

*Full Length Research paper*

# An investigation of teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement

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Parental involvement has been advocated as a strong indicator to the academic achievement of a child. A growing body of literature indicates that parental involvement has very positive effects on children success. The purpose of this study was to examine the in-service teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement. Questionnaires were sent out to the in-service teachers' at 20 government primary schools. The combined number of participants was 200 in-service teachers. The findings of this research indicate that in-service teachers' had positive attitudes toward parental involvement. Likewise, the findings revealed that there were statistically significant correlations between teachers' attitudes toward parental involvement and their age, highest degree and years of teaching experience. Implications and future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** Teachers' attitudes, parental involvement, primary schools, demographic variables.

## INTRODUCTION

A growing body of evidence supports the importance of parental involvement in education. Parental involvement in children's education has been described as an important aspect of the relationship between schools and children families, with significant contributions to children's education (Asli, 2008). Parental involvement plays an important role in children education, it refers to a broad range of activities at home as well as at school, and thus, it has been shown to be an important variable that positively influences children's education. This study

focuses on the role of parent involvement on their children's academic achievement. In all over the world, there have been numerous primary studies investigating various aspects of parent involvement and its effect on children's education. As a matter of fact, the current research is an important study to highlight the attitudes of teachers toward parental involvement, since there is a limited research regarding this topic. Thus, the purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of the level of attitudes among in-service teachers toward parental involvement. Another purpose of this paper is to identify the level of attitudes toward parental involvement according to teachers' age, highest degree, and years of teaching experience.

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## Literature Review

Education is commonly perceived as a viable weapon against poverty and social inequality (Allen and Hood, 2000). Education is an activity undertaken to effect changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes among individuals. Therefore, the role of education in improving the quality of lives, enhancing social and economic productivity, and initiating the process of empowerment and redistribution of resources is well documented in the past hundred years of research.

## Parental Involvement

In recent years, there have been an increasing number of studies focusing on parental involvement in their children education. Increasing parents' involvement in their children's education is the foremost way to improve academic achievement and development in schools. In the last several decades, studies have examined the possible impact of parental involvement in their children education. Parental involvement can be defined as the activities occurring between a parent and child at home or between a parent and teachers at school that may contribute to the child's educational outcomes and development. In many parts of the world, educators, policy makers, and researchers are increasingly recognizing school, family, and community partnerships as important for student success (Simon, 2004). Several researches suggest that, building more productive collaboration between parents and schools is a promising primary prevention approach for enhancing children's wellbeing, many issues still need to be clarified to understand the association between these variables better (Epstein and Lee, 1995; Izzo et al., 1999). A growing body of research suggests that when parents and school personnel collaborate effectively, students will have better outcomes. According to Stouffer (1992) there are four reasons why parental involvement in education is important and necessary. Firstly, it enhances the sense of pride in the community and the school. Secondly, if parents have a substantial input in the education of their children, they will be less inclined to sabotage educational decisions. The third reason is that parents no longer feel alone and alienated when dealing with difficult students and situations. They know they can rely on educators for cooperation and support. Fourthly, if parents are approached positively by the school, parental involvement can improve the educational opportunities for learners. Many previous studies showed that parents who take an active role in their child's education have profound effects on student performance. Thus, parent involvement in educational experiences in the home has been associated

with higher achievement scores and higher report card grades (Griffith, 1996; Gwynne et al., 2000). The benefits of parental involvement include the following: (1) Increased student achievement (Fan and Chen, 2001); (2) Better school attendance (Henderson et al., 1986); (3) More successful transitions to higher grades (Trusty, 1999); (4) Higher rates of homework completion (Dauber and Epstein, 1993); (5) Enhanced student motivation (Christenson and Conoley, 1992); (6) Reduced dropout rate (Cotton and Wikelund, 2001); (7) Increased interaction between parents and their child (Dauber and Epstein, 1991); (8) Improved social behavior and interactions between parents and their children's (Cotton and Wikelund, 2001), and; (9) Better emotional adjustment (Reynolds et al., 1992).

Increasing parent involvement in educational setting has been identified as an important indicator for increasing student's achievement. Although strong family-school connections contribute to academic success at all grade levels, family involvement tends to decline as students move from elementary to middle to high school (Connors and Epstein, 1994; Dornbusch and Glasgow, 1996). When parents communicate constructively with teachers and participate in school activities, they gain a clearer understanding of what is expected of their children at school and they may learn. Epstein (1992) expanded the typology and defined six levels (types) of school-related opportunities for parental involvement: (1) assisting parents in childrearing skills, (2) school-parent communication, (3) involving parents in school volunteer opportunities, (4) involving parents in home-based learning, (5) involving parents in school decision-making, and (6) involving parents in school-community collaborations. Ralph (2001) has divided parent involvement into four main components (1) parent and child discussion, (2) parent involvement at school, (3) parental monitoring of a child's behavior, and (4) parent involvement directly with the educational process and each components of cultural and social capital.

## Teachers Attitudes towards Parental Involvement

Teachers' positive attitudes toward parent involvement can be considered as a good indicator to determine the quality of education. In the educational literature, teacher attitude towards parental involvement has been defined by a number of researchers. Jones et al. (1997) defined teacher attitude as one's perceptions and ideas about the effectiveness of parents' instructional support of their children. According to Epstein and Dauber (1991), "Teachers with more positive opinions toward parent involvement place more importance than other teachers

on such practices as holding conferences with all students' parents, communicating with parents about school programs, and providing parents both good and bad reports about students' progress, more positive opinions also are positively correlated with more success in involving 'hard-to-reach' parents, including working parents, less educated parents, single parents, parents of older students, parents new to the school, and other adults with whom children live".

There are a number of factors affecting teachers' attitudes towards family involvement include "Respecting diversity, Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) skills, knowledge of families, communication skills, and knowledge of teamwork" (Marvin and Rupiper, 2004; p.391). Based on a review of studies conducted by Hara and Burke (1998), 84% of teachers agreed that if parents spent time at school, they usually made a greater effort to help their children learn at home. Foster and Loven (1992) conducted a study using a questionnaire to measure teachers' attitude toward parent involvement. Foster and Loven (1992) designed the questionnaire to investigate their five research concerns: (a) undergraduates' belief about the necessity of parent involvement, (b) undergraduates' knowledge of factors for successful family school relationship, (c) undergraduates' knowledge of parent involvement strategies, (d) undergraduates' knowledge of barriers in working with parents, and (e) the relationship between undergraduates' personal views and values and their perspectives on parent involvement. As a result of their research Foster and Loven (1992) found that the majority of teachers expressed that parent involvement is necessary. McDermott and Rothenberge (2000) conducted a study to examine teachers' attitudes about parent involvement. In their study they used focus group discussions as a method of data collection. They found that many teachers have negative attitudes towards parent involvement and the reason behind these negative attitudes is parents themselves. Parents do not want to become involved in their children education, and do not promote academic activities at home. In summary, most successful students come from a home where the parents provide structure, support and guidance. Students who have parents who really care about their education are usually more successful than students who do not (Wilson, 2002).

## METHODS

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the level of in-service teachers' attitudes toward parental involvement. The research findings would be presented, interpreted and discussed, along with their implications.

The participants in this research were in-service teachers. The study sample consisted of 200 in-service teachers' in Jordanian primary schools. The survey method was used in the present study. The instrument included sections on participants' demographic background, gender, age, highest degree, and years of teaching experience, and the level of attitudes among in-service teachers toward parental involvement. The instrument consisted of 23 items using 5-point Likert scale developed by Epstein and Salinas (1993).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two hundred questionnaires were submitted to teachers. Teachers were asked to respond to a variety of demographic questions, including: age, gender, educational level, and years of work experience (Table 1). The sample contains (49.0%) males and (51.0%) females. Teachers of 20-29 years of age were (35.0 %), between 30-39 years of age (36.5%), between 40-49 years of age (24.0%) and participants who were more than 50 years of age (4.5%). Participants were distributed according to their educational level into three classifications; Bachelors (73.0%), and Masters Degree (23.0%), and other educational levels (4.0%). The majority of participants possessed 6-10 years of experience (43.0 %), (33.5%) of participants within 1-5 years of experience, (19.0%) of participants within 11-15 years of experience, (4.5%) of participants were more than 16 years of experience.

Table 2 shows the frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation, and the overall averages for the teachers' responses. Teachers' level of attitudes toward parental involvement is interpreted using the scale as shown in Table 2. Table 3 presents the findings related to teachers' response to each item. As illustrated in Table 3, 7.36 % of the teachers had responded to "Strongly Disagree" on Five- Likert scale for teachers attitudes towards the parental involvement.

As illustrated in Table 3, 19.71 % of the participants had responded to "Disagree", 25.63 % of the participants had responded to "Undecided", 31.44 % of the participants had responded to "Agree", and 15.86 % of the participants had responded to "Strongly Agree". The overall mean for the items was ( $M= 3.03$ ) with a standard deviation of ( $SD= 1.35$ ). The results showed that teachers demonstrated positive attitudes toward parental involvement.

Pearson correlation was conducted to examine relationships between the teachers' attitudes toward parental involvement and their age, experience, and academic level. Typically, correlations are conducted between the numerical variables as means to identify the

**Table 1.** Sample Demographic Characteristics

	<b>Demographic</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	male	98	49.0
Gender	female	102	51.0
	20-29 years	70	35.0
Age	30-39 years	73	36.5
	40-49 years	48	24.0
	Over 50 years	9	4.5
	1-5	67	33.5
Experience	6-10	86	43.0
	11-15	38	19.0
	Over 16	9	4.5
Education	Bachelor	146	73.0
level	Master's	46	23.0
	Other	8	4.0

**Table 2.** Scale for Attitudes towards Parental Involvement

<b>Mean score</b>	<b>Level use scale</b>
1.00 – 1.65	Very Low
1.66 - 2.31	Low
2.32 - 2.97	Average
2.98 – 3.63	Above Average
3.64 – 4.29	High
4.30 - 5.00	Very High

extent of how they may correspond (Sweet and Grace-Martin, 2003).

The correlations was determined to be statistically significant at levels of  $p < 0.01$ , which indicated that, as the teachers' age is high, the more they demonstrated positive attitudes toward parental involvement ( $r = 0.829^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Likewise, results showed positive correlation between teachers' experience and their attitudes toward parental involvement ( $r = 0.863^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Also a positive correlation was determined between teachers' academic

level and their attitudes toward parental involvement ( $r = 0.785^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) as shown in table 4.

## CONCLUSION

The present study attempted to look into the attitudes of teachers toward parental involvement. It is well known that parental involvement can have very positive effects on student achievement. Teachers' attitudes toward

**Table 3.** Descriptive Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes towards Parental Involvement

Items	Mean	SD
Parent involvement is important for a good school	4.08	1.12
Parent involvement is important for a good school climate	2.55	1.51
Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective	3.93	1.21
Teachers should receive recognition or compensation	3.48	1.42
Teachers cannot take the time to involve parents in very useful ways.	3.79	1.15
Teachers need training to understand effective parent involvement	3.64	1.16
Parent involvement is important for student success in learning	2.60	1.38
Most parents know how to help their children	3.04	1.44
This school has an active and effective parent organization	2.45	1.34
Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with students	3.45	1.37
Every family has some strengths to increase student success	3.00	1.44
Teachers should receive recognition for time spent on parent involvement	3.60	1.37
Parents of children want to be involved more than they are now	3.41	1.43
Teachers do not have the time to involve parents in very useful ways	3.57	1.35
Teachers need in-service education to implement effective involvement	3.06	1.59
Parent involvement is important for student success in this school	2.43	1.48
This school views parents as important partners	2.59	1.35
This community values education for all children	2.28	1.48
This school is known for trying new and unusual approaches to improve	2.83	1.36
Mostly when I contact parents, it's about problems or trouble	2.19	1.15
In this school, teachers play a large part in most decisions	2.19	1.34
This community supports the school	2.67	1.32
Compared to other schools, our school always involve students parents	2.89	1.36
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>1.35</b>

**Table 4.** Pearson Correlations of Teachers Attitudes

		Attitudes	Age	Experience	Academic Level
Attitudes	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.829	0.863	0.785
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	200	200	200	200

parental involvement are of great importance to the quality of education. In the educational literature, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) stated that teachers' positive attitudes toward parents' involvement are very influential in parents' decisions about involvement in their children's education. Responses to the first research question revealed that most of teachers had positive attitudes towards parental involvement. This may be partly due to the fact that the teachers believe that parental involvement would improve the achievement of their children. This is in parallel with the work of Addi-Racah and Ainhoren (2009) who claimed that teachers' positive attitudes are considered as an important indicator of involving parents in schools. When examining the relationships between selected teachers' demographic characteristics and their attitudes toward parental involvement, the multiple regression analysis results indicate that teachers' attitudes were significantly correlated to age, experience and academic level. The findings of this study contradicted with what Arsenault (1991) reports in his research. He found that age, years of experience, and educational background did not significantly affect the attitudes of the teachers toward parent involvement.

This study was initiated to examine in-service teachers' attitudes toward parental involvement and the relationships between their attitudes and the selected demographic characteristics. The present study indicated that in-service teachers' had positive attitudes toward parental involvement. Likewise, the present findings revealed that there were statistically significant correlations between teachers' attitudes toward parental involvement and their age, highest degree, and years of teaching experience. Based on the findings of this research, recommendations for future research are presenting as following: (1) Qualitative research methods, such as face-to-face interviews are needed, (2) Opining a regular channel of communication between teachers, parents and schools administrators is a great demand, and (3) A replication of this study with a larger sample size would make findings more meaningful. However, the current study has two limitations which could be implications for future research on related topics. First, the participants were limited to the in-service teachers in one province in Jordan. Second, the survey questionnaire is the only research method employed in this study. In summary, this study discovered that in-service teachers held positive opinions about parental involvement. Finally, this study suggests offering courses on parent involvement during the pre-service and the in-service teacher programs is a great need, providing field experiences related to parent involvement, and encouraging teachers to work directly with parents.

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