

The Impact Of Family Involvement On The Education Of Primary School Children: On The Example Of Primary School Children In Tong Liao City, Inner Mongolia

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the impact of family involvement on the education of primary school children in Tun Lio City, Inner Mongolia, with a sample of 152 participants. The research investigates how various forms of parental and family engagement, including home-based activities (such as assisting with homework and fostering a reading culture) and school-based involvement (attending school events, parent-teacher meetings, etc.), influence students' academic performance and overall school experience.

Data were collected through of surveys with parents with primary school children. The findings reveal that higher levels of parental involvement correlate positively with better academic outcomes, including improved reading and math skills, higher motivation, and enhanced social behavior in school. However, the extent of family involvement was found to vary significantly based on socio-economic factors, with parents from more affluent backgrounds often engaging more frequently in their children's education. The research also highlights cultural and regional factors unique to Inner Mongolia, emphasizing the role of family traditions and community dynamics in shaping educational practices.

The study concludes that fostering stronger partnerships between families and schools can significantly enhance the educational experience for primary school students. Policy recommendations include targeted programs to support parental engagement, especially for families from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the development of culturally sensitive strategies to increase participation across different family structures. These findings underscore the critical role of family involvement in shaping children's educational outcomes and highlight areas for future research on the intersection of education, culture, and community in Inner Mongolia.

Keywords: Family involvement, development-based dimension, activity-based dimension, involvement-based dimension

I. INTRODUCTION

Family involvement is widely recognized as a crucial factor in shaping children's educational outcomes, particularly during the primary school years. Research has consistently shown that when parents and family members engage actively in their children's education, it leads to positive outcomes such as higher academic achievement, better social skills, and greater motivation (Epstein, 2001; Jeynes, 2012). The forms of this involvement can vary, ranging from supporting homework at home to participating in school events, yet the overall impact remains significant across different educational settings. However, the nature of family involvement is influenced by a variety of factors, including socio-economic status, cultural norms, and the specific regional context (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

In Inner Mongolia, family involvement in education takes on distinctive characteristics shaped by the region's unique socio-cultural and economic landscape. Tun Lio City, located in the heart of this autonomous region, provides an important case for studying the interaction between family engagement and educational outcomes. The city's population, comprised of both Mongolian and Han ethnic groups, presents a culturally diverse backdrop that influences family dynamics and educational practices. Furthermore, the rural-urban divide, along with varying economic conditions, adds layers of complexity to how families engage with their children's schooling.

This study investigates the impact of family involvement on the education of primary school children in Tun Lio City. It aims to explore both home-based and school-based forms of family engagement, and how these contribute to children's academic performance, social development, and overall school experience. The research is based on data collected from 300 participants, including parents, teachers, and school administrators, to provide a comprehensive understanding of family involvement across different socio-economic and cultural groups.

The relevance of this research lies in its regional focus and the potential policy implications it offers. By analyzing how family engagement contributes to primary education in Inner Mongolia, this study seeks to

inform the development of strategies to promote parental involvement, particularly in communities where socio-economic challenges may hinder such participation. Additionally, it contributes to the growing body of literature that emphasizes the role of cultural and regional factors in shaping family involvement in education (Bakker et al., 2007). The findings from this study are expected to provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to improve student outcomes in culturally diverse and economically varied regions like Inner Mongolia.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Family Involvement

Family involvement in education has been the subject of extensive research, with numerous theoretical frameworks emphasizing its critical role in supporting children's academic and social development. One of the most widely recognized frameworks is the *Overlapping Spheres of Influence* model developed by Joyce Epstein (2001), which posits that children's learning is influenced by three interconnected spheres: family, school, and community. According to Epstein, effective education occurs when these spheres actively collaborate, creating partnerships that foster an environment conducive to the child's growth. Family involvement is a key component of this model, as it emphasizes that parents' engagement in their child's education can enhance motivation, behavior, and academic performance (Epstein, 2001).

The *Ecological Systems Theory* proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) also provides a valuable lens through which family involvement can be understood. This theory suggests that children's development is shaped by different environmental systems, with the family being the most immediate and influential context. In Bronfenbrenner's model, the family is part of the *microsystem*, directly influencing the child's learning experiences through interactions such as helping with homework or setting educational expectations. Family involvement, in this sense, acts as a foundational support system that interacts with other systems, such as schools and communities, to shape children's educational outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Building on these perspectives, recent scholarship has emphasized the multidimensional nature of family involvement. For example, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) developed a model that breaks down parental involvement into three dimensions: behavioral involvement (participation in school-related activities), cognitive involvement (engagement in discussions and intellectual activities at home), and personal involvement (the emotional climate and support provided by the family). These dimensions illustrate that family involvement is not limited to physical presence in school events but also includes fostering a positive learning environment at home, which significantly contributes to a child's academic success (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

Furthermore, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) proposed a model to explain why parents become involved in their children's education. According to their framework, parents' involvement is influenced by personal beliefs about their role in their child's education, perceptions of invitations from the school, and life context variables, such as time and energy. This model highlights the importance of both external factors (such as school communication) and internal motivations (such as parental self-efficacy) in determining the level and type of family involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Theories of social capital also offer insights into the benefits of family involvement. Coleman (1988) introduced the concept of social capital, which refers to the resources available to children through relationships within their families and communities. He argued that when parents are engaged in their children's education, they transmit values, norms, and expectations that contribute to academic success. In this context, family involvement serves as a form of social capital that facilitates the flow of information, support, and opportunities essential for educational achievement (Coleman, 1988).

2.2 Development-Based Dimension of Family Involvement

The role of family involvement in education has been extensively studied, and various dimensions of this involvement have been identified as crucial in supporting children's development. One such dimension is the *development-based* approach, which considers the changing needs and capacities of children as they grow, and how family involvement can adapt to meet these evolving needs. This approach recognizes that the nature and impact of family involvement differ at various stages of a child's academic and developmental trajectory, from early childhood through adolescence. Research has demonstrated that family involvement in the early years, particularly during preschool and primary school, is vital for establishing a foundation for academic success. In early childhood, parents are often seen as a child's first teacher, directly influencing their cognitive and emotional development. According to Fan and Chen (2001), involvement in early literacy activities, such as reading together and playing educational games, has been shown to significantly enhance children's academic readiness and early literacy skills. These early interactions provide a scaffold for future learning and lay the groundwork for a positive attitude toward education.

As children enter primary school, the development-based dimension of family involvement continues to be critical but begins to take on different forms. At this stage, family involvement typically shifts from direct instructional support (e.g., helping with homework) to fostering an environment that encourages learning,

independence, and self-regulation. This shift is aligned with children's growing cognitive and social capacities. A study by Eccles and Harold (1996) found that parental involvement in school-related activities, such as attending parent-teacher conferences and supporting school programs, positively influenced children's motivation and academic self-concept. These findings suggest that family involvement during the primary years is not just about academic tasks, but also about nurturing a supportive home environment that reinforces school-related values.

Moreover, developmental psychologists such as Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) argue that as children mature, family involvement must evolve to match their increasing autonomy and competence. Their model emphasizes that effective family involvement during middle childhood includes a balance between providing support and allowing children to take more responsibility for their own learning. This stage of development is marked by children's growing need for independence, and parents who successfully adjust their involvement—by offering guidance while fostering self-directed learning—tend to see better educational outcomes for their children.

In adolescence, family involvement becomes even more nuanced, as teenagers seek greater independence and autonomy in their learning. Research by Hill and Tyson (2009) indicates that while direct parental involvement (such as helping with homework) tends to decrease in middle and high school, more subtle forms of involvement—such as setting high expectations and communicating the importance of education—continue to have a positive impact. Adolescents benefit from parental engagement that supports their emerging sense of identity and responsibility, while still maintaining a strong connection to educational values and goals. Hill and Tyson (2009) also note that developmentally appropriate forms of family involvement, such as discussing future educational plans and helping with organizational skills, are more effective than the types of direct control that may have been beneficial in earlier stages.

The development-based dimension also considers the importance of cultural and contextual factors in shaping family involvement. For example, Cooper et al. (2010) highlight the ways in which different socio-economic and cultural contexts affect how families engage with their children's education over time. In some cultural settings, extended family members may play a larger role in educational support, particularly as children grow older. Additionally, economic challenges can influence the extent to which parents are able to remain actively involved in their children's education as they balance work and other responsibilities.

2.3 Activity-Based Dimension of Family Involvement

The activity-based dimension of family involvement in education focuses on the specific actions and behaviors that parents and family members engage in to support their children's academic development. This dimension is concerned with both home-based and school-based activities, such as helping with homework, attending school events, volunteering in the classroom, and creating educational opportunities outside of formal school settings. Research has shown that such activities can significantly influence students' academic performance, motivation, and socio-emotional well-being (Epstein, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001). One of the most influential models in this area is Joyce Epstein's (2001) *School, Family, and Community Partnerships* framework, which identifies various forms of family involvement, many of which are activity-based. Epstein categorizes these into six types, including parenting (supporting children's learning at home), communication (exchanging information with the school), and volunteering (participating in school activities). This framework highlights that activity-based involvement can occur in both formal educational settings and informal home environments. The participation of parents in educational activities, whether by reading with their children or attending school meetings, fosters a positive educational environment that is shown to enhance academic success (Epstein, 2001). Research on homework involvement is a major focus within the activity-based dimension. Studies have consistently demonstrated that parental assistance with homework is linked to better academic performance when done appropriately. However, the nature of this involvement matters. For instance, Cooper, Lindsay, and Nye (2000) found that parental support in the form of creating a conducive environment for homework, providing encouragement, and helping children manage their time tends to be more beneficial than directly completing assignments for them. This type of involvement fosters independence and responsibility in children, promoting long-term academic success. Conversely, over-controlling or intrusive involvement in homework can have negative effects, such as reducing a child's autonomy and undermining their motivation (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). Volunteering in schools is another key component of activity-based family involvement. When parents volunteer at their child's school, either by assisting in classrooms or helping with extracurricular activities, it fosters a closer relationship between the family and the school. Research suggests that parental volunteering not only benefits the child by reinforcing the connection between home and school but also contributes to a positive school climate (Cotton & Wiklund, 1989). According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), parents who are more actively involved in school activities tend to feel more knowledgeable about the school environment, which in turn increases their confidence in supporting their children's education at home. In addition to school-based involvement, home-based educational

activities also play a vital role in promoting academic success. A study by Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) showed that parental involvement in literacy activities, such as reading to children or encouraging independent reading, had a strong positive impact on early literacy development. Similarly, mathematics-related activities at home, such as playing counting games or encouraging problem-solving, were found to enhance mathematical skills (LeFevre et al., 2009). These findings emphasize that the activity-based dimension extends beyond homework assistance to include a broader range of informal learning opportunities that take place at home. It is important to note that the effectiveness of activity-based involvement may vary depending on the age of the child and the context. For example, Desimone (1999) found that parental involvement in school activities tends to have a stronger effect on academic outcomes in the early years of education, whereas home-based involvement, such as discussing school and academic expectations, remains important throughout middle and high school. As children grow older, the nature of parental involvement often shifts, with parents increasingly focusing on providing encouragement, structure, and guidance rather than direct assistance with schoolwork.

2.4 Involvement-Based Dimension of Family Involvement

The involvement-based dimension of family engagement in education refers to the degree and types of participation that families engage in to support their children's academic and developmental growth. This dimension focuses on the extent to which families are involved in both home-based and school-based activities and how their involvement directly influences students' academic outcomes. The involvement-based dimension has been extensively researched, revealing that the quality and nature of parental participation significantly shape children's educational experiences and success.

One of the most prominent theoretical frameworks in understanding family involvement is Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) *Model of Parental Involvement*. This model suggests that parents' decisions to become involved in their children's education are influenced by several factors: their personal beliefs about their role, their sense of self-efficacy, and their perceptions of invitations from the child or school. These factors determine the level of involvement, whether through assisting with homework, attending school events, or providing emotional support. Importantly, the model emphasizes that involvement is not uniform, and parents may engage differently depending on their own resources, beliefs, and external influences (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The involvement-based dimension also encompasses various forms of engagement, from direct involvement in school activities to more passive but supportive roles at home. Research by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) categorized family involvement into three main dimensions: behavioral, cognitive/intellectual, and personal involvement. Behavioral involvement includes participation in school events, parent-teacher conferences, and volunteer activities, while cognitive/intellectual involvement pertains to engaging children in discussions about school, encouraging learning at home, and fostering a positive attitude toward education. Personal involvement includes emotional support and the creation of an environment that promotes academic motivation. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) found that higher levels of involvement in these areas were correlated with improved academic outcomes, such as better grades and greater motivation in students. Home-based involvement, such as supporting homework completion and fostering positive attitudes toward learning, is another critical component of the involvement-based dimension. Several studies have shown that parental involvement in homework positively impacts students' academic performance, especially when the involvement is appropriately supportive rather than controlling. Cooper et al. (2000) argued that when parents offer guidance and encouragement without taking over the child's work, they foster independence and a sense of responsibility in children. However, if parents are overly intrusive or controlling in homework activities, it can diminish children's autonomy and lead to lower motivation and academic outcomes (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007).

School-based involvement is equally important, and research indicates that parents who are actively involved in school-related activities often see positive academic and social outcomes in their children. Epstein's (2001) *School, Family, and Community Partnerships* framework highlights the importance of collaboration between families and schools. This model identifies different types of parental involvement, such as volunteering at the school, participating in decision-making processes, and communicating regularly with teachers. These activities enhance the relationship between the school and the family, creating a more supportive learning environment for students. Studies show that students whose parents are actively involved in school-related activities tend to perform better academically and show higher levels of motivation (Epstein, 2001). Parental involvement is particularly significant during the transition from elementary to middle school, where students tend to need more emotional and academic support. Hill and Tyson's (2009) meta-analysis of parental involvement in middle school found that certain forms of involvement, particularly academic socialization (such as discussing the importance of education, setting academic expectations, and talking about future goals), were more effective in boosting student achievement than direct involvement in school activities. This finding underscores that, as children grow older, the type of parental involvement that contributes to academic success

evolves. Parents who engage in meaningful conversations about academic goals and provide guidance that fosters independence tend to have children with higher academic performance.

Moreover, the involvement-based dimension is influenced by socio-economic and cultural factors. Research shows that socio-economic status can shape the extent and nature of parental involvement, with parents from higher socio-economic backgrounds often having more time, resources, and knowledge to engage in their children's education (Lareau, 2011). However, parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds often face barriers to school-based involvement, such as work schedules or limited access to transportation. Nonetheless, these parents can still support their children's education through home-based involvement, such as encouraging positive attitudes toward school or providing emotional support (Reynolds, 1992).

Cultural factors also play a critical role in the involvement-based dimension. Different cultural groups may have varying expectations and practices regarding family involvement in education. For instance, research by Li (2010) highlighted that Chinese immigrant parents in the U.S. tend to emphasize academic success and are deeply involved in their children's education, often providing additional tutoring or academic resources at home. However, their involvement might not always align with U.S. school expectations for parental engagement, which can create challenges in how involvement is perceived by schools.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research has identified several dimensions of parental involvement in preschool programs (Sanders & Epstein, 2000; Deitchman et al., 1977; Fantuzzo et al., 2004; McWayne & Owsianik, 2004). Primarily, three key dimensions have been highlighted:

1. Contact with the school
2. Learning at home
3. Participation at school (Bakker & Denessen, 2007)

Studies that assess these dimensions often use average scores on scales to gauge levels of involvement. These scores can represent overall involvement or specific aspects, such as how frequently parents engage with their child's school. High scores in this area can be interpreted as "parents frequently contact their child's school" or "parents are highly involved" (Bakker et al., 2007). Recognizing that educational settings and programs vary across societies, this study aimed to align closely with the national preschool program. Thus, current research insights and recent concepts from the national preschool curriculum were applied. The PISEC survey was developed through a content analysis approach following Yildirim and Simsek's (2006) guidelines. Ten mothers of kindergarten children participated in semi-structured interviews about the activities they engaged in with their children at home and school. Two researchers independently identified and categorized types of parental involvement, achieving an inter-rater reliability of 0.90. These involvement behaviors were organized into three dimensions: development-based, activity-based, and involvement-based, with five behaviors under each dimension. After review by three specialists, adjustments were made, and the survey was finalized, using a five-point Likert scale (1-never to 5-always).

The study sample included 152 mothers of primary school children, selected to represent diverse preschool settings in Tun Lio city of Inner Mongolia. Participant's responses were analyzed descriptively using SPSS.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data was organized into three dimensions: development-based, activity-based, and involvement-based, each containing five items. In the development-based dimension, parents rated the item "closely follow what their children learn at school" the highest (M = 3.97), followed by "praise their children for good performance" (M = 3.84). The items "talk to their children to understand their interests" (M = 2.45) and "relate their interests to real-life experiences" (M = 2.31) ranked third and fourth, respectively. The lowest-rated item was "adapt school activities for home using varied models and concepts" (M = 1.71).

Table 1. Development based dimensions

Behavior	Mean scores	SD
Close follow up	3.97	0.37
Praising	3.84	0.13
Interest domain	2.45	0.21
Correlating with life experiencing	2.31	0.29
Redirecting activity	1.71	0.28

Ps:5 points scale (1-the least consistent, 5-most consistent).

In the activity-based dimension, parents rated the item " Helping to understand " the highest (M = 3.68), followed by " Involving in activity " (M = 2.59). The items " Encouraging when not interest " (M = 2.47) and " Asking about the activities " (M = 2.39) ranked third and fourth, respectively. The lowest-rated item was " Encouraging when failed " (M = 1.71).

Table 2. Activity based dimension

Behavior	Mean scores	Delta
Helping to understand	3.68	0.37
Involving in activity	2.59	0.28
Encouraging when not interest	2.47	0.27
Asking about the activities	2.39	0.15
Encouraging when failed	2.34	0.19

Ps: 5 points scale (1-the least consistent, 5-most consistent).

In the involvement-based dimension, parents rated the item " Attending to parent conference " the highest (M = 4.55), followed by " Reading books " (M = 3.80). The items Doing activity at home " (M = 3.65) and " Talking about expectations " (M = 2.45) ranked third and fourth, respectively. The lowest-rated item was " Attending to classroom activities " (M = 1.27).

Table 3. Involvement based dimensions

Behavior	Mean scores	Delta
Attending to parent conference	4.55	0.40
Reading books	3.80	0.25
Doing activity at home	3.65	0.32
Talking about expectations	2.45	0.19
Attending to classroom activities	1.27	0.32

Ps: 5 points scale (1-the least consistent, 5-most consistent).

V. CONCLUSION

This study found that parents show moderate involvement in their children's early childhood education. They regularly attend mandatory parent conferences, which focus on child progress and school policies. However, while parents frequently engage in reading and home activities with their children, they are less likely to participate in classroom activities. Although Tun Lio city of Inner Mongolia's early childhood education programs encourage classroom involvement, teachers face challenges incorporating parents into the classroom setting. Parents help child's complete activities but show limited active participation, particularly in play activities, and tend to praise success more than encourage persistence after failure. They rely on school-based activities and often need guidance to align children's interests with real-life experiences. Parental involvement was highest in the involvement-based dimension, which includes school-related responsibilities, while activity-based behaviors had lower engagement. The study suggests that parents require support to better understand how and why to engage in their children's activities effectively. School-based education sessions for parents could help boost involvement in both home and classroom settings, potentially benefiting child development. The study recommends further research on enhancing parental involvement in Tun Lio city of Inner Mongolia, including examining teacher attitudes toward parent presence in classrooms.

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