

Investigating Parental Perception of their Role in Academic Performance of Children: A Qualitative Research in Public Primary Schools of District Korangi, Sindh in Pakistan

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Abstract: This paper explores how parents see their involvement in helping children to achieve academic success in low-resource public primary schools in District Korangi, Sindh, Pakistan. Although it has been realized how important parents are in such a situation, little study has been done to establish the lived experiences of parents in such settings. A qualitative phenomenological study was used, and purposive sampling was applied to involve 16 parents (8 fathers and 8 mothers) in 5 schools. They were analyzed thematically and semi-structured interviews were used. The results showed that parents played an active role in the educational processes of their children by overseeing the schoolwork of their children, attending school-related events, and helping in homework. Their interest filled in institutional failures and strengthened academic success and moral growth. The parents also indicated that they wanted to have closer interaction with the teachers. The paper has concluded that when parents have their roles recognized and appreciated, then student results are better. It emphasizes the necessity of culturally responsive engagement practices and more effective school-family communication that will allow placing the parents as partners in the educational process.

Keywords: Parental Environment, Academic Performance, Low-Income Communities

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Introduction

Parental involvement is a responsibility whose input is well-known in enhancing future academic success of children within different learning systems in different countries of the world. The model presented by Epstein (2001) presupposes the six forms of parental involvement focusing on the fact that parental involvement in children learning is multilevel. It is discovered that the active parental involvement that is evident in monitoring homework to involvement in school life has a connection with an enhanced academic performance, attendance and high motivation among the students (Jeynes, 2012). It has been discovered that in both high and low income societies, when parents are convinced that they can play a role in doing so, children would most likely perform better in school (Fan & Chen, 2001).

The example of educational inequality and organizational limitations is characteristic of parental involvement in Pakistan in the educational institutions that are managed by the agency of the state. Sindh is among the most populated provinces which are struggling with the issue of illiteracy, and gender disparity, as well as deficiency in school facilities (UNESCO, 2021). In the context of such an environment, the parental attitudes which are based on the cultural norms, socio-economic limitations, and the past schooling experiences are essential in influencing the extent and the nature of their involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). In poor neighborhoods, many parents

can consider education as a significant instrument and can be empowered or even not to know how to teach their children to learn (Rehman & Khan, 2015).

These images are very urgent particularly in the primary schools that are not endowed with resources institutional fault lines can be overcome through collaboration between the school and the home. It however has scanty qualitative data on subjective perceptions and practices of Sindh parents in the academic track of their children. This research attempt aims at addressing this gap by discussing the experience of parents in this region. The research is expected to shed light on the culturally responsive education and parental engagement practices based on the socio-cultural background of the Sindh to provide them a voice.

Statement of the Problem

Parents are well known to be among the determinants of an academic success of children but still, many students in the primary schools of Korangi district of Sindh have been struggling with learning challenges as their parents are still very much involved. Parents are often not in a position to deal with the educational difficulties of their children due to time limits, ignorance and socio-economic strains which makes students work individually and perform poorly. Although the literature illustrates the significance of family support, there is little information on parental perceptions regarding the influence on academic achievement. To comprehend the impediments to parental engagement and to create context-specific responses, it is important to explore such perceptions in terms of the qualitative study and to formulate context-dependent interventions that can enhance family-school collaboration and student achievement in urban schools with low resources.

Research Objective

- To investigate the parental impressions regarding the Involvement in their children academic performance.

Literature Review

Parents and their role in achieving success at school

The importance of parents to the school development of children is unparalleled in a good portion of world literature. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) believe role construction, efficacy beliefs, and school personnel invitations are the factors that lead to the school personnel invitations to initiate parental involvement. The research conducted in diverse areas such as the United States and in East Asia has also concurred in the area that parental involvement is associated with high performance of students (Hill & Tyson, 2009). The meta-analyses also confirm that the parental expectations, communication, and emotional support are connected to predictors of academic success (Jeynes, 2007).

The rest of the studies prove that there is no need to rely on the parental participation at a large scale, but a small but consistent input of the parent, such as asking the children to read aloud, or just give them a glimpse at their homework or expectations in the academic work suffices to make the performance change, at least in the first years (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). In addition, parental involvement has been put in place to promote better cognitive, behavioral and motivational performances on children (Pomerantz et al., 2007). These results confirm the assumption that the position of parents as the primary instructors of the child allow it to become the foundation stone in facilitating the learning process in school and influence the development of academic habits in the long-term perspective.

Socio-Economic Factors of Involvement

The socio-economic status (SES) is likely to mediate the parental involvement where the parents with high background in the socio-economic status are better placed to communicate with the schools (Lareau, 2003). Material poverty, the absence of education, jobs, etc. can handicap the parents to offer the education of the children when they live in dire conditions (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003). The same is compounded by gender norms, lack of adult literacy and inadequate education systems amongst the populations in the South Asian countries (Aslam & Kingdon, 2011).

Perceptions of Parents/Cultural Expectations

The engagement is usually alluded in the cultural and religious needs in the case of education in Pakistan. They have pointed out that the rural parent's associate academic success with moral growth and discipline to the achievement of strictly academic success. Rind and Shah (2022) discovered that the majority of the Sindh-based parents appreciate



the significance of education, yet the vast majority of them believe that schools address the majority of the academic issues and assume the functions of moral support or punishment at home.

Parents and teachers cooperate in the Neglected Schools

The existing South Asian studies demonstrate that the relationships between parents and teachers in the state schools are weak in terms of cooperation that is commonly explained by the lack of effective communication, school hierarchy, and trust (Andrabi et al., 2015). This is also complicated by the language barriers and the absence of formalized ways of parental feedback or involvement, which make it complex in Sindh (Rehman & Khan, 2015). These considerations show that sensitive qualitative research relating to perception of parents based on their roles and negotiation of the roles are significant.

Identified Gaps

Although there have been a number of research done regarding parental involvement in Pakistan, not many studies have been conducted to examine the subjective meaning and lived experience of the same by parents about the same. This disparity is more evident in the rural and low-resource situations like state primary schools in Sindh where cultural issues and structural constraints define the actions of parents. The gap presented in the current paper is relevant since it pertains to a phenomenological analysis of how the parents conceptualize their role, experience of involvement, and how they evaluate the role.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design that was used in this study is qualitative, a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology was selected since it allowed a detailed delimitation of living worlds and perceptions of parents in reference to their children in public primary schools in terms of academic performances. This method was especially suitable since it helped understand the way people interpreted and explained their experience regarding the social and cultural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Population

The study population consisted of those parents whose children were going to public primary schools in the Korangi district of Sindh, Pakistan. These communities were characterized by low-income households, thus standing out as an important context in which parental involvement and perceptions of children's schooling may be examined.

Sampling Design

The study sample was parents of school-going children in the Korangi district of Sindh, Pakistan. Purposive sampling method was used to make sure that the sample included participants who would offer valuable and in-depth information. The respondents were identified ($n= 16$) in five primary schools that are well-representative of the low-income communities. A balanced sample was achieved by making sure the sample consisted of equal numbers of mothers and fathers in order to achieve gendered differences in perception and engagement.

Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, and flexibility and depth were provided due to the nature of the interview. This approach allowed subjects to describe their experiences using their own language and giving the researcher a chance to inquire further on themes in the process. The interviews were done using the local language so that cultural aspects were suitable and that the participants feel at ease during the study. The method made the data more authentic and richer.

Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic analysis was done through a six-stage model that is suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyze interview data. Inductive method was used that enabled the themes to crop out of the data instead of being forced into data by the frameworks that existed beforehand. It included becoming familiar with the data, making of initial



codes, theme search, theme reviewing, theme definition, and naming of themes and lastly report production. This was a methodical procedure that allowed rigor, transparency, and credibility throughout the analysis.

The four subsequent themes such as Home-Based Scaffolding, Obstacles and Barriers to Effective Engagement, Institutional Engagement and Visibility, and The Two-Pillar Model of Partnership (Figure 01). They were constructed out of multiple reflection and thematic analysis, and the rigor and credibility guaranteed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The data collected on 16 respondents (8 fathers and 8 mothers) proves the different data on the role of parental involvement in the success of academic life of the children. The themes identified in the thematic analysis process are the Home-Based Academic Scaffolding, Institutional Engagement and Visibility, Obstacles to Effective Engagement, and the Two-Pillar Model of Partnership. These themes are backed by firsthand responses provided by the parents concerning their role in monitoring the homework, bridging of gaps in education and attendance of meetings.

Thematic Analysis

Home-Based Academic Scaffolding

House-Based Academic Scaffolding was the one that was mentioned in several responses. One of the examples is that one of the parents emphasized that he provides a direct instructional support through checking up with the homework of his or her child: *"I support my child in her work at school by doing her homework as the teacher provides to her. I do not even read over what she has learned... being reminded what she has learned"* (Respondent 01). The other respondent indicated the need to address the gap in the learning process due to large classes in the government schools: *"I do not know how to be able to cover the gaps by having him learn at home since in the government schools there were too many classes and the teacher could not pay much attention to him"* (Respondent 06). This means that many parents believe that they can play an important role of complementing academic studies outside the classroom environment.

Institutional Visibility and Engagement

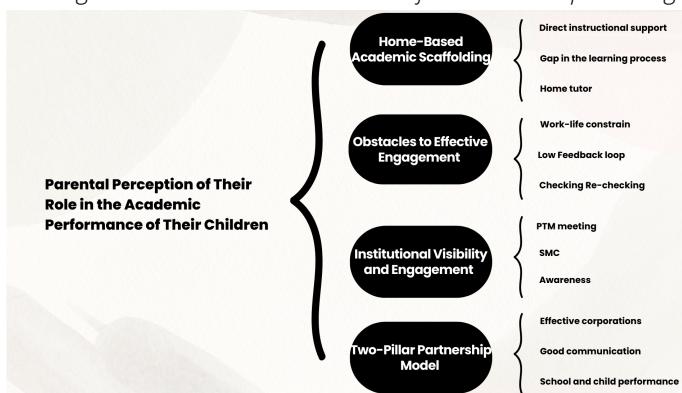
The parents participate in school meetings and follow up of the students meaning that Institutional Engagement and Visibility exist. One of the respondents said that he/she has been attending the meeting regularly and visible in school, so that teachers could be more aware of the needs of the child: *"When the teachers realize they have parents to think about, then they could be more careful about the needs of the child"* (Respondent 14). This means that the parents are grateful to their presence as some form of accountability to the institution.

Barriers to Successful Interaction

However, the Barriers to Effective Engagement were also stated. Other constraints, such as Work-life conflict, Time constraints, were also a significant constraint to some of the parents to provide regular support: *"I at times have to work and have no time to offer her up"* (Respondent 10). Besides this, there is also the low feedback loop that takes place in schools, as some parents mention, which underlines how many of them feel disappointed about the fact that the institution does not support their children in their learning: When the teachers simply crossed in his work when marking his work and do not correct him: *"This will mean that I will have to repeat the entire lesson"* (Respondent 08).

Figure 1

The Diagram Shows that Coded Answer of Parent's Perceptions Regarding their Role in the Academic Performance of their Children



Two Pillar Model of Partnership

Another model was the Two-Pillar Model of Partnership that was extremely widespread in a number of answers as the respondents made it clear that effective cooperation between the parents and teachers and efficient communication is the main element of the successful school performance of a child: Good communication is key: *"The parents should provide feedback and teachers should update parents on the progress of the child"* (Respondent 11).

Discussion

Parental involvement in education of children in Sindh, Pakistan, has both proponent and contradictory views. On the one hand, the influence of parents is commonly considered as a fundamental aspect of improvement of the academic results of children. Research has revealed that active participation, which includes helping in homework and a continuous contact with teachers is associated with improved academic performance (Jeynes, 2012).

The results of this study are in agreement with these findings as the respondents explained that they directly contribute to the academic performance of their children by participating in school-related activities, assisting them in accomplishing their assignments, and tracking the progress of their academics: I assist her with school assignments such as ensuring that she does her homework as per her instructions by teachers. I also read her work cause I want to be reminded what she has learned, is one such example of the respondent. Motivation and attendance have been found to be elevated in the school when parents participate in the given activities (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The information supports this view with some of the respondents highlighting how they have to make sure that the children do their homework and they come to school functions. Sometimes however, the socio-economic factors restrict the capacity of individuals to engage in these activities.

Conversely, there are high barriers of parental involvement in low-income communities. The socio economic issues that restrict parents to participate effectively on the schooling of the children include time constraints and work life conflict (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003). Such obstacles are not new in the literature because studies have shown that parents with lower-income earners usually find it difficult to offer academic support because of material under privileges and lack of time (Lareau, 2003). One of the respondents told me that at times he has work commitments and he cannot spend time with her. In addition, the parents are not helped by institutional barriers, including insufficient teacher feedback, which makes it very difficult to support those (Andrabi et al., 2015). The frustration with poor feedback loops expressed by parents in this work is consistent with the previous studies that reported that low-resource schools have a weak communication between parents and teachers, which only worsens the educational inequity (Rehman & Khan, 2015). According to one parent, the most difficult part is when the teachers are marking his work without correcting him, but they hand him a cross only.

Moreover, the parental perceptions are also determined by cultural and institutional dynamics in Sindh. Most parents are likely to regard their contribution as moral support and enforcement of discipline, but they are not involved in the school-related issue (Nasir et al., 2019). Studies conducted in related socio-cultural settings revealed that parental support in education is usually discussed against moral and religious concepts where discipline takes precedence as opposed to curricular content. The results show the same trend, where some parents have pointed out that they need to respect each other when they interact with teachers. Ethics and respect of one another should be upheld according to a respondent that the parents will be required to treat the teachers and staff respectfully. This is an indication of the greater cultural context of home-school division of educational responsibilities.

In addition to these, the data indicate that parents desire to be involved but their views on their role differ. There are those that view their participation in a manner of promoting moral growth and those that desire to be involved more in the academic support. These contrasting opinions can have an effect on the way schools treat parental involvement. The recognition of these disparities is essential because researchers believe that cultural expectations and perceptions have an important influence on the level of parental involvement in the education of children (Nasir et al., 2019). The results also point at the necessity to consider cultural diversity when adopting parental engagement in schools.



Findings

- ▶ **Parental Engagement:** Parents are actively involved in the education of their children by assisting them in doing their homework, school meetings and making sure that their children attend school on a regular basis.
- ▶ **Barriers to Engagement:** Work-life conflict, time constraint and subject-specific knowledge, particularly in English, are among the significant barriers to parental involvement.
- ▶ **Feedback Mechanisms:** Schools do not give proper feedback on the work of the students and hence the parents fill the gaps by imparting the lessons at home.
- ▶ **Cultural Factors:** There are a lot of parents whose role in the educational process is rather moral and disciplinary instead of the ability to work with academic material.
- ▶ **Parent-Teacher Communication:** It is believed that effective and frequent communication between parents and teachers is important to enhance the academic performance of the students, yet communication is not usually effective.
- ▶ **Institutional Involvement:** The opinion of active involvement of both the parents and the teachers who collaborate with each other as the equal partners is the point of the operational perception of parents toward the educational process.

Conclusion

The research findings offer high accent concerning the role parents play in determining the academic success of their children particularly in poor local community in Pakistan. The parental involvement is a vital factor in the academic success where most of the parents have the role to supervise the school work, school meetings and bridging the gaps in the learning process. Such parents believe that their intervention is a necessary action to enhance the learning process of their children and especially when taken into account in the under-resourced schools. This involvement is sometimes marred by the time schedule, lack of academic background in certain courses and insufficient feedback of the teachers, which limits their involvement in the education of their children.

Also, these issues are aggravating due to the lack of a structured communication between the parents and the teachers, which justifies the need to create a more efficient communication between the school and the home. When developing the parental engagement practices, the study also refers to the applicability of the socio-cultural background of the community. At the school level where conservative traditions and gender roles influence the expectations of education, programs of parental involvement must consider such factors to be effective.

Lastly, more multi-faceted and culturally sensitive parent-school partnership mechanisms are to be developed to maximize the educational outcomes in such schools of low resource. These systems should not only be steered towards improving the academic performance, they should also help the parents feel more empowered and competent to assist their children in schooling. This will require the schools and the local communities to actively be involved in the formulation of strategies that will assist them in overcoming the special problems that they are facing as parents.

Recommendations

- ▶ It is recommending that schools should put in place organized channels of communication that would keep parents updated on the progress of their children and areas of improvement. This kind of communication ought to be regular, open, and structured in such a way as to promote any collaborative support between teachers and parents.
- ▶ As a recommendation, schools should also offer workshops, training, or educational resources to their parents, to allow them to assist their children in academic achievements, especially in the area where the parent might be unfamiliar or unknowledgeable.
- ▶ It is advisable that policymakers and educational leaders should apply policies to mitigate socio-economic limitations. These can be included in flexible working hours, incentives among parents or communal based support programs that promote and maintain parental participation in schooling.



- ▶ Teachers are also advised to offer constructive feedback on the works of students in other ways other than by using numbers. This type of feedback must enable the parents to know the learning process of their child and play an active role in effective learning strategies at home.
- ▶ It is advisable that the schools should be provided with parental involvement strategies which are culturally responsive and reflective of the socio-cultural norms of the community. The strategy can be beneficial, relevant, and inclusive to create meaningful parent-school relationships.



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