



RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring the Long-Term Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Educational Achievements at Primary Level: A Grounded Theory

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this research was to explore parental perspectives and their contributions to fostering parental involvement in primary schools in Pakistan. This study employing the Straussian grounded theory approach, "Exploring the long-term impact of parental involvement on children's Educational Achievements at Primary Level: A Grounded Theory". In the data collection phase, the researcher conducted interviews with participants, transcribed their responses and applied coding framework originally developed by Strauss and Corbin in 1990. Data were gathered from a variety of sources using a triangulation method. The researcher included nine participants for interviews and four participants in the focus group discussions until reaching a point of data saturation. Data collection was executed using purposive sampling technique. In the analysis phase the researcher employed Nvivo softwear. The findings of this research was that a well-designed parental involvement mechanism needs to be developed and put into practice.

KEYWORDS

Constant Comparative Analysis, Grounded Theory, Paradigm and Parental Involvement, Theoretical Sensitivity

Introduction

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in improving students' academic achievements and shaping their personal attributes in relation to their learning experiences. When parents actively engage in their children's education, it provides a sense of support and assurance to the students, fostering a favorable environment for their educational journey. As a result, students tend to exhibit greater consistency in attending classes and perform well academically, largely attributable to the unwavering support and encouragement from their parents. Furthermore, parental involvement has a positive influence on students' self-control, their perceptions of academic competence, and their overall academic performance, all of which are closely intertwined with their personal characteristics and development. The children benefit from a sense of encouragement, recognition, and backing that parental involvement brings into their academic lives. Additionally, students tend to be more attentive in class, as they are aware of their parents' active interest and involvement in their education (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020).

Concept of Parental Involvement

In numerous studies, parental involvement has been described as a broad spectrum of actions and practices that encompass both home and school settings. These activities encompass parental hopes, expectations, attitudes and beliefs regarding their child's

educational journey (Henderson & Mapp 2002). Although there have been challenges in precisely defining this concept, as evidenced in varying perspectives across studies (as noted in, for example, (Christenson et al. 1992; Englund et al. 2004; Georgiou 1997; Hong and Ho 2005), most researchers tend to adopt the framework proposed by Epstein et al. (1997). According to Epstein et al. (2009) parental involvement consists of five fundamental dimensions: Parenting, assisting with homework, engaging in communication with the school, volunteering within the school and participating in school decision-making.

Parental Involvement in Home-Based Education

Parental engagement plays a pivotal role in enhancing both the academic performance and personal growth of students throughout their educational journey. (Muzaffar & Javaid, 2018) When parents actively participate in their children's school-related activities, it fosters a sense of support and reassurance among the students. This support translates into improved attendance and overall classroom performance, as students feel their parents' backing in their educational pursuits. Furthermore, parental involvement has a positive impact on students' self-discipline, their perception of their academic capabilities and their actual academic achievements, all contributing to their personal development. Children also benefit from the encouragement, recognition, and assistance they receive when their parents are actively engaged in their educational experiences (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020).

Moreover, when parents engage in their children's learning process, it contributes significantly to their cognitive and physical development, as well as their academic success. It also cultivates a positive attitude toward school among parents themselves. School involvement facilitates improved communication between school staff and parents, fostering positive relationships. It enables parents to gain a clearer understanding of their roles in their children's academic progress and equips them with the skills needed to effectively support and guide their children's learning. Additionally, parental support plays a vital role in enhancing parents' personal resources, deepening their academic understanding, improving their social skills and promoting their psychological well-being (Choudhry, et. al, 2016; Boonk et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, the impact of parental involvement in locally established schools can vary depending on factors such as parents' occupations, income levels and educational backgrounds. Despite these variations, research consistently demonstrates positive associations between parental involvement at home and educational outcomes (Alameda-Lawson, 2018). Recommendations for parents include nurturing a positive attitude toward education, actively supporting the school in areas such as attendance and homework completion, familiarizing themselves with school expectations and collaborating with other parents to enhance the school environment. Schools are encouraged to respect parents' concerns and values, provide clear information about expectations, maintain regular communication with parents, assist parents in supporting their children academically and offer opportunities for parent training (Wilder, 2016).

Benefits of Parental Involvement

Yang (2018) introduced a framework for parental involvement in home-based education, encompassing aspects such as communication between home and school, homework supervision, support for school-related activities, setting expectations for children and expressing beliefs about education. Parental involvement in these areas has consistently shown positive effects on children's academic achievements.

Research has consistently shown that active parental engagement in school procedures leads to reductions in dropout rates and absenteeism. Through avenues such as parent-teacher meetings and informal conversations, parents can maintain a strong connection between home and school, staying informed about their children's activities. Parents who actively participate in various school-related activities with their children tend to be more deeply involved in their children's education compared to those who do not engage regularly (Choi, Chang, Kim, & Reio, 2015).

Studies suggest that home-based parental involvement encompasses a wide range of activities, including communicating with children, building emotional connections, assisting with school assignments, reading together and discussing educational topics. It also involves supervising homework completion, managing screen time and creating a better learning environment within the home (Mora & Escardíbul, 2018).

While research has consistently shown statistically significant relationships between parental involvement and academic achievement, the specific forms of parental involvement that predict academic success remain less clear. Some studies have found positive associations, while others have not demonstrated a significant impact on academic performance (Alameda-Lawson, 2018).

In the African American community, the belief that raising children is a collective effort is prevalent, emphasizing the importance of nurturing children as a communal endeavor. To address the unique challenges faced by students in urban communities, educational leaders must establish strong relationships not only with parents but also with the broader community to promote collaboration and partnership (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Many urban schools have observed positive outcomes when parents actively participate in their children's education (Manna, 2015). However, parental involvement is often not given top priority in the professional development calendars of high-poverty urban school districts (Davis, 2012).

Importance of Parental Involvement

Several worldwide political, historical and socio-economic changes have increased the awareness concerning the relationship between home and school and particularly the involvement of parents in their children's education. The stimulus for this increased interest can be found in educational reforms, the democratization of the school, the accountability movement, the move to decentralization and the question about the responsibility of the child's education (Muzaffar, et al., 2017; Davies & Johnson 1996). Consequently, educational and psychological research on the parameters and the outcomes of parental involvement has become very popular lately. The focus on parental involvement has its roots in research pointing out the positive correlation it has with children's school achievement (Englund et al. 2004). Kim's (2002) research findings indicate that parental involvement makes a positive contribution to children's educational achievement. Epstein (1992) argues that students at all grade levels do better academic work and have more positive school attitudes, higher aspirations and other positive behaviors if they have parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging and involved. According to Keith et al. (1998) the effects of parental participation are long lasting and involvement builds a foundation for future success. Fan's (2001) study showed that parental involvement factors have a longitudinal effect on student's academic growth. Specifically, Fans suggested found those parents' aspirations regarding their children's educational attainment and communication about school activities and studies have a positive effect on children's academic growth. For all these reasons, the identification of the parameters of parental involvement is important because it can help in the design and

implementation of intervention programs aiming at educational improvements for the benefit of children's learning.

The implementation of the No Child Left behind Act (NCLB) in 2005 placed a significant emphasis on parental involvement as a means to empower parents and improve student achievement. Schools became accountable for achieving annual progress, providing parents with more comprehensive data on their children's educational development than ever before. As a result, schools were directed to enhance parental involvement with the goal of improving student achievement (Wilder, 2016).

Empirical Researches on Parental Involvement

Research has consistently shown that active parental engagement in school procedures leads to enhance the academic achievement, reductions in dropout rates and absenteeism. Through avenues such as parent-teacher meetings and informal conversations, parents can maintain a strong connection between home and school, staying informed about their children's activities. Parents who actively participate in various school-related activities with their children tend to be more deeply involved in their children's education compared to those who do not engage regularly (Choi, Chang, Kim, & Reio, 2015).

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Theoretical Foundation

In the field of research literature, a multitude of theories regarding parental involvement has emerged, each offering a unique perspective. Parents bring their own individual viewpoints to their roles in their children's education. One theory, referred to as the parent role construction theory, explores the origins of these viewpoints and how parents perceive the responsibilities they should shoulder (Walker et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Furthermore, Epstein (1995) introduces the concept of overlapping spheres of influence, which have an impact on five different categories or levels of parental involvement. To gain a more profound insight into the processes by which parents shape, define, and put into practice their views on parental involvement, it becomes crucial to closely analyze various theoretical frameworks.

Material and Methods

This section provides an outline of the approach and structure applied in this research. Its purpose is to clarify the methodology and research design employed in the study, shedding light on the "what and how" of the research process. To explore the subject matter, a grounded theory approach was utilized, specifically employing Straussian grounded-theory design. This methodology facilitated the identification of emerging categories and the development of a substantive theory, allowing for a comprehensive review of existing literature at the commencement of the research. A total of nine parents participated in individual interviews, while four parents participated in a focused group discussion conducted in the local language, Urdu, which was subsequently translated into English. To ensure the validity of the data collected a member-checking approach during which participants provided feedback. The interviews were recorded using audio tapes.

Data Collection Procedures

Researchers have the flexibility to employ one or multiple data sources either individually or in combination. Using multiple data sources together serves the purpose of triangulation and aids in corroborating research findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The choice of data collection should be guided by inquiries that sensitize the researcher to emerging ideas. The overarching principle is to select the data collection method that best facilitates the development of emerging concepts (Charmaz, 2006). The grounded theory data collection and analysis process starts simultaneously and a cyclic process that represented in figure 1.1

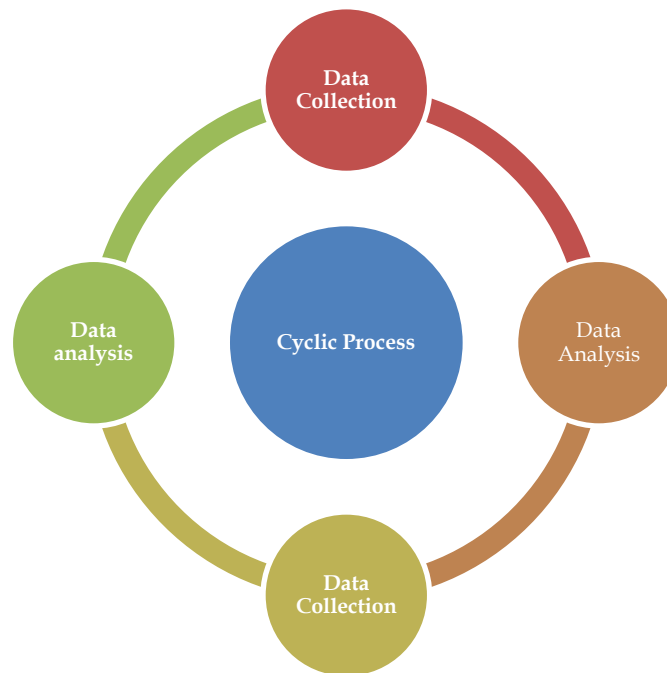


Figure 1: Glaser & Strauss 1967 Systematic Procedure of Grounded Theory

Data Collection Instruments

Creswell (2013) explained that in qualitative research, the researcher plays a crucial role as the primary instrument for data collection. In this study, the researcher employed intensive interviewing as the method to gather data. These interviews were essentially focused discussions between the researcher and the participating parents. Charmaz (2006) described intensive interviews as "directed conversations" and emphasized that they allow for an in-depth exploration of specific topics or experiences, making them a valuable approach for interpretive inquiry. Once consent was obtained from the parents data collection was conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews. These interviews involved nine parents who were individually interviewed and an additional four parents who participated in a focused group discussion. All participants were chosen based on their extensive knowledge and experience in the realm of parental involvement. The selection of participants was carried out through a combination of purposive sampling methods. Observations constitute an extremely valuable method for data collection.

Theoretical Sampling

The practice of theoretical sampling entails the purposeful selection of participants who can provide valuable descriptions to address gaps in emerging concepts and theories. This sampling strategy is directed by the core categories and the researcher's

understanding of the evolving theory. As a result, the researcher actively identifies individuals with particular experiences or the capacity to offer crucial descriptions.

Constant Comparison Method

In this study, the researcher applied the constant comparative method to gain insights from the interview results from multiple perspectives. To ensure accuracy and gain an initial immersion in the data, the researcher cross-referenced the transcriptions with the audio recordings. The analysis of participants' transcribed data involved two phases: individual data analysis and collaborative-comparative analysis.

Saturation

In this particular study, the researcher initially conducted nine interviews. It was during the seven interviews that the point of saturation became evident. Subsequently, the researcher conducted eighth and ninth interview, from which no new codes, data, categories or themes emerged. This marked the point of saturation, indicating that further data collection would not yield additional insights or information.

Member Checking Approach

Since I conducted this study as the sole researcher, member checking played a vital role in obtaining feedback to ensure that I accurately captured the authentic voices and sentiments of the participants, all while minimizing the influence of my own biases or cultural perspectives. As Creswell (2013) stated, member checking involves "determining the accuracy of the qualitative findings by taking the final report, specific descriptions or themes back to the participants and ascertaining whether they believe these representations are faithful." Throughout the course of the study, the researcher shared their findings with the participants who had been interviewed earlier to verify if they concurred with my interpretations. To ensure accessibility, translations were provided, and participants were offered individual discussion opportunities rather than having to share their views with the entire group, thus eliminating potential discomfort. Similar to the interviews and focus group discussion, this session was audio recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Procedure of Data Analysis

Strauss and Corbin (1990) outline four distinct forms of substantive coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. It's worth noting that these distinctions are somewhat arbitrary and they don't necessarily occur in a strict sequence. Researchers often move between these coding approaches fluidly, at times without clear demarcation. Let's explore these aspects in more detail. Open coding involves the systematic breakdown, examination, comparison, conceptualization and categorization of data. We will delve into each of these aspects shortly. Axial coding comprises a series of procedures in which data are reorganized in innovative ways, building upon the foundation of open coding. The key focus in axial coding is identifying connections and relationships between various categories. Selective coding entails the procedure of choosing a core category and methodically establishing its associations with other categories that necessitate additional refinement and elaboration. The primary objective of this phase is to strengthen the central theme or core concept within the dataset.

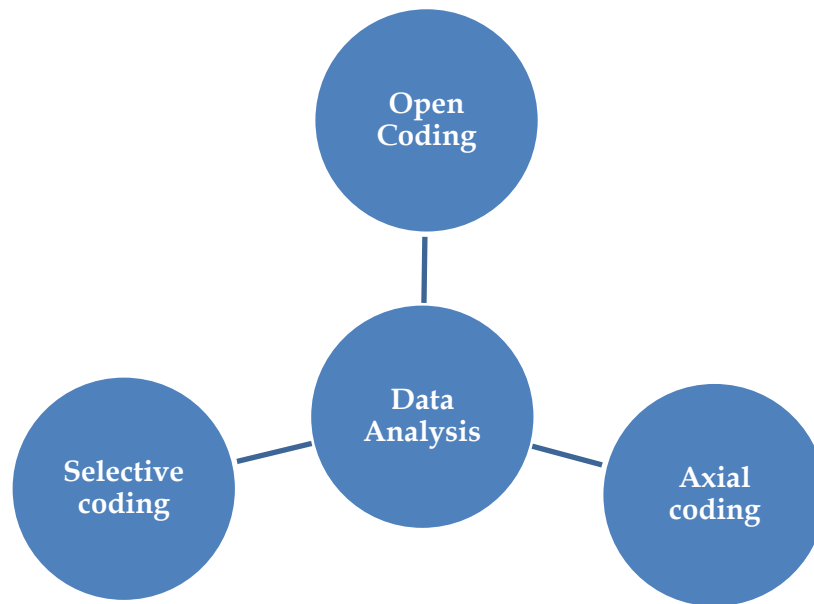


Figure 2: Strauss and Corbin 1990 coding design

Memos Writing

Charmaz (2006) underscores the usefulness of memos by explaining that they provide a space and place for making comparisons between different aspects of the research process, facilitating the articulation of conjectures about these comparisons. In this study, the researcher utilized the NVivo memo feature to link memos with the data and memos were consulted during data categorization and theorization.

Theoretical Sensitivity

Grounded theory requires that researchers enter the research field without preconceived problem statements, interview protocols, or an extensive review of literature. Instead, researchers should remain open to exploring a specific area and allow the concerns of actively engaged individuals to guide the emergence of a central issue." In this study, the researcher applied the concept of theoretical sensitivity to develop the new theory.

Results and Discussion

The results involve the school district collaborating with external agencies to address the educational needs of children and the challenges faced by parents in their daily lives. Establishing partnerships with external organizations can expand the school district's reach and provide parents with access to essential services for effective parental responsibilities. Delegating these responsibilities to trained professionals can also foster a culture that values and prioritizes education. The results showed that one reason for the limited parental engagement in schools was the insufficient professional skill of teachers in Pakistan. Moreover, school districts often neglect to offer professional development opportunities to school leaders that focus on building a culture of partnership. This study highlights the importance of creating tailored professional development programs that are culturally relevant and address the real-life circumstances. In Pakistan, there exists a significant challenge that demands attention and the foremost issue is unemployment. Empowering the head teacher is a significant step toward enhancing parental involvement. However, the budget allocated to the education department in Pakistan is quite limited.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate parents' perceptions and the factors influencing parental involvement in primary schools. Parental involvement is crucial for narrowing the achievement gap in primary education. This Straussian grounded theory study "Exploring the long-term impact of parental involvement on children's educational achievements at primary level in Pakistan". The study included ten male parents as participants, with nine participating in interviews and four in focus group discussions. Data collection utilized through theoretical sampling techniques. Theoretical sampling aimed to fill gaps in emerging concepts and theories, and negative cases were incorporated into the analysis. Data triangulation was employed, including semi-structured interviews, parent focus group discussions, and field observations. Saturation was reached when no additional data, codes, categories, or themes emerged. Data analysis followed the Strauss and Corbin (1990) coding design, including open, axial and selective coding. Memos were used for tracking codes, properties, categories, and themes. NVivo software was employed for data coding and organization. The study highlights the need for effective parental involvement in the education system. The current practice of parental involvement in Pakistan often appears to be a mere formality. Properly implemented parental involvement can significantly enhance children's education, and it is essential to establish a comprehensive management mechanism for parental involvement. Each district should form a parental involvement committee responsible for overseeing and documenting all parental involvement activities. This committee should include educated and affluent individuals from the district who can contribute both funding and solutions to address common issues faced by children. Schools should be adequately equipped to address challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and parents' busy schedules. The study recommends implementing professional development programs for educators to enhance their interaction with parents. This training should include self-assessment evaluations, goal setting, and continuous monitoring of progress. Collaborative partnerships between community organizations and district parental involvement committees can facilitate community and school-based training, promoting transparency and collaboration. Finally, the study highlights the need for a new approach to address barriers to parental involvement, focusing on developing tailored professional development programs that address the unique challenges faced by parental involvement in Pakistan.

Conclusions

Empowering the head teacher and establishing proper documentation processes are crucial components of this approach. With adequate resources at their disposal, head teachers can more effectively engage parents. This comprehensive strategy will lead to increased parental participation and ultimately result in problem resolution. Many parents are unable to attend school activities due to the risk of losing their daily wages. Even government employees encounter difficulties in obtaining leave from their workplaces. It is crucial to recognize that parents' work schedules can indeed hinder their ability to engage in their children's education. However, parents must prioritize their child's education. They should understand that the efforts made by teachers and the education department are solely for the benefit of their children and not intended to disrupt their lives. To address these challenges effectively, teachers also require training in both psychological and ethical aspects. Encouraging and praising children while providing incentives can further motivate them. The busy schedules, unemployment, and poverty are primary factors influencing children's education. Poverty is undoubtedly a significant concern, but surprisingly, some economically well-off individuals also do not participate in parental involvement activities. However, the primary issue often stems from a lack of awareness rather than poverty, which discourages people from participating.

Additionally, concerns about harassment can prevent some parents, especially mothers, from getting involved in school activities.

Recommendations

A well-structured Parent-Teacher Meeting should establish a systematic approach to provide consistent updates to parents, encompassing monthly, quarterly, and semi-annual progress reports. The school should take on the responsibility of managing the dissemination of these reports. Actively engaging parents in addressing any concerns can lead to more effective problem resolution. If parents can deepen their understanding of what is taught in school, it can help address many issues. Unfortunately, this kind of parental involvement is lacking in the government sector of Pakistan, where there is limited networking and engagement with parents.

Currently, there is a need for a proper mechanism to facilitate parental involvement in Pakistan, as the existing system is not adequately implemented. To transform the current state of affairs into a collaborative, respectful and highly effective partnership that promotes students' social, emotional and academic development, it is vital to engage parents in transparent discussions and provide them with the necessary resources. The Pakistani education system needs to shift its focus towards practical implementation, recognizing that merely relying on books and discussions will not effectively address the existing challenges. It is imperative to actively engage in parental involvement activities that are closely supervised and meticulously documented. There is a pressing need to enhance the reporting system as well. Furthermore, we must establish a platform that empowers parents to actively participate in addressing their concerns and issues.

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