

## **A Qualitative Exploration of Teachers Perspectives on Barriers to Parental Involvement in Primary Schools**

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### **Abstract**

Research in the context of Pakistan has indicated that parents are disenfranchised by the educational system since they have no idea how to actively participate in the schools. The primary objective of this study was to explore the key hurdles to parental participation in government male primary schools in Batkhela, Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The problem was investigated using a qualitative case study research design. For data collection, semi-structure interviews were conducted with 13 teachers in two government primary schools at Batkhela Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. For data analysis, thematic analysis technique was used. The data was collected, transcribed and analyzed based on coding and categorizing the themes. Based on the analysis, the study found that lack of interest, parental profession, lack of awareness, checking home-work, were the major hurdles that prevented active parental participation in education. It is concluded that way to make the parents get involved in their child learning process is sending letters to parents, because, sending letters about children's strong and weak areas their parents, then parents compel them to come into school and discuss with teachers.

**Keywords:** Parental involvement, Primary school, Awareness, Barriers, Teacher perspectives

### **1. Introduction**

According to research, the overall influence of parental participation on primary school students is strong (Rafiq et al., 2013). Scholars have found that more parental participation is the key to boosting children's academic achievement. Thus, in order to effectively promote parental involvement in public primary schools, educational leaders must examine parents' and teachers' opinions of parental involvement.

Parental participation is regarded as a key technique for improving educational quality (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Parental involvement denotes to a parent's degree of engagement in her child's education and life (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Parents' involvement and participation in

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regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving students in academic learning and other school activities leads to improved academic outcomes for pupils (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003).

Earlier studies have conclusively shown that parental involvement in their children's learning is favorably associated to achievement. According to studies, parent's active participation and children's accomplishment consequences are directly proportional. If parents show good participation, it leads to more positive accomplishment. (Jeynes, 2010). The above stated claim is accurate for all sorts of parent participation in their children's learning and development, as well as for children of all ages and backgrounds. Upon closer examination at the studies, it appears that the most beneficial kinds of parent participation involve parents actively participating with their children on learning activities at home (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Programs in which parents read with their children, assist them with homework tasks, or tutor them utilizing resources and directions that schools provide have particularly amazing outcomes. Similarly, researchers have discovered that more active kinds of parental participation offer bigger success benefits than inactive ones (El Nokali et al., 2010). When parents answer telephone calls, read and sign written communications from the school, and possibly attend and listen during parent-teacher conferences, their children will succeed more than if they do not participate at all. However, significant success benefits are observed when parents are actively involved—not only when they engage with their kids at home, but also when they participate and actually support school activities, and when they assist out in classes or on school trips, and so forth (Smith, 2006; Xu et al., 2010). The studies have also suggested that the sooner in a child's educational process parents become involved, the stronger the impacts are. Teachers often highlight the significance of the environment of home and family relationships in shaping children's academic success, and it signifies that as soon this impact is "harnessed," the possibility of better student achievement increases. The usefulness of early childhood education programmes with significant parent participation components has thoroughly proved the efficacy of this method. (Ryan et al., 2010).

Studies have also discovered that the most effective parent participation programmes are those that provide a variety of opportunities for parents to participate. Recognizing that parents' inclination, skill, and available time for involvement in school activities vary widely, these schools offer a range of opportunities for parental involvement (Altschul, 2011; Hill & Tyson, 2009).

Research has reported that parental contribution bolsters the kid and helps influence that child to wind up noticeably fruitful. Children nowadays have a considerable measure on their plate from the measure of schoolwork to move classes, games or which parent's home will be home. This is an exercise in careful control than can be overpowering and children require parental help and direction. Schools experience considerable difficulties achieving parents and catching their consideration, while on the other hand, parents experience serious difficulties knowing how to get associated with their child's school (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006).

Since there is a far greater likelihood of involving parents at the preschool level in the developed world context than at the primary, middle, or secondary levels, the vast majority of literature on parent engagement has been performed with young children and their parents in the developed world context. Evidently, study on parental involvement in student education is severely lacking in the developing world, particularly in Pakistan (Rafiq et al., 2013). There is a scarcity of appropriate and in-depth knowledge to make any conclusions concerning its usefulness. However, in latest years, some studies have been carried out with secondary and middle school kids and their families.

According to this study, parental participation is still highly effective in generating favorable performance and positive outcomes in these older students. The focus of this research has been on relationship between parental involvement and students' outcomes. However, so far, less work has been done on the major barriers that hurdles the involvement of parents in education at primary level (Ghazi *et al.*, 2010).

Barriers to involvement exist for both schools and families. Some of barriers restricted assets, while others start from the convictions, recognitions, and states of mind of families and school staff. The motivation behind why I select this explorative research to know about the major barriers to parental involvement in education at primary school level which is the foundation of education for a child. It is also important that the main verbal contact with the child's teacher, from multiple points of view, is the generally imperative. This is the time you are building an affinity and building up a relationship of trust amongst parent and teacher. Contingent upon the parent and their schedule, some of the time a telephone call or a note is adequate for correspondence. The best cooperation is an up close and personal meeting(Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

A tremendous amount of research has been done regarding parental involvement in secondary schools; nonetheless, limited research has been carried out that focuses on parental participation in primary schools. Furthermore, parental engagement is not only needed in the secondary school setting but is especially needed during the primary stages of education as well being the foundation stage (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Moreover, much research exists on the involvement of parents in schooling from the developed world context (Harris & Goodall, 2008). However, little work has been done in the context of developing world especially in Pakistan. This research is intended to explore the perspectives of teachers about the main barriers to parental involvement at primary school level at District Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## **3. Method and Design**

The qualitative case study research approach was used for this investigation. The study's purpose was to identify the obstacles to parental participation. A case study research method allows investigating a case deeply and takes into account all aspects of a case (Creswell, 2013). This current qualitative study uses an exploratory method.

### **Population and Sample**

Thirteen teachers participated in the study. These teachers were purposively selected from among those who were more experienced in terms of service. All those teachers who had more than ten years of service experience were focused for data. The reason was that these could provide more thorough information as they spend more time in school. Purposive sampling technique is an approach employed in qualitative studies to choose study participants or cases that will generate rich and reliable information for analysis (Tongco, 2007).

### **Instruments**

Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. The interview guide was developed in the light of literature review related to barriers to parental involvement in education. Before going for data collection, permission was obtained from the executive district education office to visit the schools for data collection. Permission was also taken from the teachers before interviewing. .

them. After the selection of teachers for the interview, they were invited to take part in the study. Potential participants were given the option to accept or reject participation. When teachers consented to participate, the researcher provided them with an interview timeline. The researcher gave a comprehensive description of the study, including the study's goal and participant expectations. A consent form was presented to each participant, and each instructor indicated their willingness to participate in the study. Participants were advised that they could leave at any point or choose not to answer any questions in interviews while the data was being collected.

The teachers were interviewed during the initial school visit. Throughout the talk, the semi-structured interview enabled the freedom of speech and expression of ideas and views. The semi-structured interviews were informal, allowing both the researcher and respondents to build trust and permit an open conversation (Cohen et al., 2013). During the interview, the researcher offered any further prompts and questions. For instance, the researchers employed the question "What are your views regarding parental participation?" to examine and explore the information being gathered for a greater understanding or relevance. Participants were able to reply to the questions as they saw fit, as well as not to respond on any topic or query.

During the interview sessions with each participant, the researcher was using a Personal Portable Recorder and Cassette Player with SONY HG 90 Minute audio tapes. The length of each individual interview spanned from half hour to 1 hour and 25 minutes. The study evaluated observation notes obtained during the procedure with the subject at the end of each interview. This enabled each participant to verify and confirm the meaning. The researcher performed a transcription of the audio tapes made during the interview within 24 hours after its conclusion.

The process of changing spoken communication into written language is known as transcription. After then, the written form can be utilized for research, coding, and theme generation. The second school visit the next day comprised of an interaction with the other teachers. The same protocol was employed, which included a study description, permission for participation, and a semi-structured format. Within 24 hours of the completion of the second interview session, the study evaluated observation notes with the respondent and transcribed the voice tapes (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). When it was discovered that the participants had not shared any new information, further interviews were halted. As a result, 13 teachers were questioned from our entire sample

### **Interview Questions**

RQ1: What is your opinion about parental involvement in education?

RQ2: Could you please elaborate the main barriers to parental involvement in primary schools?

RQ3: Do you think that parental involvement is important in primary school, why?

RQ 4: Could you please give some suggestions for parental involvement in primary schools? How it is possible?

#### 4. Data Analysis

The information was gathered in accordance with the study's "collection of data" section. Thematic analysis technique was used. It centered on the research issue by recognizing the obstacles to parental participation in primary education. Each participant's interview was completed and transcribed entirely. The researcher was able to turn the participant's spoken language into written form via transcription. Studying, reviewing (to make sense), coding, classifying, topic development, and analysis could all be done in written form. In addition to conducting interviews and transcription, the researcher took written notes during each school visit and used them to help with coding/theme development. The researcher evaluated each transcript three times.

The researcher developed a list of initial codes (key concept) describing the original information during each individual transcript and observation note review. The coded data was then divided into categories, which contained over thirty descriptive remarks. These categories were then examined again and lastly, the researcher reviewed each category generated from the data and devised 12 themes which included lack of parents' literacy, communication gap, nature of parents' job, parent-teacher meeting, awareness for involvement, sending letters to parents, channelizing learning process, lack of interest, checking homework, arranging events for parents, electronic communication, proper arrangement for parent-teacher meeting. Throughout the coding and theme generation process, the researcher used Creswell (2003) constant comparative approach by continually comparing initial codes to all other sources of data. These codes were modified through the creation of categories and sub-categories until final themes were generated.

#### Demographic Data

Table 1 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the respondents in term of gender, professional qualification and professional experience.

Table 1.  
Demographic Data of the participants

Feature	Classification	Frequency
Gender	Male	10
	Female	0
Professional Qualifications	BA/BSc, MA/MSc	4
	B.Ed, M.Ed	4
	M.Phil, PhD	2
Professional Experience	1-5 years	0
	5-10 years	0
	More than 10 years	10

Table 1 indicates the gender-based distribution of male to female teachers in terms of gender (0% to 100%) but (100%) teachers were male. The percentage of teachers in terms of professional qualifications: Bachelor, Master, B.Ed, M.Ed, M.Phil, PhD indicated that (40%) of the teachers had got Bachelor and Master degrees. However, (40%) of them had professional degrees like B.Ed, and M.Ed, and (20%) of them had higher qualification like MPhil or PhD. In terms of professional experience, this study showed that all of the teachers (100%) had more than 10 years teaching experience. .

The qualitative data addressed the following major research questions of this current study: RQ1: What is your opinion about parental involvement in education at primary school? RQ2: Could you please elaborate the main barriers to parental involvement in primary schools? RQ3: Could you please give some suggestions for effective parental involvement in primary schools? How it is possible. On the basis of the interviews, 6 themes emerged from analysis of perspectives of the respondents. The themes are discussed below.

### **Lack of Interest**

Most of the respondents stated that the major barrier to parental involvement is lack of parental interest in their child's education. Some of the respondents stated that most of the families do not recognize the benefits of participation and do not feel that their participation will result in any substantial progress. Majority of the respondents indicated that parents belong to our society have no value to their child's education. They said that they did not get interest in the involvement of their child education process. According to most of the respondents, the parents believe that there is no need for involvement in schooling. One of the respondents stated: *“As you know that we only produced the offspring for the reason that they may help us in laboring or forms work, we are not interested in their schooling”*.

### **Lack of Literacy**

Hundred percent teachers perceived that the main barrier to parental involvement is lack of parental literacy rate. Majority of the respondents during the interview indicated that in our society mostly peoples are uneducated and they don't know the importance of parental involvement in education. One of the respondents stated Parents of children are unfamiliar with the significance of parental engagement in education, how would they participate in their child's learning? For instance, during the interview, one of the respondents stated: *“Most of the parents are uneducated and they could not guide their children properly, and according to their children schooling requirements parents are not aware of that and even they could not help their children in schooling process”*.

### **Lack of Awareness**

During the interview, it was discovered that the main barrier to parental involvement was lack of awareness of parents about involvement in their child's schooling. Few teachers perceived that lack of awareness is not only common with parents but teachers as well, most teachers are not in favor of parental involvement, they feel parental involvement is not important in children schooling. One of the respondents stated: *“There is no need of parental involvement in student learning process, parental involvement wastes the time of school teachers”*. One other respondent stated: *“The majority of parents are unaware of the significance of parental participation that's why parents say that we have no time for to get involved in our child's education”*.

It was discovered during the interview that half of the teachers perceived that parent-teacher meeting is also a barrier to parental involvement. Some of the teachers indicated that there is additionally diversity among schools in regards to views of various teachers. In other cases, teachers are not as hospitable to parents as they may be and they do not motivate parents to participate more. Some parents believe that several teachers are overworked and would rather that parents not meddle. One of the respondents stated that teachers did not support it much because they believed it would be a nuisance for them. They analyze any attempt or innovative proposal very cautiously because they must think a few steps ahead and examine how much difficulty it

has brought them. In comparison, there have been reports of teachers who do not make a concerted effort to involve parents by organizing a variety of events that invite families into the school or urging parents to take on prominent roles in different ways at school. Most of the respondents believed that arranging events for parents is the valued suggestion to improve parental involvement. Few teachers perceived that if we want to improve parental involvement than we should arrange events for parents at least once a month. One of the teachers stated that parents could not be involved unless there are appropriate events at school in which teachers can allow parents to engage. This indicates that teachers must connect with and collaborate with parents so that it is possible to effectively educate pupils

### **Checking Home Work**

Most of the respondents perceived that checking homework of the students at home was very important for both child and parents. Checking homework of the child make the parents get involved and child do work regularly and he becomes responsible for his study, one of the respondents stated: *“when the parents check his/her child homework than the student feel responsibility about his study, because he comes to know that he is important for his parents and teachers as well”*

It was discovered during the interview that proper arrangements for parent-teacher meeting are very important for developing parental involvement. Most of the respondents believed that when the parents feel comfortable in meeting with teachers so parents willing to meet again and again with teachers for their child learning process. One of the respondents stated: *“when there is proper schedule for parent-teacher meeting and when there is a welcoming teacher for parents than the parents feel easy to meet with teachers and communicate with teachers about their child learning process”*.

### **Parental Profession**

During the interview, it was discovered that the main barrier to parental involvement is nature of parental job. In our society the majority of the parents belong to working class, all the day they are busy in their jobs, they have no time to become involve in their child learning process. One of the respondents stated: *“In our society working class parents are busy all the day in their own job they have no time to participate in school, and when they come to home, they are tired so they cannot give time their children or to check their homework”*.

Majority of the teachers perceived during the interview that one way to make the parents directly participate in their child’s learning was sending letters to parents. Respondents believed that sending letters about child strong and weak zone to their parents, then parents compel to come into school and discuss with teachers, one of the respondents stated: *“when we send letters to parents about their child weaknesses or positive message, we deliver than parents do contact with us and they visit school and discuss with teachers about their child learning process”*.

## **5. Discussion**

The following were the main findings of this research study such as lack of interest, lack of parents literacy, electronic communication, lack of awareness, parent teacher meeting, arranging events for parents, checking homework, proper arrangements, nature of parents job, sending letters to parents. The study found the major barrier to parental involvement was lack of parental interest in

their child's education. It signifies that families do not recognize the significance in participating and do not trust that their participation will lead to any real progress. The results of this research support existing studies that the parents who were uneducated did not know the importance of active parental engagement in education (Ghazi et al., 2010).

This study further found that utilizing of lack of awareness about parental involvement in education as a barrier to parental involvement. This discovery is in accordance with results of previous research as well that lack of awareness among parents towards the importance of parental involvement in their child's schooling affects their academic performance (Harris & Goodall, 2008).. The lack of awareness was not only common with parents but most teachers were not in favor of parental involvement. Further study discovered that checking homework was another obstacle to parental involvement. Previous studies have reported that lack of help from parental side to monitor home assignments and projects of students may influence their performance (Xu *et al.*, 2010).

Studies have found that arranging events may help promote better parent school relations to improve parental involvement. Researchers have further found that proper arrangements for parent-teacher meeting are very important for developing parental involvement. When the parents feel comfortable in meeting with teachers they show willingness to meet again and again with teachers for their child development and education. Parental job or profession was another barrier to parental involvement is nature of parental job (Smith, 2006). Research has already revealed that majority of the parents belong to working class, all the day they are busy in their jobs, hence they have no time to become involve in their child learning process (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). It was discovered that one way to directly engage the parents in their child's education and learning was sending letters to parents. The study found that for better parental involvement it was essential to sending letters about child strong and weak zone to their parents, than parents compel to come into school and discuss with teachers.

## **6. Conclusion**

According to the results of this research, it can be concluded that there were many barriers to active parental participation in primary schools at District Malakand such as lack of interest, lack of parents' literacy, electronic communication, lack of awareness, parent teacher meeting, arranging events for parents, checking homework, proper arrangements, nature of parents' job, sending letters to parents. However, this issue could be resolved and the barriers could be removed by involving parents in school meetings, events and other matters. This will result in any meaningful education change which would be good for children, parents and policy makers alike. It is also important to arrange meetings for parents that will improve parental involvement. Parents should regularly check students' homework. It is crucial for school management to allow parents to meet again and again with teachers for their child's education. The conclusion is that the way to make the parents actively involved in their child learning process is sending letters to parents, because, sending letters about children's' strong and weak areas their parents, then parents compel them to come into school and discuss with teachers.

## **7. Further Research**

Based on this study the following suggestions are presented for further studies. Further studies on the subject of barriers to parental involvement must be performed utilizing a more representative sample of primary school instructors, as well as parent perspectives. Taking a closer look at the function of the father in this society may shed some light on the subject and point the way for the

further research. Additional research about teachers' views toward the primary and secondary school populations should be conducted in order to have an accurate picture of all sides of the problem. This case study can be performed again with a different set of questions in a quantitative study design. This strategy will use a questionnaire to gather statistical data to supplement the existing information.

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