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Review of Literature on Participation of Parents in the Home-Based Academic Learning of their Preschool Child

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A B S T R A C T

The focus of this review is research literature on the participation of parents/caregivers in the home-based academic learning of their preschool age children. Academic learning includes studies related to school readiness, language learning, mathematics education and emergent reading skills. The review covers the publications from 2012 to 2024. It includes the unstable years of lockdown due to COVID-19 when research pertaining to digital learning in preschool age and role of parents was reported, which formed the current trends in the field. The article concludes with research in India reported in journals accessed through Google Scholar. The studies reviewed in this article are mostly in chronological order, and they include the preschool age from 3 to 6 years.

Keywords: preschool age; parental participation; home-based; digital and academic learning

1. Introduction

Parental participation in the early education of their child has been a popular topic for multiple studies and has shown to have a positive impact on children's academic achievement (Iruka et al, 2014; National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT], 2020; Polat & Bayindir, 2022; Wildmon et al, 2024). Discussing the concept of education specifically at the pre-primary stage, **Sood (2003)** stated that this stage was denoted by using various terms such as ECE/ pre-school/ pre-primary which all refer to "the activities and experiences that are offered to children in the age group of 3 to 6 years" (**p.9**).

More recently, preschool education has evolved to be more inclined towards school readiness in terms of habit formation, discipline, behavior, overall development, creativity and academic achievement i.e. learning the 3Rs-readiness for reading, readiness for writing and readiness for arithmetic.

The guidebook for planning and organization of preschool education activities in Anganwadi Centers, published by **NIPCCD (n.d.)** further lays down substages for children from prenatal to 6 years of age, stating that "care and early stimulation/interaction should be below 3 years and developmentally appropriate preschool education should be from 3 to 6 years, which should also include a more structured and planned school readiness component for 5- to 6-year-olds" (**p.2**). This clarifies the concept of a precise term and age range for 'preschool children' who are also the focus of this study and thus the age range of interest.

2. Review of Literature

In this section of literature review, all three key terms *parental participation*, *parental engagement* and *parental involvement* were searched to find the studies most relevant to the section. The results generated from these key terms were the same in most cases implying that the terms may be used interchangeably or as they are referred to in the source for the purpose of reviewing the literature.

2.1 Participation of parents and children's academic learning in partnership with preschools

A famous Chicago Longitudinal Study started in 1967 to study the effects of *Chicago's Child-Parent Centers (CPC)* which promoted school readiness and higher academic achievement as well as lower drop-out rates. The study revealed positive results from preschool age and persisted through adolescence. Parent-involvement was one of the five areas that the CPCs focused on (**Al-Sumaiti, 2012; Besharov et al., 2011**). Parental participation at preschool age was associated with greater reading achievements, more participation in primary years and more success. (**Al-Sumaiti, 2012**).

Galindo and Sheldon (2012), in another longitudinal study from the US, built up on Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory and Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influences to examine school and family connections and their relationship to family involvement and students' achievement. A nationally representative sample of 16,425 students from 864 kindergartens was drawn from Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort

(ECLS-K) database estimating the extent to which schools' outreach to families was associated with three indicators of family involvement - at home, at school and parents' educational expectations. School's efforts to communicate with and engage families were the greatest predictor for greater family involvement and higher level of student achievement in reading and math at preschool level. On average, at this age, family involvement at school and parents' educational expectations were correlated with reading and math achievement.

Youngblom and Houlihan (2014) collaborated with the Ministry of Education in Belize and studied the school-based involvement, home-based involvement and home-school conferencing using Family Involvement Questionnaire designed by Fantuzzo et al (2000)**.** One hundred and eighty-five families who responded wished to contribute more to the welfare of their children. The authors concluded that better communication and studying the relationship between family involvement and academic success can enhance the impact of partnership (**Youngblom and Houlihan, 2014**).

Al-Qaryouti and Kilani (2015) conducted a study to examine the role of Omani parents in fostering emergent learning skills. A total of 314 parents (116 fathers and 196 mothers) were given a 25-item questionnaire to measure the degree of parental participation in their children's development at acceptable levels of validity and reliability. The purpose of this study was to document the significance of four practices employed by parents that contributed to emergent literacy skills-viz-a-viz-availability of materials, activities at home, parent attitude and visit to their child's class. The results indicated parents' role ranged from medium to high on all practice domains of the tool. There were no significant differences between parents' reading and writing practices, educational levels, income levels, gender of children and siblings' order.

Bird et al. (2016) collected their data from Growing up in New Zealand (20hour ECE funding), a longitudinal cohort study of 6242 children. They used parent-report data to describe the relation between type, amount and quality of care children received and the effect of socio-emotional factors and ethnicity. Findings highlighted the importance of continued policy efforts to reduce socio-economic and ethnic disparities in education and care during preschool years. Parents expressed their intention to avail '20-Hours ECE' starting from the age 3 for their child.

In contrast, **Chan and Ritchie (2016)** questioned the notions of 'parent-teacher partnership' within preschool settings in another study from New Zealand. The national institutional document of New Zealand strongly supported involving families in preschool and required teachers to foster a sense of belonging for all families, to use culturally appropriate methods of communication, and to encourage family involvement in assessment and curriculum planning and evaluation. However, keeping the Chinese and Maori families in focus, recent findings of the national evaluation reports and research indicated no such synergy. Using secondary data, the authors applied hybridity theory, along with the related idea of funds of knowledge, to reinforce the need for teachers to be more proactive, open-minded and inclusive of diverse backgrounds.

Yamamoto et al. (2016) conducted a longitudinal cross-cultural study and examined home-based and school-based parental engagement using parenting self-efficacy measure based on Bandura's theory. The samples of the longitudinal study were 98 Japanese and 78 American mothers of children from preschool age to Grade 2. On average, American mothers reported being significantly more involved than Japanese mothers in school-based engagement. The findings of the research indicated that in case of home-based participation, homework supervision and engagement in cognitive activities contributed uniquely and significantly. School-based participation was significant when compared between the US and Japan. The findings also underscored the importance of teacher invitations in both the countries.

Bennett (2017) investigated the participation of Latino parents in a School Partnership Program (SPP) in her doctoral dissertation. The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of parents of Latino students in Virginia, US who participated in the Parents as Educational Partners (PEP) program. PEP is a school partnership program intended to strategically increase the parental involvement of Latinos in their children's schooling (LCPS, 2014 in Hingst-Bennett, 2017). The findings represented an enhanced understanding of the motivation and barriers that parents had in attending the PEP.

Mainye et al. (2018) explored the relationship between parental engagement and preschool children's access to early childhood education in Kenya. A sample of 9 head teachers, 43 ECE lead teachers and 76 parents, and a sub-county education officer were given a variety of tools to collect the information. The data were analyzed quantitatively and quantitatively. The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between parents' engagement in children's academic work and school activities. More parental engagement and more of parents' involvement were recommended for improved quality in education.

Korosidou et al. (2021) conducted a 'school-teachers-parents partnerships' study to implement Parent Involvement for the Engagement, Cooperation and Empowerment (PIECE) program in Northern Greek. This program aimed to support preschool age children's early literacy development in learning a foreign language. A sample of 52 parents of children aged 5-6 years participated in the program in which they learned English as a foreign language for the first time in an official context. The findings from the study indicated that parental involvement in early language learning contributed to the enhancement of young children's oral and literacy skills.

Tuia et al. (2022) reported a study on parental involvement in early years in Samoa, an island country between New Zealand and Hawaii, where in 2019, attendance at school was made compulsory for children from four years of age thus "making children's education a priority for parents of preschool children" (p.102). Using a mixed methodology approach, the authors collected quantitative data from teacher participants to get information on parents' contributions and qualitative data to get the views of 25 parents and 25 ECE Principals regarding how parents should assist with children's education. The findings revealed that parents provided support in different preschool activities which included communication, storytelling with discussion, reading with new words, outdoor supervision and fund-raising. Their inclination to support children remained constant. Most teachers believed parents' support should take place outside the classroom. The authors recommended better interactions with parents, teachers and ECE Principals to establish mutual understanding among all who were supporting children's early years of education.

2.2 Participation of parents in Home-based academic learning

A review of literature revealed home-based learning, home-based learning environment, academic learning, and digital learning with parental participation in it described in different ways as follows:

Home-based learning (HBL) is 'learning at home' which is meant to complement, and not substitute, in-school learning. It provides students with more opportunities to learn independently and to be more self-directed in their learning **(De Souza, Member of Parliament, 2021; Qualter, 2024**).

At preschool age "home-based learning environment (HLE) includes reading, library visits, playing with letters and numbers, painting and drawing, teaching (through play) the letters of the alphabet, playing with numbers and shapes, teaching nursery rhymes and singing" **(Al-Sumaiti, 2012, p.2).**

"There is limited research examining the factors predicting home-based involvement at kindergarten entry for low-income families. This is a notable oversight given established links between parent involvement and children's educational outcomes" **(Han et al., 2017, p.590).**

"With the emergence of COVID-19, research has increasingly focused on HLE under the conditions imposed by the pandemic" **(Scharnagl and Smidt, 2024, p.6).**

Lau et al. (2012) developed and validated Chinese Early Parental Investment Scale [CEPIS] that could be widely used in both local and international contexts to assess parental involvement at preschool age. The instrument was applied on 41 teachers and 35 parents in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. In phase 2 of the study, items of the CEPIS were developed and validated by asking 319 parents to fill out the 26-item test consisting of six parental involvement dimensions. The results revealed that Chinese parents had a higher level of home-based involvement than school-based involvement during the early years. Parental involvement was highly correlated with overall readiness for school. Parent Instruction, Language and Cognitive Activities and Homework Involvement were significant predictors of overall school readiness. Chinese parents practiced more home-based involvement than preschool-based involvement.

Lukie et al. (2014) conducted a Canadian study to determine how children's interests and collaborative parent-child interactions affected exposure to home literacy and numeracy activities. Parents of 170 children in the 4 to 5 years age group completed the survey about child's home-learning environment. They rated their child's interests and the extent of parent-child collaboration in 14 activities. Interview data confirmed that parents of children with high numeracy scores were exposing their children to rich numeracy activities during play. Findings suggested that children's interests and collaborative parent–child involvement impacted literacy and numeracy exposure in the home.

Research by **Huang et al. (2017)** examined both mother–child and father–child numeracy activities in Hong Kong Chinese families and both parents' unique roles in predicting young Chinese children's mathematics ability. A sample of 104 Chinese children aged approximately 5 years and their mothers and fathers participated in this study. Mothers and fathers independently reported the frequency of their own numeracy activities with their children. Children were assessed individually using two measures of mathematical ability. The findings of the study conducted in Hong Kong revealed that mothers' participation in number skill activities and fathers' participation in number game and application activities were strong predictors of their children's mathematical performance. These findings were quite the opposite of math learning of elementary school children where results of different studies showed evidence of intergenerational transmission of low math achievement and high math anxiety **(Maloney and Beilock, 2012; Maloney et al., 2015).**

Iruka et al. (2018) examined variation within parenting through a person-centered approach and the extent of association between child and family characteristics and profiles of parenting. The link between parenting profiles and children's preacademic skills, language and behavior outcomes in preschool were also studied. The study used secondary data from a high-quality early care and education program across the United States. And it comprised of low-income, ethnically diverse, pre-school aged children (n=740) and their parents (n=713). Findings through latent profile analyses uncovered four parenting profiles, namely: 1) low-enrichment, conflict-oriented and distressed parent; 2) average enrichment, conflict-oriented and distressed parent; 3) low to average enrichment, emotionally close and low distressed parent; and 4) high enrichment, emotionally close and low distressed parent. Parenting profiles were predictive of child's preschool outcomes.

Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez (2019) in a US study addressed the research gap with regards to urban, low-income African American families and conducted qualitative interviews before and at the end of kindergarten with 12 inner-city, low-income, African American mothers of Head Start preschoolers. During both periods, mothers assessed children's readiness skills, gave firsthand accounts and provided home-based support. They used conversations, home-based activities and extra-curricular activities. At the end of the year, despite challenges, children's transitions were overwhelmingly positive. The findings suggested how preschools could promote children's successful transitions by including families' home-based strategies.

Barnett et al. (2020) examined the practices of preschool education providers, parent involvement in preschool education centers and in home-learning activities for children's academic readiness. Secondary data were used from a longitudinal study in the US– Birth cohort (ECLS-B) of 2004-2006 comprising of 2,250 four-year-old-children enrolled in center-based setting. The authors discussed the connections made through three pathways for enhancing parent participation, home learning activities for school readiness and facilitating other practices. Findings revealed the strongest connections between preschool and home-based learning for low-income families.

Polat and Bayindir (2022) investigated the relations between school-readiness and self-regulation skills of preschool children and parental participation in their academic learning. The sample included 277 children and their parents (277 mothers and 272 fathers) from Turkey. Ten qualified

preschool teachers trained in administering a school-readiness test and evaluating self-regulation skills participated in the study. Findings revealed that parental involvement and self-regulation skills were significantly related.

Kim and Yu (2022) examined the possible association of home-based parental involvement and parental warmth with socio-emotional and academic outcomes of children of immigrant mothers in the US during the first year of kindergarten. Secondary data was used for this study from a sample of 9,187 children from the base year of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS-KG) Kindergarten Class of 2010-11. A major finding of the study was that, on average, Hispanic and Asian immigrant parents were less involved in home-based activities and reported less warmth than US born mothers. Greater frequency of home-based parental involvement was linked to better interpersonal skills for both children of Hispanic immigrant mothers and Asian immigrant mothers. In addition, the association between home-based involvement and socio-emotional outcomes was broadly among poor children of immigrant mothers. The findings highlighted the importance of understanding cultural differences in parental involvement and parenting styles to enhance immigrant children's educational experience.

Cai and Wong (2023) conducted a systematic review of selected 34 studies of parental involvement in computational thinking education. Computational Thinking [CT] education is one pathway helping young students to thrive in the digital world. Out of the total, 5 studies were implemented in home-based program in CT in which the target group were children from nursery and kindergarten age group. In the studies, Modeling, Reinforcement and Instruction were used by parents when they participated in playing kits at home with CT tools. There were a variety of tools listed in the studies. Findings revealed that parents' attitudes toward supporting their children at home improved as they interacted more frequently with the children in workshops.

Siu and Ng (2024) documented an 'offline' home-learning which focused on child-centeredness and authentic learning experience implemented through home and school involvement in a typical Hong Kong preschool. The purpose of the study was to examine the phenomenon of home-learning practice and its effectiveness from the perspective of school administrators (n=3), teachers (n=8) and parents (n=18). Qualitative data reiterated that the success of implementing offline learning depended on 1) an individualized learning support with child-centered approach and 2) family-based support tailored for diverse families. To sum up, family-school collaboration in home learning combined home and school learning environments and deepened the relationship with parents.

Scharnagl and Smidt (2024) aimed to gain insights into parents' self-reported perspectives on their support behavior towards emergent literacy skills during COVID-19 and the justification for their choice of behavior. The authors conducted the study in the final preschool year in Austria, and they collected qualitative data after administering 9 about-an-hour-long semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that parents indicated to support emergent literacy activities actively, passively or hardly at all. The justifications given by them referred to children's interest or reservations about preschool being too early to focus on literacy emergence. The study offers significant implications for appropriate pedagogies in preschools post COVID-19 times.

2.3 Parental participation and home-based learning in India

Ghosh and Dey (2020) explored the perception of parents about public and private preschools in India from a sample of 1369 households in West Bengal, India. Out of the respondents, 71% had sent their children to a public preschool (Anganwadi Center) and 29% had sent to a private preschool. The information was collected through a household survey questionnaire. The findings were that parents' socio-economic status was the main predictor of their choice for a preschool. About 90% of the parents in the study mentioned early education and school readiness as the reason for them to send their children to preschool. Better off and educationally more aspirant parents preferred private preschool over public preschool although the former did not provide any facilities other than education. The study raised an important need from the parents' side to focus more on educational and school readiness component to public preschools system in India along with its nutrition and health monitoring component.

Pandith et al (2022) investigated perspectives on reading storybooks in the Indian home context among 100 parents of preschool age children from home environments and public places like parks in Udipi district of South Karnataka. Parents were given a questionnaire to collect information on patterns of reading exposure, child's interest in reading, storybook reading practices, and attitudes & beliefs towards storybook reading. Descriptive analysis of the data revealed that most of the parents started reading storybooks with their children at age 2 or older, they read once or twice a week for about 10 minutes, and they owned less than 10 books. Parents also reported that their children were interested in reading books. The findings provided preliminary information regarding parental perspectives, and understanding more about the parental interactions surrounding storybook reading can facilitate the development of parent programs to enhance and promote quality home literacy environment.

Sk (2022) conducted a cross-sectional case study to assess the early childhood developmental [ECD] status and to investigate the factors influencing the same in Malda, India. A sample of 731 children between 3 to 5 years was collected using a structured questionnaire following a multi-stage, stratified simple random sampling procedure. ECD was measured following UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, which monitors early child development in low-and middle-income countries [LMICs]. A path analysis using structural equation modelling was carried out to examine the relationship between possible associated factors and ECD status. Results of the path analysis revealed that only about 25% of children are developmentally on track of literacy-numeracy domain of ECD. Results of the path analysis revealed that there were certain proximal factors, i.e., home environment, mother's time for care, having home tuition and attending private pre-school, which are influenced by certain distal factors and subsequently affecting ECD.

3. Methodology

This secondary data review of research studies was compiled from mainly two search engines: Google Scholar and Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC). The reason for choosing these two websites was that more recent, peer-reviewed articles, with full text available, could easily be sorted and accessed. Parental participation was examined in partnership with preschools and in home-based academic learning.

4. Discussion

Overall, a total of 25 studies were reviewed in detail. Out of these, 8 studies were conducted in the US and 2 in New Zealand, all of them using secondary data in large numbers from national level longitudinal studies like Head Start, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten (ECLS-K) of a certain year.

The 3 independent studies with Hong Kong Chinese children, conducted in Hong Kong, were of different nature. In one study a 26-item Chinese Early Parental Investment Scale (CEPIS) was piloted and then administered on a sample of 319 parents (**Lau et al., 2012**). The second study collected data from mothers and fathers individually about Math numeracy skills (**Huang et al., 2017**) and the third was a collaboration of 18 families individually with the preschool during COVID-19 for a child-centered and individualized learning and family support from the preschool (**Siu and Ng, 2024**).

The meta-analysis was a systematic review of 5 studies of parental involvement in the home-based digital learning activities (CT education) of their preschool age children (**Cai and Wong, 2023**). The review pertaining to research in India resulted in majority of studies which were related to parental perception of preschool/ elementary education, not participation. Only three studies, reported above, were found closest to parental participation at some level, which was the topic of this review.

The focus of academic learning was one or more of the following: school readiness, reading skills, numeracy, oral skills, homework, cognitive activities and emergent literacy learning. All the studies reviewed parents' participation with different and multiple indicators: at home, in school, parental attitude, parents' education, and socio-economic status [SES] etc. Most of the studies were both quantitative and qualitative.

5. Conclusion

A review of research literature on participation of parents in the academic learning of their preschool child was conducted using prominent search engines. Secondary data was systematically collected in chronological order on parents' participation in partnership with preschools and in the home-based learning of their child. It was revealed that majority of studies reported in reputed journals over the last twelve years period (2012-2024) were from the US followed by Hong Kong and New Zealand. The trend observed was of longitudinal and cross-sectional studies using large numbers of secondary data from national level projects. Studies reported from India were scarce specifically on this topic and for the age group 3 to 6 years.

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