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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Study of parent's participation in children's education and their own perception

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ABSTRACT

Introduction-The research examines perceptions of the home and school relationships through the lens of a diverse group of parents and teachers of fifth grade students. For many years, the importance and need for parental involvement in education has been well recognized and noted that there is a significant shortage of parent participation at the secondary level that may negatively affect academic progress and high school completion. **Aims and objective-** The objective is to explore the perceptions and thoughts about parental involvement among lower primary schools and the extent to which those schools in Sriganaganagar involve parents in their children's academic education and to explore how parents demonstrate their parental involvement in the education of their children. **Material and methods-** The selection strategy of the subjects was as follows: from a total of 274 families who have children in the schools, 100 families (that is every 1 of 3 families of the total number) were selected for participation in a survey and 10 parents (that is every 27th family of the total number) were selected for a personal one-on-one interview. **Results-** Of those who responded, only 2 (2.7%) of the parents claimed they always helped their children with homework, 11 (15.2%) of the parents frequently did so, and 18(25%) only sometimes helped their children and majority 41(56.9%) claimed that they had never helped their children in their homework. **Conclusion -** All the parents who responded to the survey were of the opinion that parental involvement has a direct bearing on their child's performance. They argued, despite its inconvenience, firsthand knowledge of the learning activities of their children was of grave importance. Some of the parents insisted that when parents emphasized education at home, the children usually performed better.

Key words: Children's education, parent's participation.

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INTRODUCTION

Parent involvement and family involvement in education has been identified as a beneficial factor in young children's learning and social behavior.¹ The research examines perceptions of the home and school relationships through the lens of a diverse group of parents and teachers of fifth grade students. For many years, the importance and need for parental involvement in education has been well recognized and noted that there is a significant shortage of parent participation at the secondary level that may negatively affect academic progress and high school completion. Some researches

also recognized parent involvement as "the participation of parents in every facet of children's education and development from birth to adulthood". Therefore, it is imperative for educators to continue to find ways and to encourage parents to become involved in the educational process of their children regardless of social and socio-economic challenges.²

Barge JK et al³ carried a study on Parent, student, and teacher perceptions of parental involvement and identified that teachers', students' and parents' view and approach to parental involvement are different.

They found that for parents parental involvement refers to:

- Regular supervision of students' homework by parents. Parents reported that it was essential to be sure that their children did their homework completely and to help them when needed.
- Developing individual relations with teachers. Parents thought that if they had adequate relationships with teachers and teachers saw that they paid attention to their children, the teachers' treatment of their children would be better.
- Taking advantage of extracurricular school programs. Particularly, parents who do not have enough ability to help their children with their homework or other curriculum related tasks state the importance of this involvement.
- Improving supportive collaboration within the community. According to the parents' reports, developing collaboration within the community plays an important role in students' educational achievement. Furthermore, for students parental involvement means: Parental assistance with homework
- Stimulation from parents
- Communication between parents and school

To become involved in our children's education is something most of us can do, regardless of our socio-economic status and situation. For instance, we should all be able to monitor our children's homework and be supportive and inquisitive about their schoolwork. Therefore, schools should do their utmost to encourage and emphasize partnership between schools and homes. Therefore, in this study I would like to contribute to research evidence on parental involvement at home in primary rural schools of Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan context.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This study is positioned in a context where rigorous educational reform in Sri Ganganagar is expected to take place, namely the rural areas. This study focuses particularly on a critical analysis of the involvement of parents in the academic education of their children in Sri Ganaganagar lower primary schools situated in disadvantaged areas from professional educators' and parents' points of view. The objective is to explore the perceptions and thoughts about parental involvement among lower primary schools and the extent to which those schools in Sriganaganagar involve parents in their children's academic education and to explore how parents demonstrate their parental involvement in the education of their children

Table 1: Parents' Age Groups

Age group	Father	Mother	Guardians
20-30	47 (65%)	3(4%)	0
30-40	15 (20%)	5(6%)	2(3%)

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A survey by interview guide was developed to obtain data to answer the research questions of the study. The survey was comprised of 20 questions, 15 of which were multiple-choice and 5 were open-ended and there were seven questions which were all multiple- choice questions. These questions were aimed at inquiring into the parental involvement at home. They were asked about parents helping their 'children with home work and regarding conversation between parent and child about school. There were five questions all of which were open-ended questions. These questions were aimed at parents' perceptions regarding their own involvement. The first and the second questions were on the importance of parental involvement. The third question was on parents' perception of their own impact on their children's achievement. The barriers to parental involvement were the fourth question, and the last question sought suggestions to increase parental involvement.

The interview schedule was comprised of 18 questions based on the survey. These questions were divided into three categories. The eight questions of the first category inquired into the demographic details of the interviewee. The four questions of the second category inquired into the interviewees' participation in the learning activities of the children at home, at school, and in the parent teacher activities. The first five questions of then third category were aimed at investigating into the perception of the interviewee with regard to their own involvement in their children's learning activities. And lastly parents were invited to share any other information on the topic.

Observation and Results

Demographic Information

The demographic information includes the number of subjects who completed the survey, the parent age groups, their educational background, family income, marital status, and number of children in each family. Table 1 presents the number of parents who completed the questionnaire and returned it to the researcher. Of the 72 surveys returned, 62 (86.11%) were from fathers, 8(5.76%) percent from fathers, and only 2(2.77%) were from guardians/others.

Analysis of parent's age groups found that the largest number of parents was in the 20-30 years bracket with 47 (65%) fathers, 3(4%) mothers, and 0 guardians/others. The 30-40 years of age group had the lowest number with 15(20%) fathers, 2(3%) guardians/others (table 1)

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT HOME

Parents were asked three questions regarding their involvement at home in the learning activities of their children. Of those who responded, only 2 (2.7%) of the parents claimed they always helped their children with homework, 11 (15.2%) of the parents frequently did so, and 18(25%) only sometimes helped their children and majority 41(56.9%) claimed that they had never helped their children in their homework (See Table 2.)

The second question in this category was on talking at home with children about school work. Only 6 (8.3%) of the parents had always talked with their children, and 12(16.6%) had frequently talked with their children about the school work and 34 (47.2%) had never talked

with their children about the school. Thus, a majority of parents never talked with their children about their school work. (See Table 3)

The final question in this category was listening to children reading at home. Only 4 (5.5%) of the parents had always listened to their children reading, 9(12.5%) had frequently listened, 21 (29.1%) had sometimes listened to their children reading, and majority 38 (52.7%) parents had never listened to their children reading. This presentation indicates that most of the parents have never listened to their children's reading at home. (See Table 4)

Parental Involvement at Home

Table – 2 Help with homework

Help with homework	Frequency	Percent
Never	41	56.9%
Sometimes	18	25%
Frequently	11	15.2%
Always	2	2.7%

Table- 3 Talk about school

Talk about school	Frequency	Percent
Never	34	47.2%
Sometimes	20	27.7%
Frequently	12	16.6%
Always	6	8.3%

Table -4 Listened to child's reading

Listened to child's reading	Frequency	Percent
Never	38	52.7%
Sometimes	21	29.1%
Frequently	9	12.5%
Always	4	5.5%

PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR OWN INVOLVEMENT

Having been asked about their involvement at school and at home, the parents were also questioned about their perception of the importance of their own involvement in their children's education. The overwhelming majority 27(37.5.9%) considered parental involvement to be not important, 14 (19.4%) replied that it is important, and only eight respondent 8 (11.1%) conceded parental involvement has very importance. (See Table 5)

Table 5: Parents' Perception of their Own Involvement

Perception	Frequency	Percent
Not important	27	37.5%
Somewhat important	23	31.9%
Important	14	19.4%
Very important	8	11.1%

DISCUSSION

According to the survey as well as the individual interviews, the overwhelming majority of the respondents were fathers. Therefore, the researcher is inclined to conclude that in India fathers, as they were active in the past, are still directly involved in their children's education. The highest number of parents was between 20 and 30 years of age. This could be one of the reasons that the overwhelming majority (50-75%, Table 2,3,4) of the parents were not able to help their children with homework, reading, and writing. As a result of parental involvement, almost 22% (Table 5) of the children's first division was below 20%.

Prior researchers^{4,5} found that parent's perception, their interests, and beliefs are strongly related to their children's academic performance. The findings of this study have been consistent with cited findings of the earlier studies. That is according to the findings of this survey as well as interviews almost 91 % (Table 5) of the parents perceived that their involvement was less important. One set of parents commented, "Since we have good reading habits, our children also enjoy reading at home." Another parent stated "Whatever I care for, my child cares for." These and similar others were an indication of parents' perception of their impact on their children's achievement.

Wilder S et al⁶ conducted a meta-analysis that examined this impact and it identified generalizable findings across these studies. The results indicated that the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement was positive, regardless of a definition of parental involvement or measure of achievement. Furthermore, the findings revealed that this relationship was strongest if parental involvement was defined as parental expectations for academic achievement of their children. However, the impact of parental involvement on student academic achievement was weakest if parental involvement was defined as homework assistance. Finally, the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement was found to be consistent across different grade levels and ethnic groups. However, the strength of that relationship varied based on the type of assessment used to measure student achievement.

Education can be enhanced by the parents with visits to museums and interesting places, with exposure to more than the work in school such as books, theaters and films. Part of the parental job is to extend the child's horizons by offering experiences which broaden the child's understanding of the world. The attitudes of teachers can influence children. Most people have experienced a teacher who loved their subject and inspired their classes and many have come across teachers who are ineffectual and uninteresting. Peers have an influence, especially with boys, because they can bully or tease a boy who wants to work at school,

treating him as someone who does not belong to the current male culture of the group. Being an outsider is always difficult and it is easy to succumb to such pressure. This is why there is often a problem for able youngsters, who naturally want to belong.⁷

However, there are some environments which are actively against education, unable or refusing to see what benefit it can offer. If a child comes from this sort of background it is hampered in making use of what is available. Money is a factor in education. A family which is struggling with everyday needs does not have the money to take the children out and give them experiences, nor can they buy all the supplies the child needs. An affluent family might have the money available but not have the will or understanding of how to use it to help the child. The emotional development of the child is an important factor in education. A child who has not established some confidence will not believe they can do well and not make the necessary effort. Some success in school can also do wonders for the child's confidence. Confidence can also influence student's approach to college level education. A level of emotional stability is needed to make the best use of educational experiences. Education appears to be straightforward but there are many factors which affect what use is made of it.^{7,8}

The other hindrance is that when illiterate parents want to be involved in their children's education, they are faced with many difficulties. Remarkably, the research findings on the involvement of illiterate parents appeared to be limited, in contrast with the results of our literature search on the topic of parental involvement in children's education in general, which was very extensive. However, we have found some good practices to foster the involvement of illiterate parents in their children's education.⁹

Past research has brought into being that parental involvement is related with the academic achievement of children and that parental motivation, attitude, support, and commitment effect children to do well in school. It has also been stated that lower levels of parent education and economic status do not undesirably affect the act of children if parents have high motivation and aspiration for their child's achievement. On the other hand, though parental involvement is essential for all children, the nature of parental involvement changes according to race/ethnicity, parent education, economic status of parents, and family structure. In 2007, the government of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, a member state of the United Arab Emirates, published its first strategic policy agenda. Throughout the agenda, the focus on parental involvement is clear. The policies set forward by all government agencies recognize the importance of narrowing the gaps between the parental expectations

for their kid's academic level and the part which they have to do within and after school time.¹⁰

Many researchers recognize the important role that strong positive bond between homes and schools, play in the development and education of children.¹¹⁻¹⁵ The theories put forward have been supported, and reaffirmed, by numerous studies that have shown that good cooperation between schools, homes and the communities can lead to academic achievement for students, as well as to reforms in education. Research has also shown that successful students' have strong academic support from their involved parents.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

All the parents who responded to the survey were of the opinion that parental involvement has a direct bearing on their child's performance. They argued, despite its inconvenience, firsthand knowledge of the learning activities of their children was of grave importance. Some of the parents insisted that when parents emphasized education at home, the children usually performed better. Some argued that the more involved parents got in their children's education, the more children valued their studies and made an effort to improve their learning. Underlining the importance of parental involvement, these parents insisted that parental involvement should be made mandatory.

As far as homework was concerned, the majority of the parents' opinions were that children should be left free. They do agree that parents' assistance is sometimes necessary; however, this group of parents did not agree that parents should sit and do the children's homework for them. They insisted that parents must foster independence and nurture a healthy sense of personal responsibility.

Some parents felt strongly that parental involvement was not only essential for children's educational development, but it is crucial to their emotional, social and spiritual well-being as well. The small group of parents further stated that parental involvement at home was essential for the individual attention that the teacher cannot provide in a classroom. Very few parent reported that parental involvement is important because it complements the teachers work as well as the student's efforts and reinforces what is actually being done in the classroom. One of the parents maintained that parental involvement is the one aspect that determined the quality of the school.

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