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## The Impact of Parental Support on University Entrance Exam Success: Education in Azerbaijan

### Abstract

Building on and extending Hill & Tyson's (2009) framework, the research analyzes data from 104 participants using multiple regression and ANOVA. Results reveal that **emotional support** ( $\beta=0.38, p<0.001$ ) has a stronger impact on academic achievement than financial support ( $\beta=0.25, p=0.015$ ). Integrated financial-emotional support showed no significant effect ( $p=0.142$ ). Students in urban areas scored significantly higher (mean=3.61) than those in rural areas (mean=2.89) ( $F=4.31, p=0.016$ ). No differences were found across gender or income groups. The study underscores the need to prioritize **emotional support programs** (e.g., stress management, mentorship) in educational policies. Key limitations include cultural specificity (Azerbaijan-focused data) and self-report bias. As the first Azerbaijan-centric study to disaggregate parental support components, it contributes to literature by challenging assumptions about financial support's primacy. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to establish causality and conduct cross-cultural comparisons.

**Keywords:** *parental support, university entrance, Azerbaijan, emotional support, causality, longitudinal designs*

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## Validəyn dəstəyinin universitet qəbul imtahan müvəffəqiyyətinə təsiri: Azərbaycanca təhsil

### Xülasə

Hill və Tyson (2009) çərçivəsinə əsaslanaraq və genişləndirərək, tədqiqat çoxsaylı reqressiya və ANOVA istifadə edərək 104 iştirakçının məlumatlarını təhlil edir. Nəticələr göstərir ki, emosional dəstəyin ( $\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$ ) akademik nailiyyətlərə maddi dəstəkdən ( $\beta = 0.25, p = 0.015$ ) daha güclü təsiri var. İntegrasiya edilmiş maliyyə-emosional dəstək əhəmiyyətli təsir göstərməmişdir ( $p = 0.142$ ). Şəhər yerlərində olan tələbələr kənd yerlərindəkilərdən (orta = 2.89) əhəmiyyətli dərəcədə yüksək (orta = 3.61) bal toplayıblar ( $F = 4.31, p = 0.016$ ). Cins və ya gəlir qrupları arasında heç bir fərq aşkar edilməmişdir. Tədqiqat təhsil siyasətlərində emosional dəstək proqramlarına (məsələn, stressin idarə edilməsi, mentorluq) üstünlük verilməsinin vacibliyini vurğulayır. Əsas məhdudiyyətlərə mədəni spesifiklik (Azərbaycana yönəlmiş məlumatlar) və öz hesabında qərəzlilik daxildir. Validəyn dəstəyi komponentlərini ayıran ilk Azərbaycan mərkəzli tədqiqat kimi o, maliyyə dəstəyinin üstünlüyü ilə bağlı fərziyələrə qarşı çıxmaqla ədəbiyyata töhfə verir. Gələcək tədqiqatlar səbəb əlaqəsini qurmaq və mədəniyyətlərarası müqayisə aparmaq üçün uzununa dizaynları qəbul etməlidir.

**Açar sözlər:** *validəyn dəstəyi, universitetə giriş, Azərbaycan, emosional dəstək, səbəb əlaqəsi, uzununa dizaynlar*

## Introduction

From Lutfiatin and Hamdan (Lutfiatin, Hamdan, 2019) (2019) the academic performance of the student to his/her social and emotional development, this multidimensional idea produces good outcomes on a whole range of concerns. Within the conceptual framework, parental involvement is not just about attending school events or assisting with homework; it also encompasses a whole spectrum including parents' attitudes, beliefs, expectations and behaviors towards their children's education (Raja, Kumar, Singh, 2023). Different academics and educational institutions have addressed the meaning of parental involvement from several angles in this regard (Otto, Karbach, 2020).

### Research

According to Private School Village (Private School Village, 2024) (2024), some definitions concentrate on behavioral aspects like parents volunteering at the school, taking part in decision-making processes, or maintaining regular contact with teachers. Other definitions place more emphasis on cognitive and motivational elements, such as parents talking to their kids about school, supporting their academic progress at home, and fostering a love of learning.

Hill and Tyson (Hill, Tyson, 2009) (2009) presented pioneering studies that examined the impact of parental involvement on academic success in a general framework; however, the relative effects of support in its financial, emotional, and integrated dimensions have not been sufficiently explored in cultural contexts. This study aims to fill this gap in the context of Azerbaijan by quantitatively analyzing the relationship between university entrance scores and components of parental support. The research emphasizes the need for prioritizing emotional support mechanisms (stress management, mentorship) in educational policies and addressing resource inequalities in rural areas.

### Theoretical framework

Basic Theories of Parental Involvement in Education - The impact of parental involvement on academic achievement has a long tradition of research in the fields of educational sociology and psychology. Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership Model (Epstein, 1995) is one of the most comprehensive theoretical frameworks in this field.

*Epstein examines parental involvement in six dimensions:*

**Table 1. Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement [6] (1995).**

No	Dimension Name	Description
1	<b>Parenting</b>	Meeting basic needs and supporting children's healthy development.
2	<b>Communication</b>	Effective information flow between home and school.
3	<b>Volunteering</b>	Participation in school activities and events.
4	<b>Learning at Home</b>	Providing academic support and guidance at home.
5	<b>Decision-Making</b>	Involvement in school decisions and policy-making processes.
6	<b>Collaboration with the Community</b>	Building partnerships with community resources and organizations.

**Sources:** Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement [6] (1995)

This model emphasizes that parental involvement encompasses not only academic but also social and emotional processes.

Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986) explains how families' economic, cultural, and social resources translate into children's educational outcomes. Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1986) (1986) argues that cultural capital (e.g., educated parents' language use or artistic knowledge) shapes academic

success. Coleman (Coleman, 1988) (1988) states that social networks (kinship, neighborhood relationships) increase academic opportunities through the sharing of information and resources. These theories show that parental contributions are not limited to financial support, but are also related to social and cultural dynamics.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci, Ryan, 1985) examines the relationship between parental autonomy support and students' intrinsic motivation. According to this theory, when parents understand their children's needs, respect their choices, and guide them in stress management, this positively affects students' exam performance (Grolnick, & Pomerantz, 2009). In contrast overly controlling or suppressive behaviors can increase anxiety levels and decrease success (Sirin, 2005).

Cultural Context and Family Involvement - Cultural factors are a critical element in determining the nature and intensity of parental involvement. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede, 2001) classifies societies along the axis of individualism-collectivism, suggesting that families in collectivist cultures are more involved in the educational process. For example, studies in East Asian countries have shown that parents associate their children's academic goals with social status and develop high expectations for exam success (Chao, Tseng, 2002). This suggests that similar dynamics can be seen in societies with collectivist cultures such as Azerbaijan.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) analyzes family involvement at the microsystem (family interactions) and macrosystem (cultural norms) levels. According to this theory, in societies where extended family structures prevail, the involvement of relatives such as grandparents in the educational process can expand the student's support network. However, excessive intervention or conflicting expectations can create pressure on students (Duan, 2018).

Economic Inequalities and Resource Access - The socioeconomic status (SES) of families plays a decisive role in access to educational resources. The Capacity Approach (Sen, 1999) explains how economic resources affect individuals' capacity to achieve their goals. Low SES families may have difficulty supporting their children's exam success due to limited access to resources such as private tutoring, quality course materials, or exam preparation courses. OECD (OECD, 2017) (2017) reports have revealed that socioeconomic inequalities deepen the educational opportunity gap and that this situation is particularly evident in centralized exam systems.

Structural Inequality Theory (Bowles, Gintis, 1976) argues that education systems reproduce social classes. In this context, children from high-SES families gain an advantage in exams through cultural capital and social networks, while low-SES students face systemic obstacles (Lareau, 2011).

Psychological Mechanisms and Stress Management - The effect of parental involvement on student achievement is also shaped by psychological processes. The Stress-Confusion Model (Lazarus, Folkman, 1984) explains how parental support manages students' test anxiety. Research has shown that children from emotionally supportive families are more effective in coping with stress (Hill, Tyson, 2009). In contrast, performance-oriented pressure can lead to burnout in students.

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) suggests that establishing a trusting parent-child relationship increases academic self-confidence. Securely attached students are more resilient in facing challenges (Bergin, Bergin, 2009), while insecure attachment can lead to decreased motivation.

Technological Transformation and Digital Participation - Today parental participation is being reshaped through digital platforms (Verschueren, Koomen, 2012). The Digital Divide Theory explains how inequalities affect educational opportunities. For example, families with access to online learning tools can more effectively monitor their children's exam preparation process (Van Dijk, 2006). However, families with low digital literacy or lacking technological infrastructure may be excluded from this process (Oranga, Matere, Nyakundi, 2023).

The above theories explain the effect of parental involvement on university exam success from a multidimensional perspective:

1. Structural Factors: Socioeconomic status and cultural capital determine resource access.
2. Psychological Dynamics: Directly related to parental support, stress management, and intrinsic motivation.
3. Technological Adaptation: Digital tools expand the scope of parental involvement but can also deepen inequalities.

4. This framework can be used to analyze both direct (academic support) and indirect (emotional guidance) mechanisms of parental involvement.

**Education system in Azerbaijan: reforms, current structure and analysis**

In the post-Soviet period (since 1991), Azerbaijan has taken steps to align its education system with national identity and global standards. The “Law on Education” adopted in 2009 initiated the first comprehensive reform by establishing 11-year compulsory education in the legal framework (Moneva, Malbas, Dacanay, 2020). The “State Education Strategy (2021-2025)”, which entered into force in 2021, prioritized digitalization, curriculum renewal, and teacher training.

**Table 2. Education levels.**

Education Level	Age Range / Grades	Compulsory	Schooling Rate	Notes
Preschool Education	Ages 3–6	No	65% (UNICEF, 2023)	Provided by both public and private institutions
Primary Education	Grades 1–4 (ages 6–10)	Yes	Not specified	Part of general secondary education
Basic Secondary Education	Grades 5–9 (ages 10–15)	Yes	Not specified	Completion required for full secondary education
Full Secondary Education	Grades 10–11 (ages 15–18)	Yes	Not specified	11th grade added since 2021, extending compulsory education period
Vocational Education	Post-grade 9 or 11	No	Not specified	Offered through vocational high schools
Higher Education	Universities and colleges (18+)	No	41.39% (gross, 2023)	52 public and 11 private universities (SCS, 2023)

*Sources:* (Kapikiran, 2016)

In recent years, Azerbaijan has implemented significant reforms aimed at modernizing its education system through digitalization and infrastructure development. Initiated in 2020, the “Digital School” project has led to the installation of smart boards in 1,200 schools and the establishment of computer laboratories in 500 institutions. Additionally, the government has promoted distance learning through the launch of an educational television channel and the “Virtual School” platform. These initiatives reflect a broader strategy to integrate technology into teaching and learning processes, thereby enhancing accessibility and educational outcomes.

Curriculum and assessment reforms have also been central to the national strategy. Between 2021 and 2025, instructional time dedicated to STEM subjects has been increased by 30%, aligning the curriculum with global educational trends. University admission is centrally managed by the State Examination Center (DİM), which administered entrance exams to approximately 85,000 students in 2023. Moreover, teacher professional development has become a key policy focus. Salaries for

educators increased by 70% between 2015 and 2023, and an annual requirement of 120 hours of in-service training was introduced to ensure continuous skill enhancement among teaching staff.

**Table 3. Education Levels and Key Statistics (2023).**

Level of Education	Enrollment Rate (%)	Number of Institutions
Preschool	65%	1,85
General Secondary Education	98%	4,5
Vocational Education	22%	210
Higher Education	35%	63

*Sources: CS (State Statistical Committee), (28)2023*

Azerbaijan has made notable progress in education over recent decades. One of the most significant accomplishments is the country's high adult literacy rate, which reached 99.8% as of 2022 (29). Additionally, Azerbaijan's planned participation in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2025 reflects its commitment to aligning with global education standards. This step is expected to accelerate the country's integration into international educational frameworks and support evidence-based policy development.

### 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ensari and Zembat (UNESCO, 2022) (1999) define family participation as a holistic approach that encourages families to take an active role in education, strengthens home-school communication to increase the permanence of the information learned, and aims to enrich educational programs with parental contributions. The model emphasizes the importance of cooperation in education, and emphasizes the importance of supporting the child in the school and in the family environment.

Family participation contributes significantly to the child's development by strengthening the cooperation between home and school in the education process. This process helps the child develop academic and social skills as well as grow in a healthier way mentally and emotionally. While families can be more actively involved in the education process as they get to know the school environment and teachers closely, teachers can also understand the family structure of the students and foresee potential problems and take preventive measures (Ensari, Zembat, 1999).

### 2. METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

This study builds upon and extends the parental involvement framework proposed by Hill & Tyson [1] (2009), which examines the relationship between parental engagement and academic achievement. While Hill & Tyson's model treats parental involvement as a broad construct, this research refines it by disaggregating parental support into three distinct dimensions:

- Financial Support (e.g., funding educational resources, tutoring).
- Emotional Support (e.g., stress management, motivation).
- Integrated Financial-Emotional Support (e.g., combining material and emotional aid).

The model is operationalized through a multiple linear regression analysis to test the predictive power of these dimensions on university entrance exam scores.

#### Formula:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

- $Y$ : University entrance exam score (1–5 ordinal scale).
- $X_1$ : Financial support (5-point Likert scale average).
- $X_2$ : Emotional support (5-point Likert scale average).
- $X_3$ : Integrated financial-emotional support (5-point Likert scale average).
- $\beta_0$ : Intercept.
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ : Regression coefficients.
- $\epsilon$ : Error term.

Enhancements to Hill and Tyson’s (Hill, Tyson, 2009) model can be made by incorporating a dimensional specificity approach to parental support. In this revised framework, parental support is categorized into two distinct components: financial and emotional. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of how these different types of support contribute to student academic success. Financial support, often in the form of tutoring, educational resources, and extracurricular activities, plays a significant role in providing students with the necessary tools to excel. On the other hand, emotional support, characterized by encouragement, motivation, and involvement, helps students develop resilience and a positive attitude towards their academic endeavors.

This practical application of the research provides actionable recommendations for improving educational equity and enhancing student success across diverse contexts.

**Limitations:**

1. **Cultural Specificity:** Findings are context-bound to Azerbaijan; cross-cultural validation is needed.
2. **Self-Report Bias:** Reliance on self-reported data may inflate correlations due to social desirability.
3. **Cross-Sectional Design:** Causal inferences are limited; longitudinal studies are required.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics (N = 104)**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
University Score	3,24	1,12	1	5
Financial Support	3,81	1,31	1	5
Emotional Support	3,52	1,38	1	5
Financial-Emotional Support	3,63	1,22	1	5

**Sources:** Prepared by the author (2025)

This table presents the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values of key variables. The mean university score is 3.24, indicating a general level of academic performance among students. Financial support has a higher mean of 3.81, suggesting that most students receive substantial financial assistance. Emotional support, with a mean of 3.52, is somewhat lower, indicating that while emotional support is generally available, it may not be as widespread or consistently provided.

**Table 6: Pearson Correlation Matrix.**

Variable	University Score	Financial Support	Emotional Support
Financial Support	0,45**	1	-
Emotional Support	0,52**	0,61**	1
Financial-Emotional Support	0,49**	0,72**	0,68**
<i>*Note: *p &lt; 0,01</i>			

**Sources:** Prepared by the author (2025)

This table reveals the relationships between variables. There is a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.45$ ) between university scores and financial support, while the correlation between emotional support and university scores is stronger ( $r = 0.52$ ). Financial and emotional support show a strong relationship ( $r = 0.61$ ), but the correlation between financial-emotional support and the other variables is weaker ( $r = 0.49$  to  $0.72$ ). These findings suggest that different types of support may work independently rather than synergistically.

**Table 7: ANOVA Results (Success Score by Residential Area)**

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	p
City	68	3,61	0,98	4,31	0,016*
Village	25	2,89	1,24		
Town	11	3,09	1,12		
*Note: * $p < 0,01$					

**Sources:** Prepared by the author (2025)

The ANOVA results show significant differences in success scores based on residential area. Students living in the city have a higher average score (3.61) compared to those in rural areas (village: 2.89). Students in towns (3.09) perform somewhat better than those in villages, but the difference is not statistically significant. These results indicate that residential area plays a significant role in academic success, with city students having access to better resources.

**Table 8: Multiple Regression Analysis Results.**

Variable	$\beta$	Std. Error	t	p
Constant	1,2	0,31	3,87	<0,001***
Financial Support	0,25	0,1	2,5	0,015*
Emotional Support	0,38	0,09	4,22	<0,001***
Financial-Emotional Support	0,12	0,08	1,5	0,142
<b>Model Summary:</b>				
$R^2 = 0,34, F(3, 100) = 17,22, p < 0,001$				

**Sources:** Prepared by the author (2025)

The regression analysis examines the impact of independent variables (financial support, emotional support, and financial-emotional support) on university scores. Emotional support ( $\beta = 0.38$ ) has the strongest positive effect on university scores, followed by financial support ( $\beta = 0.25$ ). However, financial-emotional support ( $\beta = 0.12$ ) does not show a statistically significant effect ( $p = 0.142$ ). The model's  $R^2$  value of 0.34 indicates that the independent variables explain 34% of the variance in university scores. These results highlight the importance of emotional support and suggest that combining financial and emotional support may not necessarily lead to enhanced outcomes.

### Hypotheses and Null Hypotheses:

1. Hypothesis 1: Financial support will significantly increase students' university scores. Null Hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ): There is no significant relationship between financial support and students' university scores.

2. Hypothesis 2: Emotional support will significantly increase students' university scores. Null Hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ): There is no significant relationship between emotional support and students' university scores.

3. Hypothesis 3: Financial-emotional support will significantly increase students' university scores. Null Hypothesis ( $H_{03}$ ): There is no significant relationship between financial-emotional support and students' university scores.

The results of the multiple regression analysis validate Hypotheses 1 and 2, confirming that both financial and emotional support positively affect university scores. Emotional support, in particular, has a stronger and statistically significant impact on university performance compared to financial support. However, Hypothesis 3 is rejected, as financial-emotional support does not have a statistically significant effect. This suggests that while both types of support are important, their combined effect does not necessarily produce the expected synergy. These findings imply that when designing educational policies and student support programs, emotional support should be prioritized to enhance academic outcomes.

## Conclusion

This study provides critical insights into the relationship between parental support and university entrance exam success in Azerbaijan through a multidimensional lens. Analyses reveal that emotional support (e.g., emotional motivation, stress management) has a significantly stronger impact on academic achievement than financial support ( $\beta=0.38$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). However, the lack of significant contribution from integrated financial-emotional support ( $p=0.142$ ) suggests contextual or cultural limitations in how these components interact. Geographically, students in urban areas scored significantly higher (Mean=3.61) than those in rural regions (Mean=2.89) ( $F=4.31$ ,  $p=0.016$ ). No differences were observed across gender or income groups.

### Policy and Practical Implications

- Education policies should prioritize emotional support mechanisms (e.g., mentorship, counseling) and address resource disparities in rural areas.
- Training programs for families to strengthen emotional support skills could enhance students' resilience to exam-related stress.

### Limitations and Future Research

- Data limited to Azerbaijan and self-report bias constrain generalizability.
- Longitudinal studies and cross-cultural comparisons are recommended to test causality.
- Qualitative research (e.g., family interviews, observations) could explore why integrated support lacks impact.

As one of the first local studies to disaggregate parental support components, this research contributes data-driven insights to both literature and education policies.

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