

# Parenting and Academic Socialization of Young Children: Sociocultural Context for Early Childhood Development in South Asian Families



Ziarat Hossain and Giovanna Eisberg

## Introduction

This chapter explores the sociocultural context of parenting and academic socialization of young children and its link to early childhood development in South Asian families. Parenting and early childhood development in South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan (known also as the Indian sub-continent, a geographic region of South Asia) today still are best understood within the tradition of multigenerational family and practices of parents', especially fathers', investment in children's education (Hossain & Atencio, 2017). The cultural belief structure of hegemonic sex roles underscores the father's masculine identity and his authority role and influence on children in these societies.

Conventional narratives suggest that both the mother and the father take active interest in children's education with the broader support of an extended family network. In particular, grandparents, aunts, and uncles play a major role in assisting parents to academically socialize young children (Babu, Hossain, Morales, & Shivani, 2018). South Asian parents, usually fathers, used to arrange a *guru* (learned man or teacher) for the child to learn computation (math), reading, writing, and life skills in early days. Nowadays, parents become actively engaged in sending their children to academic institutions (Sreekanth, 2010).

Noticeably, behavioral scientists have paid little attention to understand the nature and cultural context of parental academic socialization of young children in South Asian families. Keeping this in mind, this chapter elaborates on four themes as follows: (1) demographic and sociocultural contexts of families, (2) the conceptual and cultural underpinnings of parenting, (3) the roles mothers and fathers play in children's academic socialization, and (4) the influence of parental practices and engagement on early child development in South Asian families.

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Z. Hossain (✉) · G. Eisberg  
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, USA  
e-mail: [zhossain@unm.edu](mailto:zhossain@unm.edu)

## Demographic and Sociocultural Contexts of South Asian Families

Demographic analyses indicate that the current South Asian population of 1.69 billion is expected to rise to 2.32 billion by 2050 (World Bank, 2014). With 76% of the South Asian population, India is the most populous and culturally diverse country in this region, followed by Pakistan (11%) and Bangladesh (9%) (Asian Development Bank, 2018). The remaining 4% live in other South Asian countries such as Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Maldives. Whereas the majority of Indians are Hindus, the majority population in Bangladesh and Pakistan are Muslims (Babu et al., 2018). Almost one-third of the South Asian population is below the age of 15 years, and about 8% of the population is 60 years or older (Singh, Singh, & Arokiasamy, 2016). Early marriages, two-parent families, and extended networks are predominant family characteristics and social norms (Deosthale & Hennon, 2008). These demographic characteristics reinforce the assumption that the South Asian population is vast and young, and parents and extended family members together participate in children's socialization functions (United Nations, 2011). This chapter discusses research findings primarily derived from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan because about 96% of South Asians live in these three countries and they share common social and cultural aspects of parental practices regarding children's education and development.

Various South Asian cultural scripts encourage parents to play both actual and ceremonial roles in family socialization. For example, fathers and grandfathers assume the breadwinner and authority roles in the family (Hossain & Atencio, 2017). The practice of co-residence among grandparents, adult children, and grandchildren results from filial commitment as well as the necessity of social and economic reciprocity among family members. This practice leads to an "interdependent" conduit in that parents are morally responsible to socialize and take care of their children and in turn, adult children take care of their aged parents (Babu et al., 2018). South Asians usually conduct parenting functions within a marital relationship. Marriage (*nikah*), as an institution, provides a culturally appropriate pathway within which to raise children with good moral, academic, and social skills across South Asian families. Marriage dissolution and divorce are a rare occurrence, mostly because a deep sense of responsibility toward the well-being of their children inspires couples to maintain married and selfless lives. De Silva (2003) points out that conservative beliefs and social stigmas toward divorce are still strong throughout South Asia. For women, divorce is associated with discrimination and shame that often undermine their social status and family support (De Silva, 2003). Such negative consequences of divorce and the parental commitment to raise children together may explain why many South Asian parents tend to stay in difficult or unsatisfactory marital relationships (Idrus & Bennet, 2003).

Another set of cultural parameters that influence the parenting role are the hegemonic belief structures about masculinity, extended kin and flexible family boundary, and patrilineal hierarchy in the family (Hossain, 2013). These beliefs and

practices underline fathers' providing role for children and the family. Whereas the father or the grandfather has the patriarchal authority, the mother must observe domesticity and a subservient role in the family. Because factors such as women's education, nuclear family formation, and women's participation in the paid sectors have been influential in reshaping contemporary attitudes toward sex roles (Bhandari & Titzmann, 2017; Hussein, 2017), fathers and mothers show an increased level of collaboration and engagement in children's education (Hossain, 2018; Roopnarine & Gol-Guven, 2015). The traditional norm of a joint family system is still strong, however, and often safeguards the perpetuity of differential parenting roles in child development.

Religious beliefs strongly influence marriage and divorce practices in South Asian families. Hindu couples with *Sanatan* ideologies see marriage as an eternal engagement, and therefore, divorce is not conceivable (De Silva, 2003). Women are entrusted with keeping the marital life intact, and motherhood symbolizes women as powerful because they are a reincarnation of the Hindu goddess of wealth, *Laxmi* (Bhatt, 2008). However, the religious sentiment of the *Sita Syndrome* (self-sacrificing Hindu wife in the holy books *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*) encourages a woman to sacrifice her own well-being in order to follow her husband, raise children, and serve the family. In line with the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the *Manusmriti* (Laws of Manu – Hindu writings of social rules and men's and women's statuses) instruct women to obey their husbands (*pativrata*) and perform family chores (Roopnarine & Gol-Guven, 2015; Yunus, 2005).

The paradox is that women are considered to have divine power and imagery and yet are expected to submit to their husbands' authority and perform almost all household chores. A wife respects and manifests the profound value of marriage through fasts and prayers for the husband's health and well-being across religious groups. Although Islam allows divorce, the patriarchy often gives legal authorities and power to Muslim men, who often make divorce a difficult procedure for women (Quah, 2015). The Islamic *Sharia Law* (the Quranic interpretation of social rules and regulations) and the *Sunnah* (sayings and deeds of Prophet Mohammed) direct the mother and the father to be warm with and teach their children (Hossain & Juhari, 2015).

Because of the influence of the patriarchy and hegemonic sex-role ideologies, many Muslim men undervalue the Islamic teachings of equal parenting and delegate childrearing roles to their female counterparts (Hossain & Juhari, 2015). South Asians believe that marriage is a sacred union, and it elevates women's social status in society (Hossain, 2018). The motherhood through marriage ensures women's respectable status, and the fatherhood through marriage signifies a man's family lineage, authority, and community leadership roles. Both the mother and the father jointly offer an intact family environment for their children to grow and learn.

Although there is a rising trend in nuclear family formation, especially in urban areas, most South Asians still reside in joint and/or extended households (Roopnarine & Gol-Guven, 2015). Family members in a joint household pool economic resources and share family chores. Socioeconomic factors such as widespread poverty take a toll on parents' engagement in children's education. Approximately one-third of

South Asians (i.e., 560 millions) live in poverty, and an overwhelming proportion of these people survive with an income of less than \$2 per day (Asian Development Bank, 2018). Loss of agricultural jobs due to landlessness has resulted in the migration of millions of people who resort to the marginal or informal economic sectors (e.g., shoe-shiners, house-cleaners/cooks, bus conductors) in South Asian cities. Marginal sector occupations are characterized by extremely low incomes, insufficient or no pension income, and few opportunities for savings and insurance. The economic hardship perpetuates a cycle of poverty that abjures many parents an opportunity to engage with their young children (Babu et al., 2018).

Today, the social class divide, through the caste system and income differentials, also influences the levels and styles of parents' engagement with their children (Roopnarine, 2015). Lower-caste parents are usually poor but function in an environment that permits them to be highly engaged with their children. Upper-caste parents typically subscribe to the notion of a clearly defined sex role that delegates the task of raising young children to the mother or other hired or non-hired "help" in the family. Furthermore, factors such as urbanization, migration, post-industrial attitudes toward marriage and the family, and a growing sense of individualism have been causing a shift in the family support system for children (Alam & Karim, 2006). For example, increasing numbers of young family members leave home to seek jobs in larger cities, and women's participation in the paid workforce restrict their time to spend with their children.

Taken together, it is apparent that both the traditional norms and the evolving contexts of demographic, economic, and social changes have implications for parents' engagement in children's education in contemporary South Asian families (Singh et al., 2016). The norms of extended family and embedded identity, sense of parental duty, age-old traditional sentiments of family loyalty and obligation, and collective moral responsibility for family welfare provide the context for South Asian parents to socialize and educate their young children.

## **Conceptual and Cultural Underpinnings of Parenting**

Contemporary behavioral scientists have been using culturally appropriate methodological and theoretical paradigms (also known as ethno-theories) to understand parenting and early childhood development in ethnic minority, immigrant, and international families (Roopnarine, 2015). These newly emerging ethno-theories, such as the bioecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), underline family strengths within its own context and can help us understand how the context of parental beliefs, cultural norms, and environmental factors influence parent-child interactions in the family. In other words, parents provide the most intimate, instrumental, and caring environment for their children to learn. Bronfenbrenner described these resilient and sustained interaction patterns as proximal processes and provided empirical evidence that supported the idea that these interactions were potent predictors of child development and academic outcomes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris,

1998). Utilizing Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory as a conceptual guide, the discussion in this chapter underscores the ecological contexts including parental characteristics, cultural beliefs and practices, and socioeconomic conditions to grasp South Asian parents' academic socialization with their young children.

The tenets of the bioecological systems theory underscore how various contextual factors, such as one's family composition, cultural values and social support, economic conditions, and historical events, exert an important influence on parental roles in child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Five embedded subsystems (the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems) describe the reciprocal interactions between humans and their immediate as well as their extended environments. In line with this view, a child's own personality traits, parents' and peers' engagement, and both the home and school environment directly influence the nature of the child's school achievement and peer interactions. This interactionist and contextual view toward human growth and development has been applied to understand parent-child interactions and early childhood development across various cultural communities (Farnfield, 2008; Hossain & Atencio, 2017; Parke et al., 2004). For example, parents' personal well-being is linked to such factors as employment, marriage, and social networks; these factors, in turn, influence the course of parental engagement linked to children's behavior and development across cultural groups (Parke et al., 2004). More importantly, the constructs of the bioecological system theory have been shown to be relevant to immigrant and international families that value family solidarity, social support, and interdependent relations within various subsystems of family interactions (Hossain & Atencio, 2017). Environmental factors vary greatly across cultures and regions, and therefore, applying Bronfenbrenner's theory as a conceptual framework is appropriate to explain parents' engagement with their children's academic activities in South Asian families.

## Mothers' and Fathers' Roles in Children's Academic Socialization

Both cultural and religious scripts emphasize the importance of parents' engagement in children's education and academic achievement in South Asian families. The Hindu holy book (the *Vedas*) and the goddess of learning and knowledge (*Saraswati*) highlight the importance of education and instruct parents to take steps to educate children (Roopnarine & Gol-Guven, 2015). Hindu students from all academic institutions celebrate the annual *Saraswati puja* (worshipping goddess *Saraswati*) so that they receive Her blessings to do well in school. The students show their respect and gratitude toward the goddess by praying, singing, dancing, and offering *Prasada* (food) to the goddess. In fact, the *Saraswati puja* is a community event, and parents and teachers also participate in it.

The Hindu religious scriptures (the *Dharmasastra*) categorically instruct the father to play the role of teacher for his children (Roopnarine & Gol-Guven, 2015).

Likewise, the Muslim holy book (the *Qur'an*) and *Hadith* (written documents of the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad) unequivocally instruct a Muslim father to educate his sons and daughters equally (Hossain & Juhari, 2015). It is the father's sacred obligation to invest in children's education and welfare so that children grow up with knowledge and good moral values. These religious sentiments about the importance of parents' investment in children's education transcend SES and cultural groups in South Asia. As a result, parents, especially fathers, show strong interests in their children's education, inculcate the value of education in their children, and directly assist them with homework and school activities in South Asian countries.

## ***Bangladesh***

Correlational research suggested that variables such as fathers' age, the number of children in the family, length of marital relationship, and extra-familial support influenced the amount of time fathers spent in children's academic socialization at home in rural families (Hossain & Atencio, 2017). Parental education and marital union are important cultural values that promote parents' engagement in children's education in Bangladesh. In other words, traditional cultural norms underscore the importance of parental engagement in academic socialization within the marital relationship. Presumably, contemporary events and issues such as social media, education, and modernization encourage young fathers to engage actively with their children.

Both rural and urban mothers from lower-to-middle-income families spent more time in children's academic interactions at home than their counterparts did. Compared to fathers, rural and urban mothers spent about 53% and 62% more time each week in academic interactions with their children at home, respectively (Hossain & Atencio, 2017). This study further reported that rural and urban fathers spent about 6.4 and 11.4 hours each week to tend to their children's academic needs at home, respectively. In view with the tenets of the bioecological systems theory, routine proximal processes allow parents to use the available time for the continuity of parent-child academic interactions within the home environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

The above reported findings highlight the fact that urban parents spent more time in children's home-related academic work compared to rural parents in Bangladesh. Hossain and Atencio (2017) further reported that both rural and urban parents spent very little time in the areas of academic interactions at school. The prevailing socio-cultural values affirm the notion that teachers are a trusted authority and it is their responsibility to educate children within a school setting. Although Bangladeshi parents become less actively engaged in children's academic work in school environments, they extend their moral support to teachers by not engaging in classroom and school activities (Hossain & Juhari, 2015). Likewise, South Asian parents living in the United Kingdom participated less in children's school and classroom

activities, but they actively engaged in finding a good school for their children (Crozier & Davies, 2006). South Asian parents' limited engagement in children's school and classroom activities is in line with Dale's (1996) typology of the "expert model." This model highlights parental beliefs that teachers are the experts and the students are passive learners and supports the idea of parental non-interference with school activities. In line with this model, Bangladeshi parents often agree with the schoolteachers who use physical punishment to discipline a student for not performing well in class and/or not completing homework (Islam & Akhter, 2015). In essence, these views and findings help us understand Bangladeshi parents' limited engagement in children's academic work in a school setting.

Furthermore, the fact that rural fathers spend far less time than mothers do in children's academic work is a function of both micro- and exosystemic factors that usually discourage fathers to spend time with their children (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Personal beliefs about fathers' providing role and the availability of extended family members minimize rural parents', especially fathers', time engagement in academic socialization with school-age children. At the same time, parents receive help from other family members and recognize schoolteachers as the primary teaching agent for their children. On the other hand, because of the growing urbanization, both mothers and fathers in urban families are inclined to engage themselves in children's academic socialization at home. These parents typically have less access to extended kin for helping children with their academic work.

## *India*

A recent study conducted on families residing in metropolitan Mumbai suggested that about 50% of fathers helped school-age children with homework (Saraff & Srivastava, 2010). Another study on Gujrati families in India suggested that 44% of fathers arranged study times for their older children (Sriram & Sandhu, 2013). This latter study also reported that 57% fathers attended parent-teacher meetings and other school activities and 53% monitored the child's academic progress in school (Roopnarine & Gol-Guven, 2015). These studies, however, did not report the levels of mothers' engagement in children's academic work.

Most Indian parents directly engage themselves to help their children succeed in academic life. For example, Sreekanth (2010) reported that parents showed perseverance and sacrificed their own interests for their children's education. They attended parent-teacher meetings, supported children with homework, discussed career goals, and encouraged children to be more successful than themselves (Sreekanth, 2010). These parents took time and invested resources so that their children could attend reputable schools. Another study conducted on urban families with an intervention design reported that about 80% and 67% of 6th graders with reading and writing difficulties, respectively, studied on their own at home. Parents or other family members did not have time to help these children (Manjula, Saraswathi, Prakash, & Ashalatha, 2009). After intervention (i.e., providing



resources to the parents), the majority of the parents engaged themselves to help children, who improved their reading and writing competencies.

## *Pakistan*

Recent findings suggested that mothers and fathers were equally involved in children's educational activities in Pakistani families (Chaudhry, Khaliq, Agha, & Hassan, 2015). This study also reported that about 93% of parents took direct initiatives to send their children to school daily, and parents' occupations positively influenced their engagement with children's academic work. Other studies reported that the levels of parents' education were positively correlated with children's academic performance (Jamil, Atta, Baloch, Danish, Younis, & Siddiq, 2011; Shah & Anwar, 2014). According to Jamil et al., parents' high education was positively correlated with children's high GPA in both rural and urban families in Pakistan. Furthermore, parents actively engaged in arranging for a tutor for their children (Shah & Anwar, 2014). Although factors such as mothers' education, parents' interest in children's education, and parents' time spent in reading to children were positively linked to children's schoolwork, Pakistani parents spent very little time in visiting children's schools and/or engaging in school-sponsored activities (Riaz, Zafar, Maann, & Ali, 2010).

Overall, in view of the traditional expectation of son preference, patrilineal family structure, and sex-segregated socialization norms in South Asian families, parents typically invest more in sons than daughters (Babu et al., 2018). Under the auspices of the patriarchy, male children are considered the torchbearers for family heritage, protect family properties, and perform all social and religious rituals (e.g., lead the funeral procession after a parent's death) for the family. Therefore, the family and social expectation is that women will bear male children and the family will usually invest more resources in the development of male children (Bumiller, 1991; Rajadhyaksha, 2012). In addition, the belief is that daughters will leave the parental home after marriage, but the adult sons and their spouses will provide and take care of the older parents.

Empirical findings from recent psychological investigations, however, indicated changes in parental attitudes toward sex-biased treatments of children. Although rural mothers still preferred to spend more time in academic socialization with their sons, urban parents and rural fathers spent similar amounts of time in academic socialization with their sons and daughters in urban families in Bangladesh (Hossain & Atencio, 2017). Likewise, urban parents in India treated their sons and daughters similarly (Roopnarine, Talukder, Jain, Joshi, & Srivastav, 1992), and in some cases, more girls than boys reported to have received greater acceptance from fathers (Sinha & Mishra, 2007). These findings indicate that contemporary parents are moving away from the traditional norms of son preference and are willing to treat their sons and daughters similarly. This shift has implications for reevaluating the "forgotten daughter" paradigm that undermines parents' equal contributions and



commitment to both male and female children's social and academic development. Future research should investigate how South Asian parents equally encourage both male and female children for their academic success.

## **The Influence of Parental Practices and Engagement on Early Child Development**

Parental engagement in academic socialization entails various aspects, such as arranging a private tutor or other learning resources, or helping with their child's homework or other school-related matters. In order to understand the link between parental academic socialization and early childhood development across societies, it is important to look at the child's family life, cultural and societal factors, and the overall environmental experiences of the child. Specifically, a positive relationship with a child, one with supportive, nurturing, and cordial attitudes, resulted in fewer behavioral problems, higher self-concept intellectual development, and better classroom achievement across cultural groups in South Asia (Crozier & Davies, 2006; Rohner, Khaleque, Elias, & Sultana, 2010). Rohner's (2016) theory of parental acceptance and rejection (IPARTheory) suggests that school children who receive little parental warmth and experienced neglect or rejection do less well in school. On the other hand, parents with high community and social support engage more in children's academic work. In line with Rohner's IPARTheory, Islam and Akhter (2015) suggested that teachers' verbal or physical punishment increased the levels of psychopathology, such as anxiety and depression, among students in South Asia.

Compared to research on Western families, we have limited psychological research on parental engagement and parental and teacher acceptance of school-age children and its effect on early child development in South Asian societies. Available literature from South Asian families suggests that parental engagement improved children's academic work and social skills such as self-esteem and positive peer interactions (Manjula et al., 2009; Sreekanth, 2010). Furthermore, fathers who were engaged with their children also became more caring of their spouses, and such caring engagement improved employed wives' mental health in Indian families (Roopnarine & Suppal, 2000). In view of increased maternal employment in the paid sectors in South Asian societies, family scholars (e.g., Jesmin & Seward, 2011) argue for introducing paid parental leave policies. The paid parental leave policies would not only permit parents to be involved with their children early on but could also redefine traditional sex roles, recognizing mothers being providers and fathers having the capability to be nurturers.

Rohner and his colleagues (2010) sought to determine the relationship between mothers' and father's acceptance and adolescent perception of their parents. Using Bangladeshi samples, they documented that the cultural and societal norms for schooling were rooted in a combination of Islamic and indigenous cultural values. Because of patriarchy and provisioning roles, Bangladeshi fathers felt they should

be entitled to loyalty and respect from their family members. On the other hand, traditional Bangladeshi mothers were responsible for providing emotional support and nurturance to children and conducting household chores. The overall findings indicated that parental acceptance from both the mother and the father had a high correlation with psychological adjustment of adolescent male and female students in Bangladesh. These findings also aligned with similar studies conducted in other Asian societies (Ahmed, 2013). Additional findings from Rohner et al.'s (2010) study revealed that teacher's approval and acceptance influenced the parents' acceptance of the student. Parents' and teachers' acceptance and praise promoted the child's social skills and academic growth. Although these findings are a reminder of Asian mothers' self-sacrificing roles (i.e., *Sita Syndrome*) in raising a child, mothers perform their parenting roles with the full support from extended family members (Sharma, 2000).

Other sociocultural contexts and factors suggest that South Asian parenting is done within an intact and marital union, and the mother and the father together form the proximal process of a micro-level environment for the child to grow. Although parents in low-income Bangladeshi families lacked social capital such as contacts and access to influential people in the community, mothers harnessed their own social knowledge and skills to contribute to the children's academic achievement (Asadullah, 2008). Furthermore, children's poor health due to lack of nutrition influenced their school enrollment, attendance, and cognitive development in Bangladesh (Khanam, Nghiem, & Rahman, 2011). It was evident that parents' wealth and educational level had positive consequences on children's growth and early development.

Indian mothers residing in India and in the United States adopted different attitudes toward their parenting styles and parent-child interactions that influenced the growth of their children. Whereas Indian mothers residing in the United States utilized the authoritative parenting styles for developmentally appropriate positive child outcomes, mothers in India also reported positive child outcomes even when they used the authoritarian parenting styles including corporal punishment (Jumbunathan & Counselman, 2002). Likewise, Pakistani parents favored physical punishment to discipline a child, especially when the child misbehaved and/or lost attention from schoolwork (Malik, 2010). These findings underscore the importance for us to consider the sociocultural context of child development because cultural beliefs and practices differ across cultural and ecological settings. Broadly speaking, South Asian parents widely used an authoritarian parenting style including physical punishment to discipline or motivate their students toward academic work (Shah & Anwar, 2014). Although South Asian parents with traditional childrearing practices are typically controlling, restrictive, and protective, they teach their children not to show aggression, public displays of negative emotions, downplay and inhibit personal grievances and strong feelings, and demonstrate self-control (Yunus, 2005). Regardless of the levels of parents' controlling behavior, reports from studies on Indian families suggested that children showed friendly attitudes, positive social interactions, and cooperative play when parents are engaged with their children (Shah & Anwar, 2014).

Another important point is that parents are making visible contributions to both male and female children's academic work. Findings from the recent national PECE (Primary Education Completion Exam) and JSC (Junior School Certificate – Grades 6 to 8) examination results showed that the gender gap in educational success in Bangladesh has disappeared. Out of 2.2 million students who participated in the 2018 JSC national examination, female students performed better than male students in all three categories of evaluations (exam participation rate, pass rate, and grades). Additional analyses suggested that 66,108 students received a perfect GPA score in the 2018 JSC exam and 59% of the perfect score recipients were female students. These national data on early education demonstrate that both male and female students are equally competitive in both basic science and non-science areas. We also observe a reflection of this trend in higher education. In 2018, about 42% of 3.8 million university students were female students in Bangladesh (Habib & Adhikary, 2018). Likewise, male and female children in India are doing equally well in their schoolwork and academic achievement (Sharma & Jha, 2014). These findings support the notion that South Asian parents invest in their children's education, which has a positive impact on both male and female children's academic work.

In essence, extant research findings are in line with cultural and religious practices that encourage parents to invest in children's educational development and welfare. Similar to other Asian parents (Li & Lamb, 2015), South Asian parents, especially fathers, take an active role in children's education. The collective cultural orientation provides a concerted platform where parents, extended network, and teachers jointly contribute to early childhood development and education. At the same time, religious beliefs and practices (e.g., *Saraswathi puja*) and instructions (e.g., *Hadith*) guide South Asian parents to invest in children's educational growth and development.

## Summary and Conclusions

In South Asia, family socialization and parental responsibilities center on the expectation of raising children well. Religious and cultural norms affirm that children are valuable to continue the family lineage and it is the parents' obligation and desire to invest in children's academic growth. Whereas Hindu belief supports an argument for son preference, Islamic values ask parents to invest in both male and female children's education equally. In line with the patriarchy and hegemonic sex-role practices, cultural norms encourage the father to engage in children's education. Professional and economic success in life and interdependence enable grown children to fulfill filial obligations to their parents and grandparents (Babu et al., 2018).

Parents' commitment to children's academic socialization is unquestionable and a salient feature of South Asian parenting. Parents even sacrifice opportunities for their own professional development and reschedule their office or business hours so that children's educational needs are met (Sreekanth, 2010). In line with sociocultural and religious beliefs for educating children and the respect for "guru" (teacher),

parents treat teachers and academic institutions as important sources of support for their children's education. These narratives toward teachers' authority, importance, and academic roles for educating children transcend across South Asian families.

Although traditional cultural practices encouraged parents to invest more in male children (Bumiller, 1991), contemporary urban parents tended to demonstrate sex-neutral attitudes toward parent-child socialization and interactions (Hossain & Atencio, 2017). Consequently, female children are becoming as successful as male children are in their academic life. We need empirical research to assess how parental attitudes, expectations, and participation influence male and female children's educational success and upbringing across South Asian societies. In view of the proximal processes of the bioecological systems perspective, these psychological investigations will help us understand how sociocultural and contextual factors, such as parental attributions, cultural norms, and religious values, determine the dynamics and pathways for early childhood education and development in less studied South Asian families. For South Asians, parenting is a life-long responsibility that places children at the core of the family and prioritizes parental commitment to children's educational development and well-being.

Although parents' education is an important factor (Hossain & Atencio, 2017; Saraff & Srivastava, 2010) that contributes to children's academic success, poverty remains the major problem for millions of children's access to education and parents' engagement in children's academic socialization in South Asian families (Wilson, 2015). Families in poverty lack social capital to influence their children's academic growth and social skills (Asadullah, 2008; Babu et al., 2018). In view of increasing opportunities for mothers to take on paid employment, future research can shed light on how parental access to resources influence children's academic growth and development in the family (Rajadhyaksha, 2012). Future research should also examine the intricate relationships between cultural scripts and changing ecological contexts and the way these factors influence parenting and early childhood education and development in South Asian families (Ball & Wahedi, 2010; Hossain & Atencio, 2017).

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**Ziarat Hossain** (PhD, Syracuse University, Child and Family Studies) is a professor of Family and Child Studies and Regents' Lecturer at the University of New Mexico. He is a former Society for Cross-Cultural Research president and Fulbright scholar. He conducts research on parenting and fathers and child development across cultural communities.

**Giovanna Eisberg** (PhD, University of New Mexico, Family and Child Studies) is an adjunct faculty of Family and Child Studies at the University of New Mexico. She is a licensed clinical social worker and conducts research on bullying, parenting, and grandparents across cultures.