

Impact of Parental Participation in Career Exploration Programs on High School Learner's Self-Concept

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This study aims to understand the extent to which parents influence their children's career growth and how it influences their self-concept. In this study, we created a career exploration program in-house, which included both parents and their children. For the sensitization of the parents, two focus group discussion sessions were carried out, proceeded with a 52-item as a self-concept assessment. Using real-world case studies and logical debates, a total of 17 fathers were provided with information throughout the focus group session. After that, a posttest between group design was used to assess the impact of career development intervention on three different groups through highly reliable. A total of 62 adolescents were divided into three experimental group: 30 students were classified as alone, 15 students were partnered with their parents ($n = 30$), and 17 students were matched with 17 parents who had been educated to the issue through focus group discussions. The outcomes show that kids with informed parents did better than students alone and students with non-sensitized parents in terms of self-concept. Regression equation was found significant ($F(1, 60) = 6.745, p=0.012$), with an R^2 of 0.101, which stated that student's self-concepts holds 8.6% of the explained variability in Career exploration settings. The study's findings will be useful to policy makers, educators, parents, students, and researchers.

Keywords: Self-concept, Career key, Learners, Focus group, Parental participation.

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Author's Contribution.

All authors equally

contributed to this research.

Main work done by Tafseer Zahra under the supervision of Anila Malik where Erum Bibi collected the data and run analysis. Asma Sikandar did formatting and reference writing.

Conflict of Interest.

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest concerning the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

Project Details. Nil



Introduction:

The impact of parents on shaping the aspirations and choices of their children has become a focal point of interest in the constantly evolving fields of education and career development. At a crucial developmental stage, high school students initiate the process of considering their future career trajectories, with parental influence serving as a pivotal determinant in shaping these early decisions. The participation of parents in career exploration programs can have significant consequences, not only for career choices of students but also for their self-concept, the way they perceive themselves concerning their abilities, interests, and future opportunities [1].

Career exploration program for high school students:

Programs for high school students to explore their career options are developed to help them better understand their interests, skills, and values. The National Career Development Association [2] states that career exploration programs for high school students should provide opportunities to explore interests, values, skills, and personality traits; information about various career paths and their requirements; exposure to diverse professionals and work environments; and support from mentors and advisors.

In high school, students who participate in career exploration programs are reported to have higher levels of self-efficacy when making career decisions, according to [3] research. In a separate study, [4] found a correlation between participation in career exploration programs throughout high school and higher levels of academic engagement, career planning, and self-efficacy in choosing a career.

A researcher's [5] study found a positive correlation between participation in a high school career exploration program and later college career happiness, career exploration behavior, and career decision-making self-efficacy. These sources claim that career exploration programs can greatly improve general academic progress and readiness of high school students for the workforce.

Self-Concept:

Self-concept is the term used to describe an individual's holistic perception of themselves, which encompasses their thoughts, attitudes, and opinions related to their unique identity. It represents the culmination of a person's perceptions of their morals, values, skills, and social standing. Self-concept refers to an individual's perception and assessment of their qualities, attributes, and capabilities, which are often compared to those of others. It is a critical aspect of psychological development because it has a significant impact on how people think, feel, and act. It influences how people view themselves, interact with others, and cope with challenges in life [6]. Self-concept can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as experiences, culture, socialization, and feedback from others. It is also influenced by the meanings that are assigned to experiences by the individual [7].

Students Self-Concept and Parental Involvement in Career Exploration Program:

A researcher has shown a positive correlation between parental involvement in career exploration programs and high school students' self-esteem and sense of purpose. According to the findings of another study, parental behaviors have a great impact on career search, including self-exploration [8]. In the context of this study, parental involvement is defined as parents participating in a career exploration session with their child. This involvement occurred at two distinct levels: first, parents and children were just paired together for a job exploration session, and second, through collaboration and open communication between parents and children, both discussed the future career opportunities during the career exploration session. In the second group, those parents participated who went through a sensitization program in the form of focus group talks. Parents were first made aware of the significance of choosing the correct job or subject for their children by presenting real-life

examples, shared their own stories and discussing the need and impact of the right career/subject choice.

As research [9] also supports that parental participation in career exploration programs are positively related to decreased anxiety about making career decisions and greater self-efficacy among high school children. Another study examined the effects of a Career Exploration Intervention (CEI) on career maturity and self-concept among Malaysian high school students which revealed that following the CEI, career maturity and self-concept improved, and the effects persisted four weeks later [1].

Objectives of the Study:

This study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on the intricate dynamics between parental engagement, career exploration, and the development of a robust self-concept among adolescents. So the present study was designed to explore the impact of parental participation in career exploration programs on high school learners' self-concept. The following hypotheses were tested,

1. A group comprising of students and sensitized parents who have been sensitized exhibit a higher level of self-concept compared to the group composed solely of students.
2. The group consisting of students paired with apprised parents who exhibit superior awareness compared to a cluster of students alone.
3. The group consisting of students and sensitized parents shows a superior self-concept as compared to the one having students and non-sensitized parents.

Novelty of the study:

In Pakistan, researchers rely on the instruments developed by foreigners but for this study, we indigenously designed and developed a career exploration program where parents were part of career decision-making which is relatable to our culture.

Material and methods:

The current study was designed to explore the role of parents in the decision-making process of learners and its effect on their self-concept.

Research design:

For this research, a career exploration program-based intervention plan was designed where parents were included in the intervention plan based on expert opinions and literature findings [10]. Through focus group talks, these fathers were made more aware and sensitized, and they later took part in the career exploration sessions along with their kids. Through true experimental design, the impact of this intervention was evaluated by comparison groups that included non-sensitized, sensitized parents and students alone. Also, the self-concept scale was administered to these groups. Any confounding factors were controlled through randomization.

Sample and sample strategy:

The primary study experiment included 62 students from the ninth grade who were chosen randomly from 5 government schools in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Three experimental conditions were randomly allocated to the sample using a simple random approach. A total of 32 fathers participated in 2 different experimental conditions (17 sensitized parents paired with their 17 kids, 17 non-sensitized fathers were grouped with 17 kids, and one group with only kids).

Research Tools:

Along with demographic information, students were also assessed through Career Key which was given to the students who participated in different experimental conditions. [11] first created Career Key [12] in English, and it may be used with students at pre-matric, matric, intermediate, and university levels. It was translated and converted into Urdu [12]. This key consists of two parts: 42 occupational titles and 24 sentences, roughly speaking.

The first half of Key is made up of around 24 statements that span six personality types and are based on four traits: preferred activities, skills, self-perceptions, and values. The second section of Key is made up of roughly 40 items. Each claim is supported by Holland's hypothesis (1985b, 1997). Its ratings for each personality type vary from 0 to 8. Each statement can be assessed using a three-point scale, where a rating of 2 represents "very true," 1 signifies "somewhat true," and 0 indicates "does not apply." Similarly, each occupation can be rated on a three-point scale, with 2 meaning it would 'definitely attract' you, 1 indicating it 'might attract', and 0 suggesting it would 'not attract' you. Six distinct personality types were chosen based on the Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC) vocations, each of which is represented by seven job titles, with scores for each type ranging from 0 to 14.

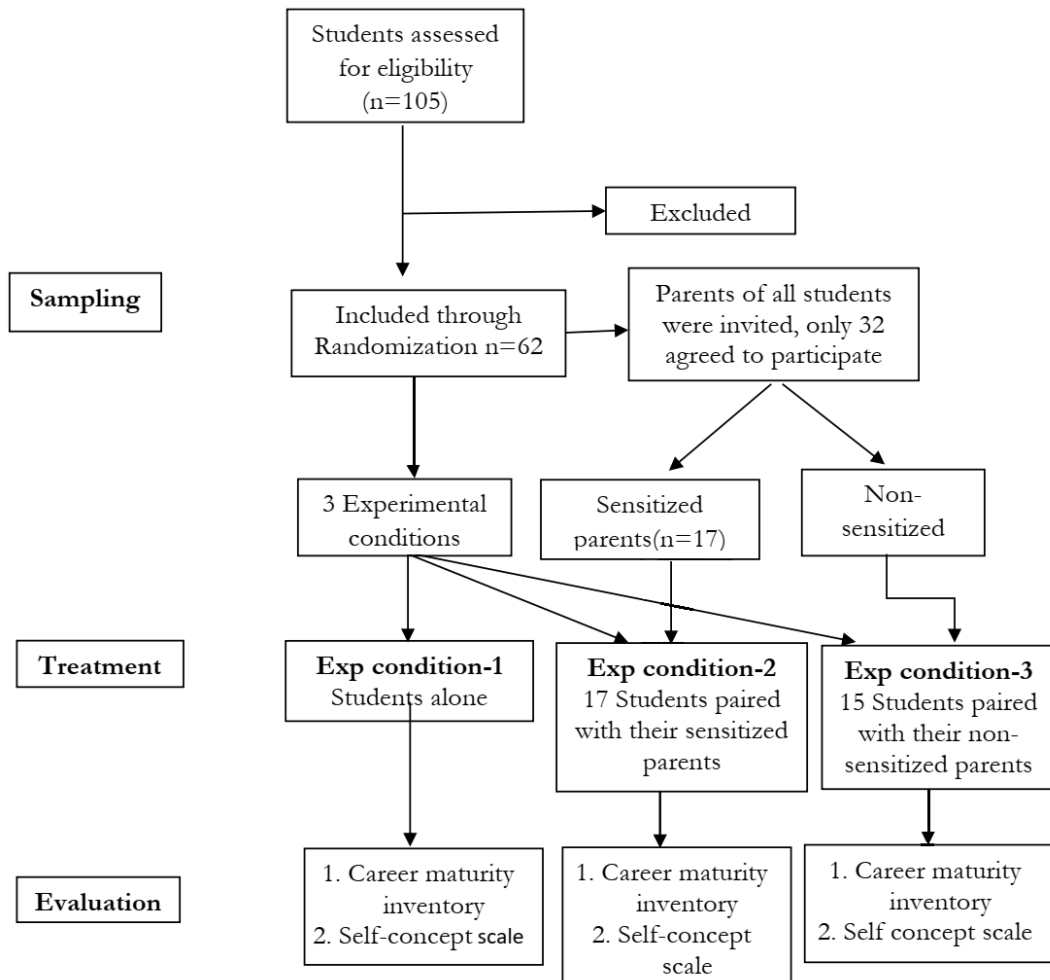


Figure 1: Sampling and flow of subjects in a designed experiment.

Career key has good estimates of its reliability and validity and can be used just as well in Asian cultures [13]. It has been translated and modified into Urdu which makes it a useful resource for Pakistani career exploration programs. Its estimated Pakistani sample reliability is 0.76. [10]. Further the Urdu adjective checklist (self-concept scale), was originally created in 1982 by Ansari, Farooqi, Khan, and Yasmin [14]. This can be given to adolescents and is made up of 52 adjectives in Urdu. For positive items, the scale has a five-point rating system that goes from very much = 5, much = 4, Moderate=3, Less=2, and Very less=1; for negative items, the scoring is done in reverse, with very much = 1, much = 2, Moderate=3, Less=4, and Very less=5. Higher self-concept scores reflect a higher and more positive self-image of an individual, and vice versa. The maximum scores on the scale fall between 52 and 260. The

computed internal consistency of scale is 0.81, making it very reliable and valid, and the test-retest reliability is 0.70.

Procedure:

The University of Karachi's Board of Advanced Studies and Research approved before the implementation of the study's design and data collection methods in the field. Parents of the students and the school administration both provided their consent for their children to participate in the research. Five schools were selected conveniently from two cities in Pakistan, namely Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The school principals agreed to allow their students to participate in this study as needed. It was assured that all personal information would be kept confidential. In Pakistan's government-run educational system, students are expected to choose between science and arts subjects when they enter the ninth grade. Consequently, the research commenced at the onset of the ninth grade, before students had made their subject selections. Students were randomly selected following the approval process. At the scheduled time, 32 fathers showed up, and 17 of them took part in group talks. Subsequently, these fathers participated in an experiment where three groups were formed based on three conditions: students alone, students paired with parents, and students matched with more sensitive parents. In this experiment, the career options for students were examined using a career key. Participants received a consent form and their confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. Following this career exploration session, measurements were made on the self-concept scale. Following data collection, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to examine the data.

Result:

Descriptive and inferential statistical tests were used to analyze the given data. Since there are three groups in this posttest between group study designs, a mean plot was first created to give an overview of the group's means. Post-hoc pair-wise comparisons were done to compare all possible combinations of the treatment groups. Descriptive statistics and ANOVA were also used to assess the significance of mean differences between groups. First, the self-concept scale's Alpha reliability was computed for the entire sample (N=62), and the results revealed that the scale is good enough ($r=0.73$) for measuring the self-concept of high school students.

Table 1: One-way ANOVA showing self-concept of different experimental groups (N=62)

| Conditions | N | M | SD | F(2, 59) | p | η^2 |
|---|----|--------|-------|----------|-------|----------|
| Students alone | 30 | 150.53 | 13.54 | 12.99 | 0.000 | 0.30 |
| Students paired with parents | 15 | 141.73 | 12.58 | | | |
| Students paired with sensitized parents | 17 | 163.47 | 8.95 | | | |

Note. η^2 = eta squared, *** $p < 0.001$, M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation,

Table 1 shows, one-way ANOVA indicated a statistically significant difference $F(3,88) = 19.12$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta^2 = 0.30$ in self-concept scores between students who were alone ($n = 30$, $M = 150.53$, $SD = 13.54$), students paired with parents ($n = 15$, $M = 141.73$, $SD = 12.58$), and students paired with sensitized parents ($n = 17$, $M = 163.47$, $SD = 8.95$).

Further results make it clear that students paired with sensitized parents performed better ($M=163.47$) than all other groups after going through the career exploration program while students paired with parents scored lowest ($M= 141.73$), this is also obvious in the graph below.

According to further results, students without sensitive parents did the worst ($M=141.73$) across all groups after participating in the career exploration program, while students with sensitive parents performed the best ($M=163.47$). This is also evident in the graph below.

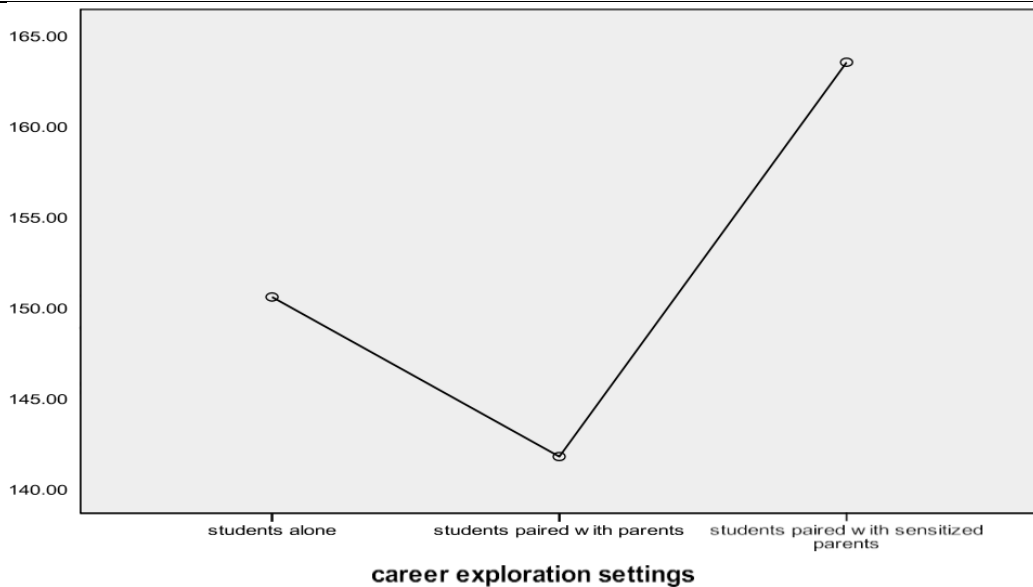


Figure 2: Graphical representation of mean differences among treatment groups on self-concept measure

The effect size was determined to evaluate whether an experimental intervention had any impact and, if so, to determine whether the effect size was greater than zero and to what extent [15]. For this, the eta square value was calculated, which demonstrates that the experimental intervention, which is parental participation in a job exploration program, is responsible for 30% of the variance in the dependent variable, self-concept.

Table 2: Post hoc test at self-concept of experimental groups

| | Conditions | Conditions | MD | SE | P | 95% CI | |
|-----------|---|---|-----------|------|-------|--------|--------|
| | | | | | | LB | UB |
| Tukey HSD | Students alone | Students paired with parents | 8.80 | 3.86 | 0.067 | -.494 | 18.09 |
| | | Students paired with sensitized Parents | -12.93** | 3.71 | 0.003 | -21.85 | -4.0 |
| | Students paired with parents | Students alone | -8.80 | 3.86 | 0.067 | -18.09 | .49 |
| | | Students paired with sensitized Parents | -21.73*** | 4.33 | 0.000 | -32.14 | -11.32 |
| | Students paired with sensitized parents | Students alone | 12.93** | 3.71 | 0.003 | 4.01 | 21.85 |
| | | Students paired with parents | 21.73*** | 4.33 | 0.000 | 11.32 | 32.14 |

Note. LB=lower boundary, UB=upper boundary, MD= mean difference, SE= standard error, CI= confidence interval, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

This study, provided information about the significance of differences among the three means, while it does not explicitly reveal whether significant differences exist between each pair of means Post hoc tests were conducted because they are specifically designed for situations where the researcher has obtained a significant omnibus F-test with a factor that includes three or more means. These tests are performed to provide a more detailed understanding of where the differences exist precisely and to what extent among the means. The significant results of post hoc comparison also provided additional evidence for the earlier hypothesis. Our hypothesis that "Students with sensitized parents will possess a better self-concept compared to students who are alone and students paired with parents" is supported by the significant differences observed between these children and the other two groups. Pairwise comparison showed that when students are paired with 'parents who are sensitized' and when students are paired with 'parents', the degree of significance is p<0.001; however,

the level of significance is $p < 0.05$ when two groups, 'students are paired with parents who are sensitized' and when 'students are alone'.

Our prediction that "Students paired with parents will perform better on self-concept than students alone" is rejected ($p = 0.067$) in Table 3. Students performed better when they were alone than when they were paired with parents, as seen by the significant mean difference between the two groups ($M = 150.53$ vs. $M = 141.73$).

Table 3: Linear regression showing self-concept in high school students ($N = 62$)

| Predictors | R ² | Δ R ² | B | SE | B | t | p |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------|--------|------|--------|-------|-------|
| Constant | | | 154.05 | 3.36 | | 45.84 | 0.000 |
| Experimental conditions | 0.050 | 0.040 | -2.61 | 1.19 | -0.224 | -2.18 | 0.032 |

- Predictors: (constant), experimental conditions
- Dependent variable: self-concept total

Based on career exploration settings, a simple linear regression was computed in Table 4 to predict high school students' self-concepts. The goal was to determine how well job exploration settings predict students' self-concept.

The regression equation was found significant ($F(1, 60) = 6.745$, $p = 0.012$), with an R^2 of 0.101, which state that student's self-concepts hold 8.6% of the explained variability in Career exploration settings that is equal to $142.313 + 5.384$ (career exploration settings).

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to determine the impact of a career exploration program on high school students' self-concept (using Career Key in combination with parental participation). Numerous hypotheses were developed and evaluated using descriptive and inferential statistics based on this main purpose.

Students paired with sensitized parents will have better self-concept than students alone:

It was anticipated, based on the comparison of the three experimental settings, that children with sensitive parents would have a more positive self-image than students alone. The importance of parental participation in the career decision-making of adolescents was highlighted by a variety of literature findings and the results of an exploratory study, as career ambitions and directions typically begin to emerge in the elementary school years under the guidance of parents and family [16].

It has been observed that young individuals in Asian countries such as Pakistan largely depend on their parents for guidance when it comes to selecting their academic courses or future career paths. Yet, this parental involvement was not as effective as it may have been since parents sometimes pursue their own goals and objectives without taking their children's abilities and interests into account [17]. Children are not yet capable of making mature, autonomous decisions while they are in high school, and they tend to follow their parents' instructions to please them and make them feel good. They do not question their parents' choices and view them as being set possibilities.

Students often find it challenging to express their choice of subjects due to the additional strictness and condescending attitude of parents. Conversely, a nurturing and strong bond between parents and children simplifies the process for young individuals to make informed decisions regarding their chosen paths, ultimately leading to a fulfilling and content life [16]. As a result, it was thought that there was an urgent need to educate parents. Focus group meetings were held to educate parents and to also tell them of the value of making well-informed decisions. This parent-child pair was more significant, particularly in regards to children's self-concept than those pupils who weren't exposed to parental sensitization in the study because of the parents' favorable attitudes about the children.

Students paired with sensitized parents will have better self-concept than students

paired with non-sensitized parents:

An alternative hypothesis suggests that children with sensitive parents would possess a higher self-concept compared to children paired with parents who are less attuned to their needs. Parents who are sensitive and aware of their parental and guiding responsibilities support their children in making informed decisions and planning for their future careers. Family communication is strongly connected to the children's present or future professional actions more so than any other demographic component, according to studies conducted in the mid-fifties and afterward [18].

The aspirations of parents are communicated to their children both verbally and nonverbally, which affects how they view various occupational fields. As a result, if parents recognize the value of their interaction and use it wisely, allowing children to choose their future subjects independently by their interest/aptitude and taking help to choose the right subject/career, it will be more productive, especially in the long run. On the other hand, it can result in children having a hazy sense of who they are and without the capacity to make wise decisions and self-confidence if parents restrict their ability to connect with their children to merely command, criticize and control [1].

In light of the interaction between professional development and human development, which results in successful lives and promotes a good sense of self, additional study has demonstrated that guidance programs are highly associated with increasing a person's self-image [19]. An individual's self-notion, according to is not static but rather a dynamic and evolving view of himself. While the environment and numerous social agents, like parents, continually influence a person's self-image, particularly in early adolescence, any instruction or aid regarding sensitizing parents may be more beneficial. Nonetheless, the rather stable self-image begins to emerge in late adolescence and persists through the latter stages of life [1].

Students paired with non-sensitized parents will perform better on self-concept than students alone:

After completing a career exploration program, kids in two separate situations (students paired with non-sensitized parents and students alone) were also compared, and it was shown that there was no significant difference in their performance on the self-concept measure. We therefore reject our prediction ($p=0.067$) that students performing in pairs with their parents will do better on self-concept than students performing alone. In these two groups, there is a mean difference (mean of students alone = 150.53 and mean of students paired with parents = 141.73), indicating that kids did better when they were alone than when they were with their parents. This result may be explained by the fact that parents may not have been as supportive and encouraging to children when they were paired up. Yet, students made career and subject decisions independently and with more assurance when they did it alone.

In the context of Pakistani society, there exists a prevailing expectation that men are responsible for making all decisions related to the household, family, and children, particularly within the middle and lower socioeconomic classes. This cultural norm perceives children as inexperienced, inept, vulnerable, and lacking in intelligence. Often, the unique personalities, interests, and abilities of both parents and children are overlooked. Instead of simply giving commands, parents need to offer guidance and collaboration to their children. Children who do not healthily engage with their parents and whose parents do not involve them in decision-making may struggle with a poor and unclear sense of self-identity. Our sample of fathers who participated in the experimental group (students paired with parents) was also from low socioeconomic backgrounds, had average educational backgrounds (mostly matric and F.A.), and were more conservative and unaware of counseling programs, which put the kids in a more vulnerable position because they were unable to express their thoughts during the career exploration session and left feeling more confused and dissatisfied.

Conclusion:

This study was designed to explore parental involvement in career exploration programs and its effect on the self-concept of high school students. For this sake experimental design was used on the sample of students and parents. Based on the research results, our employed intervention, which involved sensitive parents participating in job exploration programs with their high school students, has been demonstrated to be effective. As a consequence of this intervention, the children's self-concept becomes more defined. The results indicated that students with sensitive parents group also exhibited more distinct self-concepts than the students alone and the students paired with parents group on the self-concept scale.

Limitations and Recommendations:

Based on the above study following limitations were found which future researchers should keep in mind.

- The sample was chosen from just two cities of Pakistan (Rawalpindi and Islamabad), future researchers should cover more cities to make it more representative to our general public.
- In this study, only fathers participated with their kids, but it is suggested to involve both parents in future research.
- Along with self-concept, other personal variables like self-motivation, commitment etc. can be explored.

Implications:

In Pakistan, we have a dire need to establish career counseling centers in each school, especially in public schools where counselors involve parents in the career decision-making process of students. Schools' administration should incorporate the findings of this study in their schools for student's understanding of career-related aptitudes and readiness. Policymakers can make policies regarding the availability of career-related guidance at government-level schools.

This study fills a critical knowledge gap about how parental involvement in career exploration programs affects high school students' self-concept. The study seeks to shed light on this relationship to enhance career counseling techniques, improve educational practices, and contribute to the general success and well-being of adolescents as they travel the difficult path of career decision-making and self-discovery.

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