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## Effectiveness of Character Strengths Intervention Model on Overall Academic Performance and Performance in English and Maths among Middle School Children

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### Abstract

Academic performance has a greater influence on many aspects in a child's life. Academic achievement has a greater influence on self-esteem, motivation and perseverance among students. Academic performance assesses the thinking, absorbing and information processing of students. Experts in the field of education system have consistently tried to make it a better place for learning. Research works in the field is running parallel in implementing new ideas to have an effective learning practice. The present study focused on developing intervention model using character strengths from Positive Psychology to identify the effectiveness of intervention model on overall academic performance and performance in English and Maths among middle school children. Pre-Post analysis was executed on the control and the experimental group. Results show that there is significant difference in the Effectiveness of Character Strength Intervention Model on the overall academic performance and performance in English and Maths among middle school children.

**Keywords:** Character Strengths Intervention Model, Academic Performance, English, Maths.

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### INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is of major concern to all educators, parents and students [1]. Children are widely affected by the concept called academic performance. Children, feel to be judged or assessed through academic performance. Their level of thinking, absorbing and processing information is assessed through academic performance [2]. Academic performance has a greater influence on many aspects in a child's life. Academic achievement has a greater influence on self-esteem, motivation and perseverance among students. Academic performance of children in each subject would differ. Interest, teaching style, learning style, difficulty level are some of the influencing factors in bringing difference in performance.

Character Strengths, given by positive psychology is a way to identify the strengths among individuals and make it a conscious practice for the betterment and well-being of human life. Positive psychology focuses on factors that enable children and adolescents to grow [3]. Having knowledge about something positive in an individual would increase self-

efficacy to deal with challenges confidently and adaptively. Strengths can be used to build optimal states such as flow. Seligman proposed that one way to build flow is through identifying character strengths and help people to find their opportunities to use these strengths more often [4]. This use of strengths would have holistic growth and development. Researchers have been working on bringing connections between the use of character strengths and positive outcomes.

### Need of the Study

Teaching character strengths and identifying its effectiveness would be possible through intervention models. Character strengths have shown its positive effect on well-being among children. Character strengths could help children to become more focused and aware about their actions or performances. Intervention models can be designed for improvement of specific behaviour. Present study focused to develop character strengths intervention model and study the effectiveness of the model on overall academic performance and performance in English and Maths among middle school children. The character strength intervention model shows the importance of its

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effectiveness in improving academic performance among middle school children.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reviews of literature acts as the support system for the further research and also helps to build better research activity to make the society a better place of living. Literature reviews updates and upgrades the research field. Jayanthi, et al. [5] studied the factors contributing to academic performance of students. Results showed that factors such as gender, nationality, co-curricular activities and also a basic interest to pursue higher degrees influenced academic performance. Use of previous years question papers for study has shown an improvement in student's academic performance. Another study by Tella [6] showed the impact of motivation on student's academic achievement and learning outcomes in mathematics among secondary school students in Nigeria. Results reveal that gender difference were significant when impact of motivation on academic achievement was

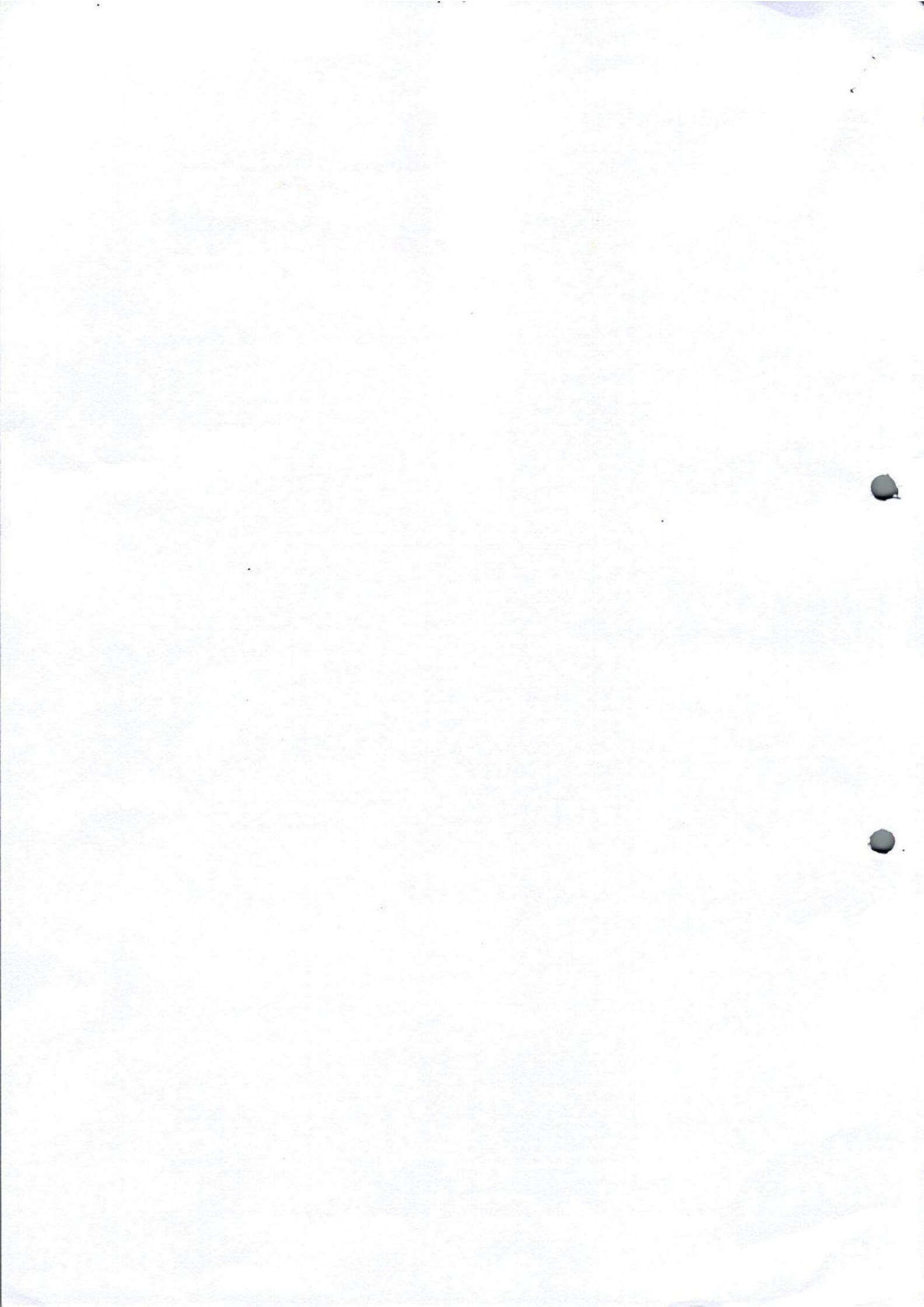
- To study the Effectiveness of Character Strengths Intervention Model on Performance in English among middle school children.
- To study the Effectiveness of Character Strengths Intervention Model on Performance in Maths among middle school children.

### HYPOTHESIS

**H0:** There is no significant difference in the Effectiveness of Character Strengths Intervention Model on Overall Academic Performance among middle school children.

**H1:** There is no significant difference in the Effectiveness of Character Strengths Intervention Model on Performance in English among middle school children.

**H2:** There is no significant difference in the Effectiveness of Character Strengths Intervention Model on Performance in Maths among middle school children.



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**Table-2: Showing correlation between emotional maturity and self-efficacy**

|                              |                     | Self-Efficacy | Emotional Instability | Emotional Regression | Faulty social adjustment | Lack of independency | Flexibility and Adaptability |
|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Self-Efficacy                | Pearson Correlation | 1             | .114                  | .342**               | .308**                   | .138                 | .064                         |
|                              | Sig. (2-tailed)     |               | .191                  | .000                 | .000                     | .113                 | .460                         |
| Emotional Instability        | Pearson Correlation | .114          | 1                     | .616**               | .617**                   | .534**               | .458**                       |
|                              | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .191          |                       | .000                 | .000                     | .000                 | .000                         |
| Emotional Regression         | Pearson Correlation | .342**        | .616**                | 1                    | .750**                   | .554**               | .434**                       |
|                              | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000          | .000                  |                      | .000                     | .000                 | .000                         |
| Faulty social adjustment     | Pearson Correlation | .308**        | .617**                | .750**               | 1                        | .551**               | .455**                       |
|                              | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000          | .000                  | .000                 |                          | .000                 | .000                         |
| Lack of independency         | Pearson Correlation | .138          | .534**                | .554**               | .551**                   | 1                    | .215*                        |
|                              | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .113          | .000                  | .000                 | .000                     |                      | .013                         |
| Flexibility and Adaptability | Pearson Correlation | .064          | .458**                | .434**               | .455**                   | .215*                | 1                            |
|                              | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .460          | .000                  | .000                 | .000                     | .013                 |                              |

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed);

Table 2 shows the Pearson's correlation analysis of the study. Correlation analysis has been executed to know the relationship between self-efficacy and five sub scales of emotional maturity.

*Self-efficacy* with emotional instability ( $r = 0.11, p > 0.05$ ), with emotional regression ( $r = 0.34, p < 0.01$ ), with faulty social adjustment ( $r = 0.30, p < 0.01$ ), with lack of independency ( $r = 0.13, p > 0.01$ ), with flexibility and adaptability ( $r = 0.64, p > 0.01$ ).

*Emotional Instability* with self-efficacy ( $r = .11, p > 0.05$ ), with emotional regression ( $r = 0.61, p < 0.01$ ), with faulty social adjustment ( $r = 0.61, p < 0.01$ ), with lack of independency ( $r = .53, p < 0.01$ ), with flexibility and adaptability ( $r = 0.48, p < 0.01$ ).

*Emotional Regression* with self-efficacy ( $r = 0.34, r < 0.01$ ), with emotional instability ( $r = 0.61, p < 0.01$ ), with faulty social adjustment ( $r = 0.75, p < 0.01$ ), with lack of independency ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.01$ ), with flexibility and adaptability ( $r = 0.43, p < 0.01$ ).

*Faulty Social Adjustment* with self-efficacy ( $r = 0.30, p < 0.01$ ), with emotional instability ( $r = 0.61, p < 0.01$ ), emotional regression ( $r = 0.75, p < 0.01$ ), with lack of independency ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.01$ ), with flexibility and adaptability ( $r = 0.45, p < 0.01$ ).

*Lack of Independency* with self-efficacy ( $r = 0.13, p > 0.05$ ), with emotional instability ( $r = 0.53, p < 0.01$ ), emotional regression ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.01$ ), with faulty social adjustment ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.01$ ), with flexibility and adaptability ( $r = 0.21, p < 0.01$ ).

Flexibility and Adaptability with self-efficacy ( $r = 0.06, p > 0.05$ ), with emotional instability ( $r = 0.45, p < 0.01$ ), emotional regression ( $r = 0.43, p < 0.01$ ), with faulty social adjustment ( $r = 0.45, p < 0.01$ ), with lack of independency ( $r = 0.21, p < 0.05$ ).

Results of the study of Phase I shows that self-efficacy has shown relationship with emotional regression and faulty social adjustment. Whereas emotional instability, lack of independency and flexibility and adaptability do not show any correlation with self-efficacy. Inter-correlation shows that, sub scales of emotional maturity are significantly correlated with other. Hence the *null hypothesis is partially rejected and partially accepts the alternative hypothesis* stating "*There is significant relationship between Emotional Maturity and Self efficacy among Parents during Pandemic*".

### Phase II Qualitative Analysis

The thematic analysis of Interview executed with parents explains the prominent emotions experienced by parents, measures taken by parents and suggestions given by parents to deal with emotions and social situations during pandemic. Four themes have been derived out of the responses given by the parents. Themes and analysis have been given below.

### Theme I: Feelings and Emotions among Parents during Pandemic

COVID-19 brought up negative emotions and feelings within people that caused stress because of uncertainty and helplessness. One of the samples expressed it as "mostly, I feel stressed. There is a lot of

tension due to this pandemic. The environment is full of tension, people are dying every day and we are helpless so because of this I feel a lot of stress." Parents explained the cause of stress was due to increased work responsibilities, job insecurity, deaths happening around, helplessness, and uncertainty about things getting into normal. "We all are confined to walls, I need to take extra care towards my children and husband about their health, diet, their works and work from home and couldn't escape from this even for some time from many days, I don't know how long it is going to be, it is making me feel stressed" shared one of the parents. COVID-19 had got so much impact on people that they are subjected to many feelings and emotions like anxiety, frustration, helplessness and fear of death.

Other than negative emotions, positive emotions were also pointed out by parents. One of the samples expressed that, "I also feel positive about this that pandemic made all of us to stay at home and made me to do things which I wanted to do earlier like dancing and playing with my children and enjoying my cooking. During the regular times I couldn't be able to do such things as we all rush to our works as soon as the day starts." The pandemic situation made people to think about taking care of their physical health by improving their lifestyle, changing their habits and doing activities they were earlier unable to do.

#### **Theme II: Effects and Challenges faced by Parents during Pandemic**

Parents responded that COVID-19 had affected people in many aspects and they are confronted with many challenges. Parents expressed that there is no social gathering, travelling, and recreation for children. One of the samples expressed, "I am worried about my children, I feel like this is the most crucial time where children get exposed to social awareness and where the thought process develops from the environment but due to this they are caged and getting addicted to the gadgets as we cannot go out" and another one expressed that "I like travelling, knowing things, and talking to people. My job is also as such that I need to travel a lot; I want to take my children out and make them play but now we are restricted to walls and have fear to go out." Parents felt that pandemic had brought fear in them. Sudden changes in lifestyle have affected them. The focus had to be on physical and mental health.

Another set of challenges faced by parents were; to discipline their children, boredom due to which there is increase in screen time, managing work and home, financial difficulties and emotional disturbances. One of the samples expressed that, "actually children don't show that they are impacted by COVID but everyone knows we all are affected in some way or the other. One of my sons wanted to study abroad but couldn't as he cannot travel". Parents expressed it's a tough time for them to handle work, home, children,

health of own and family, emotional and financial crunches. One of the parents expressed that it was too difficult in the first wave when compared to second wave. "We have kind of got used to the situation now, though the difficulties remain the same, we are getting used to it now" said one of the parents. Adaptability becomes tougher when it is new. Positive or negative effect, both requires adaptability. Though the difficulties experienced have remained same the intensity of it was seen more in first wave than the second wave. Once an individual can adapt to situations, they would be able to handle the situation. Parents in the study have expressed that COVID-19 has affected them.

#### **Theme III: Coping Strategies during Pandemic**

These days people have started to accept the pandemic situations and began to deal with it more effectively. Many of them were managing their negative emotions by engaging in their regular duties, spending time to enhance their passion in gardening, trying new delicious recipes and reading favorite books. One of the parents shared that, "I manage my emotions by spending my time on duty. It helps a lot to distract myself. When I come back, watching T.V, and listening to music helps me to relieve my stress." Another response was, "Spending time with my family, is seriously the best remedy. We have spent quite a lot of time together during this pandemic. You know one thing good about this pandemic is, it has brought some families together. We now have a chance to be with, play with them. It really helps to grow good relations among us. After we play some games, I make some delicious food for them and that's how the day ends. It's nice, really nice." Likewise, some of them deal with it through personal prayer, meditation, yoga and other physical activities. Parents have been facing huge financial crisis due to sudden changes but they have learned to tackle these problems with proper planning such as reducing and tracking the expenditure, modifying lifestyle pattern, making budget list, setting schedules, taking precautions and managing time..

#### **Theme IV: Suggestions by Parents to handle Pandemic**

COVID-19 pandemic has made humans to think and live in more effective manner. Through this study, parents were asked to give some valuable suggestions to handle the pandemic situations more carefully and productively. One of the suggestions given was, "I would like to suggest other parents to take this pandemic as an opportunity to spend time with their closed one who are staying with them. And even though pandemic has impacted us in lots of bad ways but there is positivity towards it. We can't deny the negative part but we just need to accept it and move on with it. Try accepting the reality and think optimistically. Make your mind calm by listening to music, watching your favorite movie, cooking or anything else. Just stay

positive and whenever you buy something or travel just take all the precautions, wear mask, carry sanitizer, stay six feet away, take your shot of vaccination. I think if we follow all this, it can seriously help us fight this pandemic." Some other suggestions were, stay connected to your family and friends, while spending time with children make them aware and build confidence in them, eat healthy and nutritious food, and be conscious and aware about the pandemic and try to provide mental support to others.

## DISCUSSION

Under the situation of COVID -19 pandemic people are suffering to maintain good emotional as well as social wellbeing. Considering families, the importance of discussing the impact of this pandemic on the role of parents is tremendous. Studies show that pandemic situation puts parents at a higher risk of experiencing distress, potentially impairing their ability to be supportive caregivers (Spinelli *et al.*, 2020). In such scenario a healthy dose of emotional maturity and self-efficacy would likely provide resilience where otherwise parents could burnout very fast. Thus, the present study primarily assesses these constructs and attempts to comprehend them in greater depth.

This study explores the relationships between self-efficacy and emotional maturity. Results shows that self-efficacy has shown significant relationship with emotional regression and faulty social adjustment. Whereas emotional instability, lack of independency and flexibility and adaptability do not show any correlation with self-efficacy. Inter-correlation shows that, sub scales of emotional maturity are significantly correlated with other. Hence the null hypothesis is partially rejected and partially accepts the alternative hypothesis stating "There is significant relationship between Emotional Maturity and Self-Efficacy among Parents during Pandemic".

In accordance with the thematic analysis, it was found that COVID-19 pandemic was related with changes in people's lifestyle and there were worries regarding many aspects of life including financial issues, work life, psychological effects, social, physical and mental health. This concurs the findings of other studies that suggested worsening mental health, behavioral health, moderate or severe financial insecurity, and loss of regular child care (Wu M, *et al.*, 2020). The samples also gave valuable suggestions to handle the pandemic. These suggestions can help other parents to overcome the pandemic more effectively.

Although the present study is on parents but it also enables us to identify children who may require more help and support as a result of their parents' impaired mental health. According to Eisenèberg *et al.* (2005), parents' positivity and warmth can promote effortful control in children, reducing their externalizing

behaviors. In fact, environmental aspects might also indirectly affect parents' belief to be competent in managing parental tasks, and this could lead to less psychological well-being of the children (Jones and Prinz, 2005). For this reason, it is important that parents have a good parenting self-efficacy and emotional maturity in order to display positive parenting strategies that can foster adaptive functioning and emotion regulation in children (Stack *et al.*, 2010).

Furthermore, the current findings can be used to implement intervention strategies for parents in order to foster wellbeing among children. These intervention programs should be aimed at increasing parents' regulatory emotional maturity and parenting self-efficacy, by uplifting their adaptive strategies and resources to deal with routine tasks and reinforcing their strengths. Intervention programmes should also teach parents how to communicate effectively with their children. Using the correct words is more probable when parents have high levels of parental self-efficacy and emotional regulation self-efficacy (Jones and Prinz, 2005b), and this could be extremely beneficial to both parents and children.

## CONCLUSION

The present study shows that there is significant relationship of self-efficacy with emotional regression and faulty social adjustment. COVID-19 has affected people in many ways like socially, psychologically, emotionally and financially and brought up new challenges. It also shows that it gave positive effects like bringing families together and spending quality time, to be conscious about health, and also helped them to learn new things like improving their interests and getting updated with the digitalization in schools and work places. Parents being multi-tasking have helped them to deal with changes in life style during lockdown and covid-19 condition. As the effect was on entire family it required more strength, energy, skill, social and emotional balance to take care of them and family. The effects and challenges faced by them shows there is a need for parents to improve their emotional maturity and self-efficacy to handle covid-19 situation. Suggestions are given by parents for maintaining their physical and mental health based on their experiences in life, these suggestions would benefit people in dealing with covid-19 pandemic.

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