



Parental engagement

Background

The summary below presents the research evidence on parental engagement in the Arab world. The Teaching & Learning Toolkit focuses on impact on outcomes for learners; it presents an estimate of the average impact of parental engagement on learning progress, based on the synthesis of a large number of quantitative studies from around the world.

This page offers a summary and analysis of individual studies on parental engagement in the Arab world. In contrast to the Toolkit it includes studies which do not estimate impact, but instead investigate the implementation of interventions and how they are perceived by school leaders, teachers, and students. This information is valuable for school leaders and teachers interested in finding out more about particular examples of parental engagement interventions that have been delivered in an Arabic context.



Summary of the research in the Arab world

Parental engagement covers the active engagement of parents in supporting their children's academic learning. Research around the globe shows that parental involvement is usually associated with positive student outcomes, good behavior, positive attitude toward school, higher achievement in reading and better academic performance. In the Arab world, there is very minimal evidence-based research in this regard, and wherever it was found, it showed an indirect association of parental engagement to students' academic achievement (Fakhro & Almaliki, 2016; Yang et al., 2018).

In a quantitative study done in Jordan, Al-Alwan (2014) discovered that when parents are actively involved in their children learning at school, they positively affect students' behavior, emotion, and cognitive skills which yield an indirect influence on their academic achievement. Students became less aggressive, they complied with school rules, and were rarely absent from school. These students were more likely to be fun, enjoy school time and have high self-esteem. Additionally, their motivation to learn specifically their self-efficacy to spend more effort, attention, and participate in school activities increased.

Studies in the Arab world have mainly investigated parents and schools awareness of parental involvement rather than its impact. Both parents and schools in Qatar and UAE valued the relationships between them for the sake of developing children learning (Fakhro & Almaliki, 2016; Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). However, Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2016) noted that Omani parents' involvement in their children's English language remained limited despite their awareness of the importance of their involvement. In other contexts, i.e, Algeria, studies mentioned that parents and schools are until this date unaware of the importance of this role and thus the communication between parents and teachers is absent (Belaid & Sarnou, 2019).

However, in a study conducted in Kuwait, Fenimore (2018) showed that through actively participating in their special needs children reading classes, parents supported their reading skills and comprehension from kindergarten through third grade. In addition to supporting their children's comprehension, these parents took advantage from their participation to gain awareness about their children which



helped strengthen family connections (Fenimore, 2018). Similarly, in Kuwait, Al-Fadley, et al. (2018) reported that teachers held strong beliefs about the effective role of parental involvement in helping their children develop early literacy and reading skills. Particularly, parents involvement was crucial for children's early learning of a foreign language (i.e, English) if they were able to read or speak this language.

In a survey design study, data collected from 100 parents in Saudi Arabia showed that the majority of parents valued parents- teachers relationship for a successful educational experience and for the well-being for their children at school (Mahmoud, 2018). Parents perceived their role in supporting their children's learning was related to directly supporting them with their homework or projects or indirectly through motivating their children and involving them in extracurricular activities. However, the effectiveness of parental involvement was associated to the extent they were aware and clear about the curriculum and learning objectives. That is why, in order to increase parental involvement and ensure its effective role, Mahmoud (2018) recommended schools to provide consistent workshops to parents to provide effective support and be in line with teacher's instructions.

Research to date showed absence of parental involvement in raising childrens' achievement in the classroom and developing their academic and social skills (Al-Fadley et al., 2018; Alobaid, 2018; Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). Parents' participation most of the time consisted of checking their children homework and school visits were made only to discuss a child's bad behaviour (Belaid & Sarnou, 2019). Schools from their side rarely contacted parents and did not encourage their participation (Alobaid, 2018). Thus, studies like Belaid and Sarnou (2019) showed that teacher-parent relationship could not be established unless a parent-child relationship is constructed. Which means that parents who are not close to their children do not communicate the school life or performance of their children at school. As such, absence of parental engagement reflects their lack of interest in their children's learning and behavior as well. Another reason is because of the poor education level of parents (Al-Fadley et al., 2018) or being illiterate (Belaid & Sarnou, 2019). Parents' participation was also limited due to language barriers (Al-Fadley et al., 2018).



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Overall, parental engagement in children's school learning is limited in the Arab world due to many reasons. There is a lack of awareness of the importance of the role of parents in the school (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). Parents are generally passive and disconnected with the school. They don't communicate sufficiently with teachers and they don't discuss their children's interest or concerns except with their children behavioral issues (Belaid & Sarnou, 2019) and many schools do not encourage parent-school relationships. That is why, schools are recommended to help parents feel supported and encourage their involvement in general and family volunteering in particular. Special education teachers in Saudi Arabia raised their concern in this regard. They reported their needs for training to help them design programs and activities that can capture parental attention and increase their involvement (Alnaim, 2018). Schools are also invited to establish educational courses, workshops, seminars and professional development opportunities for parents to provide them with knowledge and skills to better work with teachers and build strong effective home -school relationship (Alnaim, 2018).



Summary Paragraph:

Despite the global evidence that parental involvement is greatly valued for teachers, parents, and students, there is scant evidence in the Arab world to establish association between parents' involvement role and students' academic performance. Studies of parents in Qatar, UAE, and Algeria have found that parental involvement in promoting the educational well-being of their children is limited. Parents interactions with school were often reported as being limited to visits to discuss behavioral issues rather than their children's learning. Studies have also found that some parents are not aware of the importance of their involvement in the education of their children.

However, in a study done in Jordan, parents who were actively involved in their children's learning, positively influenced their behavior, emotions, and cognitive skills which indirectly influenced their academic achievement.

Overall, there remains a limited amount of published studies on parental participation and schooling in the Arab world. Researchers in the Arab world are recommended to examine the relationship and association between parental involvement and children academic achievement and behavior. Researchers are also suggested to investigate which parental involvement interventions will increase attainment.



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Databases searched

Academic Search Complete

Education Source

ERIC (EBSCO)

Google scholar

Linguistics & Language Behaviour

ProQuest Central

PsycINFO

Search Terms

Parental involvement; family literacy programmes; parents as tutors.