are upset or distressed.	Mothers	F							3.20	2.83
			%	2	5	7	16	3.23	2.85		
				7	17	23	53				
		Fathers	F								
				3	4	8	15	3.17	2.80		
			%	10	13	27	50				
5	He/she exhibits suitable	Mothers	F							2.93	2.64
				5	6	5	14	2.93	2.65		

			Never	Some-time	Very Often	Always	Mean	SD
negative emotions to aggressive peers Behaviors.		%						
			17	20	17	47		
	Fathers	F	4	8	4	14	2.93	2.63
		%	13	27	13	47		

Table 3 displayed the parents' perspectives on the social skills positivity in their children. The results show that parents generally have positive perceptions of their child's social skills. The data results show that the mean score for all items meets the acceptance criteria. Most of parents (both mother and father) have opinion that their child is cheerful(Mean 3.28, SD 2.91)and   can say when feeling sad or angry(Mean 2.97, SD 2.61).Parents said that their children respond positively to the friendly approaches by peers (Mean 2.97, SD 2.61). Most of parents also said that their children are empathetic towards others when they are upset and distressed (Mean 3.02, SD 2.83) and displays appropriate negative emotions to aggressive acts by peers(Mean 2.93, SD 2.64).

Table 4: *Parents response regarding Child's Social Skills Negativity*

Item #	Statement	Relation		Never	Some-time	Very Often	Always	Mean	SD	Average Mean	SD
1	His/her eye contact in face-to-face situations is abnormal or missing	Mothers	f							2.03	1.84
			%	14	6	5	5	2.03	1.84		
				43	23	13	20				
		Fathers	f	14	6	5	5	2.03	1.84		
			%	47	20	17	17				
2	He/she does not understand People's social cues, e.g., facial expression.	Mothers	f							2.05	1.82
			%	13	7	5	5	2.07	1.86		
				43	23	17	17				
		Fathers	f	12	8	7	3	2.03	1.77		
			%	40	27	23	10				

#	Statement	Respondent		C1	C2	C3	C4	M	SD
3	He/she shows verbal emotions When feeling lonely, being bored etc.	Mothers	f					2.03	1.82
			%	13	8	4	5	2.03	1.83
			f	43	27	13	17		
		Fathers	f	13	7	6	4	2.03	1.81
			%	43	23	20	13		
4	He/she finds joy in the discomfort of peers.	Mothers	f					2.04	1.88
			%	15	5	4	6	2.03	1.88
				50	17	13	20		
		Fathers	f	15	5	4	6	2.03	1.88
			%	50	17	13	20		
5	He/she has difficulty in making friends.	Mothers	f					2.02	1.86
			%	13	7	6	4	2.03	1.81
				43	23	20	13		
		Fathers	f	14	5	7	4	2.03	1.83
			%	47	17	23	13		
6	He/she is not accepted by other children to participate in their games.	Mothers	f					2.07	1.85
			%	13	9	2	6	2.03	1.84
				43	30	7	20		
		Fathers	f	11	10	4	5	2.10	1.86
			%	37	33	13	17		

Table 4 displays the parents' perspectives on the social skill negativity in their children. The results show that parents generally have positive perceptions of their child's social skills. Most of parents (both mother and father) have opinion that their child keepseye contact in face-to-face situations (M=2.03, SD=1.84). Parents said that their child understands people's social cues (M=2.05, SD=1.82), and don't show verbal emotions when feeling lonely (M=2.03, SD=1.82). Most of children don't have difficulty in making friends (M=2.02, SD=1.86), and are accepted by other children in games (M=2.07, SD=1.85).

Table 5:   *Parents practices regarding social skills development in their child*

Parents practices regarding social development	Relation	Mean	SD
Authoritative parenting practices regarding child's social skills development	Mother	2.6	1.02
	Father	2.4	1.08
Authoritarian parenting practices regarding child's social skills development	Mother	2.7	1.11
	Father	2.11	1.23
Permissive parenting practices regarding child's social skills development	Mother	3.01	1.01
	Father	2.9	1.24
Neglectful parenting practices regarding child's social skills development	Mother	2.01	0.98
	Father	2.22	1.23

Table 5 represented parents practice regarding social skills development of children. The mean score indicated that mothers exhibit slightly stronger authoritative (2.6 vs. 2.4) and authoritarian (2.7 vs. 2.11) parenting style compared to fathers, suggesting they compose more structure and discipline. Mothers showed a higher inclination towards permissive parenting (3.01 vs. 2.9), indicating greater leniency. In contrast fathers have a higher mean score in neglectful parenting (2.22 vs. 2.01) though both scores remain low. Overall data suggested that mothers tends to be more involved across different parenting style, while fathers showed a little interest.

DISCUSSION

The study was conducted to determine the role of parents in social development of early learners. The findings from this research contribute valuable insights to the existing literature on the development of child social skills. The outcomes were consistent with earlier research, revealing that parental practices, including parent engagement, warmth, mental well-being, and home surroundings, play a significant role in shaping children's social skills development. Previous research investigations have yielded comparable results regarding the influence of parents on social skills development in a broader sense, with a specific focus on the effects of parent involvement, warmth, mental health, and home environment. According to Alarcson (1997), children's social development is significantly shaped by the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of their parents. In a study by Okagaki and Sternberg (1991), the examination of parental factors revealed that parental beliefs and behaviors played a crucial role in social skills development. Prior studies have highlighted the advantages of employing positive parental practices in fostering the socials kills in children (Choe et al., 2013).

The findings of the current study paint a positive picture of children's emotional well-being and social interactions. The majority of the observed children exhibited a cheerful demeanor, demonstrating ease in managing their behavior and understanding the emotions of their peers. Additionally, the children displayed an appropriate response to aggressive acts by their peers, indicating a healthy emotional regulation and social awareness within the group. A previous study reported that these positive aspects contribute to a conducive and harmonious social environment among the children, fostering a sense of emotional intelligence and interpersonal understanding (Schwartz and Proctor, 2000).

However, a notable challenge emerged in the area of rule comprehension and adherence to social norms. The study identified a difficulty among the children in understanding and following rules, as well as comprehending and respecting the rights of

others. This aspect suggests a potential area for targeted interventions or support, aiming to enhance the children's understanding of societal norms, rights, and responsibilities. Previous study reported that addressing these challenges could contribute to the overall social and ethical development of the children, ensuring a more holistic and balanced social integration within their peer group and the broader community (Reicher, 2010).

The results of the current study suggest that the parents tend to create an environment that encourages open communication, allowing children the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts. The emphasis on fostering a positive parent-child relationship through responsiveness and encouragement aligns with authoritative parenting principles, which are associated with positive outcomes in children, such as increased self-esteem, better emotional regulation, and overall socio-emotional well-being. A prior research aligns with the findings of the current study. It discovered that a prevalence of authoritative parent practices in the Pakistan (Imran and Aziz, 2018).Experts in the field have observed that within the Muslim community, a predominant number of fathers tend to employ an authoritative parenting style, while a considerable proportion of Muslim mothers lean towards an authoritarian approach (Rosli, 2014). Furthermore, a significant portion of parents is noted to use authoritative parent practices with their child (Morris et al., 2017).

The findings of the present study indicate that parents who exhibit a responsive attitude toward their children are more effective in promoting techniques for developing effective social skills in children. A study revealed that a majority of parents employ an authoritative parenting style in raising their children (Ashiono, 2013). Consequently, various prior studies also substantiate the findings of the current research, indicating that parental characteristics such as warmth, monitoring, and stability impact the child's emotions (Melnick and Hinshaw, 2000). Researchers further explored that children raised by parents employing authoritative practices tend to experience greater life satisfaction (Milevsky et al., 2008).

The findings of the current research uncover that parents can influence their children toward an antisocial attitude through punitive and harsh behavior. Parents who favor negativity over positivity might unintentionally foster antisocial behaviors in their children, especially during emotional expressions. Previous study has emphasized that children raised by neglectful parents are at a higher risk of developing psychological issues such as disappointment, depression, and unhappiness (Spinrad et al., 2004). Similarly, Odame et al. (2018) emphasized that neglectful parenting behavior has a detrimental impact on the social skills of their children, resulting in an inability for these children to control their behavior.

The current study explored that neglectful parents practices also has negative effect on the social skills development of their children, further hindering their ability to appropriately control their social skills. Likewise, whether characterized as good or bad, parenting practices contribute to inappropriate behaviors during the expression of children's social skills, lacking guidance toward the adoption of positive strategies. Sarwar (2016) contends that parents play a crucial role in molding the antisocial attitudes of youngsters. Diverse parenting practices are instrumental in enhancing children's social skills. There is a widespread acknowledgment that parental roles have a considerable impact on fostering the development of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and personality in their children (Munyi, 2013). Various expert opinions suggest that individual difference variables may influence the process of social skills development. Therefore, it can be deduced that parents showcase diverse personalities and employ different approaches in regulating the development of social skills in their children in early childhood.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that some parents with neglectful approaches were practiced rarely by both parent (mothers and fathers). Results indicated that the majority of parents did not favor neglectful parenting approaches with their children during early childhood education. On the whole children have good social skills of parenting practices with authoritative approaches than parenting with permissive behaviors but parenting with neglectful behavior was too weak. The results indicated that the majority of parents employed authoritative parenting approaches with their children.

The child has some areas of strength in their social skills development, but they also need to improve in some areas. The child has difficulty in many of areas of social skills. The child seems to have difficulty understanding and following rules, comprehending and respecting the rights of others, and responding positively to social cues from peers. A survey was also conducted using a questionnaire and the findings of survey suggest that parents are generally supportive of their children's social skills development. The result also revealed that parents are more likely to volunteer their time to help their children with social skills development, and they are also more likely to be involved in their children's education and activities.

The second objective of this study was to investigate parent practices used for social development of their children. Results revealed that parents are generally supportive of their children's social skills development. They are more likely to engage in practices that are known to be effective in promoting social skills development, such as volunteering, playing games, and attending parent-teacher meetings. However, there are also some areas where parents could improve, such as rewarding their children for obeying and providing them with plenty of freedom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion, following recommendations were drawn.

1. It is recommended that parents allocate more time to their children.
2. It is advised that the parents need to maintain a balance between their children's independence and supervision.
3. Parents need to avoid parenting practices involving punishing children by restricting freedom, slapping children for undesirable reactions, and criticizing the child for improving behavior, however, they need to adopt a more flexible approach with their children.
4. It is suggested that the District Education Authority organize programs in communities offering guidance and counseling to parents on various parenting issues.
5. The government may also proactively implement measures to create a conducive environment in schools and at home, fostering positive social behavioral changes among students.

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