



THE ROLE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE  
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF THIRD AND FOURTH  
GRADERS AT A UYGHUR PRIMARY SCHOOL

BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

Parental involvement in children's all rounded personality development and education is crucial. Yet, research on parental involvement in children's education has not been conducted in the rural areas of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), China, where majority Muslims live. Thus, this research aims to examine the level of parental involvement and its role in children's academic achievement at a Uyghur primary school. It also attempts to identify the challenges to parental involvement. The cross-sectional survey design was utilized. The parents' of Grades Three and Four school children were selected to answer a 39-item questionnaire on parental involvement. The descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages) and the independent sample t-test were used to answer the research questions. The results revealed high level of overall parental involvement. The parents had high aspiration towards children's education, and they were more involved in children's works at home than school. There was a significant difference in the mean scores of parental involvement between high and low achieving students. Low level of proficiency in the Chinese language and the complexity of the school subjects were identified as the biggest challenges to parental involvement. The results from this research provide useful information to parents, school administrators and policy makers. The same research could be conducted using bigger samples including other school grades. Qualitative research is recommended to obtain more in-depth information on parental involvement in their children education.

## خلاصة البحث

تدخّل أولياء الأمور مهم في تطوير شخصية الأطفال الشاملة وتعليمهم . ورغم ذلك، لم يتم تنفيذ أبحاث حول تدخّل أولياء الأمور في تعليم الأطفال في المناطق الريفية لشعب الأيغور في إقليم شنجيانغ في الصين والذي يسكنه أغلبية من المسلمين. لذلك، يهدف هذا البحث إلى التحقق من مستوى ودور تدخّل أولياء الأمور في التحصيل الأكاديمي للتلاميذ في مدرسة ابتدائية في كرادوو؛ وتحاول الدراسة تحديد التحدّيات لتدخّل أولياء الأمور. وتم إستخدام منهج البحث المسحي المستعرض في هذا الدراسة. واختارت الدراسة أولياء أمور تلاميذ الصف الثالث والصف الرابع الابتدائية للإجابة على أسئلة الاستبادة المكونة من 39 فقرة تتعلق بتدخّل أولياء الأمور . وللإجابة على أسئلة الدراسة، تم استخدام الإحصاء الوصفي (الأوساط الحسابية والانحرافات المعيارية والتكرارات والنسب المئوية). وأشارت النتائج إلى مستوى عالٍ لتدخّل أولياء الأمور، ولديهم مستوى تطلّع تعليمي عالٍ؛ وهم يتدخّلون في أعمال أبنائهم في البيت أكثر من الأعمال في المدرسة. وكذلك أشارت النتائج إلى وجود فرق معنوي ذي دلالة إحصائية في مستوى تدخّل أولياء الأمور بين الطلبة ذوي التحصيل المرتفع والتحصيل المتدني. وبيّنت الدراسة أن المستوى المتدني في اللغة الصينية لدى أولياء الأمور وصعوبة المواد الدراسية هي أكبر التحدّيات لتدخّلهم. هذا وقد زوّدت هذه الدراسة أولياء الأمور والإدارة المدرسية وواضعي السياسات بمعلومات مفيدة. ويُمكن إجراء نفس الدراسة على عينة أكبر من صفوف مختلفة. وأوصت الدراسة بإعداد أبحاث كمية للحصول على معلومات أكثر عمقا حول تدخّل أولياء الأمور في تعليم أبنائهم.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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## LISIT OF ABBREVIATIONS

S.W.T.	Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala (Praise to Allah and the Most High)
P.B.U.H.	Pease be Upon Him
e.g	(exempligratia); for example
et al.	(et cetera); and others
i.e.,	that is
XUAR	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Parents are the crucial and key people who can influence in all aspects of a child's personality development. They have the responsibility for the safety, care and proper upbringing of their children, where they should guide their children and enlighten their path to be good human beings and achieve success in both lives - the worldly life and the Hereafter. Allah (S.W.T) says, "O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded" (Surah At-Tahrim, 66:6). Luqman outlined the necessary attributes and good characteristics that each individual should possess. Allah (S.W.T) says, "O my son! Establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong: and bear with patience constancy whatever betide thee; for this is firmness [of purpose] in [the conduct of] affairs. And swell not thy cheek [for pride] at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth; for Allah loved not any arrogant boaster. And be moderate in thy pace, and lower thy voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass" (Surah Lukmaan, 31:17-19). Furthermore, Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) says in one well-known Hadith, "Surely! Every one of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges: The Imam (ruler) of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects; a man is the guardian of his family (household) and is responsible for his subjects; a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and of his children and is responsible for them; and the slave of a man is a

guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it. Surely, every one of you is a guardian and responsible for his charges." (Sahih al-Bukhari, 7138, Book 93, Hadith 2). This Hadith explicitly portrays that upbringing of children is not only the responsibility of the father, but also the mother's; and the parents will be asked how they have performed their responsibilities on the Day of Judgment. In another Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) assures that raising righteous daughters can protect the parents. Jabir bin Abdullah (*r.a.*) narrated that the messenger of Allah (S.W.T.) said, "The one who has three daughters born to him, and he is patient over them, clothes them well according to his means, and shows mercy to them, they will become a means of rescue for him from Hell. Another man said, if two? Prophet (P.B.U.H.) replied, and two" (Al-Bukhari & Muslim Book 1, Hadith 1).

In terms of education, parents naturally want their children to receive better education and perform their academic tasks successfully. The parents' responsibility and their active role in educating their children are undeniable (Chen, 2005; Epstein & Karweit, 2014). Children may know the importance of education through parents, and this can affect their academic performance and achievement. Parents can encourage and support their children to learn and provide them with opportunities for learning (Epstein, 1987). It was maintained that parents and family members have the most powerful influence on school children's education across grades (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; Jeynes, 2005a). Thus, parental involvement has become one of the most discussed topics in educational research especially in the developed countries, such as USA.

Parental involvement does not have one single universal definition. Researchers has defined parental involvement in various ways as it has multiple types of behaviors and beliefs (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005a). Traditionally, parental involvement is seen as the parents' investment of their time and money in their children's education.

Therefore, parents who are not be able to provide their children with these resources are considered as uninvolved parents (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

However, Christenson and Sheridan (2001) have pointed out that the ways to be involved in children's education are already beyond traditional involvement such as volunteering at school, helping homework and financial support. Parental involvement is not only limited to activities conducted at home, but it also includes the activities at school such as visiting the school, asking about children's performance, volunteering in both classroom and parent-teacher association activities and many others (Epstein et al., 2009). In other words, parental involvement includes parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community (Epstein, 2001). In addition, parental involvement is categorized into parental involvement at home and parental involvement at school based on the location of parents' involvement practices, such as providing assistance with homework, providing a place for their children to complete schoolwork, and attending school activities (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Howard M. Sandler, 2007). Other researchers have referred to three types or dimensions of involvement (cognitive, affective and school-based involvement) Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994). Parental involvement also includes parents' educational aspiration as used in several studies (Fan & Chen, 2001; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Snyder-hogan, 2010; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007). For instance, Snyder-hogan (2010) examined three components of parental involvement, namely parental home-based involvement, parental school-based involvement and parental educational aspirations. He found that parental aspirations is one of the most significant predictors of student academic achievement. Thus, the current research study has included parents' educational aspirations, parents' home-



based involvement and school-based involvement as the aspects of parental involvement.

Meanwhile, there is no doubt that parents are the key people in any educational progress of their children. Research literature has shown that parental involvement plays a positive role in enhancing students' academic achievement in early childhood to adolescence (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Mo, 2008; Smalls, 2010; Wang, 2015). Many studies have provided evidence that parental involvement is an effective strategy to ensure students' success (Barnard, 2004; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Hill & Craft, 2003). Children will have more positive attitudes towards school and higher academic achievement when parents are more involved in their children education (Catsambis, 2001; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Fan & Chen, 2001; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Jeynes, 2005a; Mo, 2008; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Smalls, 2010; Smith, 2011). Moreover, parents' educational aspirations also play a very influential positive role in shaping students' achievement (Bronstein, Ginsburg & Herrera, 2005; Fan & Chen, 2001; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Smith, 2011; Snyder-hogan, 2010; Spera, Wentzel & Matto, 2009; Wang, 2015).

Although many research studies on parental involvement focused on the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement, little attention has been paid to examine which parental involvement strategies are most effective in order to improve student academic achievement (Jeynes, 2005b; Pruitt, 2012). Some research studies found that parental involvement in school and parents' educational aspirations have very significant role in shaping children's academic achievement (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Snyder-hogan, 2010). On the other hand, Pruitt (2012) found that the most significant relationship is found between parenting (parent-child relationship) and student academic achievement of grade three students. Current

study identified the role of parental involvement aspects such as parents' educational aspiration, home-based involvement and school-based involvement in grade three and four students at a Uyghur primary school in order to identify which types of parental involvement most effectively contribute to students' academic achievement.

It is important to add that literature has identified barriers/challenges that limit parent's involvement in their children education either at home or at school. For instance, Smith (2011) found that communication and language are among the barriers to parental involvement. They also explained further that identifying those barriers, putting effective strategies, and establishing an effective partnership between school and family would have a great impact on parental involvement and student academic achievement.

In China, research on parental involvement is still at its primary stages, especially in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) where literature on parental involvement is quite scarce. However, it is noticed that most of the researches on parental involvement in China are conducted in Hong Kong and other developed areas like Shenzhen. For instance, Lau, Li and Rao (2011) found that parents from Hong Kong and Shenzhen were more involved in their children's early learning, mainly through home-based involvement. In addition, the same researchers found in another research conducted in Hong Kong and Shenzhen that level of parental involvement in their children's early learning was influenced by various factors such as parents' marital and employment status (Lau, Li & Rao, 2012). Wang (2015) examined the influences of parental expectations, parental involvements, and self-efficacy on Chinese eighth graders' achievement in English in Kunming, Yunnan, China, and found that those factors were significant predictors of the students' achievement in English. In another study conducted on Uyghur students studying in a Chinese boarding school, away from

home, Chen (2010) found that the parents could help and facilitate their children school life due to the parents' high level of aspiration toward their children's education.

### **1.1.1 Education System in China**

The Republic of China (PRC) is a unified country with multi-ethnicities of 56 ethnic groups. Despite the diversities they have mutual respect, good integration and all are given equal rights to education. The basic right of education in China includes a nine-year compulsory education, which comprises of six-year primary and three-years of junior secondary education. The nine-year compulsory education is the result of China's Communist Party Central Committee Resolution on the Educational System Reform in 1985. Consequently the number of schools and student enrollment rates are expanding rapidly, and the demand for quality education is increasing. By 2005, the new curriculum for the nine-year compulsory education was adapted in 22 provinces, five autonomous regions and four major cities. This is to equip future generations with solid knowledge, necessary skills and proper attitudes towards education. In order to further improve the quality of education, the government of China has also developed strategies to strengthen the relationship between community, school and families.

The XUAR is one of the five major autonomous regions in China with more than 40 ethnic minority groups. The population of the region is over 21 million (2010), and Muslim ethnic minority groups constitute more than 60% of the population in XUAR (consisting mostly of Uyghur, Kazak, Hui, Kirgiz, Tajik, Uzbek, and some others) where Uyghurs from the largest racial group (Statistics Bureau of XUAR, 2010). The schools in XUAR follow two systems called as Minority School System and Han School System based on the language of instruction and student enrolment. This current

research study was conducted at a Uyghur primary school which is one of the Minority schools in XUAR.

The Chinese language is the main language of all the Chinese in China. However the use of Chinese language and other ethnic minority language by ethnic minorities in China is allowed, especially in XUAR where bilingual education in Mandarin and a minority language (Uyghur or Kazak) together were chosen as the languages of instruction. The aim of bilingual education system in minority schools in China is to preserve Chinese culture and at the same time to make students to be more involved in the mainstream society in learning advanced science, culture and technology and contribute towards China's development (Yu-le, Li & Luo, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, in this study, the Uyghur primary school is a minority school where Uyghur children make up 100% of the enrolment. Recently, in this primary school, the final exam results of the students in the four major subjects (language, literature, mathematics, and sciences) showed that students vary in their academic achievements; many students scored high marks, while equally many others scored low marks and failed in these subjects. These varied results might be due to different levels of parents' involvement. As shown in many studies there is a strong relationship between parental involvement and student academic achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005a; Pruitt, 2012; Smalls, 2010). The prime focus of researches on parental involvement in China is given to the Chinese schools in developed areas based on the belief that parental involvement is a major variable that can positively impact children's academic success. Thus, this study will investigate the role of parental involvement in the academic achievement of the school children at a Uyghur primary school, and examine the challenges of parents' involvement in their children's education at home and at school.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Literature has provided evidence on the positive impact of parental involvement on the academic achievement of school children (Catsambis, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Jeynes, 2005a; Mo, 2008; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Smalls, 2010; Smith, 2011). In a meta-analysis of 41 studies on parental involvement and student academic achievement, Jeynes (2005a) found that parental involvement has a positive impact on the students' academic achievement. In China, the available literature on parental involvement is limited to some developed cities like Beijing and Shenzhen. Those studies conducted on parental involvement in China indicated a positive impact on the academic achievement of Chinese students (Chen, 2010; Lau, Li & Rao, 2011, 2012; Wang, 2015). However, these studies have not focused on Uyghur students, and studies on the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement is yet to be conducted in Uyghur primary school. It is still not known whether parental involvement plays a role in Uyghur students' academic achievement.

Recent statistics from the Education Bureau in XUAR has shown that Uyghur primary school has a low ranking among many other primary schools due to the students' overall poor academic achievement. For example, in classes of grade 3 in a Uyghur primary school, students' final exam results in language, mathematics and science subjects for the academic year of 2015/2016 were dramatically low; nearly 70% of students failed in language and Science subjects, while more than 50% of students failed in Mathematics. Nonetheless, there are some students in other classes in the same school who are achieving high grades in all subjects, including the major ones. The school community are constantly being asked to identify the factors for this varied academic achievement, and provide the students with every possible means to improve

their academic achievements. Based on the school records and teachers' observation and experience, it is argued that low level of parents' involvement either at home or at school might be one of the key factors that negatively affect the school children's academic achievement. Only a small number of parents are participating in the school events and communicating frequently with the teachers or school administration. In addition, many parents may be less likely to provide learning opportunities for their children at home for various reasons, which result in students growing up in a non-supportive educational environment.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for a research to be conducted to examine the level of Uyghur parents' involvement in their children education, and its role in student academic achievement, and to identify the challenges for parental involvement in this rural area in XUAR. This study will fill in the gap in the research concerning parental involvement at the primary schools in the rural areas in XUAR; and more informed strategies and policies could be formulated to enhance students' academic achievement in XUAR.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the levels of parental involvement (i.e. parents' educational aspiration, parents' home-based involvement and parents' school-based involvement) in school children's education at a Uyghur primary school in XUAR.
2. To determine the differences in the levels of parental involvement between low achievers and high achievers.
3. To investigate the challenges of parental involvement at home and at school.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided the current study. Research questions one and two are based on the parents perceptions towards their involvement in their children's education.

1. What are the levels of parental involvement in the education of school children at a Uyghur primary school in XUAR in terms of
  - a. their educational aspiration;
  - b. home-based involvement; and
  - c. school- based involvement;
2. Is there any significant difference in the levels of parental involvement between low achievers and high achievers?
3. What are the challenges to Uyghur parents' involvement at home and at school?

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of this study is derived from the essential role of parental involvement in enhancing school children education in all aspects of development, particularly the academic achievement as coined in many researches. Similar research have not been found or conducted in XUAR, where Uyghur primary school is experiencing problems in students' academic achievement. Therefore, as the first study on parental involvement in XUAR, these findings will be useful to parents, teachers, students and school administrators. It will provide important information about the level of parental involvement in Uyghur primary school, and identify the challenges to parents' involvement at home and at school. School and teachers will gain benefit as encouraging partnership between parents and teachers/schools. The study will assist administrators

and teachers to identify the effective ways and strategies to improve parental involvement and enhance students' academic achievement as well.

## **1.6 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

These are among the delimitations of this study;

1. The sample of this study is limited to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students studying at a Uyghur primary school for the academic year 2015/2016.
2. Students' final exam scores of four major subjects namely Language, Literature, Mathematics and Science for the academic year of 2015/2016 were used to measure students' academic achievements.

## **1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE STUDY TERMS**

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study.

### **Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement refers to the parents' different forms of activities in order to help children's education, such as parents' motivation, parents' expectations, value of education, helping with homework, reading session with child, discussion with their children about school day, volunteering at school, and communication with teachers and others. In this study, parental involvement includes three components: parents' educational aspiration, parents' home-based involvement, and parents' school-based involvement.