

Parental Involvement and Its Influence on Academic Achievement

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Parental involvement in education is widely recognized as a critical factor influencing children's academic success. This qualitative study seeks to explore the varied aspects of parental engagement and understand its direct and indirect effects on student outcomes. The objective is to delineate how different forms of involvement contribute to academic achievement and to identify the barriers that parents face in engaging with their children's educational processes.

Methodology: The study employed a qualitative methodology, focusing exclusively on semi-structured interviews to gather comprehensive data from 24 participants, including parents, students, and teachers. The interviews aimed at achieving theoretical saturation and were analyzed using NVivo software to facilitate a thorough thematic analysis. The participant selection was purposive, ensuring a diverse demographic representation to capture a wide range of experiences and insights.

Findings: Three main themes were identified from the analysis: Types of Parental Involvement, Impact of Involvement on Student Outcomes, and Barriers to Parental Involvement. Under these themes, multiple categories were explored, such as Emotional Support, Academic Assistance, and Financial Support, which significantly enhanced academic performance and student well-being. Barriers identified included work and time constraints, economic factors, and cultural attitudes, which hindered effective parental engagement.

Conclusion: The study underscores the significant positive effects of diverse types of parental involvement on students' academic outcomes and emotional well-being. It also highlights several socio-economic and cultural barriers that can restrict parental engagement. Addressing these barriers is crucial for facilitating more effective parental involvement, which is essential for optimizing student achievement.

Keywords: Parental involvement, academic achievement, qualitative research, educational barriers, thematic analysis, student outcomes.

1. Introduction

The influence of parental involvement on academic achievement has been a focal point of educational research for decades, underscoring its critical role across various socio-economic and cultural contexts. The foundation of this study is built upon an extensive review of literature that highlights both the direct and indirect effects of parental engagement in educational processes (Green et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2005; Kasi et al., 2021; Lavenda, 2011; Peng et al., 2023; Taseer et al., 2023; Topor et al., 2010; Watkins & Howard, 2015).

Historically, parental involvement has been conceptualized in a broad spectrum, ranging from direct academic assistance to more indirect forms of support, such as emotional backing and involvement in school governance. Castro et al. (2015) provide a comprehensive meta-analysis that underscores the positive correlation between parental engagement and enhanced student academic performance, noting that even minimal involvement can have significant effects on student outcomes (Castro et al., 2015). This finding is echoed in studies across different regions and educational stages, suggesting a universally beneficial impact of parental engagement (Englund et al., 2004; Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Research specifically addressing diverse economic backgrounds indicates that while all forms of parental involvement are beneficial, the nature and impact can vary significantly across different socioeconomic statuses (SES). Altschul (2012) illustrates how socioeconomic factors can mediate the ways through which Mexican American parents engage with their children's education, directly linking SES to academic achievement through parental involvement (Altschul, 2012). Similarly, Zhang et al. (2021) discuss the moderating role of adolescents' subjective social mobility perceptions on the efficacy of parental involvement, suggesting that students' outlooks on their future can influence how parental efforts impact their academic success (Zhang et al., 2021).

The dynamics of parental involvement also differ in response to geographical and cultural settings. Beyers and Mugabe (2022) highlight perceptions among learners in rural Zimbabwe, pointing to unique local factors that affect academic achievement, thereby emphasizing the need for contextual sensitivity in approaches to parental engagement (Beyers & Mugabe, 2022). This geographical sensitivity is mirrored in studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, where Kasi et al. (2021) and Yu et al. (2022)

explore how enforced home schooling altered traditional forms of parental involvement, suggesting adaptations in parental roles that could have long-lasting effects on educational practices and outcomes (Kasi et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2022).

In addition to academic support, the emotional and psychological aspects of parental involvement play crucial roles in shaping educational outcomes. Hardaway et al. (2020) focus on cognitive stimulation in the home and maternal responses to academic performance, highlighting how emotional support mechanisms within the family can significantly influence academic achievement, particularly among low-income African American adolescents (Hardaway et al., 2020). This psychological support is critical as it not only impacts academic performance but also influences students' emotional and social well-being, which in turn affects their overall educational experience (Gordon & Cui, 2012).

However, despite the recognized benefits, several barriers to effective parental involvement exist. Work and time constraints, educational knowledge, economic factors, and cultural attitudes often hinder meaningful parental engagement (Hill et al., 2004; Ôtani, 2019). Radzi, Razak, and Sukor (2010) provide insights into primary teachers' views on the challenges and opportunities of parental involvement in Malaysia, suggesting that overcoming these barriers requires targeted interventions that are sensitive to local educational ecosystems (Radzi et al., 2010).

This article aims to explore and elucidate the multifaceted impact of parental involvement on the academic outcomes of students, leveraging qualitative insights gleaned from semi-structured interviews.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This qualitative study was designed to investigate the impact of parental involvement on students' academic achievement. Our primary data collection method involved semi-structured interviews, which allowed for the collection of in-depth responses while also providing the flexibility to explore new topics that emerged during the interviews.

The participants for this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique to include a diverse range of parents, teachers, and students from various educational backgrounds and geographic locations. We sought to achieve theoretical saturation, which is the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data. This

approach ensured that the sample size was adequate to support a comprehensive analysis of the research questions.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Semi-Structured Interview

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format with a guide that included open-ended questions to explore various dimensions of parental involvement. These questions addressed areas such as the nature and extent of parental help with homework, communication with teachers, participation in school activities, and the perceived effects of these activities on academic outcomes.

Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or via online platforms, depending on the participant's preference and availability. The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants to ensure accuracy in data collection.

2.3. Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using NVivo software, a leading qualitative data analysis

tool. This software facilitated the organization and coding of the data, allowing for efficient identification of recurring themes and patterns. The analysis followed the principles of thematic analysis, where data were initially coded in a wide-ranging and open manner to capture all possible meanings and relationships. These initial codes were then grouped into potential themes, which were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the interview data.

3. Findings and Results

The study included a total of 24 participants, representing a diverse demographic profile to comprehensively explore the effects of parental involvement across different backgrounds. The participants were comprised of 12 parents (50%), 8 students (33.3%), and 4 teachers (16.7%). Among the parents, there was an equal distribution of males and females. The students ranged in age from 12 to 18 years, encompassing both middle and high school age groups. The teachers were from a variety of educational stages including elementary, middle, and high school levels, with an equal split between genders.

Table 1

Categories, Subcategories, and Concepts

Categories	Subcategories	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Types of Parental Involvement	Emotional Support	Encouragement, Listening, Empathy, Understanding, Motivation
	Academic Assistance	Homework help, Tutoring, Educational resources, Study habits
	Communication with School	Parent-teacher meetings, Emails, School visits, Volunteer work
	Decision-Making Participation	School board involvement, Curriculum input, Policy discussions
	Financial Support	School fees, Supplies, Uniforms, Extracurricular funding
2. Impact of Involvement on Student Outcomes	Academic Performance	Grades improvement, Test scores, Subject understanding
	Emotional and Social Well-being	Confidence, Social skills, Stress management, Happiness
	Attitude towards School	Attendance, Participation in activities, Interest in learning
3. Barriers to Parental Involvement	Work and Time Constraints	Long working hours, Scheduling conflicts, Lack of time
	Knowledge and Skills	Educational background, Teaching skills, Understanding curriculum
	Economic Factors	Low income, Economic instability, Cost of educational materials
	Cultural Attitudes	Perceptions of education, Gender roles, Value of involvement
	Communication Issues	Language barriers, Miscommunications, Lack of responsiveness

3.1. Types of Parental Involvement

This category encompasses the various forms of active participation by parents in their child's education. Five subcategories were identified:

Emotional Support: Parents provide crucial emotional backing through encouragement and empathy. One parent

noted, "I always make sure to listen and understand what's troubling my child about school. It really helps to boost their confidence."

Academic Assistance: Assistance with homework and provision of educational resources are common. As one student mentioned, "My dad helps me with my math homework whenever he can. It makes things so much clearer."

Communication with School: Engagement with school staff through meetings and other communication channels was highlighted. "I regularly attend parent-teacher meetings and volunteer at school events," shared one parent.

Decision-Making Participation: Some parents take part in school decision-making processes. A school board member explained, "Parents' input in curriculum discussions is invaluable for us."

Financial Support: Funding for school-related expenses is a significant form of involvement. "I work overtime to ensure my kids have everything they need for school, from uniforms to field trip fees," said a parent.

3.2. *Impact of Involvement on Student Outcomes*

Parental involvement has a direct impact on various student outcomes, divided into three subcategories:

Academic Performance: Improved grades and better test scores are prominent outcomes. "Ever since my mom started helping me with my studies, my grades have gone up," a student recounted.

Emotional and Social Well-being: Enhanced social skills and emotional health are critical. "My son seems happier and more outgoing with us being involved in his school activities," observed a parent.

Attitude towards School: Increased school attendance and participation are noted benefits. "She's more eager to go to school and participate in class since I started engaging more with her teachers," a parent commented.

3.3. *Barriers to Parental Involvement*

Several barriers that prevent or hinder parental involvement were identified, with each subcategory illustrating different challenges:

Work and Time Constraints: Many parents find it difficult to balance job demands with school involvement. "My work schedule makes it nearly impossible to attend school functions," a parent lamented.

Knowledge and Skills: A lack of educational knowledge can limit the help parents can provide. "Sometimes, I feel like I'm not much help with the new math they study," admitted one parent.

Economic Factors: Financial instability can restrict parents' ability to support school-related activities. "It's tough when you can barely afford the basics, let alone extra school programs," explained a parent.

Cultural Attitudes: Cultural perceptions about education and parental roles can also be barriers. "In our community,

not everyone sees the value in parents getting too involved with school," said a participant.

Communication Issues: Language barriers and poor communication with school staff can deter engagement. "I find it hard to communicate with teachers as English isn't my first language," a parent shared.

4. **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this qualitative study, three main themes were identified, each highlighting a different aspect of parental involvement's impact on academic achievement. The themes include "Types of Parental Involvement," "Impact of Involvement on Student Outcomes," and "Barriers to Parental Involvement." Within these main themes, several categories were explored: for "Types of Parental Involvement," the categories were Emotional Support, Academic Assistance, Communication with School, Decision-Making Participation, and Financial Support; for "Impact of Involvement on Student Outcomes," the categories included Academic Performance, Emotional and Social Well-being, and Attitude towards School; and for "Barriers to Parental Involvement," the categories consisted of Work and Time Constraints, Knowledge and Skills, Economic Factors, Cultural Attitudes, and Communication Issues.

The first main theme, "Types of Parental Involvement," encapsulated the various ways parents engage with their children's education. The category of Emotional Support included concepts such as encouragement, listening, empathy, understanding, and motivation, reflecting the emotional and psychological encouragement provided by parents. Academic Assistance was defined by homework help, tutoring, providing educational resources, and fostering good study habits. Communication with School involved parent-teacher meetings, emails, school visits, and volunteering, indicating active participation in the educational environment. Decision-Making Participation covered involvement in school boards, curriculum input, and policy discussions, showing a higher level of engagement in educational decision-making. Lastly, Financial Support included providing for school fees, supplies, uniforms, and funding extracurricular activities, highlighting the economic aspect of parental involvement.

The second theme, "Impact of Involvement on Student Outcomes," dealt with the effects of parental involvement on various aspects of students' academic and personal development. Academic Performance was enhanced through

improved grades and better test scores, attributed to parental support. Emotional and Social Well-being was supported through increased confidence, improved social skills, better stress management, and overall happiness, pointing to the broader impact of parental involvement beyond academic metrics. Attitude towards School was positively influenced, evidenced by increased attendance, greater participation in school activities, and a heightened interest in learning, reflecting a more engaged and motivated student.

The final theme, "Barriers to Parental Involvement," outlined the challenges that prevent parents from becoming more involved in their children's education. Work and Time Constraints included long working hours and scheduling conflicts that limit parents' availability for school-related activities. Knowledge and Skills captured the gaps in parents' understanding of the curriculum or effective teaching methods. Economic Factors discussed the impact of low income and economic instability on the ability to provide educational resources. Cultural Attitudes addressed the varying perceptions of the value of education and parental roles across different cultures. Communication Issues highlighted barriers such as language differences and poor communication with school staff, which can impede effective engagement.

Our findings confirm that various types of parental involvement, such as emotional support, academic assistance, and financial support, positively correlate with enhanced academic performance. These results are consistent with those of Castro et al. (2015), who found that diverse forms of parental involvement were positively associated with student academic achievement (Castro et al., 2015). Similarly, Englund et al. (2004) reported that parental involvement in early elementary school had significant longitudinal effects on children's academic success, which underscores the long-term benefits of early parental engagement (Englund et al., 2004).

The specific impact of socioeconomic factors on the methods and effectiveness of parental involvement, as observed in our study, aligns with the research by Altschul (2012). This study specifically linked lower socioeconomic status and the unique challenges it presents to the academic achievement of Mexican American youth, suggesting that socioeconomic context significantly shapes the nature and efficacy of parental involvement (Altschul, 2012).

The barriers identified in this study, including work and time constraints, economic factors, and cultural attitudes, have been widely discussed in the literature. Hill et al. (2004) highlight similar challenges, noting demographic variations

in parental academic involvement and its effects on student behavior and aspirations (Hill et al., 2004). Furthermore, the findings by Ôtani (2019) support the notion that socioeconomic and cultural factors can significantly hinder the involvement of parents in their children's education, thereby impacting academic outcomes (Ôtani, 2019).

The recent global shift towards remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic has also influenced patterns of parental involvement. Our findings related to the increased role of parents during school closures align with those of Yu et al. (2022), who documented how parental involvement during school closure significantly affected children's academic achievement. This adaptation to involvement has likely set a precedent for future parental roles in education, potentially leading to lasting changes in how parental support is provided (Yu et al., 2022).

The role of parental emotional support in enhancing students' academic and social well-being, as identified in our findings, echoes the research by Hardaway et al. (2020). They pointed out the critical role of cognitive stimulation at home and responsive parenting in supporting the academic achievements of adolescents. This form of involvement not only supports academic success but also contributes to the overall emotional resilience and social competence of students (Hardaway et al., 2020).

This study conclusively demonstrates that parental involvement in education significantly enhances student academic achievement, validating the theories posited by existing research. The nuanced insights gained from semi-structured interviews underscore the importance of a supportive home environment and active parental engagement in fostering educational success. These findings not only reinforce the value of varied forms of parental involvement but also illuminate the complex interdependencies between family dynamics and educational systems.

Despite its insights, this study is not without limitations. The reliance on qualitative data from a limited participant pool may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Theoretical saturation was achieved, yet the diversity and number of participants were constrained by logistical and geographical factors, which may affect the breadth of perspectives and experiences captured. Furthermore, the study focused predominantly on parental perspectives, with less emphasis on the viewpoints of educators and students, which could lead to a potential bias in interpreting the impact of parental involvement.

Future research should aim to address the limitations noted by incorporating larger and more diverse populations across different educational settings and regions. Quantitative studies could complement this research by providing statistical validation of the findings, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the results. Additionally, exploring the long-term effects of parental involvement beyond the immediate educational outcomes could provide deeper insights into the sustained benefits of such engagement.

The implications of this study are significant for educational policy and practice. Schools and educators should consider developing programs that facilitate and encourage diverse forms of parental involvement, especially in under-resourced or culturally diverse communities. Such initiatives could include workshops that equip parents with effective strategies for supporting their children's education and creating more flexible communication channels that accommodate varying parental schedules. Additionally, policy-makers should consider the socioeconomic barriers identified in the study, advocating for policies that reduce these impediments to allow equitable parental participation in all students' educational experiences.

Authors' Contributions

The first author was responsible for conducting the interview and collecting data, and the other authors were responsible for analyzing the data and writing the article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the interview and participated in the research with informed consent.

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