

## The Importance of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education for Children Under 4-Year Old

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### ABSTRACT

Parents' involvement in children's education has been considered one of the important aspects of children's ongoing learning process and development success. The Malaysian government policy and initiative has introduced the term partnership to describe parents, schools and teachers regarding their involvement in children's education. Parents know their children best more than anyone, and settings which refer to the teacher, school or centre should prepare and provide for the children's individual needs. This will help to increase children's progress in their learning and development, resulting in better outcomes for the children. The objective of the study was to identify and analyse parents' views on their involvement in their children's education. The research project is a small-scale qualitative study that used semi-structured interviews to gather data. Data was gathered from the small sample of the setting population in order to gain insights into the samples' perspective on the parents' involvement in the children's education. This study concluded that parents as respondents believe and are aware that they play an important role in their children's learning process and also development.

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### 1. Introduction

The important parts in every person not only for adults but for children as well is education. United Nation Child Convention (UNCRC) said that children opportune to have a proper education. In order to shore up the children developments, the children need a proper education for their own future also the country (PERMATA NEGARA, 2014). In addition, Rafiq et al. (2013) stated that education is important for the development of society. Hence, Rafiq et al (2013) also mentioned that the civilization of the society depends on the knowledge and education that they have. Based on that, education for children are roles and responsibility of every individual including family members.

Family is the central unit of the society (Wasim et al, 2008) and the most important element for children life (Kotirde and Yonus, 2014). Family is referring to a group of people related by marriage or blood. This implies that any person who is related by blood or marriage are defined as a family (Wasim et al., 2008). In relation to the children, family can be referring to the parents as the first teacher and powerful role models for young children (Seth and Ghormode, 2013).

Similarly, as stated by Rokis, (2014) parents are defined as a person who has the genetic or adopted children under their care. Parents are referring to mothers and fathers who are responsible to educate their children and struggling for the family's survival. Most of the children have two teachers in their lives which are their parents and their practitioners (Enemue and Obidike, 2014). On the other hand, (Kaiser and Hancock, 2003) mentions that parents are the primary teachers because the learning process begins through reciprocal action with family

at home. While (Rafiq et al., 2013) said that parents stay with child until the start school at early years then the responsibility to educate the children is relying on their parents. The more parents involve in their children learning or development process, the more useful the children can be towards society (Vellymalay, 2011 and Sapungan, 2014).

Initially, father's responsibility is to work while mothers will stay at home as mother to take care of the children and doing chores (Talib, 2009). However, in many developing countries, participation of women who have a child in the working sector has increased rapidly, the industrializing of the country present challenges for women to combine their roles as housewife and employee at the same time (Kotb et al, 2012). As supported by Danso (2014), the phenomenon of urbanization and industrialization influencing more women to join the working sector. Unfortunately, according to Voydanoff cited in Marican and Sabil (2011) working parents have reduced the quality time to spend for family activities with their children in order to maintain the relationship.

As supported by Sultana, (2013), the scenario of working mothers in Malaysia is increasing rapidly, and it is necessary for women to work because of the economic development which is to support the husband and increase their monthly income for a better life. In addition, Talib (2009) stated that the modern lifestyles and high cost of living has made both parents sharing financial burden to manage a family together and at the same to achieve a better quality of life (Seth and Ghormode, 2013).

In addition, Ahmad (2008), said that the negative impact on children development happened due to parents who focus more on works. Supported by Rokis (2014), due to financial demands both parents need to work hard in order to achieve those demands. And by that demands, parents tend to send their children to child center earlier. Unfortunately, this precious opportunity seems quite expensive for busy parents to follow up with their children achievements, development and learning process. There is a lot of research said that most of the children complained that they have less interaction with parents due to their parent's busy work life even though they have been provided with good materials and latest gadgets. (Seth and Ghormode, 2013).

In Malaysia, most of the parents be concerned with their children education achievement and put trust in their children accomplishment at school (Talib, 2009). Phan (2004), even though they have no understanding on the importance of their presence in their child development, they essential to ensure their children become a good person and develop in all aspect. Besides, the first five years of children development really important because it is including cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development (Naeum, 2012).

In addition, Gonzalez cited in Phan (2004) say that parents have been recognized as the important people in their children's development. This means that parents' involvement should not merely focus on school or education but at the same time, parents need to support and encourage the children to play because children love to play and children are learning through play Bodrova and Leong (2003), Ashiabi, (2007), Hyvonen (2011) Undiyaundeye, (2013), and (Berk 2013). Additionally, playing and learning cannot be separated in practices during early years (Samuelsson and Carlsson, 2008). According to Moyles (2010) play is a medium for learning and children learn to make sense of the world around them through play (Ali et. al, 2011).

### *1.1 Research Objectives*

- To identify the impact of parent's involvement in their children education and development.
- To identify how parents can influence or support in their children learning process.
- To identify what are the relationship between parent and teacher responsibilities toward children education.

### *1.2 Research Question*

What are the parent's perspectives towards the important of parental involvement in their children education?

## **2. Literature Review**

Chohan and Khan (2010) say generally, schools are known as a place that provides suitable learning environment for a child, but the parents also play a significant role in their children's learning, parents also need to prepare a home environment that can influence the children's learning (Selvam, 2013). According to Vellymalay (2013) every parent wants their children to perform well at school especially in academic. However, children's education performance was not only depending on the teachers and school efforts to inculcate good skill, attitudes and behaviors which could make them to become successful and educated students in future. It has been expected that academic achievement of students may not only depend on the quality of schools and the teachers, parental involvement also has an important role in academic achievement of their kids. Vellymalay (2013) and (Zakaria, et al, 2013).

According to (Pena, 2000), since the early 1970s, the importance of parents' involvement has been stressed out by the researchers. Previous research pointed out the benefits of parent involvement not only towards the students but also give benefit to the school and parents schools and parents. This is keep up by Asli cited in Abdullah (2011) mentioned that parental involvement in children's education progress as a prime aspect for the children, family and school relationship bestow to the children's education (Abdullah, 2011) and (Zakaria, et al, 2013). Parent involvement and parent participation are the similar terms because this is referring to the parent actions (Selvam, 2013). According to Henderson and Mapp cited in Georgiou and Tourva (2007) parental involvement has been defined as different behaviors and practices of parents at school and home, this is including parent's aspirations, expectations, attitudes and opinions towards their child's education. As mentioned by Abdullah (2011) parental involvement refer to the parent's variation of activities at home as well as at school where it is positively influences the children education.

Based on Spera, (2005) the researcher pointed out that parent's involvement in children education can include the act of parents making sure that the children are at school every day, involvements in parents and teacher conferences, monitor, check and assist in children's homework, provide a variety of materials for children learning and involvement in school activities. Further support by Abdullah (2011) parental participation can be defined as the pursuit between the parents and kids at home that may contribute to the children's outcomes and developments, thus parents' involvement is also known as numerous activities including at home such as assisting with children homework, conversation between teacher and parents and joining school functions (Abdullah, 2011). The collaboration between school, teacher and parents to support learning, the children tend to succeed not just in schools but throughout life (Grace et al 2012). In addition, as supported by Rafiq et al (2013) mentioned that parental involvement in school may include the activities such as interactions with the teachers, checking the attendance of their children, monitor the children's activities and checking the children's academic progress reports. All these things contributive and influenced the children's academic achievements.

According to Shah and Anwar, (2014) learning can happen anywhere, but the meaningful learning process usually happen in quality learning environments. Epstein pointed out that parent's involvement is not only at school, but the parents should continue and get involve in their children education at home, hence, these may lead to the academic achievement (Zakaria, et al, 2013). Parents should provide the environment that suits best for their children and actively promote a learning environment at home for children Chohan and Khan (2010) and (Selvam, 2013), for example providing learning material such books, newspapers and place for children to study at home for their learning process.

In addition, Piaget further believed that environment should be an important aspect in children learning (Blake and Pope, 2008). As mentioned by Aziz and Said (2011), children tend to be in environment that can help them to think, observe, make choices, attract their attention and involve in their favorite activities. Preparing an adequate environment for children is important in order to ensure the children an engage with the experiences to apply skills, and develop new competencies (Burriss and Burriss, 2011) and (Wijtzes et al, 2014). The children need to feel safe and feel free to explore the environment and satisfy their curiosity (Aziz and Said, 2011).

Under the Behaviorism theory, there is one theory that linked and can be used for parents to motivate their children learning process at home. The behaviorist views the processes of reinforcement as the key factors in the children learning (Brock and Rankin, 2008). Based on that B. F. Skinner's presented operant conditioning to describe that best learning occurs when reward is providing after makes the desired reaction (Yi and Hsin, 2009). When a reaction occurs and is being reinforced, the possibility that it will occur again in the presence of similar stimuli is increased. Based on that, the parents should always compliment their children and encouraged them to reading book at home and at the same time to promote reading habits among their children in order to support their children learning process. Environment which a person lives is actually will influence the individual's behavior especially children (Kivunja, 2014). Thus, Mafa and Makuba (2013), conversations between parents and their children at home regarding school activities and chore are directly linked to parental involvement.

Socialization is a prime role in children's learning process. Theories of Vygotsky and Piaget believed that children learn through interaction with others, including parents, staff and peers is important for learning process (Theresa and Nufrio, 2011) and (Weisberg et al, 2013).

The other element of children learning is on the roles of adults. Based on social interaction theory, individuals will learn best when working together with others and through support with skilled persons (Shabani et. al 2010). In relation to this, it is supported by the theory of Vygotsky, which highlighted on readiness of one individual learns in their "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD). According to theory of ZPD, children need support or scaffold by an adult in order to achieve one skill (Tomlinson et. al (2003). Vygotsky defined the

ZPD as the distance between a child's actual developmental level determined by problem solving by their own and the level of potential development determined through problem solving under guidance or collaboration with more skilled peers Bodrova et al, (2013) and (Shaman, 2014).

In addition, the concept of 'scaffolding' is closely related to Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Fernández et al, 2001) where concept of scaffolding in learning is a temporary guidance by the teacher to the children in order to support their learning and then removed it when the children no longer needs it (Boblett, 2013). In addition, further support by Sharman (2014) scaffolding is a strategy used to help a learner to reach a level of development that they could not achieve on their own. Therefore, parents should always monitor about their children homework and at the same time support and assist them to complete their works. In relation to that, as support by Froebel (cited in Gonzalez, 2011) highlighted the importance and role of adults is to guide and monitor children learning process. Hence as mentioned by Athey, (cited in Pound, 2008) it stated that the active learning and best teaching technique depends on the positive interaction between adult and children.

### 3. Method

Regarding the research objective, this study will use a qualitative method. Besides, this study also gains in depth information in verbal about parent's perspective regarding their involvement in their child development. Dongre (2009), qualitative research is type of formative research that involve a method to get in depth response about people perspectives and help the researcher to dive deep into the subject under their study. This also supported by Joubish et al (2011), qualitative method aims to get deeper understanding of the research question.

In qualitative research, there are major source in conduct the research which is interview, observation and document in order to gain data for understanding the phenomenon under the study (Sharma, 2013). The focus in this study is interview method where interview method takes the form of a dialogue in which the researcher seeks to elicit information about the topic chosen. In addition, Moriaty (2011) stated that interview is the common method used in the qualitative research in order to gain perspective and experience of people in a flexible way.

There is various research design that fall under research method which are phenomenology, ethnography, and case study (Petty, et al, 2012). The researcher will focus on the collection of data through semi-structured interview since the respondents of this research selected randomly. Hence, the focus of this research is to collect the data using semi-structured interview and understand the individual experience by exploring the means of the spectacle (Petty et al, 2012). The selection of participants in research is the initial step in order to collect data. Participants are selected as they are willing to share their experience (Englander, 2012).

In this study, semi-structured interview will carry out order to gather the data and explore the perspective of respondents about the importance of their participation toward their children education. Semi structured interview are the flexible way to get the information (Dongre, 2009) and likely the most popular form of interview as the semi structured interview is a backbone of qualitative research (Campbell et ell, 2013) and it allowing the respondent to manifest the view and experience (Tuner, 2010). Matthews and Ross (2010), this type of interview with open-ended question in the effective way in collecting the data as information obtained from two-way communication.

Interview always held at a place and time available to the respondents. The interview will last roughly within 40 to 60 minutes. The researcher will remain neutral all the way in the process of interview such as not to respond regarding any opinions and experiences given by respondents. All the interview session will be recorded and transcribed with the permission from respondents. Sharma (2013), the important aspect of interview session is asking clear question, good manner and follow up question or probes.

Qualitative research using the coding method will be labelling and categories each of the data from transcript and applied in grounded research approach (Wahyuni, 2012). The researcher will use thematic analysis to analyze the data which works with raw data to underline and themes from the transcript. Coding is the essential process of analysis which is the data will be categorized into theme (Matthews and Ross, 2008). The coding and theme help the researcher interpret the data into findings.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### ***Key Themes 1: Perspectives of Parents regarding their involvement towards their children education***

The result has shown that parent had aware about the importance of their involvement toward their children. And they also know the effect if they are not done their responsibility. Parent A, Parent B and Parent F, believe that their involvement is important for their children as environment is important for children development, if

not the children will have a problem in their developments. As said by Parent A, “*there is no problem for me with the parent who are work as well as the parents can spend time with their children*”. *If not, the children feel lonely and fell like their parents in not taking care of them because always busy with their works.*

### **Key Themes 2: Parents social support**

The children need their parent’s attention in order to give them opportunity to develop in a positive way. This is support by Grace et al (2012) parents play an important role at the home and school because the involvement of parent will determine the future of children on a child. Hence, (Shah and Anwar, 2014) mentioned parent’s involvement will affect on children development in all aspects. Abdullah (2011) stated parental involvement refer to the parent’s range of activities where it is positively influences the children development and education. Based on Abraham Maslow, social contributions such as goofing around and give heed toward the children is prime role for children development (Mo and Singh, 2008).

Based on the result, it shown that all parent has play their roles to make sure their involvement toward their children. All the parent mostly will spend time with their children in order to build a close relationship as believe by Parent A “*I will bring him and my wife at playground and let him play, for example at a playground and riding a bicycle.* Parent C said, “*I will take a long leave and bring me and my family to go to short holiday such as we go to Langkawi for example, because I believe with a short holiday or a trip to somewhere else, this is better and then we can be closer, from there too, I believe that, we can be a strong family*”.

### **Parent involvement in children learning process**

Parent participation in children learning process is one of the key roles in children development. There are many activities that parent can do to support and motivate their children in learning process. This is explained by the parent in which they will always support and persuade their children at home.

### **Key Themes 3: The advantages of Parental involvement in children education**

The result from discussion has shown that all the parents whether father or mother will make sure their involvement toward their children education at school. All parent says that, there a benefit for them when they involve in their children education at school.

### **Key Themes 4: Parent and teacher as partnership**

Parents and teacher has play their roles in educating the children, based on the interview parents are aware and know about their responsibility to support their children in education and life. Parents also believe that teachers and parents have the same responsibility to educate the children.

## **5. Conclusuion**

The prime objective of this research was designed with the objective to identify parent’s views regarding their involvement toward their children education, identify the impact of parent involvement and the relationship between parent and teacher responsibility and also how parent can influence their children in education. All parents who took part as a respondent are willing to share their perspective, opinion and experience regarding experience towards their involvement. Hence all parents shared the same opinion that their involvement play a major role in their children education and developments.

The research methods and methodology that are used in order to complete this research was a triumph. The qualitative method used in this research was competent to get the data that need through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interview was carried out using an interview guidance that included question that has been prepared in order to meet the objective of the study. Semi-structured interviews were suitable method in this research because by using observation or focus group, it will not give much and in-depth information rather than using semi structured interview.

From the interview, it is shown that it was successful as the respondents are giving their belief that are related with the question and objective of the interview. From the interview, all the respondent opinion and experience have been categorized into several key themes that has been identified through the process of data analysis. All the respondents were fully aware about the aims of this research.

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