



Investigating the relationship between toxic parents and self-esteem in elementary school students

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.21580/jieed.v3i2.17489>

Received: 2023-08-11, Revised: 2023-09-20,

Accepted: 2023-09-25, Published: 2023-09-30

Abstract

This study aims to explore the correlation between the behavior of "toxic parents" and the self-esteem of elementary school students. The research adopts a quantitative approach with a correlation method and involves a total of 90 respondents, comprising 9 fathers, 81 mothers, 52 male students, and 38 female students, selected using a quota sampling technique. Data collection is carried out through carefully designed questionnaires, and hypothesis testing is conducted using product-moment correlation analysis. The study's results reveal a correlation value (r) of -0.484, surpassing the critical value (r table) of 0.207, with a significance level (p) of 0.000, which is lower than 0.05. Additionally, the coefficient of determination at 23.42% signifies a substantial influence of "toxic parents" behavior on the self-esteem of students. These findings unequivocally confirm a significant negative relationship between "toxic parent" behavior and students' self-esteem. The implication is a pressing need for fostering positive and supportive parenting approaches as a potential avenue for positively impacting the self-esteem development of elementary school students.

Keywords: *toxic parents, self-esteem, primary school*

INTRODUCTION

During their developmental stage, children undergo rapid changes in various dimensions, such as physical, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects. However, each child shows a distinct growth pattern. The readiness to transition into adolescence is crucial due to the significance of this phase (Soetjiningsih, 2018). Self-esteem is a critical factor for an individual's success and often faces challenges during a child's development (Nuraini, 2018). Low self-esteem can prevent individuals from achieving success and satisfaction in their lives (Rabay, 2021).



Various factors influence self-esteem, including gender, social class, and environment. For example, a study conducted by Aisyah and Sakdiyah (2015) found that males tend to have higher self-esteem than females. Additionally, support from family environments and social classes plays a crucial role in enhancing self-esteem. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, self-esteem is categorized as a fourth-level need, where individuals aim to gain recognition and approval from others (Stoyanov, 2017). Conversely, Coopersmith's definition of self-esteem pertains to an individual's self-assessment in comparison to oneself (R. & Rosita, 2021). One of Coopersmith's tools to assess self-esteem is the CSEI (Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory), which evaluates an individual's belief in their abilities.

The impact of the environment, primarily interpersonal relationships within the family, on self-esteem is crucial. Research from Korea demonstrates that self-esteem has a relationship with academic achievement, beyond physical aspects (Kim et al., 2021). Additionally, low self-esteem can lead to unsatisfactory academic performance (Rubin et al., 2012).

Several observations emphasize the influence of environmental pressures, including those exerted by parents, on a child's self-esteem. For instance, some of the students at SD Muhammadiyah 12 Setiabudi Pamulang displayed indications of elevated academic stress that could potentially impact their self-worth. Parents who excessively pressurize their offspring to always attain perfection may lead to reduction in their self-worth. Such behavior is often correlated with the conduct of "toxic parents" which may have unfavorable implication on the growth of a child, including their academic progress (Jennifer & Margaret, 2020; Oktariani, 2021).

The study aims to objectively examine the correlation between toxic parental behavior and student self-esteem. The purpose is to present clear and concise information with a logical flow of causality. The study employs conventional academic structure and employs a formal register, avoiding biased language. Precise technical terminology and standard sentence structure were used, and grammatical correctness was maintained according to American English style. Consistent citation, footnote style, and formatting features were observed.

METHOD

This quantitative study employed a correlational design to investigate the relationship between 'toxic parenting' and 'self-esteem' in fourth-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 12 Setiabudi Pamulang. Based on Dunham and Dermer's definitions, 'toxic parenting' encompasses: 1) Parents who mold their children according to their own expectations and desires; 2) A lack of parental involvement, whether physically, emotionally, or financially; 3) A tendency of parents to make negative comments, belittle, or blame their children. On the other hand, as per

Coopersmith, 'self-esteem' includes: 1) An individual's capability to influence others; 2) Feeling valued when treated well; 3) The individual's ability and effort to achieve milestones appropriate to their age; and 4) An individual's capacity to adhere to norms and set a positive example.

Assessment of both dimensions was done using a Likert scale. Positive statements were scored as strongly agree (4 points), agree (3 points), disagree (2 points), and strongly disagree (1 point). For negative statements, the scoring was reversed. Questionnaires on 'toxic parenting' were distributed to parents, while 'self-esteem' questionnaires were given to the students. The results from these questionnaires were subsequently analyzed through a correlation test to determine the relationship between 'toxic parenting' and the students' 'self-esteem'.

RESULTS

The results of this study indicate that 3.33% of parents exhibit toxic behavior, but are categorized as "good." This suggests that while there is a tendency for negative behavior, it hasn't reached excessive levels. Detailed data is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
Toxic Parents Survey Scores

Total Respondents	90	Variance	35.337
Average Score	29.79	Range	36
Median	30.00	Minimum	16
Mode	34	Maximum	52
Standard Deviation:	5.944	Total Score	2681

Table 2
Toxic Parents *Data Interval*

Interval	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
$52 < x$	Very good	0	0%
$40 \leq x \leq 52$	Good	3	3,33%
$28 \leq x < 40$	Fairly Good	56	62,22%
$x < 28$	Less Good	31	34,44%
Jumlah		90	100%

One of the most prevalent indicators is parents having high expectations for their children. Positive and reasonable parental expectations can significantly influence children's future development. From the self-esteem survey, 2.22% of students fall into the "fair" self-esteem category. Details can be shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3

Self-esteem Survey Scores

Total Respondents	90
Average Score	29.79
Median	.627
Mode	30.00
Standard Deviation:	34
Variance	5.944
Range	35.337
Minimum	36
Maximum	16
Total Score	52
	2681

Tabel 4*Self-esteem Data Interval*

Interval	Kriteria	Frekuensi	Persentase
$130 < x$	Very good	22	24,44%
$100 \leq x \leq 130$	Good	66	73,33%
$70 \leq x < 100$	Fairly Good	2	2,22%
$x < 70$	Less Good	0	0%
Jumlah		90	100%

The majority of students in Grade IV at Muhammadiyah 12 Setiabudi Pamulang Primary School have good self-esteem, at a rate of 73.33%. This is likely attributed to attentive and loving parenting, marked by genuine emotional bonding. Analysis shows the self-esteem survey has a lowest score of 72 (out of a possible 160), while the highest score for toxic parental behavior is 52 (out of a maximum 64).

The hypothesis test using the Product Moment Correlation technique resulted in a correlation value of -0.484 with a significance (p) of 0.000. This indicates a

significant negative correlation between toxic parental behavior (variable X) and children's self-esteem (variable Y). As the toxic behavior score of parents increases, the self-esteem of children decreases, and vice versa.

This correlation implies that the toxic behaviors of parents negatively impact a child's mental well-being. A correlation nearing -1 signifies the strength of this relationship. The coefficient of determination shows that toxic parental behavior contributes 23.42% to a student's self-esteem. Meanwhile, 76.58% is influenced by other factors. Excessive expectations from parents can diminish a child's abilities and lower their self-esteem. To address this, parents should recognize the potential within their children and avoid setting unrealistic expectations. Other research indicates that emotional support from the family can boost a child's self-esteem.

DISCUSSION

In the course of this research, a noticeable trend was observed among the parental respondents. A staggering 90% were mothers, overshadowing the mere 10% of fathers. This prevalent trend accentuates the primary role that mothers often play in child-rearing, a sentiment echoed in the findings of Fatwikingasih and Fajriyah (2021). Furthermore, the study's respondents, when broken down by gender, revealed that 58% of the student participants were male.

Ulfah and Widya's investigation unveiled a concerning pattern. Specifically, 20.4% of the 99 parents who adopted an authoritarian parenting style often resorted to behaviors such as criticism, anger, and excessive protectiveness. This domineering approach requires children to align precisely with their parents' desires, potentially stifling the development of a child's self-esteem. Supporting this notion, Ekdha & Sari (2019) pinpointed that 15 students from such authoritarian households demonstrated a low self-esteem.

The low prevalence of "toxic parents" might be attributed to their ability to manage stress through religious approaches, as illuminated by Pratiwi et al. (2020). Their study discovered that a lower percentage of parents exhibited moderate or favorable toxic behaviors compared to those with significantly toxic attitudes. A parallel study in Yogyakarta by Pratiwi, Ikta, et al. showed that a mere 4.71% of parents displayed moderately toxic behavior.

John, Lavanya, and Preetha's (2020) findings offer a significant insight into the academic realm. They established that parental expectations wield a tangible impact on a child's academic achievements and the mutual trust and understanding between parent and child. This aligns with observations from SD Muhammadiyah 12 Setiabudi Pamulang, where high parental expectations sometimes cast a shadow on children's ability to value their accomplishments. On a brighter note, 22 students showcased excellent self-esteem. Remarkably, children aged 4-5 with high self-

esteem appeared to adapt more adeptly to their surroundings, as inferred from Firdausia et al. (2020).

A crucial element of measuring self-esteem was gauged by one's ability to influence others' behaviors. This metric fell under Coopersmith's "power" aspect of self-esteem, alongside other dimensions such as significance, competence, and virtue. This theory of self-esteem is intricately linked with James' theory of self, suggesting that individuals' feelings about themselves evolve through interactions with others (Liliweri, 2015).

Dalifa's research (2021) presented a relationship between self-esteem and parental attachment, with only 6.8% being influenced by this bond and a significant 93.2% affected by other factors. Aini (2018) elaborated on these factors, including gender, social class, and environment. Furthermore, the relationship between "toxic parents" and self-esteem appeared to have a weak determination coefficient, suggesting the need for more comprehensive research in this area.

CONCLUSION

The study conducted on fourth-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 12 Setiabudi Pamulang reveals pivotal insights into parenting dynamics and their impact on a child's self-esteem. The negative effect of toxic parenting practices on students' self-esteem is undeniable, with a calculated 'r' value of -0.484 exceeding the table 'r' value of 0.207.

In other words, the presence of toxic parents, characterized by negative and perhaps harmful parenting styles, was found to reduce the ability of these children to value and accept themselves. As a result, it is crucial to adopt nurturing and constructive parenting techniques that are consistent with a child's developmental requirements. Failure to do so may contribute to children's challenges in developing self-worth, which could have long-term impacts on their overall growth. It is crucial for parents and educators to acknowledge this link and implement interventions that not only offset the negative consequences of toxic parenting but also encourage activities that enhance children's self-esteem.

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