

The Impact of Parental Educational Involvement on Children's Education

Wenxin Wei *, Wei Wang

College of Education and Sports, Yangtze University, Jingzhou 434023 China

* Corresponding Author: Wenxin Wei (Email: leaderthreewang@gmail.com)

Abstract: Parental involvement in education plays a crucial role in the development of children, though its effectiveness often falls short of expectations. Numerous studies have shown that parental educational involvement is a complex model, with varying approaches leading to different outcomes. Therefore, recognizing effective parental involvement is essential for maximizing its positive impacts.

Keywords: Parental Educational Involvement; Child Development; Family Education.

1. Introduction

A well-rounded education encompasses more than just school instruction; family education also plays a vital role. In today's highly developed educational landscape, the lack of family education is garnering increasing attention from both the public and scholars. Parental involvement in education, defined as the involvement of parents in their children's education through their educational philosophies, expectations for their children's development, and various behaviors aimed at enhancing their academic and psychological outcomes at home and school, is considered a key variable in evaluating family education outcomes. This concept has evolved from research that positions parents as integral participants in the educational process.

Influenced by traditional Chinese culture, parents in China often play a crucial role in their children's education, as seen in historical anecdotes like "Mencius' mother moving three times." Contemporary reports also indicate that in East Asian cultures, parents are typically willing to expend considerable effort and resources for their children's education. Theoretically, parental involvement should enhance children's educational outcomes. However, real-world instances exist where extreme parenting approaches, known as "tiger parenting," have led to psychological imbalances in children, including declines in academic performance and even depression. Moreover, in the post-pandemic era where online learning has become prevalent, schools and teachers often find it challenging to interact directly with students, leaving parents to play a larger supervisory role in education. This has significantly increased the opportunities for parents to engage in their children's education, adding new dimensions to the impact of parental involvement compared to earlier times. This paper focuses on how to define and measure parental involvement and examines whether its impact on the educational outcomes of elementary and secondary school students is consistently positive.

2. Definition and Measurement Methods

Parental involvement in education is commonly defined as the combination of parents' educational philosophies and expectations for their children's development, along with

diverse behaviors aimed at fostering better academic and psychological outcomes both at home and in school. This concept originates from Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory introduced in 1979, which applies ecological principles to analyze the environments influencing child development, encompassing microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. The microsystem specifically relates to parental involvement based within the family context.

Initially, parental involvement was often viewed as part of a more complex model and measured at a singular level. However, further research has revealed that parental involvement itself is a multifaceted and complex variable, influenced by various factors including parents' socioeconomic status, educational level, personality traits, temperamental characteristics, and sociocultural backgrounds. Its effects on children are not always entirely positive, and its measurement has evolved from simplistic single-level surveys to more complex multilevel questionnaires.

In China, parental involvement is typically divided into five dimensions: family monitoring, academic tutoring, parent-child communication, joint activities, and home-school communication. However, in less developed regions where schools may find it challenging to frequently engage in home-school collaborations, the dimensions have been adapted in practice to focus primarily on parent-child communication, parental supervision, and home-based learning.

3. Positive Impact

Early studies on parental educational involvement, such as Seginer's (2006) review of 60 empirical studies and Green's (2009) meta-analysis of 50 studies, consistently found a positive correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement. Keith's (1993) research on a large sample of 8th graders (n=15,703) revealed a cross-ethnic positive correlation between parental involvement and educational outcomes. Traditionally, studies often directly linked educational outcomes to academic grades. However, recent research has shifted focus towards the quality of children's learning within the educational process. For example, Si Jiwei et al. (2022) showed that parental involvement could mitigate math anxiety among elementary

school children. Zhang Ling (2022) reported that parental involvement positively affects student engagement.

Beyond academic outcomes, the broader concept of children's "capabilities" has also attracted attention. Marjoribanks (1996) pointed out that parental involvement serves as a moderating variable in the relationship between ethnicity and cognitive performance. Andrade et al. (2005) found that home environment stimulation, an aspect of parental involvement, significantly predicts children's cognitive scores after controlling for mothers' job and education levels.

Considering that developing a well-rounded personality and successful socialization are crucial aspects of education, the impact of parental involvement on children's social and personality development has been extensively studied. Regina (2001) indicated that educational behaviors within parental involvement significantly relate to children's risky behaviors. Orleans (2000) noted that parental involvement has a non-linear effect on children's internet usage, where appropriate levels can be beneficial. Similar observations have been made in China, where studies suggest that parental rules can help adolescents manage their time effectively and reduce smartphone addiction (Ding Qian, Zhang Yongxin, Zhou Zongkui, 2019). Shumow (2002) discovered that parental involvement predicts children's socio-emotional adaptation levels. Amid the pandemic, the shift to remote online education has underscored the importance of parental involvement, with Jin Xiaoyi et al. (2022) observing a general increase in parental involvement during this period, although variations exist among parents.

4. Negative Effects

Contrary to common expectations and predictions, parental involvement in education does not always yield positive results. In the highly scrutinized area of educational outcomes, numerous studies have shown that the relationship between parental involvement and children's academic achievement is not always significant (Tam & Chen, 2009), and may even be negatively correlated (Hill & Tyson, 2009). This counterintuitive finding results from the relatively simplistic models of parental involvement used in early research. Later studies, which categorized parental involvement into multiple dimensions and assessed both positive and negative aspects, revealed that parental involvement is indeed a complex variable with varying directions.

For example, the negative impact of excessively frequent parental involvement on children's academic performance has been repeatedly confirmed by various scholars (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991; Jeynes, 2005). Research by Deng and colleagues indicates that among first graders, formal home mathematics education by Chinese parents is negatively correlated with children's mathematics proficiency. This is attributed to parents' own mathematical abilities and educational methods not meeting the standards of modern, advanced school education. Survey results from Shanghai reveal that parents' strategies for intervening in their children's media use are simplistic, focusing more on time restrictions than content limitations, with almost no parental participation in children's new media usage processes (Chen Qingwen, 2019). This approach could negatively influence the relationship between parental educational involvement and children's internet addiction.

5. Negative Effects

Parental involvement in education extends beyond academic achievements and psychological well-being to influence children's educational activities and future development. Effective guidance in home education is crucial as it directly impacts the quality and trajectory of a child's education. Here are some key aspects of how parental involvement can guide educational activities:

5.1. Cultivating Interest and Motivation in Learning

Parental involvement can help nurture a child's interest and motivation to learn. By actively participating in their children's educational activities, parents can convey their love for knowledge and the importance of learning. They can explore different academic fields with their children, encourage the pursuit of personal interests, and stimulate their motivation to learn.

5.2. Providing Learning Resources and Support

Parental involvement also includes the provision of learning resources and support. This may involve purchasing educational materials, providing a dedicated study space, or arranging tutoring sessions. Parents can help children develop good study habits, monitor their academic progress, and offer the necessary guidance and support to ensure they realize their full potential.

5.3. Guiding Career Planning and Development

Parental involvement can play a significant role in children's career planning and development. Parents can discuss various career options with their children, understand their interests and skills, and offer advice on education and career development. They can help children set long-term career goals and provide support to achieve these objectives.

5.4. Promoting Social Skills and Interpersonal Relationships

Beyond academics, parental involvement includes the development of social skills and interpersonal relationships. Parents can guide their children in building positive relationships, teaching them conflict resolution and communication skills. They can encourage participation in various social activities to develop teamwork and leadership skills.

In summary, parental involvement is crucial for guiding educational activities. The support and participation of parents can provide children with broader educational opportunities and richer educational experiences, helping them achieve greater success in academics and life. Therefore, encouraging parents to actively participate in their children's educational activities and providing appropriate guidance and support will contribute to their holistic development and future success.

6. Conclusion

In light of the mixed effects of parental involvement on education and contemporary societal changes, researchers underscore the pressing need for appropriate, high-quality parental involvement (Luo Liang, 2014). To harness the

benefits of parental involvement while curtailing its adverse effects, enhancing the quality of such involvement is crucial. This requires a clear definition of what constitutes high-quality parental involvement.

A recognized theoretical framework in domestic scholarship is the five-dimensional model proposed by Wu Yifang and colleagues (2013). Based on this model, it's essential to identify the characteristics of high-quality parental involvement as observed in real life, underpinned by a robust body of research on the subject. From extensive past research, China has recognized the attributes of high-quality parental involvement, which include:

1. Structured Guidance: Involvement should be structured and consistent, aligned with the child's developmental stage and capabilities.

2. Support for Autonomy: It should foster independence, offering children opportunities to attempt solutions on their own without undue interference.

3. Process Orientation: Emphasizing the nurturing aspect of involvement, focusing on children's growth throughout the process rather than merely on outcomes, encouraging enduring commitment.

4. Positive Emotional Investment: The involvement process should be conducted in a positive, optimistic environment, avoiding negativity such as reprimand and criticism.

5. Co-Involvement of Parents: It highlights the collaborative effect of both parents, as the absence of either can lead to inadequate educational structure and unsuccessful outcomes.

6. Child's Perception and Willingness: Involvement is not unidirectional; it is an interactive process where the child's active participation is fundamental to achieving high-quality outcomes.

These traits, proposed by Luo Liang et al. (2014), define high-quality parental educational involvement.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Seginer, R. (2006). Parents' Educational Involvement: A Developmental Ecology Perspective. *Parenting: Science and Practice*, 6(1), 1-48.
- [2] Keith, T. Z., & Keith, P. B. (1993). Does parental involvement affect eighth-grade student achievement? Structural analysis of national data. *School Psychology Review*, 22(3), 474-496.
- [3] Si, J. W., Guo, K. Y., Zhao, X. M., et al. (2022). Changes in latent categories of mathematics anxiety in elementary school children and the effects of parental educational involvement: A 3-year longitudinal study. *Acta Psychologica Sinica*, 54(4), 355-370.
- [4] Luo, L. (2011). Parental Involvement in Children and Adolescents' Development. *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Sciences)*, 2011(1), 21-28. DOI:10.3969/j.issn.1002-0209.2011.01.003.
- [5] Wu, Y. F., Han, X. H., Wei, W., et al. (2013). Construction and verification of a theoretical model of parental educational involvement behavior in elementary school students. *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Sciences)*, 2013(1), 61-69.
- [6] Zhang, L. (2022). Research on the impact of parental educational involvement on student engagement. *Journal of Education*, 18(1), 150-160. DOI:10.14082/j.cnki.1673-1298.2022.01.015.
- [7] Luo, L., Wu, Y. F., Wei, W. (2014). Characteristics of High-Quality Parental Educational Involvement. *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Sciences)*, 2014(1), 53-60.
- [8] Zhu, X. Y., Cao, M., Li, H. (2021). The impact of parental educational involvement in online learning and its interaction effects. *Modern Distance Education Research*, 2021(6), 47-55. DOI: 10.3969/j.issn.1001-8700.2021.06.006.
- [9] Ding, Q., Zhang, Y. X., Zhou, Z. K. (2019). The relationship between parental phubbing and smartphone addiction in middle school students: The moderating role of parental monitoring. *Chinese Journal of Special Education*, 2019(1), 66-71. DOI:10.3969/j.issn.1007-3728.2019.01.011.