

Examining Parental Involvement in Elementary Education: Disparities, Dynamics, and Implications

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Abstract

Parental involvement in a child's education constitutes a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing diverse practices and attitudes toward their children's educational journey. This quantitative research, utilizing a descriptive survey design, aims to investigate the impact of parental involvement on elementary students' academic performance. Employing Joyce Epstein's revised (2010) Framework of Six Types of Parental Involvement, this study seeks to gauge the extent of parental engagement in their children's educational activities, particularly in the context of developing countries. Four schools, including two public and two private institutions, were chosen from Karachi district East. A total of 250 students, evenly distributed between genders, were selected as respondents. Each participant completed a research questionnaire to examine the correlation between parental involvement, categorized into six types following Epstein's framework, and student achievement. Findings revealed a positive association between parental involvement and student academic success. However, the applicability of Epstein's (2010) Framework in studying parental involvement in developing nations like Pakistan was found to be limited.

Keywords: *Parental involvement, Elementary education, Academic achievement, Joyce Epstein framework, Developing countries*

Introduction

Background

The involvement of families with their children, as well as interaction at home, is crucial for every child's social development and cognitive growth and has been emphasized greatly (Wynn, 2002). However, research has made it evident that the involvement of parents throughout a child's educational years can improve the child's academic achievement (Hong & Ho, 2005). The importance of parental involvement in a child's education is a multi-faceted phenomenon which includes a wide range of practices and attitudes undertaken by parents regarding their children's education process. While a single definition of the term is yet to be agreed upon by involved stakeholders, this study will consider Jeynes' (2007) broad definition of the term as translating to parental participation in the educational process of their children. This participation done by parents either takes place at the school or at home, providing a holistic educational environment for the children (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). Research (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Zaff et al., 2017) indicates that when parents remain involved in their child's education, they are more likely to do well in school.

While parental involvement has been defined and studied to various degrees, this research will consider the work of Epstein (2010), who states that parental involvement is a partnership between schools and families and focuses on how schools can assist families in creating home environments that will help parents support their children as students. In explaining this dynamic relationship of the involvement of parents, Epstein (2010) developed a Framework that includes six different types of parental involvement. This research will study the effect of the involvement of parents, as defined by Epstein (2010) in her framework, on the academic success of students in elementary school.

Research Gap

Given the importance of parental involvement in an adolescent's education, parents should look at themselves as being collaborators and partners with their child's teachers in their education (Zedan, 2011). To further study the factors involved in parental involvement, Kim S.W. (2017), in their meta-synthesis states that developing countries face a ranging set of difficulties in regard to children's education, owing to the fact that their governments are not strong enough to take charge of the education sector fully. Hence parents have to play a stronger role in the successful education of their child. Kim S.W. (2017) analyses this gap between developing and developed countries to conclude that notable frameworks, like that of Epstein (2010) which have contextualized parental involvement in relation to children's academic achievement have done so within developed countries where bridging the achievement gap is the goal. In developing countries parental involvement is governed by cultural contexts which are entirely different. This leaves a gap for these frameworks to be studied in context to developing countries to research their applicability and validity at different educational levels.

Significance of Study

The Pakistani education system has struggled to maintain quality across the board. Partnerships between schools and parents in Pakistan are extremely weak for the most part. Research shows that this contributes to academic results being compromised, as successful schools involve parents and communities in the school's activities and give them a voice (Salfi, 2011). This study will help parents and schools understand the various aspects of parental involvement in supporting the school and teachers for the eventual better academic achievement of the student. It will further help educators understand the multifold reasons behind the below-average academic achievements and performance of students in elementary school. Parents will be able to understand their role in their child's academic success fully.

Teachers will be able to understand the importance of this parent-school partnership to achieve their desired learning outcomes effectively. This research will further highlight which practices of parental involvement, as detailed by Epstein (2010) in her framework, are statistically helpful and which have no direct link to students' academic achievement.

This study focuses on Epstein's (2010) framework of six types of parental involvement and will look at each type of involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Practices, challenges, and results from each type of involvement will be highlighted in this study, as suggested by Epstein (2019) and her colleagues in a review of the framework. However, since the framework was initiated in a developed country (Epstein, 1995), this study will look at how each type of involvement it includes applies to elementary school in a developing country, like Pakistan. By looking at schools in Karachi East district, this study will outline the types of involvement that are valid in context of Pakistan, and those which are either not directly linked to student achievement or have no effect on it.

Research Objectives

Following are the objectives of this study:

1. Studying the degree of involvement of parents in the educational activities of elementary level children.
2. Examining the extent of parental involvement in the educational activities of their children in public and private sector elementary schools.
3. To test how applicable each different type of parental involvement outlined in Epstein's (2010) framework is in improving student achievement at the elementary level.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested during the study:

H₁: There is an increased level of parental involvement in the educational activities of children at the elementary level.

H₂: The relationship between parental involvement and student achievement in public and private sector elementary schools is not the same.

H₃: Each type of parental involvement in Epstein's (2010) Framework is not fully applicable to the study of the effect of parental involvement at the elementary level.

Literature Review

The importance of parental involvement in a child's education is a multi-faceted phenomenon which includes a wide range of practices and attitudes undertaken by parents in regard to their children's' education process. While a single definition of the term is yet to be agreed upon by involved stakeholders, this study will consider Jeynes' (2007) broad definition of the term as translating to parental participation in the educational process of their children. This participation done by parents either takes place at the school or at home, providing a holistic educational environment for the children (Epstein and Sanders, 2002). Research (Hill and Tyson, 2009; Zaff et. al., 2017) indicates that when parents remain involved in their child's education, they are more likely to do well in school. This literature review will first and foremost attempt to understand the concepts of parental involvement and student achievement, also referred to as academic achievement, during the course of this study. Research done on parental involvement will be considered, with special focus on detailing the Parental Involvement framework created by Joyce Epstein (1995). Academic achievement will also be studied as a construct. Both the variables will be studied to explore text present on the relationship between them, especially for elementary level students.

Parental Involvement

The process of learning is a complex one and begins right at the start of an individual's life. For a child the first teacher and role model they have is their parents. The

part played by involved and engaged parents in a child's learning has been defined in many different ways, some of which are challenging to say the least (Wright, 2009). However, as can be concluded based on research, all types of learners benefit from parental support in their education (Epstein, 2002). The leading and most influential factor in the life of a child are their parents (Zedan, 2011). An effective, open, and communicative partnership between parents and the schools helps to connect the two learning spheres for the child: the classroom and the home. Hence, parents should look at themselves as being collaborators and partners with their child's teachers in their education, without leaving the responsibility entirely on the school (Zedan, 2011).

Parental involvement in children's education has been studied immensely. However, a raging majority of these are done in developed countries, like the United States and Canada, where the challenges for parents and children both are very different from those being faced by the same, in developing countries (Kim S. W., 2017). In a meta-synthesis conducted on Parental Involvement, Kim S.W. (2017) states that developing countries face a ranging set of difficulties in regard to children's education, owing to the fact that their governments are not strong enough to take charge of the education sector fully. This results in the parents' and the communities' having to play a stronger role in the successful education of a child. Kim S.W. (2017) analyses this gap between developing and developed countries to conclude that notable frameworks which has contextualized parental involvement in relation to children's academic achievement, specifically those by Hill and Chao, 2009; Epstein and Sanders, 2002; Epstein, 2001; Fan and Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995, are done within developed countries where bridging the achievement gap is the goal. In developing countries parental involvement is governed by cultural contexts which are entirely different. These include the parents' beliefs, their perceptions, and culturally driven practices (Kim, S.W., 2017). While there are on-going efforts to explore this topic within developing countries, it is

important that any study using western frameworks, considers them to understand parental involvement but combines them with the actuality of how they play out in the real world.

Frameworks that are most commonly used to study Parental Involvement use the ones by Joyce Epstein (1995) which describes the concept using six different types of participation from parents, namely parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and community collaboration. Pomerantz et. al. (2007) studied the Why, How and Whom of parental involvement. They stated that successful parents will construct a defining role for their involvement and work on getting better at it. This means that once they reach a certain quantity of parental involvement, parents will automatically focus on the quality of their involvement.

Walker et al. (2005) revised the theoretical framework created by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), to outline how every individual parent's perceived self-worth plays a big role in how involved they are in their children's' education. This means that the way parents view their own time, energy, knowledge, intellect, and skills will affect their level of involvement (Walker et al. 2005). Cultural context and practices were another major factor affecting parental involvement, as studied by Hill and Torres (2010). They stated that even in developed countries like the United States, ethnic, minority parents were not being overly involved in their children's' education because they didn't feel they were experienced enough and did not want to overstep on the teacher's domain out of respect for them (Hill and Torres, 2010). Buchmann and Hannum (2001) describe parental involvement in relation to the educational gap left by weaker states in developing countries, stating that where reforms, economy, and resources are limited, parental involvement can be that driving force that can influence children's' education.

In light of research done and frameworks created across the globe, the importance of parental involvement remains consistent, recognizing that parents are key decision makers for

their children's education (Kim, S.W., 2017). Hence understanding parental involvement as a construct becomes crucial. For the purpose of this study, Joyce Epstein's revised Framework of Six Types of Parental Involvement (2010) will be considered to explore the boundaries of a school and parental partnership, and to study how it affects children's academic achievement. Even though, the school and parent partnership has been branded as the remedy for students' achievement (Jeynes, 2012), parental involvement is not just limited to Parent-Teacher meetings. In fact, it goes beyond that into a more holistic partnership between schools, communities, and homes (Epstein, 2002). Epstein, (2010) has extensively described this partnership in her Framework which contains six different types of involvements that should be undertaken by parents. These include effective communication, parenting, learning at home, being volunteers, making decisions, and being collaborative with the whole community.

Epstein's (2010) framework offers a deep dive into parental involvement in each of these six domains, outlining initiatives and tasks undertaken by both schools and parents to ensure that the child has a supportive educational environment in school and at home. Research has indicated that when parental contribution to their child's education increases, there is an upward trend in the child's academic growth (Wright, 2009).

Epstein's Parental Involvement Framework

While many scholars have researched the subject of parents' involvement in their child's education, Epstein's (1995) work on the subject is detailed and has received extensive review from the educational research community.

Epstein's (2010) Framework for parental involvement includes six different types of behavior sets and systems. It is the latest version of her research, which describes the practices of parent-school partnership. This framework (Epstein, 2010) considers each different type of parental involvement and describes it as a partnership which should be

collaboratively developed with inputs from both the family and the school. This means that each involvement has defined roles for families and schools. The six different ways in which parents can be involved, mentioned in the framework (Epstein, 2010) are:

1. **Parenting:** This involvement refers to the support parents extend to their children at home. It includes creating an environment and carrying out practices at home to support children as students. This involvement also extends to the school's efforts to understand each student's family background and dynamics.
2. **Communicating:** This type of involvement includes effective channels of communication between the school and home. These two-way communication channels ensure that the family is updated about the student's progress and the school knows about the child's progress.
3. **Volunteering:** This type of involvement happens when the school involves families in student activities. Parents are recruited as volunteers or audience, to help or support various student activities in school like sports day, drama night, etc.
4. **Learning at Home:** Here the set of practices assist parents in creating a home environment which makes the child feel fully supported as a student. In order to achieve this, the role of the school is to provide parents with trainings, workshops, or simpler ideas, which will educate them on the topic. Parents will then be able to help their children in doing their homework or participate in other co-curricular activities.
5. **Decision Making:** The type of involvement is based on the school's ability to include parents in discussions about school plans and policies. It occurs when schools make parent bodies or parent representatives and give them a voice.
6. **Collaborating with the Community:** This encompasses the inclusion of community services, shared resources, and community partners in the educational process to build

upon the relationship of the school and community. This type of involvement will ensure that student learning and development is supported from every social aspect. Epstein (2010) provides a long list of real-life examples and settings for each type of involvement in her framework. The framework has gone through years of research and practice in establishing partnerships between schools, families and communities. While Epstein (2002) has evidence to support the model, she also recognizes that these partnerships are not invincible, and they will start to decline across grade levels, unless schools and teachers put in active effort to continue building upon them (Epstein, 2019).

Her work also outlines that affluent communities will have more positive and stronger parental involvement, as opposed to economically depressed communities where communication with parents is usually aimed towards problems and difficulties being faced (Epstein, 2019). Similarly, she further states that working parents, single parents, and families who live at a distance from the school are likely to be less involved with their child's school. They may also not be able to support or volunteer for their child as much as they would like to because of economic and social circumstances. However, she still emphasizes on the role of the school and parents both in using a respectful approach to build this partnership. This is detailed in the latest review of the framework, by Epstein (2019) and her colleagues, through three comprehensive tables, discussing the practices & strategies, challenges & redefinitions, and expected results for each type of involvement. The contents of which have been summarized for each type of involvement below.

Parenting

The first type of parental involvement, titled Parenting, focuses on helping families establishing a supportive learning environment at home for children. The practices and strategies suggested for this type of involvement include suggestions for home conditions for each grade level, that will support the learning of the child at home; training and education

programs that parents can take to increase their knowledge on supporting children as students; programs for family support that provide guidance about nutrition and health. Additionally, the school can really support this type of involvement by providing parents with resources that include educational knowledge, for instance: workshops, or audio visual messages about parenting practices appropriate for the child's developmental stage at each grade level, meetings with parents to help them understand the school and its environment, and even school visits during major transitional periods for students like from primary to elementary school, etc. The challenges present in this type of involvement include factors like the willingness of parents to accept this support. Hence, it is necessary that clear and usable information and resources should be given to all parents, and not just the ones who ask for it or need it. Similarly, parents should be encouraged to share more information about their family background, culture, and any talents that the child has etc. This results in students feeling supported and supervised. It also positively impacts their attendance and establishes the importance of school for them. For parents, this type of involvement results in them having increased awareness about their child's development and confidence in their own parenting. It also increased the support they feel from the school, developing a positive relationship between both.

Communicating

Communicating is an integral part of Epstein's framework and includes the school-to-home and home-to-school channels of communication. It includes, but isn't limited to, parent-teacher meetings, and report card reviews. Epstein (2019) includes sample practices for this type of involvement that extend to regularly scheduled circulars and memos, progress conferences to discuss report cards, informative sessions on choosing school policies, programs, activities and transitions, sharing of weekly progress folders, and even language translators to help remove any possible language barriers. Epstein (2019) details that

challenges occur in this type of involvement when the communication channels are unclear, vague, or one-way. Hence it is important that all types of communication in this type of involvement are two-way for them to be effective. This type of involvement results in students being more aware of their progress and the actions required to maintain their academic achievements. They also develop a better understanding of school policies, rules, and conduct. Similarly, with increased interaction between teachers and parents, there is a better shared understanding of school policies, increased monitoring of student progress and effective problem resolution, all of which ultimately have a positive effect on student achievement.

Volunteering

This type of parental involvement recruits the help and support of parents at school in various events, activities, and other programs. This means that ideal practices would include parents volunteering to help teachers in organizing programs, events, meetings, etc. It also includes parents lending support in patrolling or chaperoning school extra-curricular events. Anyone who volunteers to support student learning and development in any way, is part of this type of involvement. Challenges that then appear include organizing the volunteer work and executing it in a manner that's flexible enough to accommodate varying schedules.

However, once accomplished, this type of involvement allows students to learn important communication skills with adults. It also increases their awareness and learning of skills, and talents. For parents and teachers this opens up a welcoming environment to work together in collaboration. Understanding each other's roles and facilitating them to eventually aid the child's learning process.

Learning at Home

This type of involvement is focused on creating a home environment that fosters children as students. It includes information and ideas being provided to families about how

they can help students at home with multiple educational activities, including but not limited to homework. It includes practices that provide parents with relevant information, resources, school schedules, activity calendars, details about policies, and any other support that can allow them to create a supportive learning environment at home. While the coordination required in this type of involvement is taxing to execute, especially for teachers with a large number of students, it has immense benefits for all stakeholders.

Learning at home allows students to have a positive attitude towards their educational activities. They gain skills, self-confidence, abilities and establish the concept of being life-long learners. Parents are able to understand the school curricula and how to effectively assist their children. While both parents and teachers are able to encourage, support, discuss and understand children as learners.

Decision Making

Decision making is related to the inclusion of parents and representative parental bodies in making school decisions. It includes parents having a voice through councils or committees for parental leadership and participation. While this is challenging because not all parents are up to the task themselves, it also requires equal representation of multi-cultural, religious and ethnic groups. If achieved, this allows students to have the safety of their rights being protected, parents feeling heard and included in their child's education and teachers understanding the perspective of parents about school related matters.

Collaborating with the Community

This type of involvement includes any and every community resources, and extra-curricular activities outside of school that strengthen the educational experiences being learned at school. For this type of involvement information about programs and resources needs to be readily available to parents including details about summer camps, extra help programs, physical activity programs etc. Funding, equal opportunities, geographical

locations, and participation from all families are challenging but essential elements to make this type of involvement successful. However, it has an undeniably positive effect on increasing skills, talents, and learning through engaging learning opportunities for students. Parents and teachers can interact with like-minded individuals in the community and share meaningful experiences with them.

Understanding Academic Success and Academic Achievement

Even though the importance of student achievement cannot be debated, what is surprising is that a shared definition of the concept doesn't exist, with school leaders, teachers, parents, researchers, and policymakers defining it differently (Guskey, 2007). For parents' academic achievements for their children includes advanced grades, high assessment scores, and a positive attitude about learning in school (Wright, 2009). Conrad (2006), defines academic achievement as the extent to which students achieve their educational goals, measured through academic assessment. However, academic achievements for a child go beyond grades and scores. Recent research has shown that academic achievement is affected by a number of factors including parenting (Georgiou, 2010), self-esteem and personality characteristics (Harackiewicz et. al., 2002), motivation (Kuncel, Hezlett, & Ones, 2004), and even procrastination (Klassen et al., 2010). Academic achievement, viewed as one of the most important outcomes of the formal education process, plays a key role in students' academic life and in their future (Kell, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2013). Research conducted by Martinez et al. (2019) showed that students who are engaged with their learning are more likely to have higher academic achievements. Eakman et. al. (2019) studied academic achievement to determine that in the presence of self-efficacy, fewer academic problems, and an autonomous and supportive learning environment, a positive impact is seen on student achievement.

Academic success has also been defined as the attainment of standard scores in summative assessments. However, researchers have argued the meaning of academic success, stating that it cannot be boxed into a single definition, given that it can be viewed from so many different perspective (York et. al., 2015). These perspectives are defined by York et. al. (2015) as the following six elements: academic achievement, educational satisfaction, acquiring required knowledge, skills, and proficiencies, attaining learning objectives, determination, and success in career. This means that academic success isn't just limited to what a student achieves within the defined boundaries of an educational institutes' curricula, but also includes the individual's capacity to secure a job or professional role after finishing their studies. However, in the same study, York et. al. (2015) also concluded that despite being broader in nature, academic success was continually being measured academic achievement, through grades, scores and/or CGPA. This continues to be a problem because grades and GPA are often not an accurate measure of growth in cognitive abilities (Arum & Roksa, 2011), and are not valid to measure the broader scope of academic success. Given that academic success, as suggested by the above literature, is a broader concept to encapsulate and measure, the focus of this study will remain on understanding and studying student achievement, also referred to as academic achievement, which is measured through scores, grades and GPA obtained during academic assessment (Conrad, 2006).

Academic achievement broadly includes a student's proficiency of reading, speaking, and writing skills, mathematics, science, social science, liberal arts and humanities, and critical thinking skills. Given the vast nature of the term, this research, like most others, will use a narrow definition of the term, one that can be linked to standardized tests and related achievements. Hence, for the purpose of this study academic achievement will be used to refer to content-area achievement in mathematics, English, science, and social studies.

Relationship between Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement

Parental involvement has been defined in a myriad of ways, most prominently including social psychological support provided to children through praising efforts and accomplishments and encouraging them to overcome challenges (Crossnoe and Resler, 2019). In view of Epstein's framework (2010), and several aspects of home-based involvement mentioned by Boonk et. al. (2018), school achievement is positively related with parental involvement. This positive relationship includes factors like parental support and encouragement, value placed on accomplishments at school, and reinforcement of learning at home, especially for children in elementary school and above.

Zakeri (2013) explored the relationship between the parenting styles, academic achievement, and the development of adolescents, which includes factors like their concept of their own self, motivational levels, and procrastination. The research concluded that respective of the parenting style, a long-term impact was seen on the positive or negative outcome of children's achievements. Martinez and Garcia (2007), found that adolescents who saw their parents as involved and indulgent, had a higher self-esteem, compared to those who described their parents as authoritarian and scored lower in self-esteem, a contributor to the student's academic achievement. In research done on the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement, Hassan, Jami & Aqeel (2016), concluded that the two variables are most strongly related during the ages of 7 to 15, which constitutes the elementary school period. However, there are varying views on this data when Asian countries are taken into view, where parents tend to have a more authoritarian role and a higher control on their children (Chang, 2007). In respect to Pakistan, this translates to the values taught as obedience and respect, where children are expected to follow the rules and morals laid down by their parents, all contributing to their authoritarian style (Huver et. al., 2010). Now although this style of parenting is viewed as negative and directly related to lower self-esteem

within adolescents, there is also research which states otherwise (Moghaddam et. al., 2017). The results of a study done on collectivist parents in Pakistan, supports the fact that even when parents are in fact using an authoritarian style of parenting, adolescents can still exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, meaning a possible attainment of academic achievement. The research attributes this finding to an influence of culture, which describes how parenting styles can affect factors like self-esteem, and academic achievement (Moghaddam et. al., 2017). However, given that there are also studies which conclude that an assumed negative parenting style like the authoritarian one, does not affect academic achievement directly (Khan et. al., 2014) it can be assumed that the relationship between academic achievement and parenting styles isn't a direct, linear one. Both variables are linked indirectly to each other, having an influence on the other (Pychyl, 2002). Ultimately though, the child's achievements at school are linked to their cognitive advancement, which is related to the attributed behavior of the parents (Georgiou, 2010).

Parenting style, however, is not the only factor linked to students' academic achievement. Research also indicates that family background of parents also plays a vital role in achievement differences (Hanushek, 2016). Here family background includes many different factors like the educational level of parents, socioeconomic status, and income, all of which predict school achievement (Lamb, 2011). These factors, namely social and economic resources available to parents, also considerably influence the level of parental involvement in their child's education (Crossnoe & Ressler, 2019). Pinguart and Ebeling (2019) state that parents who themselves have higher education will be more engaged with their children's school and schoolwork, holding them to higher expectation standards. Hence socioeconomic status is a prominent factor in defining the relationship between academic achievement and parental involvement.

Another factor influencing the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement is parents' education expectations. Parents who have higher expectations from their children are inadvertently enhancing their motivational levels, self-efficacy, and student accomplishment (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Higher expectations from parents also influence the quality and quantity of parental involvement in their children's schooling and the level of communication with the teacher, all of which are factors that positively effect student achievement. However, if the expectations set by parents are too high or difficult to achieve, they may result in undue pressure on adolescents, negatively affecting achievement and resulting in mental-health related problems (Ericksen, 2020).

Parents who are compassionate, supportive, and involved, equip their children with the confidence they need to get through academic challenges, and ultimately move towards academic achievement (Zahed et.al., 2016). Studies also show that parenting styles impact the academic performance of students at both primary and secondary levels of education (Rahimpour et. al., 2015). Angion, (2009) states that an improvement and increase is noticed in a child's cognition, verbal communication, social-emotional qualities, and their attainment, with the presence of parental involvement. This means that when parents are involved in their education, adolescents are more likely to perform better academically and graduate (Zaff et. al., 2017).

Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement at Elementary Level

The varied practices that form part of the parental involvement paradigm are also categorized by the school level of the children. The level and type on involvement parents show towards their child's education differs depending on the child's grade level (Patall et al, 2008). Hill and Taylor, (2004) describe this variation through the difference between the academic goals of elementary level, middle school level and high school level students. With each level of student aiming for different outcomes, the level of involvement or support given

by parent's changes. Similarly, as the grade levels increases, so does the developmental level of students' cognition, resulting in them requiring less and less direct involvement from their parents (Hill and Taylor, 2009).

Elementary school, also referred to as middle school in western developed countries, brings with it a number of challenges both for students and parents, which affects the parents' ability to stay actively involved in the education of their children (Sanders and Epstein, 2000; Hill and Chao, 2009). These challenges are broadly described in four main domains by Hill and Tyson (2009) in their meta-analytic assessment of strategies that promote academic achievement. The first challenge comes from the shift that comes from early years to elementary levels. School curricula and premises are comparatively larger and more complex, making it difficult for parents to stay involved. Secondly, each class in elementary level has an increased number of student-teacher ratio. With one teacher instructing so many students, it gets increasingly difficult for teachers to maintain active relationships with parents of each student. Thirdly, the increase in the number of subjects means that each student now has multiple specialized subject teachers, and effective interaction of parents with each of these teachers becomes increasingly challenging. Lastly, the larger curricular choices and varied forms of assessment taking place at elementary level becomes complicated for parents to keep a regular track of and makes it even more challenging to effectively maintain an understanding of (Hill and Taylor, 2004). Hence, elementary level brings with itself many different challenges for students to face developmentally, and for parents to remain involved (Hill and Chao, 2009).

Students in elementary level reach a stage of adolescence where they experience a drastic change in their cognitive development and develop the concept of themselves as an individual (Lerner & Steinberg, 2004). This cognitive change brings with it an enhanced ability for them to consider multiple factors when making decisions (Keating, 2004). They

also have an increased ability to understand the consequences of their actions and decisions and learn from their failures (Halpern-Felsher & Cauffman, 2001). These developmental changes are important to consider as they have an impact on the role students play in their own education, affecting the level of involvement they require and accept from their parents (Seigner, 2006). Having the ability to choose their own courses and developing an understanding of how their curricular and extra-curricular choices are related to their larger academic goals for the future, means that they require less direct parental involvement. This includes assistance with their homework, and school-based interaction with teachers. This also means their feelings towards having their parents visit their school more often changes which forces parents to reduce direct forms of involvement (Seigner, 2006).

It is also during this adolescence period that the relationship between parents and children starts to reform and realign (Collins and Laursen, 2004). Parents at this stage will often try to set new boundaries and start to alter their view about their child's abilities, and skills, which in turn will influence the way adolescents see themselves and have an effect on their performance (Jones & Schneider, 2009). Hill and Tyson (2009) describe this time as the crucial period where parents' strategies for being more involved in their child's education should also change. During the early adolescent years this change in strategy can include one of many practices like: communicating educational goals and expectations, fostering aspirations, planning for the future, introducing and discussing learning strategies. When these strategies, termed as academic socialization, inevitably support the decisions that adolescents are trying to make for themselves, and supports their educational and future goals, it will result in higher achievement in middle school, than any other form of direct parental involvement at this level will. This allows parents to remain involved while also allowing adolescents their independence and furthering their advanced cognitive abilities (Hill and Tyson, 2009).

In their meta-analytical synthesis of extant literature Hill and Tyson (2009) confirmed that despite the decrease of parental involvement in elementary level, the effect of it on student's achievement is still positive. The study further noted that the type of parental involvement at this level mattered a lot. The three types of involvement included in the study were: Academic socialization, which included parents communicating their expectations about their involvement, creating an understanding of educational goals and performance, assisting with strategies pertaining to achievement and building aspirations; home-based involvement, which included homework assistance or supervision for educational activities at home; school-based involvement, which included visiting the school, attending school events, and communicating with the teacher or principal. Out of these three involvements the one which showed the highest positive impact on student's achievements in elementary level was academic socialization, as compared to school-based or home-based involvement, as it allowed young adolescents to make semi-independent decisions about their own education

Research Methodology

Research Design and Population

This study is quantitative in nature using a descriptive survey design, as it studies the effect of parental involvement, using Epstein's (2010) Framework, on the academic achievements of elementary level students. The purpose of the research is to study the relationship between both variables: parental involvement (independent variable) and student achievement (dependent variable) as detailed by Epstein (2010) and test the applicability of the Framework in the context of elementary level students in Karachi. Given that the research is focused only on describing the characteristics of the variables under study, a descriptive survey design was chosen. For this purpose, elementary level students were asked to fill a questionnaire, the results of which were used to analyze the relationship between both variables and determine if Epstein's Framework was applicable or not.

The nature of this study demanded that the total population includes only elementary level students. Hence, the total population for the study were boys and girls from private and public elementary schools situated in Karachi, District East. While elementary level consists of grades I to VIII, the study only included students from grade VI, VII, & VIII as they were old enough to understand the nature of the study and answer the questionnaire on their own. Students from these grades had a wider understanding about the participation and involvement of their parents in their academic activities.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Using random sampling, two private schools and two public schools were selected for the study. Given the high number of public and private schools in Karachi East district, and the time and resource limitation of the research, the random and convenience sampling technique was used to ensure that the sample size included representation of both schooling sectors. The sample size for this study was 250 students. The sample frame included 114 students from private schools and 136 students from public schools.

Table 1

Gender of the number of students included in the sample frame

Gender	No. of Students	Percent
Male	125	50.0
Female	125	50.0
Total	250	100.0

The sample frame included an equal number of boys and girls for equal representation of both genders as shown in Table 1. This was necessary so that all a total understanding of the characteristics of both research variables could be established.

Data Collection Tool and Procedure

A survey questionnaire was designed and distributed to the sample frame by the researcher to collect data. The questionnaire was designed keeping in view the literature

review and Epstein's (2010) Framework. It included 30 close ended questions about demographics and specific questions from each type of involvement detailed in Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement (2010).

The questionnaire was designed in English given that that was the chosen language for the research, and to avoid any discrepancies between translations. The questionnaire has seven parts. The first part included questions about demographics including gender, age, grade level, level of parent's education, and the student's overall class percentage. In order to outline the achievement of the students in the sample size the overall class percentage was divided into three options: low (below 60%), medium (60% - 80%), and high (80% and above). Parts two to seven had questions about each six types of parental involvement outlined in Epstein's (2010) Framework. This included six questions about Parenting, four questions about Communicating, three questions about Volunteering, seven questions about Learning from Home, three questions about Decision Making and one question about Collaborating with the Community. The questionnaire was distributed to students of grade VI, VII and VIII by the researcher in public and private schools. It was the main tool for data collection and was administered by the researcher. The respondents were explained the questionnaire so that the meaning of each question was understood as intended. Public school students required more assistance in understanding the meaning of certain questions, while private school students required minimal assistance. Students were asked to respond honestly and return the questionnaire once done for analysis.

Data Analysis Technique

For analyzing the results of the study, the Kruskal Wallis test and Mann-Whitney U tests will be applied to test the significance of the relationship present between involvement by parents (independent variable) in their children's educational activities divided in the six

different types of outlines by Epstein's (2010) framework and the child's student achievement (dependent variable). Based on the results of the test, findings will be drawn to explain the association between both variables and the other factors that affect them. SPSS software was used to analyze the data.

Table 2

Reliability of the Research Instrument

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.706	24

Using the Cronbach Alpha reliability test, the reliability of the research instrument was found to be 0.706 which shows that the research results are valid and reliable.

Data Analysis and Results

The data gathered in this quantitative study was analyzed using non-parametric statistical tests. This was done in two parts: descriptive statistics to understand the characteristics of the gathered data set and inferential statistical tests, namely the Kruskal Wallis test and Mann-Whitney test, to test the three hypotheses.

General Findings

This study gathered data from questionnaires being administered to students of grade VI, VII and VIII in public and private schools. The results from the study were used to outline the relationship between demographic variables with each type of parental involvement as outlined in Epstein's (2010) Framework.

Table 3

School Sector of the students included in the sample frame

School Sector	No. of Students	Percent
Private School	114	45.6
Public School	136	54.4
Total	250	100.0

Even though the number of private and public schools used for the research were equal, 2 each, there were slightly more students from public schools than from private schools, as shown in Table 3. Given that the research anticipated a higher non-response rate from students in public schools with a decreased understanding of their parent's involvement in their academics, the entire population of the selected grades in the sample frame was taken. This resulted in more students from the public sector being included as opposed to the private sector. The difference in the number of students between both sectors also represented the higher number of students in each classroom present in public schools as opposed to private schools.

Table 4

Grade level of students included in the sample frame

Grade Level	No. of Students	Percent
Grade 6	74	29.6
Grade 7	91	36.4
Grade 8	85	34.0
Total	250	100.0

The total number of students included from each grade weren't equal, with the highest percentage of students, 36%, being from grade VII. This was due to the fact that students in grade VI could have had trouble fully understand the extent of parental control being studied in the research. This could have potentially faulted the findings of the study. However, a decent number of Grade VI students were included in the study after the pre-test showed that with some assistance the students were able to answer the questionnaire on their own. Students from grades VII and VIII were comparatively more in number as they were old enough to be part of the study with minimal assistance required and had a better understanding of the demand of each question in the research tool.

Table 5

Frequency of age bracket in the sample frame

Age	No. of Students	Percent
9 - 11 years	23	9.2
12 - 14 years	198	79.2
15 - 17 years	29	11.6
Total	250	100.0

Table 5 shows that the majority of elementary level students in the sample size were between the ages of 12 – 14 years. There were also older students in the sample size, ranging in the age group of 15-17 years. This is due to the fact that elementary students in public schools are older in age as they often start school late.

Hypothesis Testing

H1: There is an increased level of parental involvement in the educational activities of children at the elementary level. To analyze parental involvement at elementary level each six types of involvements were tested against elementary grade level to test the hypothesis that there was an increased level of involvement in educational activities (dependent variable) of children based on grade level (independent variable). To test the hypothesis using an inferential statistical test (Kruskal Wallis) a null hypothesis had to be constructed. The null hypothesis was: There is no level of parental involvement in the educational activities of children at elementary level.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for each type of Parental Involvement tested against Grade Level

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Parenting	250	7.7880	1.24469	6.00	11.00
Communication	250	5.4280	1.09619	4.00	8.00
Volunteering	250	4.3600	.84929	3.00	6.00
Learning at Home	250	9.7200	1.62856	7.00	14.00
Decision Making	250	4.8400	.92185	3.00	6.00
Community Collaboration	250	1.51	.501	1	2
Grade Level	250	2.04	.798	1	3

Table 7

Kruskal Wallis Test

Type of Parental Involvement	Grade Level	N	Mean Rank
Parenting	Grade 6	74	140.37
	Grade 7	91	108.37
	Grade 8	85	130.89
	Total	250	
Communication	Grade 6	74	132.89
	Grade 7	91	110.02
	Grade 8	85	135.64
	Total	250	
Volunteering	Grade 6	74	136.14
	Grade 7	91	111.32
	Grade 8	85	131.42
	Total	250	
Learning at Home	Grade 6	74	119.73
	Grade 7	91	117.20
	Grade 8	85	139.41
	Total	250	
Decision Making	Grade 6	74	128.09
	Grade 7	91	113.45
	Grade 8	85	136.15
	Total	250	
Community Collaboration	Grade 6	74	124.50
	Grade 7	91	123.81
	Grade 8	85	128.18
	Total	250	

Note: This table shows findings of each six types of parental involvement being tested against Grade Level.

Table 8

Kruskal Wallis Test Statistics

	Parenting	Communication	Volunteering	Learning at Home	Decision Making	Community Collaboration
Chi-Square	9.249	7.064	6.434	4.980	4.995	.240
df	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.010	.029	.040	.083	.082	.887

Note: The table shows the results of the Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable is Grade Level.

Based on Table 6, 7, and 8 the Kruskal Wallis test shows that there was an uneven trend in the statistical significance for each different type of parental involvement. The statistically significant difference between 3 types of parental involvement was < 0.5 : Parenting $p = 0.010$, Communication $p = 0.29$ and Volunteering $p = 0.40$ type of parental involvement. The Descriptive statistics show that these three types of parental involvement had the following mean ranks: Parenting = 7.78, Communication = 5.42, and Volunteering = 4.36. This means that the research hypothesis was accepted for these three types of parental involvement in elementary grade level, and the null hypothesis was rejected.

However, since the statistical significance for the other three types of parental involvement was > 0.5 : Learning at home $p = 0.83$, Decision Making $p = 0.82$ and Community Collaboration $p = 0.887$, the research hypothesis was rejected, and the null hypothesis was accepted. Hence it can be deduced that only three types of parental involvement, as detailed by Epstein (2010) increases at elementary level: Parenting, Communication and Volunteering.

H2: The relationship between parental involvement and student achievement in public and private sector elementary schools is not the same. To analyze the difference between parental involvement between public and private sector schools, descriptive statistical analysis, using crosstabulation, was done to examine the level of education of parents of students in public and private sector elementary schools. The null hypothesis constructed was the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement is the same across public and private sector elementary schools.

Table 9

Crosstabulation of School Sector with Mother's Education Level

		Mother's Education			Total
		School	College	University	
School Sector	Private School	10	31	73	114

	Public School	88	32	16	136
Total		98	63	89	250

Table 10

Crosstabulation of School Sector with Father's Education Level

		Father's Education			Total
		School	College	University	
School Sector	Private School	5	26	83	114
	Public School	67	41	28	136
Total		72	67	111	250

Table 9 and 10 show that more mothers (73) and fathers (83) of students in private sector went to university than those of students in public sector. Given that parents of students in private sector elementary schools were more educated than those of public sector, the level of each type of involvement for each was studied to see how parents' education affects their involvement in their children's educational activities for each educational sector. This was analyzed using the Mann Whitney U inferential test, instead of Kruskal Wallis test, as there were 2 independent variables (private sector and public sector) being tested against different dependent variables (six types of parental involvement).

Table 11

Mann-Whitney Test

	School Sector	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Parenting	Private School	114	132.77	15135.50
	Public School	136	119.41	16239.50
	Total	250		
Communication	Private School	114	111.86	12752.50
	Public School	136	136.93	18622.50
	Total	250		
Volunteering	Private School	114	122.34	13947.00
	Public School	136	128.15	17428.00

	Total	250		
Learning at Home	Private School	114	108.59	12379.50
	Public School	136	139.67	18995.50
	Total	250		
Decision Making	Private School	114	142.26	16217.50
	Public School	136	111.45	15157.50
	Total	250		
Community Collaboration	Private School	114	121.21	13818.00
	Public School	136	129.10	17557.00
	Total	250		

Note: This table shows findings of each six types of parental involvement being tested against School Sector.

Table 12

Mann-Whitney Test Statistics

	Parenting	Communi- cation	Volunteeri- ng	Learning at Home	Decision Making	Community Collaboration
Mann-Whitney U	6923.500	6197.500	7392.000	5824.500	5841.500	7263.000
Wilcoxon Z	16239.500	12752.500	13947.000	12379.500	15157.500	13818.000
Z	-1.500	-2.821	-.674	-3.442	-3.549	-.992
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.134	.005	.501	.001	.000	.321

Table 13

Mann-Whitney Hypothesis Test summary

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
The distribution of Parenting is the same across categories of School Sector.	Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.134	Retain null hypothesis.
The distribution of Communication is the same across categories of School Sector.	Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.005	Reject null hypothesis
The distribution of Volunteering is the same across categories of School Sector.	Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.501	Retain null hypothesis
The distribution of Learning at Home is the same across categories of School Sector.	Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.001	Reject null hypothesis

The distribution of Decision Making is the same across categories of School Sector.	Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.000	Reject null hypothesis
The distribution of Community Collaboration is the same across categories of School Sector.	Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.321	Retain null hypothesis

Based on Table 11 and 12 the Mann-Whitney test shows that there was an uneven trend in the statistical significance for each different type of parental involvement in relation to the school sector. The statistically significant difference between 3 types of parental involvement was < than 0.5: Communication $p = 0.005$, Learning at Home $p = 0.01$ and Volunteering $p = 0.00$. This means that the research hypothesis was accepted for these three types of parental involvement not being equal in public and private sector, and the null hypothesis was rejected. Table 13 shows that research hypothesis was rejected for the remaining three types of parental involvements: parenting, community collaboration and volunteering. The null hypothesis was accepted for these three types, indicating that the level of parental involvement here is the same across public and private sector.

H3: Each type of parental involvement in Epstein’s (2010) Framework is not fully applicable to study the effect of parental involvement on student achievement at elementary level. The analysis of this hypothesis was done using inferential statistical test, the Kruskal Wallis test. The relationship between the dependent variable, three different types of academic achievement (low, medium, high), and the independent variable, the six types of parental involvement, was studied using the results of this test. The null hypothesis constructed was Epstein’s (2010) Framework was fully applicable to study the effect of parental involvement on student achievement at elementary level.

Table 14

Kruskal Wallis Test to test student achievement against parental involvement

Overall Percentage	N	Mean Rank
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Parenting	Low	3	143.00
	Medium	177	123.69
	High	70	129.34
	Total	250	
Communication	Low	3	204.00
	Medium	177	128.71
	High	70	114.02
	Total	250	
Volunteering	Low	3	151.00
	Medium	177	125.84
	High	70	123.55
	Total	250	
Learning at Home	Low	3	210.50
	Medium	177	126.92
	High	70	118.26
	Total	250	
Decision Making	Low	3	161.50
	Medium	177	125.48
	High	70	124.00
	Total	250	
Community Collaboration	Low	3	187.00
	Medium	177	138.27
	High	70	90.57
	Total	250	

Note: This table shows the findings of each of the six types of parental involvement being tested against Student Achievement.

Table 15

Test statistics for the Kruskal Wallis Test

	Parenting	Communication	Volunteering	Learning at Home	Decision Making	Community Collaboration
Chi-Square	.514	6.033	.486	5.080	.866	32.037
df	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.773	.049	.784	.079	.649	.000

Based on Table 11 and 12 the Kruskal Wallis test shows that there was an uneven trend in the statistical significance for each different type of parental involvement in relation to student achievement. The statistical significance of three types of parental involvement is <

0.5; this includes Communication, Learning at home, Community Collaboration. The remaining three types of Parental Involvement had a statistical significance > 0.5 ; this included Parenting Volunteering, Decision Making. Given that there was a uneven trend, the research hypothesis was accepted, stating that Epstein's (2010) Framework is not fully applicable to study parental involvement at elementary level. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Discussion

This research studied the effect of parental involvement on academic achievement of students in elementary level, using Epstein's (2010) Framework. The framework outlined six different types of parental involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. While the influence of parental involvement on student achievement cannot be denied, the results of the data analysis from this research indicate that Epstein's (2010) Framework of parental involvement is an inadequate framework. All three hypotheses of the research were tested and showcased the same trend of the Framework being inconsistent.

The statistical manipulation of the data proved that the level of parental involvement in educational activities of children at elementary level does increase, however not in all six types of parental involvement as Epstein's framework claims. Similarly, the difference between parental involvement in educational activities across the public and private sector was also seen to be inconsistent. While parents in both sectors were involved in their children's educational activities, the degree across each type of parental involvement did not have a coherent pattern. These results along with the statistical manipulation of data pertaining to parental involvement against student achievement, supported the third

hypothesis that Epstein's (2010) Framework of Parental Involvement isn't fully applicable to study the effect of parental involvement on student achievement in elementary level.

Conclusion

The findings of the study proved that Epstein's framework was created for developed countries where the objective of parental involvement is entirely different than the objective of parental involvement in developing countries, hence the framework is not valid for elementary school students in Pakistan. While parental involvement, based on Epstein's (2010) Framework has shown to significantly affect the academic achievement in secondary level studies in Pakistan (Rafiq et al, 2013), its applicability at elementary level, as shown by the results of this study, remains questionable.

This is owed to the fact that the challenges facing parents, schools, and students in developing countries like Pakistan are vastly different from the challenges in developed countries like the United States where frameworks like that of Epstein (1995) were initiated. In a meta-synthesis conducted on Parental Involvement, Kim S.W. (2017) states that due to the fact that the governments in developing countries are not strong enough to take charge of the education sector fully, parents' and the communities' have to play a stronger role in the successful education of a child. This means that the six types of parenting outlined in Epstein's Framework might not equally be a priority for the parents. The results of this research show that all six types of parental involvements did not have the same statistical significance in relation to student achievement.

Similarly, Kim, S. W. (2017) states that in developing countries parental involvement is governed by cultural contexts which are entirely different. These include the parents' beliefs, their perceptions, and culturally driven practices. This is supported by Hanushek (2016) who concluded that family background of parents also plays a vital role in achievement differences. Here family background includes many different factors like the

educational level of parents, socioeconomic status, and income, all of which predict school achievement (Lamb, 2011). This agrees with the results of the study that indicate that each type of parental involvement is not equally consistent across public and private sector elementary schools. The findings of this research show that there is a considerable difference between three types of parental involvement, communication, learning at home and decision making, across public and private sector schools. This was further supported by descriptive statistics that highlighted more educated parents or private school students than those of public sector. Pinguart and Ebeling (2019) state that parents who themselves have higher education will be more engaged with their children's school and schoolwork, holding them to higher expectation standards. Hence socioeconomic status is a prominent factor in defining the relationship between academic achievement and parental involvement.

To conclude it can be stated that while there are elements of Epstein's Framework that have shown to have a positive relationship with student achievement, like communication with the teacher, helping students learn at home, and collaborating with the community to enhance the student's learning experiences, the framework is still not an all-encompassing tool that takes into consideration the many different elements of student achievement at elementary level. Hence, it should not be the yardstick benchmark for studying parental involvement at elementary level in developing countries like Pakistan.

Recommendations

This research was a quantitative in nature with a descriptive survey design, it measured the characteristics of the variables being studied. While it concluded that Epstein's (2010) Framework is not fully applicable at studying student achievement at elementary level, it does not go into the reasoning for this conclusion. Hence, this leaves room for further research to study the 'why' of these findings.

Since Epstein's (2010) Framework is not fully applicable at elementary level to study the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement, this means that a framework needs to be developed that is fully valid for developing countries like Pakistan. Future research should focus on reviewing the works of Epstein (2010), Hill and Chao (2009); Epstein and Sanders (2002); Fan and Chen (2001) and many others to create frameworks that are specifically altered to the challenges that are affecting parental involvement and student achievement in developing countries.

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