The Scope of Parental Involvement as a Social Capital of Emirati Children: A Case Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to investigate how Emirati parents were involved in their children's education. The data of this study were collected through semi-structured interviews with parents equally distributed from both genders (n=12) and whose children were registered at public and private schools in one of the UAE's major cities. Parents were interviewed concerning the importance of education as social capital, parents' and children's gender. Results demonstrated that parents viewed education as part of social mobility, and it is vital as social capital. Furthermore, Parents believed that their involvement in their children's education was influenced by their gender, as well as by the age and gender of their children. Mothers believed that they are more involved in their children's education than fathers. Parents viewed themselves as falling short on focusing on parent-initiated involvement activities instigated by schools due to a variety of barriers that affect their participation in school-initiated parental involvement activities. Recommendations for future research include school initiatives focusing on parental involvement and raising parents' awareness

about school-initiated parental involvement activities to enable parents' participation.
Keywords: Emirati Children, Parental Involvement, Social Capital, Gender, Case Study Introduction.

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of parental involvement was proven empirically. Pushor contended that parents should be considered a commonplace feature in the curriculum (Pushor, 2009). Elnokali et al. (2010) also found that children's behavioral problems declined, and their social skills improved because of their parent's involvement; however, children's achievements were not affected. Parental involvement and academic success were found to have a minor to moderately significant association, according to (Fan & Chen, 2001).

Badri, et al. (2014) found that parental involvement in early education considerably improves children's behavioral adjustment at school in the context of Abu Dhabi. Also, the Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK), formerly the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), emphasized the significance of family involvement in children's education. The recommended parental roles and responsibilities for assisting children in learning have been clarified by ADEC, including encouraging parents to be involved in various school events and be informed about their children 's learning and development (ADEC, 2015)The results of different ADEC/ADEK surveys of principals, teachers, and parents were inconsistent. Female respondents from all categories in the ADEC surveys indicated that they felt more involved in school life compared to male respondents; parents who had attained higher education levels felt less involved than those with basic qualifications or no academic degrees (ADEC, 2012a; 2012b;2012c; ADEK, 2016;2017; AlArabi, 2022a).

A. The Purpose of the Study

The goal of this case study was to examine how Emirati parents were involved in their children' education. Furthermore, the study described the differences in parental involvement regarding parents' gender and children's age and gender.

B. The Problem

The importance of parental involvement in children's education was recognized by society, educators, and researchers, who studied the connection between parental involvement and academic performance in schools (Elnokali et al., 2010; Fan & Chen, 2001; Pushor, 2009). Some researchers addressed parents' perceptions surrounding obstacles that hinder their involvement or their opinions on the importance of

their involvement (Amini, 2011). Although parents are considered essential stakeholders in their children's education, their perceptions about their involvement in education have not been explored. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), particularly in Al Ain, research scarcely targets parental involvement. Most studies in the field focused on school staff perceptions rather than parents. Understanding parents' perceptions about education and parental involvement are the issues that this study aimed to tackle.

C. The Questions

This paper is structured around the question: How can parents participate in their children' education? The question was answered by exploring these three sub-questions (1) How do parents perceive education and its importance for their children? (2) How does parental involvement differ between mothers and fathers? 3) How does parental involvement differ regarding the gender and age of their children?

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Different classifications and explanations for parental involvement were discussed and related to achievement and student behaviors at school. Parental involvement was divided into four dimensions: Discussing school-related activities and programs with parents at home, contact between parents and schools that is two-way, home supervision by limiting TV time, going out and monitoring homework or providing homework after school and school participation by volunteering at school or parental events (Sui-Chu & Williams, 1996). Using factor analysis, six forms of parental participation were discovered. Parenting tendencies that emphasize pressure, control, success, and personality development make up four of them. Learning at home, as well as volunteering and decision-making at school, are the final two forms of parental involvement. Parental pressure has a negative impact on children's achievement, whereas control and at-home learning had no evident association with it. Volunteering and decision making at school, parents' tendencies to emphasize achievement and personality development, have a positive relation with actual school achievement (Alarabi, & Alwardat, 2021; Georgiou, 1997)

Six different types of parental involvement were included in the design of the parental involvement model (Epstein,2002). (1) Schools help families in order to enhance learning at every age and grade levels by offering parenting advice, family support, an awareness of child and adolescent development, and help with creating the right conditions at home. (2) Communication and interacting with families to inform

them about school programs and student progress and establish two-way channels of communication between the home and the school. (3) Volunteering, which means welcoming parents to volunteer to support school goals. (4) Learning at home involves encouraging, listening, guiding and discussing and not only teaching school instruction. (5) Making decisions that involve families as partners in the decision-making process at the school. (6) Collaborating and working together with community organizations to plan resources and services for families, students, and the school..

Two types of parental involvement were classified by Driessen et al. (2005): parent-initiated parental involvement and school-initiated parental involvement. The latter included the use of extra financial resources to encourage parental contact, the use of various resources and strategies to activate positive communication with parents. Parent-initiated parental involvement included helping children with homework, asking children about school issues and matters, providing children with rich cultural capital context by taking the children to visit museums, having pedagogical rules, and allowing them to choose secondary school. (Driessen et al., 2005).

Domina (2005) argued that although policymakers and scholars assumed parental involvement is always positive, the research has demonstrated varying results (Domina, 2005). Some studies associated parental involvement with adverse outcomes. Indeed, Domina's findings indicated that some parental involvement activities contribute to preventing behavioral problems; however, it also revealed that parental involvement does not advance children's education alone. Hill and Tyson's meta-analysis revealed that parental involvement has a different impact on achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Their meta anlysis revealed that the strongest positive association between achievement and parental involvement occurs when parents convey expectations about involvement, help children put techniques into practice, and help them comprehend the purposes, goals, and meaning of academic performance.

Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) found that parental involvement was associated with the gender of the child and learning and behavioral problems. Home discussion with girls is more strongly associated with achievement than with boys and low-achieving children or children with behavioral problems.

According to West et al. (1998), mothers are more engaged in their children's education. They discovered that parental participation is better predicted by mothers' education levels than by the social class of the family. Additionally, McBride et al (2002) explained that maternal involvement is more active and less influenced by other factors such as children's gender and characteristics than paternal

involvement. They clarified that mothers perceived that their involvement was part of their role in raising their children.

Antonopoulou et al. (2011) found that Greek parents believed that family-school collaboration is important for children's academic and psychosocial development. Nevertheless, Greek parents rarely create active partnership between them and schools, even if schools offered a climate for encouraging cooperation..

Tao, a talented child's father, stated, "Parents are often discouraged from voicing their views for fear of being showing off and trumpet-blowing" (Tao, 1986, p. 313). He clarified that parents should help their children in two areas: developing their children's personalities and designing individual education programs. Furthermore, Borge and Mayo (2001) argued that parents' perceived roles in involvement should transcend their perceived roles to have more active and equal roles as other educational stockholders.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design and Instrument

In order to provide parents a chance to talk about their involvement in their children's education, a case study methodology was employed to address the research issues. Each parent is considered a case. Thus, the design was a collective, multisite and instrumental case study (Cresswell, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews concerning parental involvement in the field were used to collect descriptive data. The researchers carried out the required steps to get informed consent by describing the study pupose for the participants, guaranteeing their confidentiality, informing them that participation in the study was optional and they could withdraw at any time (Gay et al., 2009, Kvale, 2013).

B. Data Collection and Analysis

During the fieldwork, the researcher tried to maximize the trustworthiness of the interviews by clarifying the purpose, guaranteeing the participants' confidentiality and allowing participants enough time to voice their opinions. The researchers used clear and unbiased open-ended questions, as well as avoiding leading questions, debating and judging. Interviewing skills such as listening more than talking and not interrupting were utilized. Audio recordings were also made, and the audio data was transcribed. (Gay et al., 2009, Kvale, 2013).

A qualitative analysis was performed, and each case was described in detail to clarify the social factors and features each has. Memoing was

the first step; the scripts were read several times thoroughly to understand the data. Second, the researcher categorized data using categorical aggregation and cross-case analysis to establish the themes. The NVivo 10 program was used to sort and analyze the data.

C. Population and Sample

The study's population included all parents with children enrolled in government or private schools at different education levels in Al Ain; in this study, the participants were 12 parents from this population. The participants were chosen purposively to be from both genders, male and female and parents of children in government and private schools. The researcher used maximum variation sampling to explore different perspectives about the issue of parental involvement. The data coding pseudonyms of fathers started with F and mothers with M.

This study was limited to parents who live in Al ain and have children in private and governmental schools. Parents who volunteered to be interviewed for this study included both male and female parents. As a qualitative study, the study did not aim to generalize the results of the interviews in another context. Instead, it aimed to gain in-depth knowledge of the participants' perceptions to understand the topic from their viewpoint; interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached.

IV. RESULTS

The interviewees' responses were categorized and unitized to extract the answers to the primary research question and sub-questions as follows: The first sub-question: How do parents perceive education and its importance for their children?

When responding to the primary and probing interview questions related to parents' perspectives of education and its importance to their children, five participants explained that education is not restricted to schooling and is a lifelong process. One father stated that he believes that education is restricted to schooling from kindergarten to university. All participants concurred that education is crucial for their children's quality of life and future prosperity. The responses to the first sub-question highlighted key themes in parents' views on the importance of education, which includes providing high position and prestige, building personality and support with raising children to become good citizens.

The second sub-question: How does parental involvement differ between mothers and fathers?

that compared to fathers, mothers are more interested in their children' education because of differences in the parental roles and variation in the nature and personal attributes between mothers and fathers. Additionally, fathers clarified that mothers and fathers complement each other. However, they stated that the role of mothers is more significant than father' role in terms of being involved in children's education, especially if mothers had at least a high school education.

Mothers clarified that they are involved in teaching their children after school, assist them with their homework and preparation for exams. Preparing healthy food and taking care of the children's daily schedules is part of maternal involvement to support children's education.

Fathers declared that their main responsibility was to provide their children with a convenient life that enables them to study and achieve academic success; as well as providing their children with their educational requirements, motivating them, selecting and visiting schools. They also believed it was their role was to provide their children with other educational opportunities such as enrolling them in language, computer courses, and presenting skills courses to improve their characters and skills.

Moreover, it was evident in parents' answers that they focused only on parent-initiated involvement. The researcher expanded on this and asked parents about their perceptions of school-initiated parental involvement. Most participants clarified that they try to attend meetings and events at their children's schools if their work schedules permit them. All participants acknowledged the importance of school-initiated parental involvement activities because of the positive impact these activities have on the children's character and morale.

In conclusion, mothers' involvement can be considered to be greater in comparison to fathers' involvement. However, fathers' involvement supports the mothers' involvement activities, and they fulfill a different aspect and role in the parental involvement process.

The Third Sub-Question: How does parental involvement differ regarding the gender and age of their children?

All participants, except for one mother, agreed that involvement in children's education differs based on gender and the number of siblings in the family. One parent stated that as the number of siblings in a family increases, it leads to a progressively lower level of participation in each child's education. At the same time, all participants agreed that children require different levels and forms of involvement according to their age and gender.

The main question: How can parents participate in their children' education?

The answers to the study's sub-questions revealed that most participants believe that education is not restricted to school. Thus, their answers about involvement in in the education of their children included activities related to school and other issues related to lifelong learning. It was evident that mothers take a more active role in their children's school-related education. At the same time, fathers are more concerned with providing a convenient environment that can help children to learn and build their characters. It was also evident that involvement is affected by children's gender and age. Also, the number of siblings and their needs are other factors that influence the level and the type involvement of parents in their children's education.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this case study showed that parents believed that education was an essential component of social mobility and social capital. Furthermore, the study revealed different shapes and dimensions of involvement of parents in children's education. These dimensions include involvement in teaching and preparing children before they reach school age; providing them with all of their educational requirements and a supportive environment. It is important for parents to understand their children's ambitions and abilities, be involved in selecting and visiting schools and setting goals for their children's education. Parental involvement also includes facilitating children's moral development to ensure positive behavior, teaching children after school, discussing issues, providing encouragement and motivation, enrolling children in extracurricular activities, and assigning them with age-appropriate responsibilities. These dimensions were mentioned in the literature and previous studies (Georgiou, 1997; Sui-Chu & Williams, 1996; Tao, 1986). Furthermore, the findings of this study were consistent with previous studies in Abu Dhabi and other international studies that contended that maternal involvement level is higher than paternal involvement in children's education (ADEC, 2012a; McBride et al.,2002; West & Norden, 1998; Alarabi et al., 2022b).

Parents appreciated the available forms of school-initiated parental involvement activities such as attending parents' meetings and participating in school events. However, literature and previous studies also classified other activities and categories as a component of parents' involvement in their children' education which did not appear in the participants' comments regarding their involvement in the schools. Volunteering in school activities, parent training courses,

and decision-making are examples of these activities (Borge & Mayo, 2001; Epstein, 2002; Georgiou, 1997; Sui-Chu & Williams, 1996; Tairab et al., 2020). Parents discussed parent-initiated forms of involvement at length, while they did not mention the school-initiated activities until they were asked about them. This might be because parents focused their answers on their efforts to improve their children's education. This is consistent with Saeed's (2019) findings that parents are least involved in school activities. It was clear from the forms of school-initiated activities mentioned that the parents' roles were passive. Parents were only recipients of information about their children or just invited as guests to school activities and events, indicating low degree of genuine communication and collaboration between schools and parents. It is suggested that more research is conducted to replicate this study in different cities in the UAE to collect data about parents' perceptions of parental involvement.

VI. ASSERTION

In conclusion, parents understand that education is a lifelong process, and they believe in its importance. I Al Ainm involvement of parents in children's education has different levels and forms relating to parents' gender and age and gender of children. Parents participated in a variety of activities that were considered to be parent-initiated parental involvement, but they tended to be passive participants in school-initiated activities, which may be a sign of poor communication between parents and schools.Therefore, it is suggested that more attention is paid to investigating and developing school-initiated parental involvement activities, designs and practices.

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