

CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PARENTAL  
LEVEL OF EDUCATION

By

Danielle J. Viau

A Field Report Submitted  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of

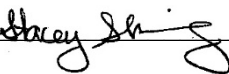
Master of Science in Education

Special Education


At

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh  
Oshkosh, WI

January 2025

 Advisor

\_1/28/2025\_\_\_\_\_ Date Approved

 Member

\_1/29/2025\_\_\_\_\_ Date Approved

### **Abstract**

Social emotional development includes a child's experiences, expression, and management of emotions and the ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others (Cohen et al, 2005). The core features of emotional development include the ability to identify and understands one's own feelings, to accurately read and comprehend emotional states in others, to manage strong emotions and their expression in a constructive manner, to regulates one's own behavior, to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships with others (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). This study looked at the social emotional scores of children evaluated using the DAYC2 and were found eligible for a local Birth to Three program. For a child to be eligible for Birth to 3 services they must demonstrate a 25% delay in any area of development or a standard score of 81 or less. I then looked at the scores of each child, in the area of social emotional development, to see if there is any correlation with their parent's level of education.

**Table of Contents**

Chapter 1 - Introduction..... 4  
    Key Terms ..... 4  
    Purpose/Methods..... 5  
Chapter 2 – Literature Review ..... 8  
    Contributing Factors..... 8  
    Protective Factors ..... 11  
    Education and Social Emotional Development..... 12  
    Types of Screening Tools..... 12  
    Impacts of Positive /Healthy Relationships on Social Emotional Development ..... 14  
    Why is further investigation needed on this topic? ..... 16  
Chapter 3 - Methods..... 17  
    Study Participants and Setting ..... 17  
    Methodology ..... 19  
    Summary ..... 20  
Chapter 5 - Discussion ..... 26  
    Study Strengths and Limitations ..... 27  
    Implications for Practitioners ..... 28  
    Implications for Researchers ..... 28  
References..... 30

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

Social emotional development is a very critical piece of development in young children. This study will look at social emotional development, how it correlates to their parent's level of education and why further investigation is needed on this topic. Chapter 2 explores what social emotional development is, what contributes to it and protective factors for building healthy social emotional relationships. Chapter 2 will then discuss the types of tools that can be used to screen and assess social emotional skills and ways to promote healthy social emotional relationships. While there was plenty of research on social emotional development there was not previous research on how parental factors influence social emotional development. Therefore, this study investigated whether or not there was a correlation between parent's level of education and their child's social emotional development.

### **Key Terms**

Throughout my report I will refer to social emotional skills (SE) and social emotional development (SED). Social emotional development (SED) is defined as "a child's ability to have and maintain positive relationships and manage their emotions in a healthy and appropriate manner. SE development is demonstrated by the ability to understand both one's own emotions and the emotional states of others, constructively manage strong emotions, regulate one's own behavior, display empathy and maintain relationships" (Berns et al., 2021, p. 1). Another term I will use throughout the report will be developmental scores or evaluation scores. In these instances, these terms are referring to the areas of cognition, expressive language, receptive language, and social emotional skills, unless otherwise specified. Eligibility is defined as a standard score of 81 or less in any area of development.

## **Purpose/Methods**

Chapter 3 investigates whether or not there is a correlation between parents' education level and the developmental area of social emotional skills of children ages birth to 3 as measured by the DAYC-2 (Developmental Assessment of Young Children, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) (Swartzmiller 2014). The study was a quantitative study that examined the social emotional scores of children ages birth to 3 and their parent's level of education. The purpose of this field report was to look into whether or not there was any correlation between parent's level of education and the development of social/emotional skills of their child. The data of approximately 100 children, who were previously evaluated for the Birth to 3 program, and their families will be included in this study. Children are referred to their local Birth to 3 program when there is a suspected developmental delay or a previously diagnosed condition. If not automatically eligible due to a diagnosed condition, they are evaluated to determine if they have a developmental delay. A developmental delay is defined as a standard score of 81 in any area of development. A score of 81 or less makes a child eligible for Birth to 3 services.

The children, both male and female, were evaluated using the DAYC-2. They were evaluated between the months of January to December 2021 and were all 3 years (36 months) old or younger. This assessment measures the children's performance in the areas of gross motor, fine motor, cognition, receptive language, expressive language, adaptive skills and social emotional skills.

I looked at the developmental area of social emotional skills to see if there was any correlation with their parent's level of education. The levels of education that were studied; 1) pre-high school, 2) GED/high school diploma, 3) Associate's or technical degree, 4) 4-year degree and 5) Graduate school. I then used the scores in the area of social emotional

## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

development to compare/contrast with each different level of education. The data was then separated into five different categories; the scores of the children evaluated who had parents with pre-high school education, the scores of the children that were evaluated with parents who have a GED-HS diploma, the scores of the children who were evaluated with parents who had an Associate's or Technical degree, the children who were evaluated with parents who have a 4-year degree, and the children who were evaluated with parents who have a graduate school degree. As the five areas of education were examined the question that was answered was: when a parent has achieved an increased education level, does it affect the social emotional skills of the child or are developmental scores the same as children whose parents have not achieved a higher level of education? Correlational data is a statistical measure that was used in this study to help decipher if there was a relationship between parent's levels of education and the social emotional development of their child. Chapter three will further define the methods and analysis used in this study.

Chapter 4 looks at the results of the study. Using the correlational coefficient the study looked at 89 Birth to 3 age children who were evaluated, the mothers' levels of education were as follows: 5 were pre-high school, 34 of them were at the high school/GED level, 23 had an associate's or technical degree, 16 had a 4-year degree, and 11 had a graduate degree. The levels of education for the fathers of the 89 children evaluated were: 5 at the pre-high school level, 33 at the high school/GED level, 26 with an associate's or technical degree, 19 with a four-year degree, and 6 with a graduate degree. Using the correlation coefficient the parent's level of education and the social emotional scores of the children were compared. There was no linear relationship found between the two. The complete results are in Chapter 4.

## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

Chapter 5 discusses the strengths and limitations of the study as well as the implications for the practitioners and researchers. Implications for practitioners that were discussed in chapter 5 were having more time before the evaluation to build a relationship with the family so questions can be answered more honestly or thoroughly and making sure the evaluation environment has as little distractions as possible. Another was that the evaluation will only be administered in English. The evaluation will not be translated into any other languages unless an interpreter is used. Implications for researchers can be found in chapter 5. Some ideas for future research discussed were gender, zip code, family socioeconomic status, birth order, families with one child vs. multiple children, etc. More information can be found in chapter 5.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature Review**

Social emotional (SE) development is defined as “a child’s ability to have and maintain positive relationships and manage their emotions in a healthy and appropriate manner. SE development is demonstrated by the ability to understand both one’s own emotions and the emotional states of others, constructively manage strong emotions, regulate one’s own behavior, display empathy and maintain relationships” (Berns et al., 2021, p. 1).

Nurturing relationships instill young children with a sense of security, self-assurance, and resilience. These connections teach children the skills to forge meaningful friendships, express their emotions, and navigate life's obstacles. Furthermore, strong, positive relationships foster the development of trust, empathy, compassion, and moral understanding in children. From the moment they are born, babies begin shaping their identity based on how they are cared for and treated. “Through everyday interactions, parents, relatives and caregivers send babies messages like: You’re clever. You’re good at figuring things out. You’re loved. You make me laugh. I enjoy being with you. These messages shape a baby’s self-esteem” (Zero To Three, Social Emotional Development: Birth to 12 months, p. 1). Positive relationships between caregivers and children foster a sense of safety and security. When children receive consistent, dependable responses from their primary adult caregivers in early childhood this support promotes the full development of neural connections, brain structure, empathy, resilience, and other cognitive abilities (Berns et al., 2021).

### **Contributing Factors**

A child's development in language, cognition, and social-emotional skills can be greatly affected by their socioeconomic background, which encompasses their family's income, the education levels of their parents, and the types of jobs their parents hold (Ernest et al., 2016). “In



## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

early childhood, it is estimated that approximately one in four children in the US and one in two children worldwide live in poverty” (Ernest et al. 2016, p. 1). Students worldwide and in the U.S. who come from families who are underprivileged often start school behind their peers both academically and socially. Hart and Risley (1995) documented the impact of poverty and maternal responsiveness on children’s cognitive, language, and social-emotional aptitudes. By recording the length and types of communication between parents and children, they extrapolated that by the age of 3 an accumulated thirty-million-word gap would exist between children from higher versus lower SES environments. The authors also found that mothers who lived in lower SES environments expressed fewer positive emotions toward their children and more negative emotions than mothers from both middle and upper SES environments. Taken together, the authors found socioeconomic and sociocultural factors have the capacity to significantly impact children’s early language and cognitive development; and as children enter the educational system, long-lasting effects may result in achievement deficits (Ernest et al., 2016).

The neighborhood in which a child lives, and the income of the family can also be risk factors that may impact the social emotional development of young children. Compared to children in middle or wealthy neighborhoods, children from low-income neighborhoods are more likely to experience behavioral problems. Similar to this, young children from lower-income homes are more prone to face behavioral issues that hinder their development (Cooper et al., 2009).

Postpartum depression is one way the bond between a parent/child can be negatively affected and hence affect the child’s social emotional development.

## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

Postpartum depression is defined as the brief emotional disorder that occurs after delivery based mainly on depression, with symptoms ranging from brief mental depression to severe depression with anxiety and fear, indifference and hostility to one's baby and husband, sleep disorder, and so on. Postpartum depression not only affects the health, marriage, and family of postpartum women but also leads to obstacles in maternal and child bonding, which can have negative effects on the infants' mental and behavioral development (Jin & Zhang, 2016, p. 720).

Postpartum depression not only affects the mother but can affect other family members and the cognitive and the emotional development of the child (Bahlmann et al., 2016). Women experience depression before, during and after pregnancy with higher rates than the general population. In the first three months after pregnancy depression rates are reported at 7-19%, of these women 60% experience depression during or before their pregnancy (Bahlmann et al., 2016).

More needs to be done to address depression and help these moms to develop an attachment and positive behaviors with their infant or child. The importance of their relationship needs to be addressed with the mom so that she can work to repair this relationship and get help for herself. A child first and foremost needs to be nurtured in a safe and positive environment. If the mother is not capable of taking care of her own basic needs, she is not going to be able to respond to the needs of her child. Maternal postpartum depression can have lasting effects on a child, extending beyond infancy into the toddler, preschool, and even school-age years (Maternal depression and child development, Canadian Paediatric Society, 2004, p. 575). Studies have shown that the child of a mother who has had postpartum depression have poorer cognitive functioning, conduct disorders, increased prevalence for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

(ADHD), lower IQ scores and increased needs for special education services in school (Maternal depression and child development, Canadian Paediatric Society, 2004).

### **Protective Factors**

Many factors can help babies/toddlers to develop social-emotional skills -- providing babies with responsive care, supporting their developing skills, being affectionate and nurturing, helping them feel safe and secure. Providing babies and toddlers with responsive care means “matching your caregiving to what your baby needs” (Zero to Three, Social-Emotional Development: Birth to 12 months, p. 1). Supporting babies’ developing needs means to allow them to explore, play, and pursue what excites them. When you give children just enough assistance to overcome a task without getting too frustrated, kids learn new abilities (Zero to Three, Social-Emotional Development: Birth to 12 months, p. 1). Another way to help build SE skills is to be affectionate and nurturing. “Touching, holding, comforting, rocking, singing and talking to your baby all send the message he is special and loved. While it’s easy to be affectionate when babies are cute and cuddly, it’s also important to nurture babies when they are difficult, fussy, crying a lot, or colicky. When you can be there for your baby during the tough times, children learn that they are loved for who they are – no matter what” (Zero to Three, Social-Emotional Development: Birth to 12 months, p. 2). One final way to help build social emotional wellbeing is to help them feel safe and secure. “You help your baby feel safe and secure when you respond to her cries and other communications. It is the love and trust you share that helps your child learn that you will always be there for her. This trust gives her confidence” (Zero to Three, Social-Emotional Development: Birth to 12 months).

Another protective element that has been researched in the past is resilience. One way to think of resilience is as ordinary magic that protects against adverse events that happen in life

(Bahlmann et al., 2016, p. 120). Resilience is developed over one's life and is affected by the environment. It will vary over time and circumstances and can buffer the effects of traumatic events (Bahlmann et al., 2016).

### **Education and Social Emotional Development**

Early education and preschool experiences contribute to children's school readiness and future academic achievements (McClelland et al., 2000). For example, Denham (2006) has noted that in addition to having better grades and accomplishments, children who start kindergarten with stronger social-emotional competency profiles are also more likely to have positive mindsets toward learning and make a smooth transition to school (Ernest et al., 2016). In contrast are children who start school with reduced social emotional skills. Some signs of poor social emotional development may include "chronic feeding or sleeping difficulties, inconsolable irritability, incessant crying with little ability to be consoled, becoming extremely upset when left with another adult, inability to adapt to new situations, easily startled or alarmed by routine events, inability to establish relationships with other children or adults, excessive hitting, biting or pushing of other children, and flat affect or very withdrawn behavior" (Palmer, 2019, p. 2). When any of these behaviors are observed, further screening/evaluation may be warranted. The next section will further examine the tools that are used to both screen and evaluate children's social emotional development.

### **Types of Screening Tools**

Screening is used to detect whether or not there is a need for further testing. The following section details screening tools that are used for infants and toddlers. There are screeners that can be filled out by the mother as well as screeners that can be filled out by their

## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

physician, social worker, home visitor, or someone else. Most screening tools can be done within 5-15 minutes.

**Infant/toddler screeners and overall developmental assessment tools.** Screeners can be used to determine whether there has been an impact on the infant/toddler's social emotional development. These screeners can look specifically at social emotional development, or they can look at all areas of development; gross motor, fine motor, cognition, expressive language, receptive language, self-help skills, and social emotional development. It is important to know whether a child has a delay in an area of development so that it can be addressed, and progress can be made to help that infant/toddler get back on target in their development.

***Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA).*** For children aged 12 to 36 months, the BITSEA offers an initial assessment of emotional-behavioral issues, developmental delays, and competencies (Reijneveld et al., 2013). It is a screening tool that can be completed in 10 minutes. The BITSEA has been validated in the United States as well as examined in Turkey and Finland (Reijneveld et al., 2013). The tool consists of 42 items that come from the 166 items on the ITSEA (Reijneveld et al., 2013).

***Ages & Stages Social Emotional Screener.*** The Ages & Stages Social Emotional Screener was developed to complement the Ages & Stages Questionnaire, which is a general development screener (Reijneveld et al., 2013). This tool measures social and emotional behaviors in children ages 3 to 66 months and was developed in the United States. Different age ranges have differing questions and number of items. If the item is an additional concern to the parent, additional points are added to the overall score (Reijneveld et al., 2013).

***DAYC-2.*** The Developmental Assessment of Young Children-Second Edition was developed for children ages birth to 5. It assesses overall development across five different

## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

domains which are adaptive skills, social emotional skills, physical (gross and fine motor), communication (expressive and receptive language) and cognition. The tool can be used to identify children who are experiencing delays in any of these areas, to monitor their progress and also for research (Swartzmiller, 2014). The number of domains administered determines how long it takes to conduct the inventory. Since each domain takes roughly 10 to 20 minutes to finish, administering all five domains might take 50 to 100 minutes (Swartzmiller, 2014). Additionally, all domains may be administered or only the domain in which there is a concern.

Now that we've talked about the signs and symptoms of social emotional delays as well as the different screening tools and assessment tools to evaluate for delays, let's look at ways we can positively promote social emotional development and healthy relationships.

### **Impacts of Positive /Healthy Relationships on Social Emotional Development**

What can be done to promote positive interactions between an infant/child and mother/caregiver? We can guide parents on how to interact with their child to promote a healthier social emotional trajectory. It is important for new parents to know that touching their baby, holding it and rocking it are equally important to feeding the baby and talking to it (Brazelton & Sparrow, 2006). Babies and toddlers need to have secure attachments in order to learn to self-regulate and form positive relationships throughout life. When secure attachments are formed, babies "are more likely to have positive relationships with peers, be liked by their teachers, perform better in school, and respond with resilience in the face of adversity as preschoolers and older children" (Clark & Ensher, 2016, p. 37). They also need these things to feel safe enough to explore and learn on their own. The fundamental, necessary basis for starting them on this lifelong journey is attachment, bonding, security, and an emotional home with reliable caregivers. Furthermore, in many respects, all other facets of development are supported

## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

by good social and emotional development (Clark & Ensher, 2016). Therefore, the earlier we find a need, the earlier we can address the needs of the child and make positive changes to his or her development. When the mother-child dyad is the focus of an effective intervention, treating maternal mental health conditions like depression has the potential to significantly improve parent-child relationships during the first three years of life and beyond (Clark & Ensher, 2016). As these infants turn into toddlers, we also know that teaching children to resolve any conflicts in a healthy or appropriate way is going to help them with coping skills they will need throughout life. A positive, self-aware mother is going to pass those healthy traits on to her child. Thriving infant mental health helps leads to positive relationships throughout life.

Mothers are more likely to display negative parenting attitudes and actions if they are raising and caring for their children in an environment of poverty, single motherhood, low educational attainment, and overburdened family structures (Bernstein et al., 2013). We also know that women living in poverty tend to have children at a younger age which corresponds to the above-mentioned poor attitudes and behaviors related to parenting. They tend to be less reactive and show less compassion to the needs of their infant. The study incorporated 248 young pregnant women who were under the age of 22 and of gestation less than 34 weeks. There were four doulas who worked in this program, and all were African American, as were the 248 women. Follow up was provided when the infant was 4 months, 12 months, and 24 months of age (Bernstein et al., 2013). “Attachment is an important marker for social and emotional development. Poor attachment, especially maternal attachment, can negatively impact children’s social –emotional health and development” (Cooper et al., 2009, p. 2).

**Why is further investigation needed on this topic?**

The need for addressing and identifying children who are delayed in their social emotional skills is a crucial and time sensitive issue. With proper screening to identify children with a social emotional delay, we can then guide these parents as to what they can do to make positive changes in theirs and their children's lives. Many young children do not receive screening, early intervention services, and/or treatment and supports even though previous data supports them (Cooper et al., 2009). Even though some of these children may be receiving services, it is still not being recognized what their exact diagnosis is or what is happening with them. Parents of as many as 25% of children receiving EI services stated that their kids were hyperactive, worried, depressed, or had trouble interacting with others. Yet only 4% of young children were identified as having social emotional difficulties by Early Intervention Professionals (Cooper et al., 2009). This research will help identify more children who are falling behind in their social emotional development.



### **Chapter 3 - Methods**

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there is a correlation between parents' education level and the developmental area of social emotional skills of children ages birth to 3 as measured by the DAYC-2.

#### **Study Participants and Setting**

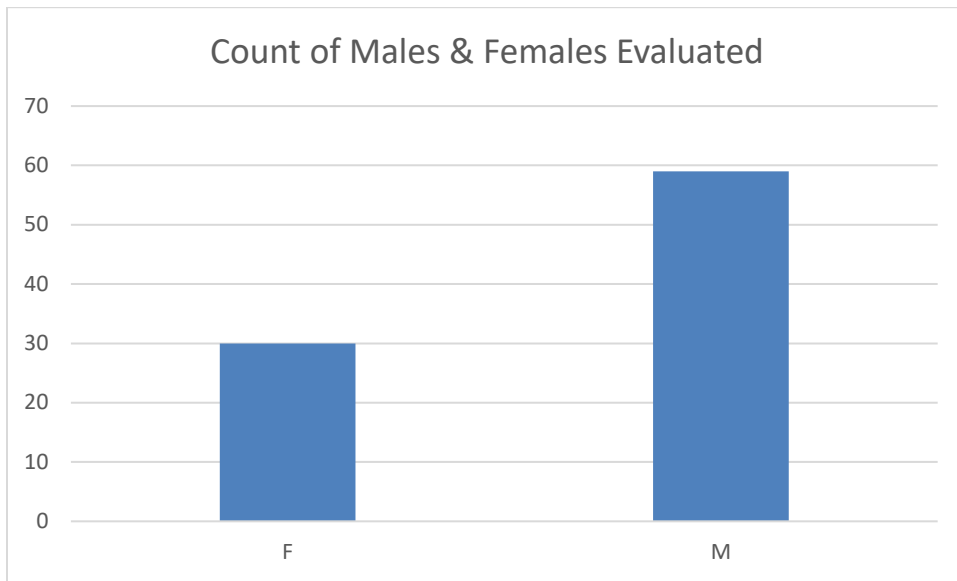
The study was completed in a North Central State. The participants were all families/parents and their infants/toddlers who had been evaluated through their local B-3 special education service provider. A child that was eligible for Birth to Three services may have received speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, special education and/or service coordination, which is a core service to every family served. Birth to 3 provides support to families and their children age birth to 3 in their natural environments -- home, daycare or within the community. A child is referred and evaluated to determine eligibility for services. An early childhood special education teacher evaluates overall development; gross motor, fine motor, cognition, self-help, receptive and expressive language, and social emotional skills. Additionally, an occupational therapist, physical therapist, or speech therapist evaluates the child depending on the area of concern. Once a child is eligible, an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is written with the family. The IFSP details the goals that are important to the family as well as the frequency of services that will support the family.

The following chart shows the make-up of males and females and their ages (0-36 months) that were evaluated for the study.

Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

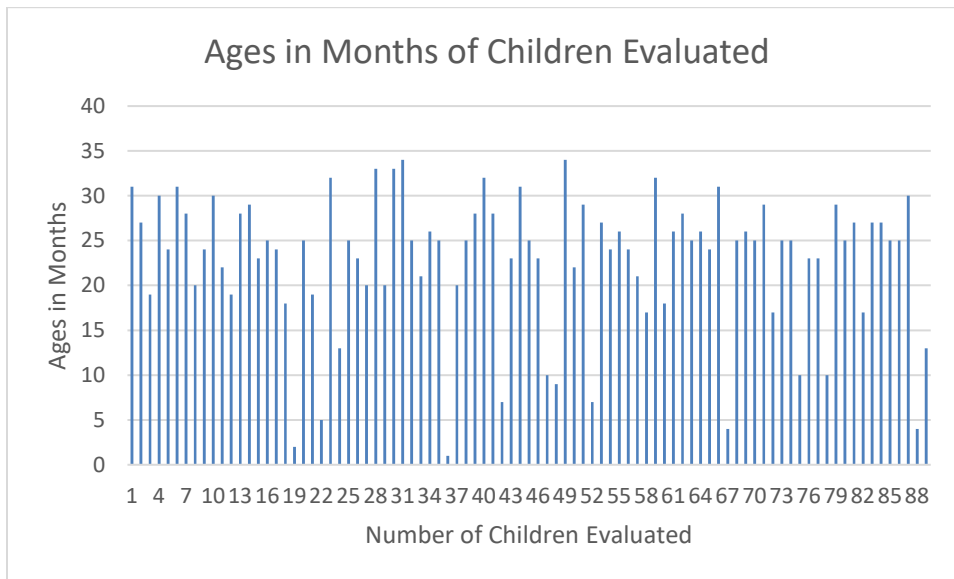
**Figure 1**

*Sex of Children Evaluated*



**Figure 2**

*Ages of Children Evaluated*



**Methodology**

The study was a quantitative study that looked at the social emotional scores of children ages birth to 3 and their parent’s level of education. The levels of education that were studied are; 1) pre-high school, 2) GED/high school diploma, 3) Associate’s or technical degree, 4) 4 year-degree, and 5) Graduate school. I used the DAYC-2, Developmental Assessment of Young Children 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. All children/families that were in this study were referred to the Birth to 3 program, between January and December of 2021, due to developmental concerns or a diagnosed condition. The children referred were then evaluated using the DAYC-2 to determine if they were eligible for Birth to 3 services. To be eligible for services a child has to have a standard score of 81 or lower in any area of development, with 100 being the average score. The areas of development assessed using the DAYC-2 were: social emotional skills, adaptive skills, cognitive skills, receptive & expressive language, gross motor skills, and fine motor skills. I then used the scores in the area of social emotional development to compare/contrast with each different level

## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

of education. Data was collected and stored in a locked computer. The study included social emotional scores, parental level of education and included quantitative information to investigate the research question: is there a correlation between parent's level of education and social emotional skills of children ages birth to 3? The data included the developmental scores of the students and the quantitative data. The data was then separated into five different categories; the scores of the children evaluated that had parents with pre-high school education, the scores of the children that were evaluated with parents who have a GED-HS diploma, the scores of the children that were evaluated with parents who have an Associate's or Technical degree, the children that were evaluated with parents who have a 4-year degree, and the children who were evaluated with parents who have a graduate school degree. As the five areas of education were examined the question that was answered was: when a parent has achieved an increased education level, does it affect the social emotional skills of the child or are developmental scores the same as children whose parents have not achieved a higher level of education? Correlational data is a statistical measure that was used in this study to help decipher if there was a relationship between parent's levels of education and the social emotional development of their child.

### **Summary**

My study gathered research as to whether or not parental education levels are correlated with the social emotional development of children ages birth to 3. With more information on this topic, we can address the importance of social emotional development and help these families and their relationships. More could be done to promote social emotional development and ways to foster positive relationships. Next, in chapter 4, we will look at the results of the study.

## Chapter 4: Results

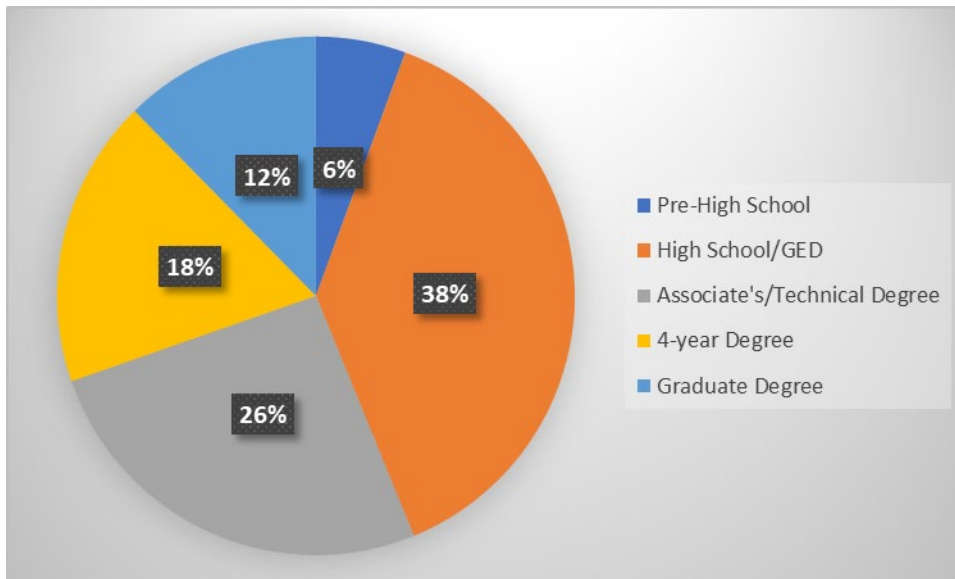
## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there was a correlation between parents' education level and the developmental area of social emotional skills of children ages birth to 3. The pre-existing data from 89 children who were evaluated in the year 2021 were used to investigate this question. All 89 of these scores were from children who were evaluated for eligibility in a county-based birth to three program in a north central state.

Of the 89 Birth to 3 age children evaluated, the mothers' levels of education were as follows: 5 were pre-high school, 34 of them were at the high school/GED level, 23 had an associate's or technical degree, 16 had a 4-year degree, and 11 had a graduate degree. The levels of education for the fathers of the 89 children evaluated were: 5 at the pre-high school level, 33 at the high school/GED level, 26 with an associate's or technical degree, 19 with a four-year degree, and 6 with a graduate degree.

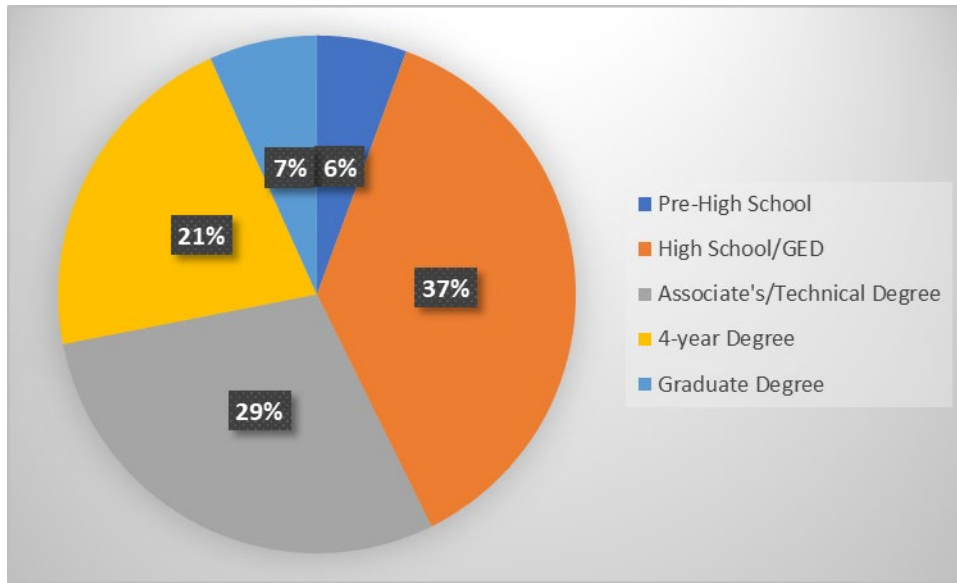
**Figure 2**

*Mother's Level of Education*



**Figure 3**

*Father's Level of Education*



Out of those 89 children that were evaluated the lowest social emotional score was 64, the average score was 91.84 and the highest score was 110. The DAYC-2 is a norm-referenced test that can be administered solely via parent report which could possibly affect the results of this type of investigation. More information about the DAYC-2 can be found in Chapter 2 on page 8.

After compiling all of the DAYC-2 (Developmental Assessment of Young Children 2nd Edition) social emotional scores, maternal levels of education and parental levels of education into an excel spreadsheet, this researcher used the correlation coefficient statistical measure to examine the data. The data from all 89 children evaluated follows.

Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

**Table 1**

*Mother's Level of Education, Father's Level of Education and Social Emotional Scores*

| <b>MOMLOE</b> | <b>DADLOE</b> | <b>Soc/EM score</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 4             | 5             | 110                 |
| 2             | 2             | 106                 |
| 4             | 5             | 104                 |
| 5             | 4             | 104                 |
| 5             | 3             | 104                 |
| 3             | 4             | 103                 |
| 5             | 5             | 102                 |
| 3             | 2             | 102                 |
| 2             | 2             | 102                 |
| 4             | 4             | 101                 |
| 3             | 4             | 101                 |
| 4             | 4             | 100                 |
| 3             | 3             | 100                 |
| 2             | 2             | 100                 |
| 2             | 1             | 100                 |
| 2             | 1             | 100                 |
| 2             | 2             | 99                  |
| 5             | 4             | 98                  |
| 4             | 4             | 98                  |
| 2             | 3             | 98                  |
| 2             | 2             | 98                  |
| 2             | 2             | 98                  |
| 2             | 1             | 98                  |
| 2             | 4             | 97                  |
| 4             | 2             | 97                  |
| 5             | 4             | 96                  |
| 4             | 4             | 96                  |
| 3             | 3             | 96                  |
| 2             | 3             | 96                  |
| 3             | 2             | 96                  |
| 2             | 2             | 96                  |
| 5             | 4             | 95                  |
| 1             | 4             | 95                  |
| 1             | 4             | 95                  |
| 3             | 3             | 95                  |
| 3             | 2             | 95                  |
| 2             | 2             | 95                  |
| 3             | 3             | 94                  |
| 2             | 3             | 94                  |
| 2             | 2             | 94                  |

## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| 5 | 5 | 93 |
| 4 | 4 | 93 |
| 4 | 2 | 93 |
| 2 | 2 | 93 |
| 5 | 5 | 92 |
| 5 | 3 | 92 |
| 3 | 3 | 92 |
| 2 | 3 | 92 |
| 3 | 2 | 92 |
| 2 | 1 | 92 |
| 1 | 1 | 92 |
| 4 | 5 | 91 |
| 4 | 4 | 91 |
| 3 | 3 | 91 |
| 3 | 2 | 91 |
| 2 | 2 | 91 |
| 2 | 2 | 91 |
| 2 | 2 | 91 |
| 2 | 2 | 91 |
| 2 | 2 | 91 |
| 4 | 4 | 89 |
| 4 | 2 | 89 |
| 2 | 2 | 89 |
| 5 | 3 | 87 |
| 4 | 3 | 87 |
| 3 | 3 | 87 |
| 3 | 3 | 87 |
| 3 | 3 | 87 |
| 2 | 3 | 87 |
| 4 | 2 | 87 |
| 3 | 2 | 87 |
| 1 | 2 | 87 |
| 5 | 4 | 86 |
| 2 | 3 | 85 |
| 4 | 4 | 84 |
| 3 | 3 | 84 |
| 2 | 3 | 84 |
| 3 | 2 | 84 |
| 2 | 2 | 83 |
| 2 | 2 | 82 |
| 2 | 4 | 79 |
| 2 | 3 | 79 |
| 1 | 3 | 79 |
| 3 | 2 | 77 |
| 3 | 3 | 76 |



## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| 2 | 2 | 75 |
| 2 | 2 | 71 |
| 3 | 3 | 69 |
| 3 | 3 | 64 |

Correlation coefficients “are used to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationships between pairs of variables” (Mukaka, 2012, p. 69). The two variables in this study were social emotional scores using the DAYC-2 and the parent’s level of education: 1) pre-high school, 2) GED/high school diploma, 3) Associate’s or technical degree, 4) 4 year-degree, and 5) Graduate school. The results of the correlation for the mother’s level of education and social emotional scores are -0.062120735. The correlation between the father’s level of education and the social emotional scores is 0.14402919. These results indicate there is no linear relationship between a parent’s level of education and a child’s social emotional score on the DAYC-2. A correlation coefficient of zero indicates the absence of a linear relationship between two variables. Conversely, a coefficient of -1 or +1 signifies a perfect linear relationship. The strength of this relationship can vary between -1 and +1, with values nearer to either -1 or +1 reflecting a stronger correlation (Mukaka, 2012). In chapter 5, we will discuss further the importance of the outcomes of this study as well as the implications of the study.

## Chapter 5 - Discussion

In an effort to answer the question: Is there a correlation between social emotional development and parental level of education, the researcher gathered the social emotional developmental evaluation scores of children ages birth to three-years old that were evaluated at initial referral to a county Birth to Three Program. Results indicated that, per the correlational coefficient, there was not a strong relationship between the social emotional scores and the parent's level of education.

Possible reasons that there was not a strong relationship between the two may be due to the accuracy of parent reports when collecting the evaluation information. The parents may not give accurate answers when reporting on whether or not their child can do a particular skill. Sometimes when evaluating, both parents are present and each answer differently; one parent ends up overriding the other parent's answer and answering the evaluation question over the other. An example of this is asking the parents if their child looks at them when you call their name. One parent may say yes, and the other parent may say no. In the end the parent that said yes makes a stronger argument for his yes answer and that skill is marked as achieved when in fact that child is not yet doing this skill. This could result in an inaccurate answer. Parents are also sometimes distracted during the questions being asked; tending to other children, on their phone or some other tasks. This can result in not fully hearing or understanding a question and answering without clarification. The parent will then just say yes to the child being able to do a certain skill or no without actually knowing what skill they are answering about. Another reason may be simply not understanding the questions asked by the evaluator and not asking for further explanation. The parent may not understand what the evaluator is asking them but may be too embarrassed to ask what the question means and therefore just answer yes or no without

## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

knowing what is really being asked. This could also be due to a language barrier. Often times when English is the second language for a family, they state that they do not need an interpreter, when in fact having an interpreter would help them to better understand all of the evaluation questions being asked. Another reason is that there may be no correlation between social emotional scores and a parent's level of education. There was little to no previous research to compare or read about before starting my own investigation. One research article was found that researched parent's level of education and children's school readiness level regarding social-emotional, cognition and motor development going into first grade. This was done in Kosovo, and the findings did conclude that the education level of parents does affect the readiness of young children (Gjelaj & Shala, 2014).

### **Study Strengths and Limitations**

Correlational data helps us understand the relationship between two variables. The correlational data collected for this study may be beneficial to the field to help determine whether additional attention should be paid to parental levels of education. This study used a sample size of 89, which is a limitation when using the correlational coefficient. It is possible that a larger sample size may have shown a stronger relationship between the variables. With more information on this topic, we could address the importance of social emotional development and support these families and their relationships. Another limitation to this research is that the children/families who were evaluated were orally asked questions in English and not their native language. Giving the evaluation questions to the family in written form may be a better option for some families that are visual and do better reading the questions. A weakness to using correlational data is that while correlation may be demonstrated in the findings/data of this research, it is not possible to determine if one causes the other.

### **Implications for Practitioners**

At the time of evaluation, a relationship has not yet been established with the family. The evaluation is the first time this early childhood educator is meeting the family and conducting the evaluation. The family may not feel comfortable answering questions honestly and therefore practitioners may not get reliable data. An implication might be to build a stronger relationship with the family before gathering the data or evaluating the child and then the family may feel more inclined or comfortable answering the evaluation questions openly. Another adjustment could be to help set up the environment so that it is less distracting. The evaluation team could ask the family to have the TV turned off, put their phones away and have siblings taken care of by someone else so that they can solely focus on the questions they are being asked.

Additionally, it is always best practice to have an interpreter ask the evaluation questions to a family in their native language when appropriate. This is difficult at times when a family states that they do not need an interpreter, when in fact an interpreter would have made the evaluation questions easier understood. Since this study found that there was no correlation between the education level of parents and social emotional development, future studies could look at other factors that may impact social emotional development. Some of those factors are discussed in the next section.

### **Implications for Researchers**

Further research could look at additional factors that may impact social emotional development. Such factors could include: gender, zip code, family socioeconomic status, birth order, families with one child vs. multiple children, etc. Future studies could dig deeper into whether or not males or females have lower social emotional scores, the difference in social emotional scores of various children within the same city but different zip codes within that city

## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

and varying household income ranges for the children that are evaluated. Additionally, the social emotional scores of children that are automatically eligible due to a diagnosed condition could be separated from the social emotional scores of children who are eligible due to a developmental delay and then compared to their parent's level of education. All of these additional factors are so important for the field of early childhood education and early childhood special education.

The results can help advance the awareness of social emotional competencies and drive the path to education of social emotional skills to a broader audience. Social emotional skills and social emotional learning continue to be an integral part of education, and more research will continue to be a fundamental piece to learning.

### References

- Bahlmann, F., Engel, K., Hain, S., Louwen, F., Sommerfeld, S. (2016). Risk and protective factors for antepartum and postpartum depression: a prospective study. *Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 37 (4), 119-129.
- Berns, S., Dion, S., Edwards, K., Johnson, M., Menon, M. (2021). Promoting social emotional development during the paediatric well-child visit: a demonstration project. *BMJ Open Quality*, 10, 1-8.
- Bernstein, V., Edwards, R., Hans, S., Henson, L., Lee, H., Thullen, M. (2013). Promoting positive mother-infant relationships: a randomized trial of community doula support for young mothers. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 34 (5), 446-457.
- Brazelton, T., & Sparrow, J. (2006). *Touchpoints: Birth to three—Your child's emotional and behavioral development* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.
- Clark, D., Ensher, G. (2016). Social-emotional development, families, and mental health needs in the earliest years. *Zero to Three, March 2016*, 36-44.
- Cooper, J., Masi, R., Vick, J. (2009). Social emotional development in early childhood. *National Center for Children in Poverty, August 2009*, 1-12.
- Ernest, J., Leger, S., Sharkins, K. (2016). Examining effects of poverty, maternal depression, and children's self-regulation abilities on the development of language and cognition in early childhood: an early head start perspective. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 45, 493-498.
- Gjelaj, M. & Shala, M. (2014). The relationship between parent's level of education and children school readiness regarding socio-emotional, cognitive and motor development domains.

## Correlation between Social Emotional Development and Parental Level of Education

*Faculty of Education, University of Pristina, Kosovo.*

Hart, B. & Risley, T.R. (1995). Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children. Paul H Brookes Publishing.

Jin, S. & Zhang, Y. (2016). The impact of social support on postpartum depression: the mediator role of self-efficacy. *Journal of Health Psychology, 21 (5), 720-726.*

Holmes, D., McClelland, M., Morrison, F. (2000). Children at risk for early academic problems: The role of earning-related social skills. *Early Childhood Quarterly Research, 15 (3), 307-329.*

Maternal depression and child development. *Canadian Paediatric Society, 2004, 9 (8), 575-583.*

Mukaka, M. (2012). Statistics corner: a guide to appropriate use of correlation coefficient in medical research. *Malawi Medical Journal, 24 (3), 69-71.*

Palmer, J. (2019). Beyond the ABCs and 123s. *National Conference of State Legislatures, September 1-9.*

Reijneveld, S., Theunissen, M., Vogels, A., Wolff, M. (2013). Three questionnaires to detect psychosocial problems in toddlers: a comparison of the BITSEA, ASQ: SE, and KIPPI. *Academic Pediatrics, 13 (6), 587-592.*

Social-emotional development: birth to 12 months. *Zero to Three, 2010, 1-3.*

Swartzmiller, M. (2014). Test Review. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 32 (6), 577-580.*