محددات المشاركة الوالدية في تعليم الأطفال: دراسة حالة روضات مدينة دبري تابور، إثيوبيا

Determinants of Parental Involvement in Children's Education: The Case of Debre Tabor Preschools, Ethiopia

الباحث نيجوس وركو تيجابو: قسم رعاية وتربية الطفولة المبكرة، جامعة ديبري تابور، إثيوبيا.

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الملخص:

لا تُعد مشاركة الوالدين في تعليم الأطفال ظاهرة حديثة العهد؛ بل أصبحت سمة راسخة وجزءاً لا يتجزأ من السياسات التعليمية في العالمين المتقدم والنامي. تمثل الهدف الرئيس لهذه الدراسة في تحديد وفحص العوامل المحددة التي قد تدفع الوالدين إلى اختيار عدم المشاركة في العملية التعليمية أو تلك التي تجعلهم غير قادرين على الانخراط فيها بفعالية أكبر. من الناحية النظرية، استندت الدراسة إلى "نظرية الدوائر المتداخلة للتأثير" لإبستين (Epstein). ومن الناحية المنهجية، تم توظيف تصميم دراسة الحالة النوعي لاكتساب رؤى متعمقة حول الموضوع. استُخدمت تقنيات العينة القصدية لاختيار أربع (4) مدارس للتعليم ما قبل المدرسي (رياض أطفال) وأربعين (40) مشاركاً داخل مدينة "دبري تابور" (Debre Tabor)، وشملت الدراسة مؤسسات خاصة وحكومية. كشفت النتائج أن الوضع الاجتماعي والاقتصادي ومستوى التعليم النظامي للوالدين لهما تأثير كبير ومباشر على التقدم التعليمي للأطفال. علاوة على ذلك، تبين أن الوالدين يكونون أكثر ميلاً للمشاركة عندما تكون تصورات المعلمين حول دور الأسرة إيجابية ومُرحِّبة. كما أثبتت الدراسة أن مشاركة الوالدين تتأثر بالإضافة إلى ذلك بعمر الأطفال. وبناءً على هذه النتائج، تقترح الدراسة ضرورة دعم الوالدين ليدركوا الفوائد العميقة لمشاركتهم في رحلة تعلم أبنائهم، كما ينبغي تطوير ورش عمل تربوية تهدف إلى تعزيز العلاقة بين الآباء وأطفالهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأطفال، المحددات، مشاركة الوالدين، التعليم، رياض الأطفال (التعليم ما قبل المدرسي).

Abstract

Parental involvement (PI) in the education of children is not a recent phenomenon; rather, it has become an established and integral feature of education policies across the developed and developing world. The primary objective of this study was to establish and examine the determinant factors that may influence parents to choose not to participate in the educational process or render them unable to become more actively involved. Theoretically, the study was grounded in Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence theory. Methodologically, a qualitative case study design was employed to gain in-depth insights. Purposive sampling techniques were utilized to select four (4) pre-schools and forty (40) participants within Debre Tabor city, encompassing both private and governmental preschool institutions. The findings revealed that the socio-economic status and the level of formal education of parents have a significant and direct effect on children's educational progress. Furthermore, it also emerged that parents are more likely to be involved when teachers' perceptions about the role of parents are positive and welcoming. The study established that PI is additionally impacted by the age of the children. Consequently, the study suggests that parents should be supported to appreciate the profound benefits of parental involvement in the learning journey of their children. Furthermore, educational workshops ought to be developed to strengthen the relationship between parents and their children.

Keywords: Children, Determinants, Parental Involvement, Education, Preschools.

INTRODUCTION

Parents serve as a fundamental and crucial part of the school community and have a significant impact on their children's overall education. One distinct and important idea in modern education reform is that parental involvement (PI) is crucial for children's school success, how well they fit in socially, and for promoting their social development generally.

Parental involvement, as comprehensively explained by Miksic (2015), refers to how parents assist their children with their education through specific actions and encouraging words. Parents can participate directly in school activities or provide support at home. Important components of parent involvement at home include discussing school activities, expressing parents' hopes and expectations, monitoring homework, managing how parents raise their children, defining family roles, and providing supervision. At the school level, important parts of parental involvement include establishing contact with school staff, attending meetings for parents and teachers, and volunteering or helping out at the school premises (Shute, Hansen, Underwood, and Razzouk, 2011; Dearing, McCartney, and Weiss, 2006). Student achievement is usually measured by various indicators such as report cards and grades, enrollment in advanced classes, attendance records, staying in school, and improved behavioral conduct (Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

Various studies have found that there is a strong connection between personal intelligence and school success. For instance, Sheldon and Epstein (2005) conducted a study to determine if there was a connection between parental involvement and how well children performed on math tests in 18 schools located in diverse regions including Ohio, Maryland, Wisconsin,

Minnesota, Michigan, Kansas, and California. They found that learning activities done at home helped students do significantly better on Math tests. Furthermore, kids who completed math homework with their parents at home achieved better math grades (Bartel, 2010). Consequently, schools are making strategic plans to connect with parents to help improve the relationship between the school and students' families.

Parents start teaching and guiding their children from the moment they are born; therefore, it is a sound strategy to keep involving them in their kids' education as they grow up (Liu and Liu, 2000). They are indisputably the first teachers for kids and can shape how kids think and what they want in life for a long time. However, in contexts like the United States, there are signs of challenges or inequalities in education, observed both at home and within schools.

Echaune, Ndiku, and Sang (2015) explain that legislative frameworks, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, highlight the importance of parents being involved and having a say in the quality of education in schools. Additionally, Echaune and others (2015) note that many African countries, such as Uganda, South Africa, and Kenya, have implemented policies that support PI. These writers mention that in Kenya, the Basic Education Act of 2013 was created, which requires school Boards of Management to evaluate what schools need with the active involvement of parents.

Nyarko (2011) studied how parental involvement in schools affects students' grades in Ghana. The results showed that when parents are involved, students tend to perform better in school. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, Chindanya (2011) conducted a study on participatory learning in primary schools in the Zaka district, and the findings demonstrated that it has many

advantages. Some of the benefits of PI included increased motivation for both students and teachers, better school attendance, and improved behavior. The belief that parental involvement (PI) helps students do better in school is widely popular. Because of this, both society and teachers view parental involvement as an important part of fixing many problems in education today.

However, there are still significant barriers that make it difficult for parents to get involved in their children's education. Therefore, it is important to find out what causes differences in how well children do in school.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the benefits, some parents are not actively participating in their children's education. They do not usually communicate with their kids' teachers. This study aimed to examine and investigate what makes it hard for parents to be involved in their children's education.

RESEARCH QUESTION The following research question gave direction and provided continued focus during the study:

- What are the determinant factors affecting parents' involvement in the education of their children?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on Epstein's model of overlapping spheres of influence. The most widely accepted current way to understand PI is based on the ecological model created by Bronfenbrenner in 1979. The idea of overlapping spheres is part of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (Harris, 2014; Kavanagh, 2013). Epstein developed a model that shows how family, school, and community all affect a growing child, with the child situated in the middle (see Figure 1).

(Figure 1: Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence would appear here)
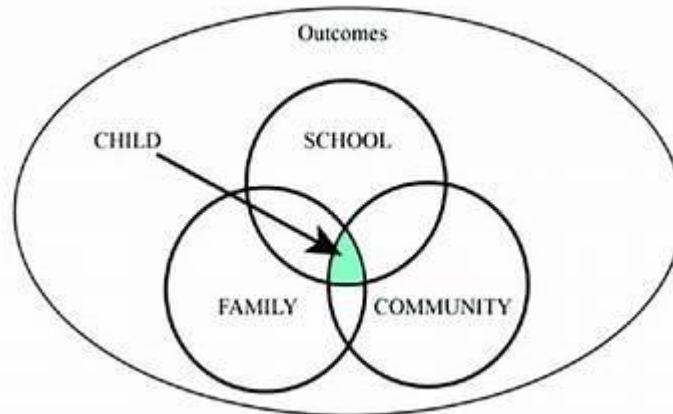
The circles show how family, school, and community affect us. The one thing that all circles have in common is the child, who connects each area. The overlapping spheres of influence model shows that families, schools, and the community do some things on their own and some things together to help a child grow and learn (Epstein, 2001). The teamwork between the three areas helps children grow and develop in the best possible way. When teachers include parents in their regular activities, it helps them work together better. Likewise, when parents get more involved in their children's schoolwork, it also helps them connect more. So, as Harris (2014) stated, the theory gives us a basic way to understand PI. Schools, families, and the community need to work together to make the biggest positive difference for the children they all care about.

METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the following topics: how research is conducted, the research design, selecting participants, gathering information, examining the data, ensuring the research is reliable, and considering ethics. The study aimed to understand a situation by collecting direct information from the participants; therefore, a qualitative case study approach was used.

The qualitative approach, according to Magwa and Magwa (2015), focuses on understanding social issues by listening to the people involved. The study looked at what influences how well kids do in school. The study focused on teachers, parents, and students. In qualitative research, as mentioned by Hancock, Windridge, and Ockleford (2007), the number of people studied is usually small. Based on this idea about sample size, we chose 8 parents, 12 students, and 20 teachers using a specific method called purposive sampling. The goal of purposive sampling is to choose people who know a lot about the topic being studied (Magwa and Magwa, 2015).

We used different methods to gather information, such as interviews and questionnaires, to get useful and accurate data. A pilot test was conducted to improve the tools and ensure the study was accurate before collecting the main data. The data was examined by looking for common themes or patterns (Marvasti, 2004). We grouped the important themes, categories, and sub-categories from the data so that we could show, combine, and discuss the results effectively. The data was reported using detailed explanations and exact quotes.

Trustworthiness of Research Findings

Qualitative research looks at important factors like how trustworthy the information is, whether it's reliable and consistent, and if it can be applied to other situations (Shank, 2006; Trochim, 2006). To make sure their study was trustworthy, the researchers spent a lot of time talking to people and handing out surveys to understand what affects PI. Triangulation was used to make sure the results were reliable. Conformability is about how much other people can confirm research results. This was achieved by making sure the findings come from the experiences and ideas of the participants, not just the researchers' preferences. We made sure to follow ethical guidelines by

getting permission from the participants and keeping their identities private. Keeping the participants' identities a secret helped to protect their privacy (Magwa and Magwa, 2015). Pseudonyms were used to keep the identities of the participants safe.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are various factors that constrain parents' ability to become actively involved in their children's school work. Three distinct factors, namely parent-related, school-related, and child-related factors, were established by the study.

Parent-related Factors

The study found that many reasons for not having parental involvement in education were related to the parents themselves. One important factor about parents mentioned in the study is their socio-economic status, which includes their educational background, their occupations, and their income level. Parents with low reading and writing skills were said to not have the knowledge and abilities to help their kids with schoolwork. On the other hand, evidence suggests that parents who have an education are more likely to help with their children's schoolwork than parents who cannot read or write.

The following statement from a teacher illustrates that parent literacy has an impact on student performance: "If parents don't have much education, they find it hard to help their kids with homework. Some parents, even when they go to school activities, are unsure about joining the decision-making because they think they don't have anything useful to contribute. Parents with good education encourage their children to aim for high academic goals".

These results agree with studies that say a parent's education affects how involved they are in their child's education (Donoghue, 2014). Parents who

lack confidence are more likely to stay away from schools (Baeck, 2010). They might be less involved because they feel unsure about communicating with school staff. Lee and Bowen (2006) found that parents with higher college degrees go to school meetings more often and discuss education-related topics more frequently. Parents are more involved in their kids' education because they understand what their kids need to learn and can expect a lot from them.

Most people believe that a parent's job and how much money they make affect how involved they are in their children's schoolwork. Participants indicated that parents with higher income pay more attention to their children's schoolwork than parents with lower income. Hornby (2011) also mentioned that parents' social and economic status affects parental involvement. Hornby says that parents with low incomes are less involved and have less information. They are also more likely to face issues with language, transportation, communicating, and taking care of their children.

What one teacher said shows how most of the participants feel: "Parents with more money are more involved in their children's education because they can buy learning materials. In contrast, parents with less money may not be able to do the same. Parents who earn less money usually have to work long hours, so they have less time to help with their children's schoolwork". Thus, as echoed by Donoghue (2014), in terms of time and work, conflicts seem to pose a greater barrier for less affluent families than for more affluent ones. Low socio-economic status negatively affects effective PI.

School-related Factors

This study showed that schools influence how much parents get involved in their children's education. Parents, teachers, and students believe that the

choices parents make about getting involved in their kids' education are affected by the school environment. The study found that how teachers feel and think about things at school is important. Teachers' attitudes toward poor parents can suggest that these parents don't have anything useful to offer their children in education, as expressed by one parent.

Some teachers think that parents take a limited role in the education of their children. They are perceived as less professional; thus, they do not treat them as equal partners in the educational process. Studies show that parents are more likely to be involved if they understand that teachers want them to take part. Teachers should think about how they interact with their students' parents and work on any attitudes that might stop parents from getting involved in school.

Parents might think that school staff doesn't trust them or that the staff looks down on them (Griffin & Galassi, 2010). It was found that when schools and homes do not communicate well, it leads to low parental involvement. If parents don't know what is expected of them and how they can be involved, they won't be able to take part in school activities effectively. Agreeing with what Gorman (2004) said earlier, it's important for the school to have good communication with parents during meetings and visits. Parents will feel like better parents if they get the support they need in a friendly setting. They will feel at ease, relaxed, and ready to share important information with their teachers. How schools talk to parents is very important because making improvements with parents won't work without good communication with them. Also, it was discovered that poor communication can make it harder for parents to get involved. Many parents want to get involved, but they don't have good communication with the school or aren't encouraged to do so.

Student Related Factors

Another concern that affects the effective involvement of parents, as noted by the participants, involves the students themselves. It was reported that some students, especially as they reach higher levels like high school, may resist parental involvement. The following quotation portrays the feelings of most participants with regard to this concern: "Some high school students feel that parents do not have the knowledge to assist them with school work. Others also especially from low socio-economic backgrounds feel ashamed of their parents' poverty. These students can deliberately fail to inform their parents of events in the school where parents are to participate".

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) say that the age of children affects how much parents are involved in their education. As kids get closer to middle and high school, they start to think that they should take more responsibility for things like homework instead of their parents doing it for them. Also, Griffin and Galassi (2010) note that some students think their parents don't have the same knowledge and skills as the school staff. They question what parents can do. They care less about how much their parents are involved in their education. So, according to Donoghue (2014), students also play a part in why parents don't get involved in their children's schoolwork.

CONCLUSION

Parental involvement includes a variety of actions, thoughts, and activities that happen mostly at home, but also at school. The power of PI helps children do well in school. PI is seen as a strong predictor of school grades and future goals (Holcomb-McCoy, 2010). Parents with more education and better income tend to be more involved in their children's education. Schools can create big problems for kids with learning difficulties if collaboration is absent. Parents are more likely to take part when they feel accepted by the

teacher and think their opinions matter. It is well-known that PI often decreases as kids get older. Younger kids have a higher PI because they feel more excited about their parents starting school. The home, child, and school work together to create a supportive environment that helps with learning (Maphanga, 2006).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers need to change how they think about getting parents involved in school events and also change how they feel about parents being part of the school system. We should create workshops to help parents and kids connect better. Parents should be recognized and supported as important partners in education, with their own valuable knowledge and skills. Schools should encourage parents to get involved in their children's education and help them improve their reading and writing skills.

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