

Good Education Better Parenting: A Study on Role of Parental Education in Parent-Child Emotional Communication

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Abstract

A child's capability to comprehend and manage emotions is a by-product of the emotional bonding between him and his parents. Initially a child requires help with developing emotional awareness and understanding. As the child develops so does their knowledge about the world and other people. This is where the child needs help with emotional expression and emotional regulation. Emotion regulation will then lead to reflective functioning or mentalization. This whole process is necessary for a child to develop a strong emotional backbone and is only possible when there is good parent-child emotional communication. One of the components of good emotional communication in parents is their educational background. We hypothesize that the higher the educational background, better the quality of emotional communication between parent and child. A 75 item questionnaire (one for child and a separate questionnaire for father and mother) was developed to measure five dimensions of emotional communication: emotional awareness, emotion regulation, emotional understanding, emotion expression and reflective functioning. The results indicated that for all the participants father, mother, child for father and child for mother showed significant impact of parents educational level over emotional communication.

KEYWORDS: parent-child emotional communication, level of education, emotional awareness, emotion regulation, emotion expression, emotional understanding, reflective functioning, middle childhood

INTRODUCTION

Good emotional communication between parent and child not only helps develop positive emotions in children but it also helps them understand and deal with emotions effectively. Parents can enhance their child's emotional skills by helping them develop a good vocabulary to express their emotions and engage in active listening skills. Encouragement by parents to motivate their

children to share their thoughts and feelings goes a long way in developing empathy, concern and positive relationships all the way into adulthood.

Emotional communication is the ability to understand, be aware and effectively express our emotions so that not only the other person but we ourselves are able to reflect upon and regulate our emotions. Emotional communication is a continuous process, it cannot take place in stages or relevance.

Emotional expression teaches us the skill to connect with ourselves and others. Not only does it help in strengthening our relationships with others but it also allows for a deeper understanding of oneself. Being able to effectively express our emotions releases anxiety and stress from within us and has the capacity to reduce depressive symptoms and increase resilience. Parents also need to teach their children the skill to regulate their emotions. Emotion regulation directly affects one's understanding of the emotional situation and further the child's quality of life. Another emotional tool that is an important part of emotional communication is emotional awareness. Emotional awareness is a core life skill. The ability to be aware of one's own and others' emotions helps in overcoming challenges and defusing conflict. Finally, we have reflective functioning or mentalizing. It is important for parents to depict this skill as it not only enhances the quality of the parent-child relationship but it also gives the child attachment security.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature has shown that parental educational level is important in predicting child's behaviour (Eccles EJ 2014; Dubow, et al 2009; Davis-Kean, 2005). By the time children reach middle childhood their capacity to regulate, control and internalize emotions greatly increases. They learn about cultural norms and appropriate emotional expressions. Good parent-child emotional communication during this time teaches them that they are not controlled by their emotions and that they have the ability to act in control. This responsibility is largely upon the parents and the care givers (Mamta Roy and Regina Giraldo-Garcia 2018). When parents are supportive of their child's emotions it leads to enhanced personality development thus enabling children to achieve a good quality of life.

Parrigon.S.K., et al (2015), evaluated and summarized previous literature concerning attachment and how it is related to emotional competencies in children. The summary of the reviews showed that not only is parent-child attachment important for children to form secure attachments all the way into adulthood but it is also related to emotion understanding, affective experiences, physiological responses and emotion regulation processes. It was also seen that children who have secure attachments

with their parents, portray higher positive emotions and lower negative emotions. It was also seen that secure attachment gave the children significant advantage in various domains of emotion over insecurely attached children.

Dubow.E.F., et al (2009), examined how the overall family climate and parents' level of education during middle childhood has the ability to affect adult outcomes at age 48. They found that the advantage linked to parents' level of education are not limited to the educational achievement of children. These advantages were seen to have long-term impact for positive outcomes in adulthood. Further, the effects caused by parental education were found to be independent of other socioeconomic factors (occupation, housing, etc) and family process variables (e.g.- negative family interactions).

Author Gentzler, L.A., et al (2005) in their paper parent-child emotional communication and children's coping in middle childhood, examined negative emotions and coping in 75, 5th graders. The research was based on parents' reports on their reactions to their child's negative emotions and child's report on the amount of negative emotions they share with their parents. There was a task that was given to be completed by the families in which the event of the task was upsetting to the child. Thus, parent-child communication was measured. Results showed that parent-child emotional communication was largely dependent upon child's coping strategies.

There is ample research on how parental involvement affects academic adjustment (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005). There is however not enough research on the impact of level of education of parents on parent-child emotional communication especially in middle childhood.

AIM

To study emotional communication in parent-child relationship in parents from different educational backgrounds.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To study emotional communication in parent-child relationship in middle childhood
- 2) To study difference in emotional communication in parent-child relationship emotional in parents from different educational backgrounds

METHODOLOGY

A 75 item questionnaire (one for child and a separate questionnaire for father and mother) was developed to measure five dimensions of emotional communication: emotional awareness, emotion regulation, emotional understanding, emotion expression and reflective functioning. The items were randomly distributed and were positive and negative in nature. The scoring of the items were based on Likert Scale where the positive items were scored as 1–never, 2- rarely, 3- sometimes, 4-often and 5-always (the reverse was true for negative items). A sample of 60 children aged 8-12 years along with their fathers and mothers, attending schools in Ludhiana, Punjab were selected for the study. Once the study was explained to the parents and

children, consent was taken from both. A brief demographic interview was conducted by the researcher. With a Cronbach alpha of = .96, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated as excellent. The tool was developed in both English and Punjabi as to avoid any bias and ethical concerns. The translation was undertaken by experts in psychology, English and Punjabi using the back translation method. This study used descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were calculated and independent sample, t-test and one-way ANOVA were tabulated to assess the variation in parent-child emotional communication in the five dimensions.

RESULTS

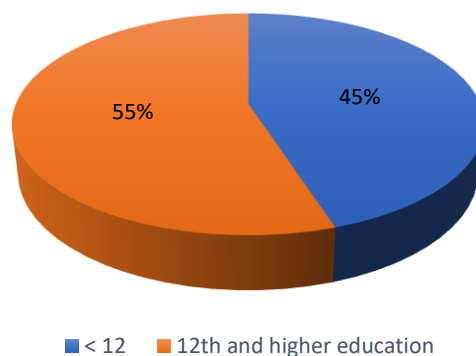


Figure 1: Fathers educational level N=60

Figure 1 tells us that 55% (N=33) of fathers had an educational background of 12th grade and higher whereas, 45% (N=27) of the fathers had an educational level of 11th grade and lower.

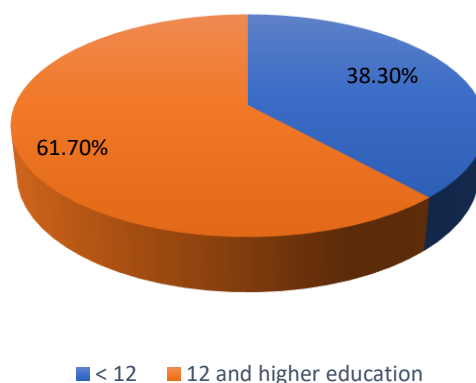


Figure 2: Mothers educational level N=60

Figure 2 shows us that a greater percentage of mothers 61.70% (N=37) were from an educational background of 12th and higher whereas, 38.30% (N=23) of the mothers were from a lower educational background.

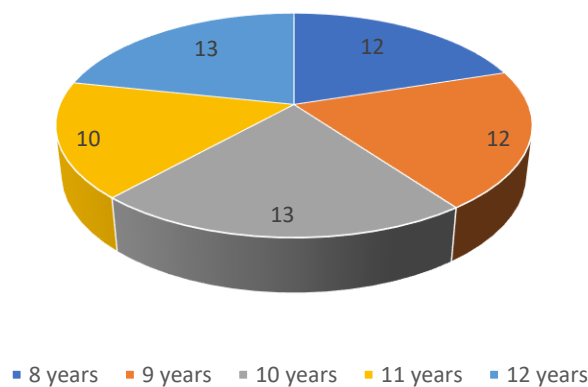


Figure 3: Age wise distribution of children 8-12 years

Table 1: Dimension wise emotional communication in fathers based on level of education

Dimensions	< 12		> 12		t	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
E.EXP	45.36	5.64	56.86	8.73	-6.10	.000
E.UND	50.53	7.02	61.50	12.23	-4.34	.000
E.AW	41.08	6.02	48.27	9.84	-3.45	.001
R.F	38.11	3.60	44.77	6.48	-5.03	.000
E.REG	43.83	6.88	56.00	10.53	-5.32	.000

* $p\text{-value} \leq 0.001$ is statistically highly significant.

In table 1 a significant difference was found in the dimensions of emotional communication of father's belonging to different educational backgrounds. In the dimension of Emotion Expression fathers with an education of < 12 scored lower ($M=45.36$, $SD=5.64$) than fathers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=56.86$, $SD=8.73$). In the dimension of Emotional Understanding fathers with an education of < 12 scored lower ($M=50.53$, $SD=7.02$) than fathers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=61.50$, $SD=12.23$). In the dimension of Emotional Awareness fathers with an

education of < 12 scored lower ($M=41.08$, $SD=6.02$) than fathers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=48.27$, $SD=9.84$). In the dimension of Reflective Functioning fathers with an education of < 12 scored lower ($M=38.11$, $SD=3.60$) than fathers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=44.77$, $SD=6.48$). Lastly, In the dimension of Emotion Regulation fathers with an education of < 12 scored lower ($M=43.83$, $SD=6.88$) than fathers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=56.00$, $SD=10.53$).

Table 2: Dimension wise emotional communication in fathers based on level of education from child's perspective

Dimensions	< 12		> 12		t	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
E.EXP	45.50	8.00	58.45	8.03	-5.97	.000

E.UND	52.53	8.25	60.77	12.24	-3.06	.003
E.AW	41.72	6.89	50.95	9.99	-4.16	.000
R.F	39.44	4.65	43.86	7.34	-2.81	.007
E.REG	44.39	5.90	54.05	10.56	-4.47	.000

* $p\text{-value} \leq 0.001$ is statistically highly significant.

* $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$ is statistically significant.

In table 2 a significant difference was found in the dimensions of emotional communication of father's belonging to different educational backgrounds from the child's perspective. In the dimension of Emotion Expression children of fathers with an education of < 12 scored their fathers lower (M=45.50, SD=8.00) than children with fathers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher (M=58.45, SD=8.03). In the dimension of Emotional Understanding children of fathers with an education of < 12 scored their fathers lower (M=52.53, SD=8.25) than children with fathers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher (M=60.77, SD=12.24). In the dimension of Emotional Awareness children of fathers with an education of < 12 scored their

fathers lower (M=41.72, SD=6.89) than children with fathers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher (M=50.95, SD=9.98). In the dimension of Reflective Functioning children of fathers with an education of < 12 scored their fathers lower (M=39.44, SD=4.65) than children with fathers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher (M=43.86, SD=7.34). Lastly, In the dimension of Emotion Regulation children of fathers with an education of < 12 scored their fathers lower (M=44.39, SD=5.90) than children with fathers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher (M=54.05, SD=10.56)

Table 3: Dimension wise emotional communication in mothers based on level of education

Dimensions	< 12		> 12		t	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
E.EXP	44.55	5.40	58.93	10.54	-6.70	.000
E.UND	50.10	6.16	61.52	12.15	-4.63	.000
E.AW	39.71	4.59	48.59	7.01	-5.83	.000
R.F	38.61	4.03	44.83	7.53	-4.01	.000
E.REG	42.77	7.19	54.07	9.60	-5.17	.000

* $p\text{-value} \leq 0.001$ is statistically highly significant.

In table 3 a significant difference was found in the dimensions of emotional communication of mother's belonging to different educational backgrounds. In the dimension of Emotion Expression mothers with an education of < 12 scored lower (M=44.55, SD=5.40) than mothers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher (M=58.93, SD=10.54). In the dimension of Emotional Understanding mothers with an education of < 12 scored lower

(M=50.10, SD=6.16) than mothers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher (M=61.52, SD=12.15). In the dimension of Emotional Awareness mothers with an education of < 12 scored lower (M=39.71, SD=4.59) than mothers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher (M=48.59, SD=7.01). In the dimension of Reflective Functioning mothers with an education of < 12 scored lower (M=38.61, SD=4.03) than

mothers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=44.83$, $SD=7.53$). Lastly, In the dimension of Emotion Regulation mothers with an education of < 12 scored lower

($M=42.77$, $SD=7.19$) than mothers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=54.07$, $SD=9.60$).

Table 4: Dimension wise emotional communication in mothers based on level of education from child's perspective

Dimensions	< 12		> 12		t	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
E.EXP	45.13	6.25	57.27	10.46	-5.45	.000
E.UND	52.77	6.00	59.83	13.61	-2.60	.012
E.AW	40.03	3.66	50.50	8.74	-6.04	.000
R.F	39.87	3.93	45.40	7.62	-3.53	.001
E.REG	43.53	5.82	55.17	11.27	-5.01	.000

* $p\text{-value} \leq 0.001$ is statistically highly significant.

* $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$ is statistically significant.

In table 4 a significant difference was found in the dimensions of emotional communication of mother's belonging to different educational backgrounds from the child's perspective. In the dimension of Emotion Expression children of mothers with an education of < 12 scored their mothers lower ($M=45.13$, $SD=6.25$) than children with mothers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=57.27$, $SD=10.46$). In the dimension of Emotional Understanding children of mothers with an education of < 12 scored their mothers lower ($M=52.77$, $SD=6.00$) than children with mothers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=59.83$, $SD=13.61$). In the dimension of Emotional Awareness children of mothers with an education of < 12 scored their

mothers lower ($M=40.03$, $SD=3.66$) than children with mothers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=50.50$, $SD=8.74$). In the dimension of Reflective Functioning children of mothers with an education of < 12 scored their mothers lower ($M=39.87$, $SD=3.93$) than children with mothers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=45.40$, $SD=7.62$). Lastly, In the dimension of Emotion Regulation children of mothers with an education of < 12 scored their mothers lower ($M=43.53$, $SD=5.82$) than children with mothers with an educational background of 12th grade and higher ($M=55.17$, $SD=11.27$).

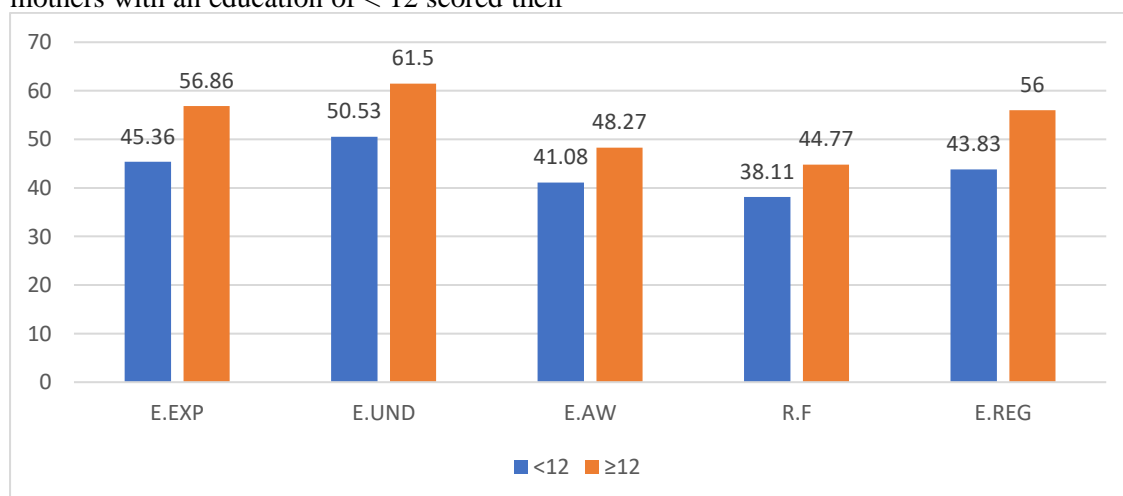


Figure 4: Dimension wise emotional communication of fathers from different educational backgrounds

Figure 4 shows us that in all the five dimensions of emotional communication fathers from higher educational backgrounds score higher than fathers from lower educational

backgrounds. This clearly marks the importance of education in parent-child emotional communication.

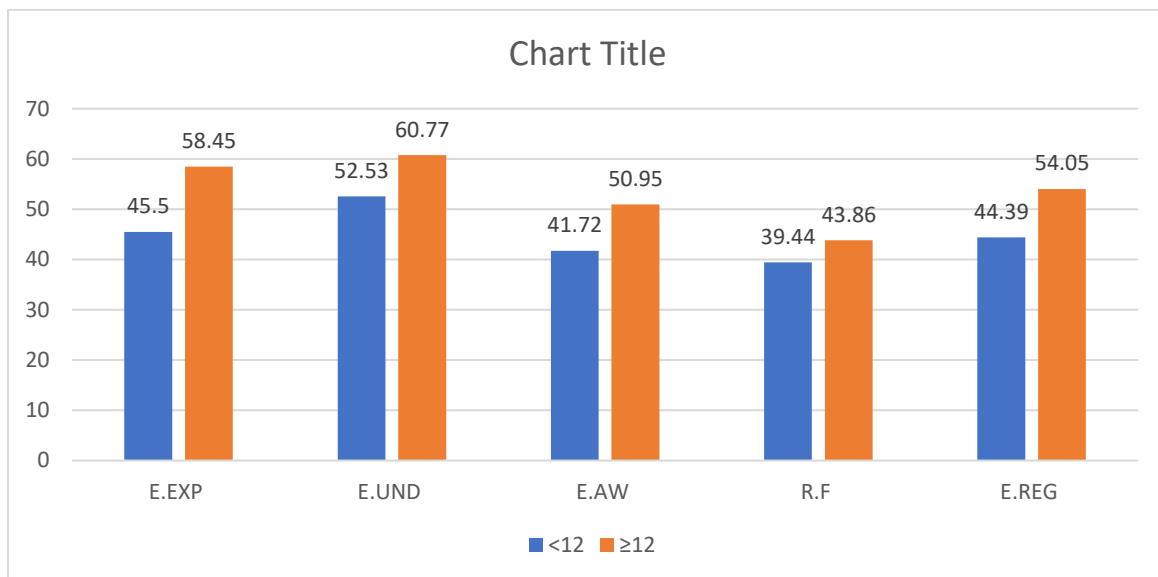


Figure 5: Dimension wise emotional communication of fathers from different educational backgrounds from child's perspective

Figure 5 which is from the child's perspective shows us that in all the five dimensions of emotional communication fathers from higher educational backgrounds score higher than

fathers from lower educational backgrounds. This clearly marks the importance of education in parent-child emotional communication.

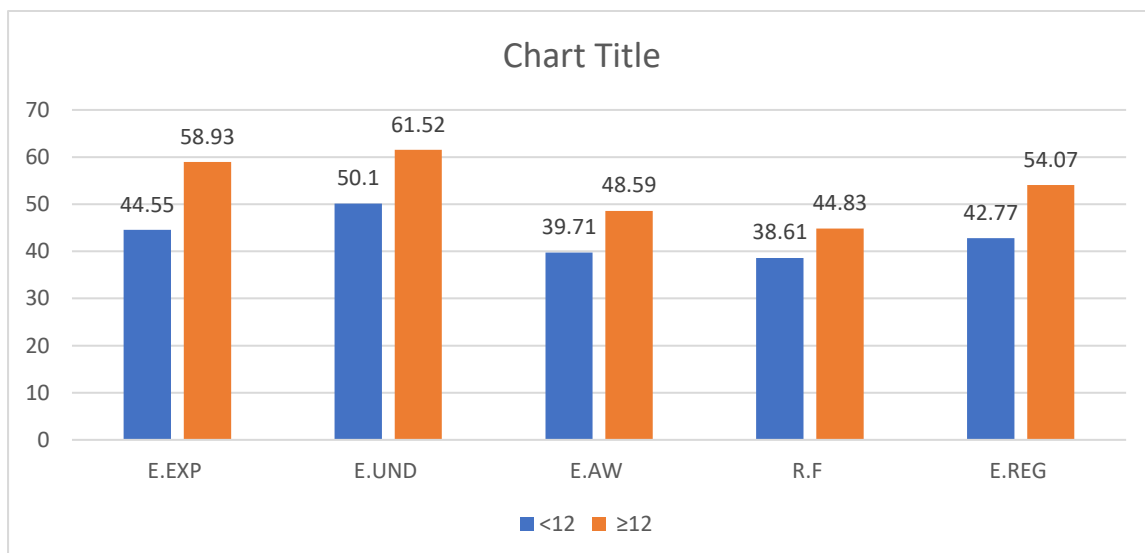


Figure 6: Dimension wise emotional communication of mothers from different educational backgrounds

Figure 6 shows us that in all the five dimensions of emotional communication mothers from higher educational backgrounds score higher than mothers from lower educational

backgrounds. This clearly marks the importance of education in parent-child emotional communication.

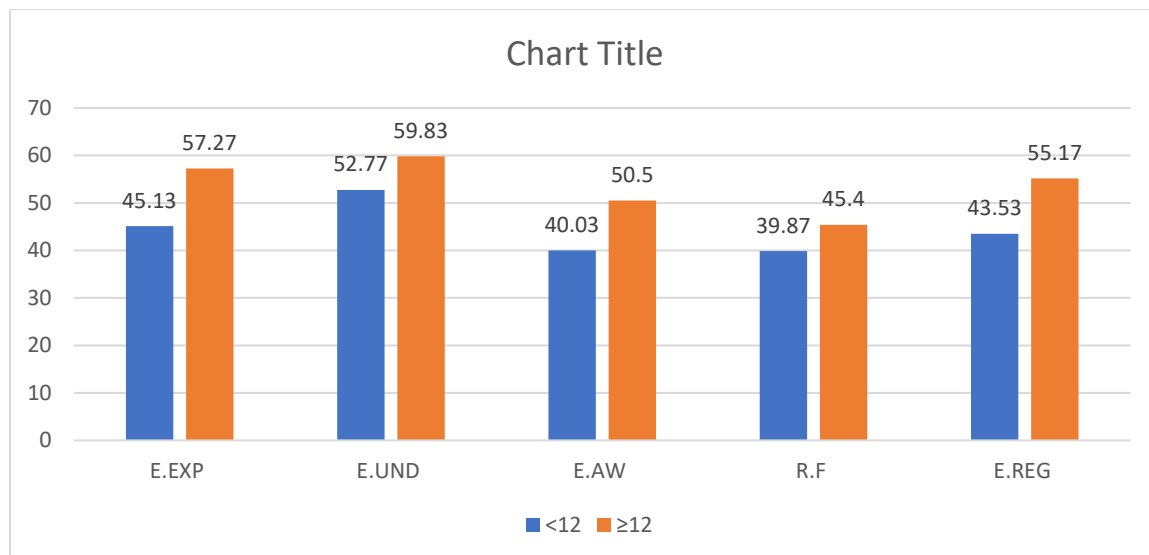


Figure 7: Dimension wise emotional communication of mothers from different educational backgrounds from child's perspective

Figure 7 which is from the child's perspective shows us that in all the five dimensions of emotional communication mothers from higher educational backgrounds score higher than mothers from lower educational backgrounds. This clearly marks the importance of education in parent-child emotional communication.

DISCUSSION

In the present study an attempt was made to study the role of education in parent-child emotional communication in middle childhood. A sample of 60 children with a mean age of 10.26 ± 1.44 years along with their parents were selected for the study.

The results show that in all the five dimension of emotional communication: emotional understanding, emotion expression, emotion regulation, emotional awareness and reflective functioning fathers and mothers from higher educational backgrounds have scored higher and same has been depicted from the child's perspective. Higher education brings with it a better quality of life and access to greater resources. This enables the parents to make use of these resources to help the child in dealing with various life adversities (Chun-hao Li 2012). Parents with a higher educational background are also aware of their own self and have great mentalizing capabilities which directly influences parent-child attachment (Mamta Roy and Regina Giraldo-garcia 2018; Parrigon.S.K 2015).

Parental education level shapes a child's behavioural and emotional outcomes (Davis-Kean 2005). Parental education level influences the quality the interaction that parents have with their children (Conger et al 2002), and establishes a broader social learning model (Huesmann, 1998). Furthermore it has been seen that low parental educational level cause negative family interactions which further influences child behaviour problems (Dubow et al. 2009). Parents with higher education also have greater knowledge regarding child rearing and child development and thus help their children develop a strong emotional core (Waylen & Stewart-Brown, 2010). Parental education level also has the ability and capability of influencing child development in more than one way and have a huge impact on the child's mental health (Duncan & Magnuson, 2003).

CONCLUSION

The results of this research have shown that the level of parental education has an impact on parent-child emotional communication, it is not correct to assume that educational qualification is the only factor that effects emotional communication. There are many more aspects to be measured and many more factors that contribute to parent-child emotional communication. This study needs to be conducted on a larger scale and on a diverse population before a definite conclusion can be reached. The focus of future studies need to

remain in middle childhood as this age group tends to be largely neglected.

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