



Parent involvement and students' academic performances in high schools in Kalay, Myanmar

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 17 April 2020

Revised 7 July 2020

Accepted 19 July 2020

Available online 31 July 2021

Keywords:

high school,
parent involvement,
students' academic performance

Abstract

This research investigated the relationships between six types of parent involvement suggested by Epstein comprising type 1 parenting, type 2 learning at home, type 3 communicating, type 4 volunteering, type 5 decision making and type 6 collaborating, and students' academic performances comprising engagement, achievement in term of grade, attendance and attitude toward school in high schools, Kalay, Myanmar. Data were collected using questionnaires from 350 pairs of parents and students (350 grade 10 students and 350 parents), recruited using proportion and simple random sampling methods. Data were analyzed using basic statistics and Person Correlation analysis. Analysis showed that type 1 parenting, type 2 learning at home, and type 4 volunteering were significantly correlated with students' performances, particularly with engagement and achievement in terms of grade. Type 3 communicating was also positively associated with student achievement in terms of grade, while type 4 volunteering performed by male and female parents differently affected attendance. Type 4 Volunteering performed by parents with a high school and below education level was negatively associated with student's attitude toward school. The findings presented critical evidence to confirm parent involvement was crucial in education. The study suggested the policy makers and the local education authorities consider the results of this study to develop and implement strategies to enhance parent involvement, and that parents continuously express their expectation, care and love to their children as well as focusing on building a good relationship with their children through parenting and learning at home activities.

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Introduction

Parent involvement at school has become one of the most important issues worldwide. As the saying goes, "It takes a village to raise a child (Clinton, 2006)," schools as well as parents and families need to be involved actively in

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children learning. Parent involvement means the dedication and active participation of family members such as a mother, father, or other family members in school and in student learning. It indicates how often family members participate in school and children's lives.

Previous studies have investigated the effects of parent involvement on students' academic performances and found that not only can parent involvement foster a positive social experience to children's life and improve children's educational outcomes, but it can also ensure children safety and discipline (Nitecki, 2015). Because of its strengths, schools around the world have tried to promote healthy parent involvement by providing opportunities to parents. Studies have shown that parent involvement has a significant association with students' grades or GPAs, engagement (Amponsah, Milledzi, Ampofo, & Gyambrah, 2018), attendance (Ross, 2016) and attitudes toward school (Chauhan, Bhadouria, & Bhakar, 2015). Therefore, parents should be considered in the role of their child's learning to increase student achievement.

As studies have demonstrated, there is a significant link between parent involvement and academic performances in terms of engagement, academic achievement, attendance and attitudes toward the school (Arulmoly & Kiruthika, 2017; Castro et al., 2015; Chauhan, Bhadouria, & Bhakar, 2015; Mombourquette, 2007). Studies have shown that if parents and children maintain good relationships and work closely with schools, greater academic performances will be achieved (Epstein, 2010). Ross (2016) found that parent involvement reduces student dropout rates. An increased parent involvement can have a positive impact on student attendance, attitudes toward school, and behavior. It can also stimulate students' motivation. When parents are actively involved in school activities, their children become more involved in their learning. As a result, they will get positive results in their education (Marshall & Jackman, 2015). Studies have shown that parent involvement improves student readiness before class. Ultimately, parents who help students do homework at home not only help their children prepare for classes but also contribute to their ability to express prior knowledge and quickly grasp new concepts (Mautone, Marcelle, Tresco, & Power, 2015).

Myanmar education policy encourages parents to help their children for the success of their education through Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and School Board of Trustees (SBT) to a certain degree. Most parents participate in home activities by assisting children with their homework and lessons, and supporting them with their needs. However, when children get into high school, the way

parents participate in education also changes. As most parents are busy with work and some lack knowledge and skills of high school level education, their participation shows a downward trend apart from their striving to send their children to the best school in order to provide children with the best knowledge or high achievement (Htoon, 2018).

Previous studies in other locations also indicated the issue that elementary students seem to be more motivated and engaged in learning compared to high school students (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005). In primary school, students' willingness to study, motivation, attendance and engagement are usually high; however, those factors seem to gradually decline as students move to a higher grade, so by the time they are in high school, they become less engaged and motivated (Carreón et al., 2005). As elementary students and high school students have different experiences and change based on parent involvement in school, it is important to study the association between parent involvement and high school students' performances including engagement, achievement in terms of GPA, class attendance, and attitude toward school (Arulmoly & Kiruthika, 2017; Chauhan, Bhadouria, & Bhakar, 2015).

Similarly, parents' involvement in Myanmar declines when children get into high school, and parents need to be encouraged to be more involved for students' performance improvement and for the betterment of school (Htoon, 2018). However, little research has been conducted on parent involvement in Myanmar; as a result, no guidelines or practices relevant with Myanmar context to increase parent involvement in education are available in Myanmar. Kalay, which is a town in rural Myanmar, has a low pass rate of yearly matriculation exams and a high dropout rate. This might be due to a low parent involvement in schools; however, how parents are involved in their children learning has not clearly been reported. Hence, all six high schools in Kalay were chosen as the research sites to investigate the relationship between parent involvement and students' academic performance. In particular, the study aimed to test the hypothesis to find if there were significant correlations between Epstein's types of parent involvement and students' academic performance.

Research Objective: The objective of this study was to examine the relationship of parent involvement, comprising type 1 parenting, type 2 learning at home, type 3 communicating, type 4 volunteering, type 5 decision making and type 6 collaborating, with students' academic performances in the areas of engagement, achievement in term of GPA, attendance, and attitude toward school.

Methodology

Population and Sample

This research used the quantitative method. All six high schools in Kalay Township, Myanmar, were selected as the population ($n = 6,026$: 3013 students and 3013 parents (1:1)) of this study. Based on Taro Yamane formula, the total sample size included 354 pairs of parents and students. Proportional and simple random sampling techniques were employed, and 354 pairs of students and parents (354 students: 59 students from each school and 354 parents of the selected students: 59 parents from each school) were recruited to respond to the questionnaires.

Data Collection

A set of questionnaires including Parent Survey and Student Survey was distributed to 354 respondents (354 pairs of students and parents). Parent Survey consisted of questions to examine 6 types of parent involvement- type 1 parenting, type 2 learning at home, type 3 communicating, type 4 volunteering, type 5 decision making, and type 6 collaborating. Student Survey was to collect data of students' engagement, achievement in terms of grade, attendance and attitude toward school.

Three knowledgeable experts in the field of parent involvement checked the questionnaire for content validity. The questions in questionnaires were evaluated by Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) based on the score range from -1 to +1. Items lower than .50 were revised and those higher than .50 were reserved. Items with the results between .66 and 1.00 were used. The pilot test was conducted with 30 students and 30 parents to ensure the questionnaires were consistent and reliable. The Parent Survey and Student Survey achieved Cronbach's Alpha value of .820 and .812, respectively.

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Coefficient were employed to investigate correlations between parent involvement and students' academic performances. The strength of correlation was determined as Evans (1996) suggested for the absolute value of r : .00–.19 “very weak”, .20–.39 “weak”, .40–.59 “moderate”, .60–.79 “strong” and .80–1.0 “very strong”.

Results

350 (98.8%) sets of questionnaires were retrieved. Table 1 illustrates the overall correlations between parent involvement and students' academic performances. According to the table, overall, types of parent involvement did not have a relationship with students' attitude toward school, and attendance. However, parent involvement had significantly positive relationships with achievement in terms of grade and students' engagement. Particularly, type 1 parenting, type 2 learning at home, and type 4 volunteering were correlated with engagement at the significant level of 0.05 ($r = .13, p < .05$; $r = .11, p < .05$; and $r = .09, p < .05$, respectively). Among the three types, type 1 parenting had the strongest level of correlation with engagement, followed by learning at home and volunteering. However, the correlations between those three types and engagement were at very weak levels. Type 1 parenting also had a small positive correlation with achievement in terms of GPA ($r = .09, p < .05$).

As shown in the Table 1, when classified by gender, male and female parent involvement differently affected student's academic performances. The table illustrated the parent involvement performed by male parents did not have any associations with students' attitude towards school and achievement in terms of grade, while some relationships were found between some types of parent involvement and engagement and attendance. Type 1 parenting, type 2 learning at home, type 4 volunteering and type 5 decision making activities performed by male parents had positive correlations with students' engagement at a statistically significant level of 0.05, but the relationships were at very weak levels ($r = .16, .13, .15$ and $.14$, and $p = .02, .04, .02$ and $.03$, respectively). It was also found that male parent participation in decision-making had a small positive association with attendance at the statistically significant level of .05 ($r = .18, p = .01$).

As described by the Table, there were no relationships between parent involvement performed by female parents and students' engagement and attitude toward school. Positive associations existed between type 1 parenting and type 3 communicating carried out by female parents and students' achievement in terms of GPA ($r = .14, p = .04$; $r = .14, p = .04$, respectively). A negative association was found between type 5 decision making and attendance ($r = -.14, p = .04$). All the associations found between types of parent involvement and students' academic performances were at a very weak level.

Table 1 Correlation between Parent Involvement and Students' Academic Performance

Parent Involvement. types/ Performance Fact.		Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6
Grade	r	0.09*	0.07	0.04	0.02	0.04	-0.01
	Sig.	0.04	0.10	0.29	0.33	0.25	0.43
	n	350	350	350	350	350	350
Attendance	r	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.04
	Sig.	0.29	0.27	0.37	0.36	0.22	0.20
	n	350	350	350	350	350	350
Attitude	r	0.03	0.04	-0.01	-0.08	0.01	-0.02
	Sig.	0.29	0.26	0.36	0.07	0.45	0.38
	n	350	350	350	350	350	350
Engagement	r	0.13*	0.11*	0.06	0.09*	0.08	-0.02
	Sig.	0.01	0.02	0.12	0.04	0.07	0.32
	n	350	350	350	350	350	350
Categorized by gender							
Male Parents (n = 180)							
Grade	r	0.04	0.06	-0.08	0.06	0.11	-0.10
	Sig.	0.31	0.31	0.14	0.21	0.08	0.10
	n	180	180	180	180	180	180
Attendance	r	0.03	0.06	-0.03	0.07	0.18*	0.11
	Sig.	0.35	0.23	0.33	0.16	0.01	0.06
	n	180	180	180	180	180	180
Attitude	r	0.06	0.05	0.01	-0.11	0.01	-0.11
	Sig.	0.23	0.25	0.46	0.08	0.43	0.07
	n	180	180	180	180	180	180
Engagement	r	0.16*	0.13*	0.08	0.15*	0.14*	-0.19
	Sig.	0.02	0.04	0.15	0.02	0.03	.11
	n	180	180	180	180	180	180
Female Parents (n = 170)							
Grade	r	0.14*	0.09	0.14*	-0.02	-0.04	0.08
	Sig.	0.04	0.10	0.04	0.42	0.28	0.13
	n	170	170	170	170	170	170
Attendance	r	0.03	0.00	0.08	-0.04	-0.14*	-0.04
	Sig.	0.35	0.46	0.16	0.29	0.04	0.32
	n	170	170	170	170	170	170
Attitude	r	0.01	0.01	-0.02	-0.05	-0.00	-0.01
	Sig.	0.45	0.45	0.41	0.25	0.48	0.47
	n	170	170	170	170	170	170
Engagement	r	0.11	0.09	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.07
	Sig.	0.07	0.10	0.23	0.35	0.46	0.19
	n	170	170	170	170	170	170
Categorized by education level							
Parent with College Degree							
Grade	r	0.13	0.08	0.11	0.07	0.12	-0.04
	Sig.	0.05	0.05	0.08	0.17	0.05	0.31
	n	188	188	188	188	188	188
Attendance	r	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.05	0.06
	Sig.	0.45	0.46	0.47	0.39	0.27	0.21
	n	188	188	188	188	188	188
Attitude	r	0.05	0.05	0.00	-0.05	-0.02	0.06
	Sig.	0.26	0.28	0.48	0.28	0.38	0.24
	n	188	188	188	188	188	188

Table 1 Continued

Parent Involvement. types/ Performance Fact.		Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6
Engagement	r	0.23**	0.23**	0.08	0.16*	0.05	0.03
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.16	0.02	0.28	0.34
	n	188	188	188	188	188	188

Parents with High School and below							
Grade	r	0.06	0.06	-0.05	-0.02	-0.07	0.00
	Sig.	0.26	0.22	0.26	0.39	0.17	0.47
	n	162	185	185	185	185	185
Attendance	r	0.05	0.07	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.02
	Sig.	0.26	0.17	0.33	0.22	0.33	0.38
	n	162	185	185	185	185	185
Attitude	r	0.01	0.02	-0.03	-0.12*	0.04	-0.06
	Sig.	0.46	0.39	0.37	0.04	0.25	0.17
	n	162	185	185	185	185	185
Engagement	r	0.04	-0.00	0.05	0.02	0.11	-0.05
	Sig.	0.28	0.48	0.26	0.39	0.06	0.21
	n	162	185	185	185	185	185

Note: Types of Parent Involvement: Type 1= Parenting, Type 2 = Learning at Home, Type 3 = communicating, Type 4 = Volunteering, Type 5 = Decision Making, Type 6 = Collaborating

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (one-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (one-tailed).

As data demonstrated in Table 1, relationships were found between parent involvement performed by parents with college degree and the various student performance factors although some of these relationships were negative. For parents who had degrees, type 1 parenting and type 2 learning at home had positive associations with students' engagement at the weak level ($r = .23$, $p = .00$; $r = .23$, $p = .00$, respectively) and type 4 volunteering was correlated with students' engagement at a very weak level ($r = .16$, $p = .02$). Achievement in terms of grade and attendance were found to have no associations with any types of parent involvement.

As shown in Table 1, involvement performed by parents with high school and below level were not associated with students' academic performances of engagement, attendance and achievement in terms of grade. However, a small negative association was found between type 4 volunteering and students' attitude toward school ($r = -.12$, $p = .04$).

Lastly, the hypothesis of the study is accepted, for the results showed significant relationship between some types of parent involvement and students' academic performance.

Discussion

The results showed statistically significant associations between some types of parent involvement and some factors of students' performances; however, the strength of associations found in this study were small and weak.

Parent involvement and students' achievement in terms of grade or GPA: With regard to students' performance factor of achievement in terms of grade, a weak level of associations were found between type 1 parenting and achievement in terms of grade or GPA. When parents were separated based on gender, type 1 parenting and type 3 communicating performed by mothers had a significant association with achievement in terms of grade. Studies by Benner, Boyle and Sadler (2016) and Epstein (2010) also observed that parenting activities and parent expectations had a significant association with children's grades and educational achievement. Ross (2016) also found that student achievement in English, reading, and math was related to parent involvement in the way parents helped students work and teach at home. A study from Amponsah et al. (2018) also noted that parenting activities were strongly related to students' GPA. This study also confirmed that students whose parents supported and were actively involved in their children's learning performed better than

students whose parents less supported and were less involved in their children's learning.

Parent involvement and attendance: Overall, no significant associations were found between students' attendance and any types of parent involvement. In addition, no important relationships were found between attendance and any types of parent involvement when parents were divided based on their educational level: parents with college degree and high school or below level. However, when parents were categorized by gender, type 5 decision making performed by male parents had a positive correlation with attendance at a weak level, while that performed by female parents had a negative correlation with attendance at a low level. These results again confirmed the previous findings, stating that parents' active involvement in school activities was significantly associated with student attendance and a lower dropout rate (Ross, 2016). In fact, if parents were actively involved in school activities, their children tended to attend school regularly and tended to drop out less. Reynolds et al. (2014) also stated a weak association between parent involvement in school decision making and students' attendance. Therefore, this study's results encouraged schools in the research sites and other areas to consider parent input and involve parents more in school decision making, which would result in a higher attendance rate among high school students.

Parent involvement and students' attitude toward school: Many studies found that parent involvement influenced and improved attitude of students toward school and their learning (Arulmoly & Kiruthika, 2017; Castro et al., 2015; Chauhan, Bhadouria, & Bhakar, 2015; Mombourquette, 2007). However, this study found no significant correlation between students' attitude towards and types of parent involvement. As with previous study conducted by Arulmoly and Kiruthika (2017), the data of this study might be insufficient to agree with literature that reported significant relationship between parent involvement and students' attitude toward school.

When parents were separated based on their education level, type 4 volunteering performed by parents with a high school and below level had a negative correlation with students' attitude toward school at a weak level. This finding was consistent with Mombourquette (2007), revealing student attitude toward school and its relationship to parent involvement produced a negative correlation only with parenting Type 4 volunteering. A study by Okpala, Okpala, and Smith (2001) indicated that instructional supplies expenditures per pupil and parental volunteer hours were not effective in explaining students' attitude.

Despite a negative correlation, the study concluded that regardless of whether parents had a high school education or a university degree, the more they talked and built a good relationship with their adolescent children, the better the children did in school.

Parent involvement and engagement: Regarding associations between engagement and types of parent involvement, the study showed engagement had a positive correlation with type 1 parenting, and type 2 learning at home at a significant level of 0.05. These findings were consistent with the previous findings indicating when parents constantly expressed their expectation, talked about the importance of education, and participated more in their children's learning, children became more engaged and were more likely to succeed more in their studies (Erol & Turhnan, 2018). Castro et al. (2015) also claimed that parenting and learning at home activities were important factors associated with students' engagement. Amponsah et al. (2018) reported that types of parent involvement, especially parenting and learning at home had significantly positive associations with students' engagement and academic achievement. This might be because children were motivated to concentrate on their studies when their parents expressed their expectation and importance of education in later life.

In spite of a very weak level, the study found parent voluntary involvement (type 3) had a significant association with students' engagement. This finding was consistent with previous research conducted by Jeynes (2012), stating parents involved in volunteering activities at a low level significantly affected students' engagement and improved students' educational progress, inspiring students to engage more.

When categorized by gender, engagement was correlated with type 1 parenting, type 2 learning at home, type 4 volunteering and type 5 decision making performed by male parents, while students' achievement in terms of grade or GPA was significantly correlated with female parent involvement in home and school activities. McBride, Dyer, Liu, Brown, and Hong (2009) also found that mothers and fathers' involvement in school activities differently affected students' academic achievement. Mothers were primary caregivers of children when it came to helping children with their learning; however, fathers were usually involved when children were facing trouble and difficulties with their studies. For this reason, father involvement in children education helped children overcome their struggles and encouraged them to focus more on their learning (McBride et al., 2009).

When parents were categorized based on the education level, engagement yielded significantly positive correlations with type 1 parenting, type 2 learning at home and type 4 volunteering. According to the results, parents with a high level of education involvement in students learning had a higher impact on students' engagement. This finding was in line with the findings of Gooding (2001), indicating children whose parents had a higher level of education performed better in exams than those whose parents had a lower level of education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study gave a better understanding on parent involvement in Myanmar and provided essential evidence that confirmed parent involvement matters for improvement of students' academic performances. Two types of parent involvement- type 1 parenting and type 2 learning at home, were found to be most effective to enhance student performance factors. Therefore, the study suggests: (1) School principals, teachers, members of PTA and parents develop and implement strategies to enhance parenting and learning at home activities. (2) The policy maker and the local education authorities should consider the study results to increase parent involvement in schools in order to improve students' academic performance. (3) Parents continue to express their expectation, trust, care, and interest in their children through building good relationships, which will improve their children's academic achievement.

For future research; (1) a similar study based on perspectives of students and teachers should be conducted in other areas of Myanmar in order to better understand parent involvement and its effects on students' Performances, and (2) further studies should develop guidelines or strategies to increase parents and community participation in high schools in Myanmar.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

The authors are thankful to all friends and participants who helped to accomplish this research as well as to Faculty of Graduate Studies, Mahidol University for partially funding this research.

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