The Effect of Parental Participation on the Academic Achievement of Female English as a Second Language Middle School Students in the Persian Gulf

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Abstract

A quantitative correlational study explored the relationship between parental participation and academic achievement. Data were collected from 42 parents of female ESL students in the Persian Gulf region. Although results indicated a non-significant correlation between reported parental involvement and students’ academic averages overall, it found significant correlation for a subsample of Saudi parents.

Problem

Female ESL adolescent students were not succeeding academically at a private girls’ school in the Persian Gulf region.

Approximately 10% of the total body of current students had failed in at least two core subjects for the past 3 years at the research site.

Purpose

To help close the gap between theory and practice because literature reported that parental participation in fact decreases when children reach middle school (Antonopouloua, Koutroubaa, and Babalisb, 2010; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Mo & Singh 2008).

To educate parents about the importance of their engagement in their middle school daughters’ academics.

To examine the claim that the impact of parental participation is cross-cultural and cross-racial.

Relevant Literature

Conceptual Frameworks

• Model of the effects of parental engagement on academic outcomes (Plunkett, Behnke, Sands, & Choi, 2009)
• Motivational Model (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

Related Research

Parental participation in ESL adolescents’ academics resulted in:
• higher grades and academic achievement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Epstein, 2007; Epstein, as cited in Galasiski, Griffin, 2010)
• reduced dropout rates, and fewer assignments in special education programs (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Sandars, 2009; Suárez-Orozco, Onaga, & Lardemelle, 2010)
• improved reading and writing skills, higher student attendance rates, and better preparedness for classes (Epstein, 2007)
• more positive school climates (Sanders, 2009)
• reduced gap between 1st language and ESL students’ academic achievements (Hayes, 2011)
• impact of parental participation may be cross-racial and cross-cultural (Costigan, Hua, and Su, 2010; Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong Cong, 2012; Guo, 2006; Guo, 2010).

Research Questions

RQ1: What is the magnitude and direction of the relationship between active parental participation and ESL middle school students’ academic achievement in the Persian Gulf region?

RQ2: What are the barriers that obstruct effective parental participation in ESL middle school students’ education in the Persian Gulf region?

Procedures

Sample

• A snowball sample of 42 parents of grades 6-8 girls.

Survey

• Middle School Parent Participation Survey was used to measure both the independent variable of parental participation and the dependent variable of students’ academic achievement.

• I modified the instrument from a subset of the Korea Education Longitudinal Survey (KELS)’s scales.

Data Collection

• I distributed the paper-and-pencil survey to participants.
• The setting was a conference hall in a local hotel.

Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ</th>
<th>Data Elements</th>
<th>Statistical Approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Correlated data from Question 7 of section B with data from Questions 8-19 of section “C” in the survey</td>
<td>Pearson product-moment correlation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>Addressed this research question through (questions 20-25) of section “D” in the survey</td>
<td>Frequency counts and percentages</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Addressed participants’ responses in question 26 of the survey (open-ended question)</td>
<td>Content analysis of themes</td>
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Findings

Cronbach’s alpha (α) = .81

Correlation was not significant $r = .135, p = .396$

27 parents reported that time constraints was the main barrier as compared to 10 parents who cited transportation

Only 11 parents provided comments to the open-ended question

Parents’ comments focused on communication, homework, high parental expectations, volunteering, and segregation

Limitations

Outside variables could be attributed to changing participants’ perceptions during the limited time of the study.

The sample size might have been too small.

Psychological, emotional, or physical factors might have influenced female students’ academic achievement.

Participants’ gender may have been a factor because the sample included 7 fathers and 35 mothers.

Conclusions

Understanding the role of parental participation is critical to help ESL students excel academically.

Parental participation is very complex because several factors affect parents’ willingness to participate in their children’s academics.

The results of this study indicated that the impact of parental participation is cross-cultural and cross-racial.

Social Change Implications

Ensuring that female middle school students complete their education is important for the advancement of the developing country where I conducted my study.

This study’s results appear to support the role that parental participation plays in ESL students’ academic success.