

# Impact of Parental Pressure on Children's Cognitive Development and Well-Being: Bridging the Gap Between Expectations and Education

Dr(h.c.) Nilesh H Kale<sup>1</sup>, Mrs. Saroj N Kale<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Director and Educator at Edusan Foundation*

<sup>2</sup>*Educator, Mount Litera Zee School, Besa-Ghogali, Nagpur*

**Abstract**—These days, a lot of parents are becoming really focused on how well their children are doing in school. It is like they are putting all their attention on grades and academic success. While it is natural for parents to want their kids to do well, sometimes they go over the top. They set very high or unrealistic expectations, hoping their kids will get perfect grades, excel in every subject, or be the best at everything. But this can actually be harmful. When parents expect too much, it can cause a lot of pressure for their children. Kids might feel like they have to live up to these impossible standards, which can lead to stress, anxiety, and a fear of failure. This constant pressure can also make them feel like they are not good enough or that their worth is only tied to their academic performance. Instead of growing into confidence, well-rounded individuals, kids might start to feel overwhelmed and unsure of themselves. Their mental health and overall happiness can suffer, and they might not develop important life skills like resilience, creativity, and emotional intelligence. The rise in competitive schooling systems like CBSE, ICSE and State Board from an early age reflects parents' desire for their children to excel academically. However, many parents, especially those who work and belong to the middle class, do not keep up with changing educational trends, teaching methods focused on the child, and individual learning styles. This disconnect can lead to academic overload from too much tutoring and outside coaching. As a result, children experience stress, anxiety, and a loss of motivation. This study looks at the reasons behind these issues, the consequences, and the gaps between parents and school management. It insists the importance of teacher training, parental programs, and accountability within schools. The research also suggests practical measures to create a friendly and supportive learning environment for children.

**Index Terms**—Parental Expectations, Child Psychology, Cognitive Development, Holistic Education, School Management, Teacher Training, State Board Students, CBSE, ICSE, Academic Stress, Middle-Class Education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has undergone a paradigm shift from rote-based learning to integrated, activity-based, and competency-oriented learning. Despite these reforms, parental perception of education continues to be largely examination-centric and competitive. Many parents equate early academic acceleration with future success, leading to the imposition of excessive expectations on children from a very young age.

Working parents, in particular, often struggle to keep pace with changing educational frameworks and pedagogical approaches. As a result, decision-making regarding children's education is frequently driven by social comparison, peer pressure, and misinformation rather than a scientific understanding of child psychology, individual intelligence, and interest areas.

The research by Deb et al. (2015) indicates that a significant majority of students report experiencing parental pressure related to their academic performance [Pradeep Kumar Sharma, Prof. (Dr.) Vineeta Gupta, irjhis.com]. Kaynak et al. (2021) define parental academic pressure as the imposition of pressure for achieving unrealistically high academic standards and emphasize its detrimental effects on students' overall well-being. Furthermore, Hosseinkhani et al. (2020) underscore the considerable impact that pressure from family members can have on teenagers' mental health,

suggesting it can be the most influential source of stress for this age group [irjhis.com]. These researchers provide crucial empirical evidence that not only confirms the widespread experience of parental pressure but also illuminates its potential consequences, particularly concerning academic

performance and mental health [Pradeep Kumar Sharma , Prof. (Dr.) Vineeta Gupta, irjhis.com]. To further illustrate the multifaceted nature of parental pressure, This Table provides a summary of its various forms along with illustrative examples drawn from the research.

Table: Forms of Parental Pressure and Examples

Form of Pressure	Illustrative Examples
Academic	Relating children’s present behavior in the early education, with future career. Expecting consistent and higher score in each grade. Further comparing children’s academic performance with others children’s.
Social	Prioritizing decision of relatives or others instead of children’s willingness. Over-expectation from children, how to make them different and imparting unique character than others. Fact is every child has own uniqueness, need is to understand it.
Career	Pre-assumption of students area of interest at school level with future professional career and to be adhere and plan for the same. In some cases forcing our decision about the career development to children’s before their maturity or at middle-school education.
Extracurricular	Expecting more participation in sports and art and related activities.
Direct	To express nervous approach about academic performance and lacks of appreciation.
Indirect	Comparison with siblings.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Parental over-consciousness and unrealistic academic expectations, combined with inadequate communication between school management and parents, lead to psychological stress, reduced self-confidence, and overburdening of children. The absence of structured parental orientation and uniform teacher training further elevates misunderstanding regarding integrated learning practices, resulting in unnecessary dependence on private tuition and external academic pressure.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the impact of parental over-expectations on children’s psychological and academic development.
- To examine the role of school management in addressing parent-school communication gaps.
- To evaluate teacher preparedness for holistic and inclusive pedagogy.
- To study the effectiveness of integrated learning practices in schools.

- To understand the challenges faced by middle-class working parents.
- To propose advocacy measures for holistic child development.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework guiding this study explains the dynamic relationship between parental expectations, institutional mediation, and children’s developmental outcomes.

Independent Variable:

Parental over-consciousness and over-expectation, including excessive focus on academic performance, early competition, social comparison, and unnecessary reliance on tuition.

Mediating Variables :

School management practices and teacher preparedness mediate the relationship between parental expectations and children’s outcomes. These include parental induction programs, communication mechanisms, curriculum regulation, professional teacher training, and availability of psychological support.

**Moderating Variables :**

Educational NGOs and the socio-economic context of families act as moderating variables, influencing the intensity and direction of parental pressure by providing awareness, advocacy, counseling, and community-level support.

**Dependent Variable :**

Children’s psychological well-being and holistic development, reflected in emotional security, intrinsic motivation, self-confidence, social skills, creativity, and sustained engagement with learning.

This framework is theoretically grounded in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological perspective, Vygotsky’s developmental theory, and Self-Determination Theory, emphasizing the need for alignment between expectations and developmental realities.

- Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the interaction between family, school, and societal expectations in child development.
- Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Theory, highlighting the importance of developmentally appropriate learning environments [https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/theory].
- Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan), focusing on autonomy, competence, and relatedness as determinants of intrinsic motivation [https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/theory].

**Case Studies:**

**Case Study 1: Early Academic Pressure in Lower Grades**

A Grade 2 to Grade 6 student enrolled in a CBSE school was subjected to daily tuition after school hours due to parental fear of academic lag. Despite satisfactory school performance, the child developed anxiety, reluctance to attend school, and declining interest in learning.

**Case Study 2: Misinterpretation of Activity-Based Learning**

Due to inadequate school communication, the child was enrolled in multiple coaching classes, leading to exhaustion and reduced creativity.

**III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research follows a qualitative analytical framework and Secondary data.

Research Design: Descriptive and qualitative

Sample Size: [Location Nagpur – Maharashtra]

Parents: 800

Teacher’s: 70

School Administrators: 20

Data Collection Tools:

Structured questionnaires

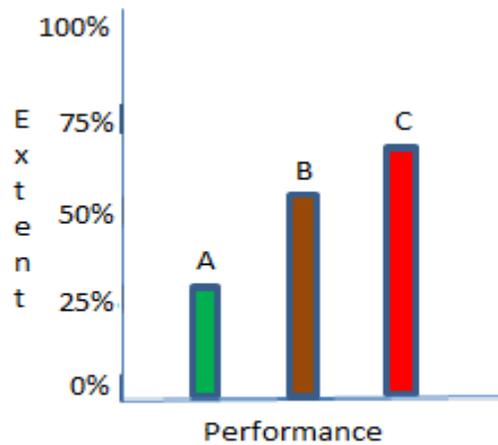
Observation of classroom practices

Sampling Method: Purposive sampling

Data Analysis: Thematic and comparative analysis

**1. Data and Discussion**

The data revealed that:



**Fig. DATA ANALYSIS**

- A: Only 25% understood integrated learning objectives.
- B: 65% believed tuition was mandatory for success.
- C: Over 70% of parents feared academic failure despite average or above-average child performance.
- Teachers reported pressure to “complete syllabus” rather than strengthen foundational concepts.

These findings indicate a strong correlation between parental anxiety and academic overburdening of children.

**Role of School Management**

School management occupies a central position in shaping institutional culture, pedagogical practice, and parent–school relationships. Its responsibilities extend beyond academic administration to include child welfare, parental awareness, and teacher preparedness.

### 1. Parental Induction and Orientation Programs

School management must mandatory parental induction programs at the time of admission and at key transitional stages of schooling. These programs should:

- Familiarize parents with the school's educational philosophy, curriculum framework, and assessment methods primarily.
- Address to Parents through organizing experts seminars.
- Explain the rationale behind integrated, activity-based, and experiential learning approaches.
- Address common parental anxieties related to academic competition, examination performance, and future career prospects.
- Emphasize age-appropriate learning expectations and developmental milestones.

Such structured orientation can significantly reduce misconceptions regarding syllabus coverage and the perceived necessity of external tuition.

### 2. Transparent and Continuous Communication Mechanisms

A major contributor to parental over-expectation is the lack of consistent and meaningful communication between schools and families. School management should:

- Establish regular parent-teacher interactions focused on developmental progress rather than marks alone
- Share clear learning outcomes, rubrics, and evaluation criteria
- Utilize digital platforms, newsletters, and workshops to communicate academic and co-curricular objectives
- Encourage two-way dialogue that allows parents to express concerns and receive evidence-based guidance

Effective communication builds trust and prevents reactive decision-making driven by fear or misinformation.

### 3. Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teachers are frontline mediators between institutional goals and student experiences. School management must ensure:

- Continuous professional development programs aligned with child psychology, inclusive education, and differentiated instruction

- Grade-specific training that recognizes developmental variability across age groups
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess teacher preparedness and classroom practices
- Ethical and empathetic use of language and behavior in classrooms

Well-trained teachers are better equipped to nurture foundational skills, foster confidence, and manage diverse learner needs without resorting to excessive academic pressure.

### 4. Curriculum Implementation and Academic Load Regulation

School leadership must actively regulate curriculum delivery to prevent academic overload, particularly in early grades. This includes:

- Prioritizing conceptual clarity and foundational skills over syllabus completion.
- Integrating play-based, inquiry-driven, and collaborative learning strategies.
- Designing homework policies that are purposeful and developmentally appropriate.
- Ensuring alignment between instructional practices and assessment methods.

Such regulation reinforces a child-centered approach and safeguards psychological well-being.

### 5. Psychological Support and Child Welfare Systems

Schools must recognize mental health as integral to educational success. Management should:

- Establish school counseling services or referral mechanisms
- Train teachers to identify early signs of stress, anxiety, and disengagement
- Promote a non-punitive, supportive school climate
- Collaborate with parents to address emotional and behavioral concerns

Institutionalizing child welfare systems affirms the school's commitment to holistic development.

### Role of Educational Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Educational NGOs act as critical support systems that complement formal schooling by addressing gaps in awareness, advocacy, and community engagement. Their role is particularly significant in reaching

middle-class and working parents who may lack access to professional educational guidance.

#### 1. Parental Awareness and Capacity-Building

NGOs can design and deliver structured awareness programs that:

- Educate parents on child development, learning diversity, and psychological health
- Demystify contemporary educational reforms and pedagogical practices
- Challenge societal norms that equate academic pressure with success
- Promote balanced expectations and supportive parenting practices

Such interventions empower parents to make informed, child-centric educational decisions.

#### 2. Advocacy for Child-Centered Educational Policies

NGOs play an essential advocacy role by:

- Engaging with policymakers, education departments, and school boards
- Highlighting the psychological consequences of excessive academic pressure
- Supporting the implementation of child-friendly policies at institutional and systemic levels
- Promoting accountability mechanisms within schools

Through sustained advocacy, NGOs contribute to policy reforms that prioritize children's well-being.

#### 3. Research, Monitoring, and Documentation

Educational NGOs often undertake empirical research and field studies that:

- Document patterns of academic stress and parental behavior
- Assess the effectiveness of school-based interventions
- Generate evidence for policy recommendations
- Disseminate best practices across institutions

Such research strengthens the evidence base for reform-oriented educational practices.

#### 4. Collaboration with Schools and Communities

NGOs can serve as bridges between schools, families, and communities by:

- Partnering with schools to conduct workshops, counseling sessions, and training programs

- Facilitating community dialogues on education and mental health
- Supporting teachers and school leaders with external expertise
- Extending outreach to marginalized or underserved populations

Collaborative models enhance institutional capacity and social impact.

#### 5. Psychological and Counseling Support Services

Many NGOs specialize in child and adolescent mental health. Their contribution includes:

- Providing professional counseling services
- Training teachers and parents in basic psychological first aid
- Conducting stress-management and life-skills programs for students
- Establishing referral networks for specialized care

These services are crucial in preventing long-term psychological consequences.

#### Synergistic Role of Schools and NGOs

A coordinated partnership between schools and NGOs can create a sustainable ecosystem for holistic education. Such collaboration enables:

- Shared responsibility for child well-being
- Evidence-based parental engagement strategies
- Continuous professional support for educators
- Community-level transformation of educational attitudes

This synergy ensures that parental aspirations are aligned with developmental realities rather than competitive anxieties.

#### Role of Parent's

when parents take a supportive approach which insist encouragement, guidance, and a healthy balance between expectations and understanding, it can contribute in cognitive development.

#### Positive Reinforcement

- Supportive parents focus on effort rather than just results. By praising persistence, creativity, and problem-solving, they encourage a growth mindset, which helps children believe that intelligence and skills can be developed over time. This approach boosts confidence and cognitive resilience.

#### Encouraging Autonomy

- Supportive parents allow children to make decisions, solve problems, and explore the world on their own. This fosters independent thinking and boosts cognitive flexibility. Autonomy helps children feel more in control, which can lead to more active engagement in learning.

#### Realistic Expectations

- Setting achievable goals and guiding children to meet those goals without imposing overwhelming pressure creates a more balanced and realistic learning environment. This allows children to experience success and failure in a healthy way, without the fear of severe punishment or rejection.

#### The Role of Parents in Supporting School Management and Beliefs

The relationship between parents and school management also plays a significant role in children's cognitive development. Parents who work with educators and participate in school-related activities contribute to a more supportive educational environment.

#### A. Collaboration with Schools

- Parent-teacher communication ensures that children's educational needs are met and that the parents understand the learning processes at school. This collaboration helps parents provide the right kind of support at home, reinforcing what children learn at school.
- When parents are involved in school activities—like attending parent-teacher conferences or volunteering they can influence the school's approach to learning, helping to ensure that their child's education is well-rounded and nurturing.

#### B. Belief in Education

- Parents who hold strong beliefs in the value of education and communicate these beliefs to their children can instill a lifelong love of learning. Children whose parents emphasize the importance of knowledge and intellectual growth are more likely to take school seriously, which directly impacts their cognitive development.

#### C. Creating a Balanced Approach to Schoolwork

- A key aspect of supporting school management is encouraging a balance between academic achievement and personal well-being. Parents

who understand the importance of downtime and mental health are more likely to promote a healthy relationship with school, preventing burnout and cognitive fatigue.

#### Advocacy and Suggested Measures

- Mandatory parental orientation at the time of admission.
- Continuous teacher training monitored by education departments.
- Clear communication of learning outcomes and assessment methods.
- Reduction of academic load in early grades.
- Counseling support for parents and children.
- Regulation of unnecessary tuition culture.

## IV. CONCLUSION

To help children grow and learn in the best way, it's important that schools, parents, and other groups like NGOs work together. When they all join forces, it creates an environment that supports children not just in their studies, but also in their emotional and personal growth.

Schools and NGOs or support groups can help by sharing the responsibility of caring for the child's well-being. They can give parents helpful ways to support their children at home, and they can make sure teachers have the right tools to do their jobs well. This teamwork helps to change how we all think about education, focusing on the child as a whole, not just as a student.

Parents also play a key role. When parents encourage their children's efforts, let them make decisions, and set realistic goals, it helps children develop a positive attitude toward learning. Parents who are involved in their children's school life also help to create a better learning environment for everyone. Transparent and crystal clear communication between parents and school academic structure, helps to bridge the gap between expectations and education thereby positive development of every children's.

Ultimately, by working together schools, parents, and support groups we can build a system where children are not only ready for school but also for life. This system will support their emotional health, help them balance school with their well-being, and set them up for success in the future.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development*. Harvard University Press.
- [2] NCERT (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Government of India.
- [3] Piaget, J. (1972). *The Psychology of the Child*. Basic Books.
- [4] Anne Joesph. <https://scientificorigin.com/how-to-foster-a-collaborative-relationship-between-parents-and-educators-in-supporting-children-with-disabilities>
- [5] Banggawan, L. M. (2013) "Parents' Role in Enhancing the Academic Performance of Students in the Study of Mathematics in Tabuk City, Philippines.
- [6] Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York, NY: Plenum.
- [7] Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227-268.
- [8] Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.
- [9] Patel, V & Pooja, K.(2021). Impact of Parental Pressure on children's psychological well-being in India. *Journal of Child Psychology and Education*, 12(4), 57-65.
- [10] Deb, S., Strodl, E., & Sun, H. (2015). Academic stress, parental pressure, anxiety and mentalhealth among Indian high school students. *International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Science*, 5(1), 26-34.
- [11] Pradeep Kumar Sharma, Prof. (Dr.) Vineeta Gupta, *Parental Pressure and Critical Thinking: A Struggled Balance*, *International Research Journal of Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies* ([www.irjhis.com](http://www.irjhis.com)), ISSN: 2582-8568, Volume: 6, Issue: 4, Year: April 2025, Page No: 148-159,
- [12] Chowdhuray,S., & Dey, S.(2019). The effect of academic stress and parental expectations on the cognitive development of children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 31(2), 45-59.
- [13] Miller, S.M., & Fishbein, M. (2007). The Influence of parental expectations on academic achievement: A longitudinal study. *Educational researcher*, 36(8), 379-378.
- [14] Psychology Today. (2020). The dangers of excessive parental pressure on childre's development. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/parental-pressure-children>.
- [15] Hosseinkhani, Z., Hassanabadi, H. R., Parsaeian, M., Karimi, M., & Nedjat, S. (2020). AcademicStress and Adolescents Mental Health: A Multilevel Structural Equation Modeling (MSEM) Study in Northwest of Iran. *Journal of research in health sciences*, 20(4), e00496
- [16] Bhoi, C., & Patra, B. (2025). Early Learning Redefined: Analyzing the Pedagogical Shifts in Pre-Primary Education in NEP 2020. *Journal of Education Method and Learning Strategy*, 3(02), 185–199.
- [17] Parenting Science. (2018). How parental pressure affect children's mental health and learning abilities. Retrieved from <https://www.parentingscience.com/parental-pressure>
- [18] <https://nel.moe.edu.sg/vsld/>
- [19] <https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/theory>
- [20] CBSE Academic Framework Guidelines, Ministry of Education, India.
- [21] UNICEF (2019). *Child Well-Being and Education*.