

## FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN GUIDING THEIR CHILDREN'S STUDIES IN KINDERGARTEN IN PENANG

Jaya Kumar Shanmugam<sup>1</sup>, Kalaivani Kalimuthu<sup>2</sup>, Lai Pranee<sup>2</sup>, Chung Jiun Yin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Faculty of Business and Management, AIMST University, Semeling, 08100 Bedong, Kedah, Malaysia*

<sup>2</sup>*School of Education and Languages, SEGi College Penang, Wisma Greenhall, 43, Greenhall, 10200 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia*

\*Corresponding author: [jayakumar@aimst.edu.my](mailto:jayakumar@aimst.edu.my)

### Abstract

Parental involvement is one of the most important roles for helping children achieving greater academic success. This study investigated the factors influencing parents' involvement towards guiding their kindergarten children's studies in Penang. Parental involvement was depicted as the dependent variable whereas parents' expectation, parents' self-efficacy, communication barrier and household wealth as the independent variables. Correlational quantitative design method was used in the research study. Data was collected using questionnaires and the targeted population was 100 parents whose children were studying in any kindergarten in Penang but only 59 participants responded. The findings showed that there was significant positive relationship between parental involvement and parents' expectation, parents' self-efficacy, communication barrier and household wealth.

**Keywords:** Parental Involvement, Parents Expectation, Parents Self-Efficacy, Communication Barrier and Household Wealth

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### Introduction

Since the recent outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has resulted in many challenges in various industries, including education. The impact of the pandemic especially had a great influence on the developments of young children. In many countries, teaching and learning have fallen under the supervision of parents due to the widespread closures of kindergartens, schools, colleges and other higher education institutions. Thus, such shift in the importance of parental role has influenced the changes in the behaviors of both children and parents (Wendel et al., 2020). Parental involvement has always been an essential component in assisting children into greater academic achievement. Many researchers have acknowledged the importance of strong positive bonds between homes, school and education of children. It has proven of those students whose parents are involved in their schooling are more likely to have higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behaviour, and adapt well to school (Epstein and Sander, 2000; Hotz and Pantano, 2015; Sebastian et al., 2017). According to Duricic and Bunijevec (2017), if parents are more involved in their children's education, the chances of them being more successful in studies are higher. UNESCO 2020 particularly has indicated the need for parents to support their children on virtual learning at home since the closures of schools during pandemic (Huang et al., 2020).

All the school lessons have been forced to shift to e-learning and pack of weekly homework was also given to children to be completed at home with the guidance from parents. According to Joyce (2016) as stated in National Education Association and National Parent Teacher Association, only 10 minutes are supposed to be total duration for a child to complete his or her homework. Thus, this is one of the

reasons parents and children opt not to complete the given homework as it took more than the supposed duration to complete the work (The Washington Post, 2016). Whereas Guven and Baltaoglu (2017), highlighted the opinions of teachers on the importance of homework, but the changes in the mode of learning made homework to be more excessive and pointless until children are frustrated whilst completing homework. Consequently, parents complete the homework as it takes too much time, effort and stress to guide their children instead. Evidently, a survey done in the United Kingdom to provide a better insight on the experiences of parents guiding their children in studies revealed that 57% of teachers, 84% of students and 65% families expressed that homework had caused them too much stress (TES Magazine, 2020). As such, there is not much literature documented on the importance of parents' involvement in children's learning experience. This study particularly focused on the factors influencing parental guidance in their children's studies. The primary purpose of conducting the research was to determine possible barriers and importance in the involvement of parents towards their children's studies. Moreover, this study will also identify the reasons of rejections among parents in participating in their children's studies. On the other hand, this study will also help teachers and kindergarten owners to up lift their implementations of online classes and providing homework for long term effectiveness.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Parental Involvement**

The views on parental involvement over the years by many researchers have shown great positive outcomes on children's learning and development. Parental involvement is one of the most significant predictors of students' achievement. Parental involvement can be defined as the actions that the parents perform in order to boost their children's school achievement, which requires joining partnerships such as parent-child, parent-teacher and parent-parent (McNeal, 2014).

A study by Lara and Saracostti's (2019) who have analysed the associations between parental involvement in school and children's academic achievement have found there were differences in children's academic achievement between parental involvement profiles, specifying children with highly involved parents have higher academic achievement. A research conducted by Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2016) recognized the parental involvement's play a critical role in students' educational development. Research suggests that parental involvement affected not only the learning outcomes but also students' social, emotional, psychological and interactional improvement (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2016). Hakyemez-Paul et al. (2018) conducted research on the point of view of teachers in kindergarten towards parents' involvement. The same study also focused on the reasons for insufficient practices on parental involvement. Hakyemez-Paul et al. (2018) found out that teachers prominently show positive attitudes towards parental involvement. The researchers further identified the main two barriers in parental involvement were often caused by poor parental motivation and insufficient time to complete the homework. Epstein and Sander (2002) suggested that teachers and parents need to work together in order to go into an efficient partnership and provide an effective learning environment for the children. Thus, it was important to further investigate the factors influencing parents' involvement in guiding their children's studies.

#### **Parental Expectations**

One way of parental involvement is shown through their expectations on the children's academic performance to succeed in future. A recent study conducted by Poon (2020) was aimed to study the impact of socio-economic status (SES) on parental factors in facilitating academic achievement in Chinese children. The independence variables studied by the researcher were socio-economic status SES, parental expectation, parental involvement and student engagement, while academic achievement as the dependent variable in a structural equation modelling (SEM). Based on the study, parental involvement has significantly correlated with parental expectation. Furthermore, statistically significant results were found between SES and parental expectation to parental involvement to child engagement

to academic achievement. Hence, it was noticed that the researcher findings suggested parental expectation, parental involvement and child engagement are equally important in the relationship between SES and academic achievement. Similarly, Ma et al. (2018) has investigated the effects of high parental expectations on academic performance and depression in adolescents. In one hand, the result showed a highly associated relationship between parental expectations and academic performance. On the other hand, the significant relationship between parental expectations and academic performance was also positively associated with depression among adolescents. Overall, parental expectations were highly associated in developing academic achievements although it was also inflicting damage at the same time. Thus, the hypothesis below was proposed below:

*H1: There is a significant relationship between parental expectation and parental involvement towards guiding their children's studies.*

### **Parental Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is usually related to a person who believes he or she can successfully perform a task (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998). For a positive child development and success in early year studies, strong parental self-efficacy was considered as very essential. It was believed that the involvement of parents in guiding their children's studies were highly affected by parental self- efficacy. Fitzmaurice et al. (2020) studied the parents' involvement in their children's homework and teachers' interpretation of this involvement. The results showed that the parents have expressed high level of involvements toward their children's homework. Moreover, teachers have also described the parents were extremely supportive. This result was derived from the positive experiences the parents had during their own schooling days. Consequently, parents' attitudes towards homework remained positive and has encouraged their involvements in guiding their children's studies. Hence, the below hypothesis was proposed:

*H2: There is a significant relationship between parenting self-efficacy and parental involvement towards guiding their children's studies.*

### **Communication Barrier**

Past literature suggested that perceived language barriers is one of the challenges faced by parents to potentially be involved in their children's studies. According to several researches, communication has become a barrier when the teachers and parents were from different cultural backgrounds (Turney and Kao, 2009; Zhou et al., 2014). A study by Alexander et al. (2017) has proved the academic performance was greatly influenced through the high level of parental involvements in their children's studies among Latinos youth. The two most common reasons for parents not to involve in their children's studies were due to their work schedule and language barriers. Several studies have emphasized the importance of linguistic and cultural influences on parents' involvement in guiding their children academically (Jeynes, 2011; Naidoo, 2015; Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). Significant feedbacks provided by parents clearly indicated that communicating in English was one of the major barrier for discouraging them to be more involved in their children's studies (Jeynes, 2011; Naidoo, 2015; Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). Therefore the below hypothesis was proposed:

*H3: There is a significant relationship between communication barrier and parental involvement towards guiding their children's studies.*

### **Household Wealth**

Wang et al. (2016) studied the relationship between the impact of the parents' two proximal processes on the family's economic status and the parents' participation in the education of their children. In their study, it was identified that in most low-income Chinese families, financial difficulties may affect the near-end processes which indirectly influences the parents' beliefs and opinions. Consequently, it affected the parents' involvements in their children's educational activities. Besides that, Wang et al. (2016) tested the indirect effects from family financial status to parental involvement. The indirect

impact from family economic status to parental participation was significant in the highly-educated group. Calzada et al. (2015) examined predictors of parent involvement families during the transition from school in pre-kindergarten to kindergarten among Afro-Caribbean and Latino. In their study it was found that parents with low socio-economic status were less involved in their children’s education. Nevertheless, Cashman et al. (2021) focused on the role of economic resources as an influencer of parental involvement in their children’s academic performance. In their study, it was shown that richer parents were more likely to be involved in educational activities with their children. In the studies conducted by Fan and Chen, (2001) and Wang et al. (2016) show that wealthier families were more likely to participate in learning activities with children. This emphasis on socio economic stability allows parents to have more quality time to participate in school-related activities with their children. Thus, the below hypothesis was developed:

*H4: There is a significant relationship between household wealth and parental involvement towards guiding their children’s studies.*

**Research Framework**

Figure 1 represents the framework developed based on the literature review in regards to the relationship between the four factors influencing parents’ involvement towards their children’s studies.

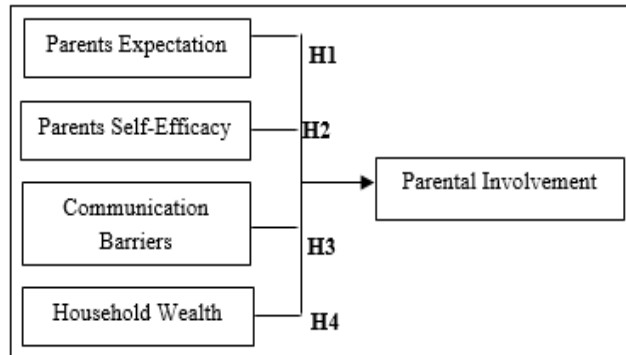


Figure 1. Research Framework

**Methodology**

The study chose the application of quantitative correlational research utilizing a questionnaire survey. This method might give a more in-depth knowledge of the factors that impact parental participation. The ability to collect quantifiable data measurements from the population is likely to be considered to constitute an overall and adequately complete picture of the entire population in quantitative research (Queirós et al., 2017). Furthermore, this study design involves gathering and evaluating organized and numerically represented data to develop precise and trustworthy measurements for statistical analysis to discover specific behaviors and patterns (Goertzen, 2017).

The data was collected using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The purpose of utilizing the questionnaire survey technique was to find out what was on the mind of the selected participants, what they thought and felt. The data analysis used the statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26.0 to determine the instrument's reliability. Three questions about demographics, five questions about parental self-efficacy, five questions about parental expectations, five questions about communication barriers, and five questions about parental participation made up the 23-item questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale. The questions are closed-ended and use a 5-point Likert Scale. As a result, respondents may select one of the following options: 1 – Never 2 – Seldom, 3 – Sometimes, 4 – Frequently, and 5 – Always. Purposive sampling refers to the inclusion of kindergarten parents in the sample. It is a type of non-probability sampling chosen by the researchers based on their

assessment of who may offer the information needed to achieve the study's goals. This sampling strategy concentrates on persons who have the same viewpoint and are willing to give that information (Etikan and Bala, 2017). Table 1 shows the sources of the items in the questionnaire.

Table 1. Summary of Measurement Items

| Variables             | No/ Items | Source                      |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Parental Involvement  | 5         | Garbacz and Sheridan (2011) |
| Parents Expectations  | 5         | Jacob (2010)                |
| Parents Self-Efficacy | 5         | Akello (2020)               |
| Communication Barrier | 5         | Shearer (2006)              |

### Results & Analysis

A total of 100 questionnaires were provided online to select parents at all branches of one of Penang's kindergartens. However, only 59 people answered during the two weeks allotted. Three surveys lacked information and only used 56 of the questionnaires. The demographic profile of respondents is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Information

| Demographic Items         | Categories         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Parent-Child Relationship | Father             | 7         | 12.5           |
|                           | Mother             | 49        | 87.5           |
| Monthly Household Income  | Less than RM2,000  | 2         | 3.6            |
|                           | RM2,001-RM4,000    | 5         | 8.9            |
|                           | RM4,001-RM6,000    | 8         | 14.3           |
|                           | RM6,001-RM8,000    | 15        | 26.8           |
|                           | RM8,001-RM10,000   | 13        | 23.2           |
|                           | More than RM10,000 | 13        | 23.2           |
| Academic Qualifications   | High School        | 5         | 8.9            |
|                           | Diploma            | 17        | 30.4           |
|                           | Bachelor Degree    | 22        | 39.3           |
|                           | Master             | 12        | 21.4           |

A total of 87.5 percent of mothers and 12.5 percent of fathers responded to the survey. Mothers make up the bulk of the parent-child relationships, with the most significant percentage of respondents. The most common monthly family income range is RM6,001 to RM8000, accounting for 26.8% of all household income. Monthly household earnings of RM8,001 to RM10,000 and more than RM10,000 accounted for 23.2 percent of the total. With 14.3 percent, monthly family income between RM4,001 and RM6,000 in the third category, and monthly household income between RM2,001 and RM4,000 is ranked fourth with 8.9 percent. With only 3.6 percent, the lowest monthly family income group is less than RM2,000. In terms of academic credentials, most respondents had a bachelor's degree, accounting for 39.3 percent of the total in this survey. Respondents who possess a diploma come in second with 30.4 percent. With 21.4 percent, master's holders are third, with 8.9% of total respondents having high school qualifications. The study gave the calculated averages of all items according to variables in Table 3. Averaging the responses to the relevant elements yielded the total score for each variable. The computed item display data mean it is 4.00 or higher. This finding indicates that respondents think all of the above elements are important: parental engagement (DV), parental expectation (IV1), parental self-efficacy (IV2), communication barrier (IV3), and family wealth (IV4).

Table 3. Summary of the mean of computed items according to the variable (N=56)

| Demographic Items      | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------|----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| Parental Involvement   | 56 | 1.80    | 5.00    | 4.08 | 0.78           |
| Parents Expectation    | 56 | 2.60    | 5.00    | 4.31 | 0.65           |
| Parents Self Efficacy  | 56 | 1.40    | 5.00    | 4.18 | 0.75           |
| Communication Barriers | 56 | 3.00    | 4.80    | 4.09 | 0.38           |
| Household Wealth       | 56 | 1.00    | 6.00    | 4.27 | 1.40           |

The purpose of the reliability test is to establish a scale for measuring dependability. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which measures how closely linked a group of items is. Table 4 shows the total Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all variables in this study, ranging from 0.7 to 0.8.

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha Value of Variables

| Demographic Items      | N of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------------------------|------------|------------------|
| Parental Involvement   | 5          | 0.78             |
| Parents Expectation    | 5          | 0.65             |
| Parents Self-Efficacy  | 5          | 0.75             |
| Communication Barriers | 5          | 0.38             |
| Household Wealth       | 5          | 1.40             |

A statistical approach for evaluating whether two quantitative or categorical variables are linked is correlation analysis. It is a measure of how things are related, to put it another way. The study of how variables are related is known as correlation analysis. Correlation analysis is a statistical method for determining the strength of a relationship between two quantitative variables (Ranganathan et al., 2018). The Pearson's correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) range between the dependent variable (DV), parental participation, and the independent variables (IVs), parental expectation, parental self-efficacy, communication barrier, and household wealth, are shown in the tables below. Table 5 identifies the relationship between the factors. It implies that parental engagement has a positive connection with the dependent variables. Overall, all of the relationships between the variables are significant, as indicated by the p-value of less than 0.005.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation

|                              |                     | PI      |
|------------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Parental Involvement (PI)    | Pearson Correlation | 1       |
|                              | Sig (2-tailed)      |         |
|                              | N                   | 56      |
| Parental Expectation (PE)    | Pearson Correlation | 0.513** |
|                              | Sig (2-tailed)      | 0.000   |
|                              | N                   | 56      |
| Parental Self-Efficacy (PSE) | Pearson Correlation | 0.655** |
|                              | Sig (2-tailed)      | 0.000   |
|                              | N                   | 56      |
| Communication Barrier (CB)   | Pearson Correlation | 0.391** |
|                              | Sig (2-tailed)      | 0.003   |
|                              | N                   | 56      |
| Household Wealth (HW)        | Pearson Correlation | 0.366** |
|                              | Sig (2-tailed)      | 0.000   |
|                              | N                   | 56      |

Table 6 shows the coefficients for the factors that impact parental engagement. The parental expectation positively impacts a lower level and a significant value of 0.000, according to the beta value (B). The beta value for parental self-efficacy, on the other hand, suggests a positive influence, with a significant value of 0.000. On the other hand, the communication barrier has a positive association and a significant value of 0.000. Finally, household wealth has a positive impact with a statistically significant value of 0.000.

Table 6. Coefficients Results

| Model |                             | Unstandardized Coefficients |            |       |
|-------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------|
|       |                             | B                           | Std. Error | Sig   |
| 1     | (Constant)                  | 0.964                       | 0.340      | 0.000 |
|       | Parental Expectation(PI)    | 0.434                       | 0.276      | 0.000 |
|       | Parental Self-Efficacy(PSE) | 0.548                       | 0.313      | 0.000 |
|       | Communication Barrier(CB)   | 0.277                       | 0.214      | 0.000 |
|       | Household Wealth(HW)        | 0.279                       | 0.187      | 0.000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Parental Involvement

Table 7 shows the linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The correlation (R) value for this study is 0.781, while the R Square value for the regression model is 0.736. Overall, this result indicates that the study's model strength is 73.6 percent.

Table 7. Model Summary

| Model | R     | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .781a | 0.736    | 0.616             | 0.398                      |

a. Predictor: (Constant), Parental Expectation, Parental Self-Efficacy, Communication Barrier, Household Wealth,

Table 8 shows the hypothesis summary of the study with the decision.

Table 8. Hypothesis Summary

| No | Hypothesis   | Accepted / Rejected |
|----|--|---------------------|
| 1  | There is a significant relationship between parental expectation and parental involvement towards guiding their children's studies.    | Accepted            |
| 2  | There is a significant relationship between parenting self-efficacy and parental involvement towards guiding their children's studies. | Accepted            |
| 3  | There is a significant relationship between communication barrier and parental involvement towards guiding their children's studies.   | Accepted            |
| 4  | There is a significant relationship between household wealth and parental involvement towards guiding their children's studies.        | Accepted            |

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the elements that influence parents' engagement in directing their children's education at kindergarten in Penang over four years. According to the findings, kindergarten parents have high expectations for their children's academic performance. The link between parental expectation and parental engagement indicated a strong positive impact on parents' educational goals

for their children's future. The findings of parental expectation and parental participation are equally important since they can significantly improve children's academic success (Ma et al., 2018; Poon, 2020). As shown in a previous study by Li et al., (2017) parents with higher educational levels are more likely to affect their children's academic conduct through parental control methods at home, such as homework monitoring and screen suppression.

Regarding parental participation, the study discovered that parental self-efficacy had the most significant positive association compared to other factors in this study: expectancy, communication barrier, and family wealth. The findings of this study show how self-efficacy and the home learning environment are linked, as shown in a prior review of the literature (Peacock-Chambers et al., 2017). As previously said, homework is an educational need for students to enhance their academic skills at home. Parents recognized their responsibility in assisting their children in completing assigned schoolwork and indicated an excellent perception of its advantages (Fitzmaurice et al., 2020). However, these parents may experience difficulty controlling their children's education, prompting them to seek professional help (Harpaz and Grinshtain, 2020). The overall mean of the parental self-efficacy questionnaire (N=56, M=4.1786) revealed that kindergarten parents had a high degree of self-efficacy to be involved in their children's education (N=56, M=4.1786).

The data analysis reveals another significant positive association between communication barriers and parental engagement. Because communication between the school and the parents is so important (Norheim and Moser, 2020), it may be one of the elements that influence parental engagement in children's research (Alexander et al., 2017). On the other hand, parents in kindergarten have the most excellent level of academic qualification, with an average of a bachelor's degree (39.3%), followed by a certificate (30.4%), indicating that they are highly educated parents. The questionnaire for this study used English as the medium of communication, contradicting the findings of Schneider and Arnot (2017). They found that parents' replies to English impeded parental engagement. However, as previously researched, the language used to interact with parents in kindergarten must be careful, such as avoiding jargon-based terminology (Preston et al., 2018).

The study discovered a strong positive connection between family wealth and parental engagement in the research. The monthly household income of kindergarten parents, a large number of parents financially secure since they generally fall into the group of RM 6001-RM 8000 (26.8%), followed by RM8001-RM10, 000 (23.2%) and RM 10, 001 (23.2%). This data analysis allowed researchers to investigate the impact of family economic position and parental engagement on children's studies. According to the influence of high family financial status on parental participation, families with stable economic situations are more likely to be active with their children's studies (Calzada et al., 2015; Cashman et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2016).

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study**

Although the research met its objectives, there were certain inevitable constraints. The study's first drawback was its short duration. The study will complete the survey in a limited period due to a time restriction. Furthermore, one of the study's limitations was the lack of responsiveness. As previously stated, most poll respondents were moms (87.5%), with the remaining 12.5 percent being fathers. Only 59 people out of a total of 100 had answered. Unresponsiveness and time constraints may be linked since parents may be preoccupied with work, causing them to forget or neglect the survey and the poll for two weeks conducted. As a result, the research study's shortcomings include a lack of time and responsiveness.

The following are suggestions for researchers who want to do better research studies in the future. The shortage of time was one of the most significant constraints encountered during the investigation.



Parents were apathetic to the survey and ignored it. Since the poll is only conducted in two weeks, parents may be preoccupied with their jobs. The study should spend more time allowing parents to respond to it, and perhaps the research will provide a more meaningful outcome in the future. Face-to-face interview approaches, which may individually be asking people questions in one-on-one discussions to factual representations of individuals' experiences, feelings, and discernment. It might be used in developing, testing, or enhancing frameworks or things and suggested as qualitative methods.

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