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**Role of Parental Involvement in Enhancing Early Childhood
Education Outcomes in Japan**



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Role of Parental Involvement in Enhancing Early Childhood Education Outcomes in Japan

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this article was to analyze role of parental involvement in enhancing early childhood education outcomes.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Research on the effect of teacher professional development (PD) on student academic performance in mathematics in the United States consistently shows moderate to positive improvements in student outcomes when teachers engage in well-structured and sustained PD programs. Studies indicate that PD programs designed to enhance teachers' instructional strategies and content knowledge, particularly in mathematics, are linked to measurable gains in student achievement, with moderate effect sizes found on test scores. Moreover, research suggests that ongoing, collaborative, and long-duration PD, such as coaching or embedded professional learning communities, tends to have a more significant impact on student learning than short-term workshops or one-off seminars.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Ecological systems theory, social capital theory & family systems theory may be used to anchor future studies on the role of parental involvement in enhancing early childhood education outcomes. Practitioners should develop interactive, hands-on training for parents on how to engage in their child's academic development at home, with a focus on improving literacy, numeracy, and social skills. At the policy level, education policymakers should prioritize the creation of national and local policies that support parental involvement as a core component of early childhood education.

Keywords: *Parental Involvement, Early Childhood Education*

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education outcomes are measured not only by academic achievement (e.g., early literacy and numeracy) but also by social skills development and emotional well-being, which together form a foundation for later success in school and life. In the United States, evidence from longitudinal intervention research shows that high-quality early childhood programs can result in measurable increases in later mathematics achievement for example, participants in the Abecedarian Early Intervention Project scored on average 1.3 grade levels higher in math in young adulthood compared with non-participants, highlighting long-term academic benefits of early learning exposure (UNICEF, 2025). In Japan and other developed contexts, social-emotional learning (SEL) interventions implemented in early childhood settings have been shown to improve not only emotional regulation but also academic performance and social adaptation; one peer-reviewed intervention study reported large effect sizes for reductions in behavioral problems and improvements in social adaptation linked to academic gains in young children (Hosokawa, 2024). Children who develop stronger cooperation, emotional control, and interpersonal skills during early years are better equipped for schooling challenges, with trends suggesting that early SEL competence correlates with long-term educational engagement. These integrated outcomes reflect how early cognitive and socio-emotional development interact to support both learning readiness and well-being in developed economies (Hosokawa, 2024).

In many developing economies, early childhood education outcomes remain constrained by limited access to quality programs, but where structured early learning exists, social-emotional and cognitive gains are evident. Research in contexts such as Uganda shows that children enrolled in well-structured early childhood programs scored significantly higher on measures of social-emotional competencies including self-regulation and social awareness relative to peers with limited formal early education exposure, demonstrating that structured early learning supports both psychosocial and cognitive development (UNICEF, 2025). Globally, access to early childhood care and education is associated with improved school readiness, including basic language, numeracy skills, and social competence, though participation rates in preschool remain low in many low- and middle-income countries (UNICEF, 2025). These patterns suggest that when quality early education is available in developing settings, children show improved emotional well-being and social competence, which are linked to later academic opportunities. However, large gaps in access and program quality mean that many children do not realize these benefits, contributing to persistent inequalities in academic and social outcomes. Addressing these disparities through investment in early childhood education infrastructure and teacher training is critical for improving outcomes across cognitive, social, and emotional domains (UNICEF, 2025).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, evidence indicates that early childhood development interventions are unevenly available and that children's outcomes in cognitive, social, and emotional domains are strongly shaped by contextual factors such as health, nutrition, and early learning exposure. Scoping reviews of early childhood development (ECD) interventions in the region point to significant gaps in responsive caregiving and early learning components, with most programs focusing narrowly on nutrition and neglecting integrated early education, limiting potential developmental impact (UNICEF, 2025). Although comprehensive peer-reviewed data on academic achievement specifically from early childhood in this region are limited, regional analyses show that ECD quality remains low, contributing to children entering primary school

with lagging early literacy and numeracy skills relative to global peers (World Bank, 2025). These developmental deficits are compounded by broader socioeconomic challenges, including poverty and limited access to early education services, which also negatively influence emotional well-being and social competence. Improving ECD outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa therefore requires multidimensional interventions that integrate early learning with health and caregiver support to address the full range of cognitive, social, and emotional needs of young children (World Bank, 2025).

Parental involvement in early childhood education plays a significant role in shaping various developmental outcomes in children, such as academic achievement, social skills development, and emotional well-being. One of the most direct forms of parental involvement is time spent on homework, where research has consistently shown that parents who engage in their children's academic activities at home enhance their children's academic performance, particularly in foundational subjects like literacy and numeracy (Jeynes, 2018). Parental participation in school events is another key factor, as it strengthens the relationship between the home and school environment, providing children with a sense of community and support, which is essential for their emotional and social development (Christenson & Reschly, 2020). Additionally, communication with teachers allows parents to stay informed about their child's progress and school needs, facilitating positive academic and emotional outcomes by ensuring that both parents and teachers are aligned in supporting the child's development (Henderson & Mapp, 2019). These forms of involvement create a nurturing environment that is crucial for young children to thrive academically and socially.

Parental involvement also directly influences children's social skills development and emotional well-being. For instance, positive communication between parents and teachers helps foster emotional security in children, making them more likely to engage in cooperative behaviors and develop healthy peer relationships (Jeynes, 2018). Parents who actively engage in school activities can model and reinforce social behaviors, such as collaboration and problem-solving, which are critical skills in early childhood. Research suggests that when parents provide consistent emotional support by showing interest in their child's school life, children tend to exhibit higher self-esteem, better emotional regulation, and enhanced empathy (Christenson & Reschly, 2020). Collectively, these forms of parental involvement contribute significantly to early childhood outcomes, providing a strong foundation for future academic and personal success. As parental engagement fosters positive interactions both at home and at school, it enhances the child's overall development, preparing them for lifelong learning and well-being.

Problem Statement

Despite widespread recognition that parental involvement is beneficial, there remains a lack of clarity about how specific types of parental engagement such as time spent on homework, participation in school events, and communication with teachers directly influence early childhood education outcomes, including academic achievement, social skills development, and emotional well-being (Jeynes, 2018; Christenson & Reschly, 2020). While some studies suggest that active parental involvement can enhance children's literacy and numeracy skills, evidence from diverse educational settings reveals inconsistent effects, with outcomes varying significantly based on the form, frequency, and quality of involvement (Henderson & Mapp, 2019). Moreover, much of the existing research has focused on older children, leaving a critical gap in understanding how

different parental involvement practices impact younger learners during their most formative years. This is particularly problematic given that early childhood represents a foundational period for establishing social competencies and emotional regulation that support later academic success. Additionally, there is limited research exploring contextual moderators such as socioeconomic status, cultural norms, and parental education, which may shape how involvement practices affect early outcomes. Therefore, there is a pressing need for empirical studies that systematically examine the roles of distinct parental involvement dimensions in enhancing early childhood education outcomes, and how these relationships differ across varying family and community contexts.

Theoretical Review

Ecological Systems Theory

Originally proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, Ecological Systems Theory posits that a child's development is shaped by multiple interacting environmental systems, from the family and school (microsystem) to broader societal influences (macrosystem). This theory highlights that children do not learn in isolation their development is influenced by dynamic interactions among family, school, and community. In early childhood education, parental involvement (e.g., time on homework, participation in school events, communication with teachers) represents a key microsystem influence that interacts with school environments to shape academic achievement, social skills, and emotional well-being. As parents actively participate in schooling, the positive alignment between home and school environments can strengthen children's learning experiences and outcomes (Lee & Choi, 2020).

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory, influenced by James Coleman's work, suggests that resources embedded in social relationships such as trust, networks, and shared norms facilitate the achievement of desired outcomes. Within education, parental involvement contributes social capital by providing support, expectations, and connections that promote children's learning and development. For example, strong parent-teacher communication and parental participation in school events can create networks of support that reinforce learning both at home and in school, fostering better school readiness and positive emotional development in young children. These social connections act as valuable capital that enhances early childhood education outcomes (Jeynes, 2018).

Family Systems Theory

Family systems theory, associated with Murray Bowen, views the family as an emotional unit in which members influence one another's behaviors and development. From this perspective, parental behaviors and attitudes are interdependent with children's educational experiences. In early childhood, parents' engagement in their child's schooling reflects broader family processes such as support, communication patterns, and emotional climate that can significantly influence children's academic motivation, social competence, and emotional regulation. When parental involvement is positive and consistent, it can promote a supportive family environment that enhances early learning outcomes (Kim & Hill, 2021).

Empirical Review

Cosso (2022) examined the impact of parental involvement programs on young children's academic achievement and social-emotional development. The study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how various parental involvement strategies influence early childhood outcomes. The analysis included studies from a range of settings, focusing on different types of parental involvement, such as home-based activities, school volunteering, and parent-teacher communication. The findings revealed that parental involvement had a moderate to strong positive impact on both academic achievement and social skills development. Specifically, children whose parents were more engaged in their education showed better reading and math scores and exhibited improved emotional regulation and behavioral control. The study also highlighted that long-term programs that focused on sustained parental involvement yielded the most significant outcomes, particularly when parents were actively engaged in school-related activities and decision-making. The researchers recommended that schools implement ongoing, structured parental involvement programs that offer training and support for parents to be actively engaged in their children's academic and social development. The study further suggested that community support systems should be established to bridge the gap for families with fewer resources or less educational experience. However, one limitation of the study was the heterogeneity in the design and scope of the included studies, making it difficult to generalize specific outcomes to all contexts. Despite this, Cosso (2022) emphasized the importance of a collaborative approach involving schools, families, and communities to improve early childhood education outcomes through parental involvement. Future research should focus on evaluating contextual factors like family income and cultural norms to better understand how they influence the effectiveness of parental involvement programs.

Nair (2025) explored the impact of parental involvement in preschool on children's academic performance in India. The research involved surveying 400 parents from different preschool settings, including urban and rural areas, to understand the nature of their involvement in their children's early education. The study revealed that higher levels of parental involvement in school activities, such as parent-teacher meetings, school events, and monitoring homework, were positively correlated with higher academic performance in subjects like math and literacy. Additionally, parents who provided consistent emotional support and engaged in learning activities at home helped their children develop better problem-solving skills and higher cognitive abilities. The study suggested that children whose parents maintained close communication with teachers were better prepared for school and demonstrated higher levels of school readiness. The researchers recommended that preschools and daycares offer structured opportunities for parents to participate in their child's learning process, such as through parent workshops and training programs on how to engage in early childhood education effectively. They also emphasized that educational policy should support parent engagement strategies as a vital component of early childhood education programs. However, Nair (2025) noted that the study did not account for socioeconomic factors that might influence the levels of parental involvement, suggesting further research to examine this relationship. The authors concluded that parent involvement is a key

predictor of early academic success and should be promoted as part of national educational reforms.

Jeon (2020) explored the relationship between parental involvement in Head Start programs and children's early academic skills, focusing on a sample of 100 low-income families. The study combined quantitative analysis of children's math and literacy scores with qualitative interviews from parents and teachers to assess the depth and nature of involvement. The findings revealed that parental involvement in school events and parent-teacher conferences was significantly associated with higher student performance in math, reading, and social skills. Additionally, parents who were actively involved in homework activities and language development at home contributed to their children's improved social-emotional skills and behavioral regulation. The study recommended that Head Start programs and similar early education initiatives create more opportunities for meaningful parental engagement to support children's academic readiness and overall well-being. Jeon (2020) further highlighted the importance of targeted outreach to involve parents in low-income settings, noting that parental involvement was often hindered by economic and time constraints. A limitation of the study was that it did not control for teacher quality, which might also influence student outcomes. Nevertheless, the study reinforced the positive impact of home school connections in early childhood education and suggested integrating family support systems into early education curricula.

Magnuson and Schindler (2024) explored how parental involvement in early childhood education influenced children's social skills and academic achievement over time. They employed a longitudinal design that tracked 500 children from kindergarten to third grade in urban schools. The study found that consistent parental involvement in school-related activities, such as helping with homework and attending school events, was significantly associated with higher test scores in math and reading. Moreover, parental emotional support and engagement in social skill development at home were linked to improved peer relationships and emotional regulation in children. Magnuson and Schindler (2024) recommended that schools should implement parental training workshops to enhance both academic and social-emotional development in children. They suggested that educational policymakers invest in family support initiatives to foster positive home-school interactions that benefit both academic and social outcomes. The authors noted that further research was necessary to explore the long-term impact of parental involvement on children's outcomes, especially in terms of academic persistence and career success.

Jeynes (2023) reviewed the existing research on parental involvement and its influence on early childhood academic performance, focusing on over 50 studies. The study found that parents who actively engage in their children's education through reading at home, participating in school events, and maintaining open communication with teachers showed children with higher academic achievement in both literacy and mathematics. Additionally, social skills development was strongly influenced by positive parental interactions in home environments, such as shared activities and emotional guidance. Jeynes (2023) recommended that schools establish family education programs to teach parents how to support school readiness and social-emotional learning at home. He also emphasized the need for early intervention programs that include parents as key

partners in the education process, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the study's limitation was its reliance on existing data and lack of new primary research to explore the direct causal relationships between parental involvement and specific academic outcomes.

Sahu (2025) conducted a study in India to analyze the role of parental involvement in early childhood education in enhancing children's academic and social outcomes. The study used a quantitative survey of 500 parents and teachers, measuring parental involvement in homework and school activities and tracking the academic performance and social skills of children. The study found that increased parental involvement was associated with higher grades in mathematics and language skills, as well as better social behaviors in children. Sahu (2025) recommended that schools provide structured opportunities for parents to engage with their children's learning through both home and school-based activities, particularly in low-income communities. The study's limitation was that it did not account for individual differences in teacher quality, which could have confounded the results.

Smith & Jones (2021) focused on parental involvement in early childhood programs in urban schools in the U.S. using a mixed-methods approach. They found that parents who engaged in school activities, such as volunteering in classrooms and attending parent-teacher meetings, had children who demonstrated better academic performance and stronger emotional regulation. The study also found that active parent-teacher communication resulted in improved teacher satisfaction, which further benefited student outcomes. Smith & Jones (2021) recommended that schools incorporate parent engagement strategies into their curricula to promote positive academic and social outcomes for young children. However, they acknowledged that cultural differences in parental involvement might influence the outcomes, suggesting further studies on how these cultural factors interact with academic achievement.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Research Gaps

One of the primary conceptual gaps in the research on parental involvement is the need for a deeper understanding of the specific types of parental involvement that most effectively influence early childhood education outcomes. While studies, such as those by Cosso (2022) and Jeynes (2023), highlight the positive effects of general parental engagement, there remains insufficient clarity about which forms such as homework support, participation in school events, or communication

with teachers are most impactful. Future research needs to clearly differentiate between various engagement strategies and identify how they contribute to distinct developmental outcomes, such as academic achievement, social skills, and emotional well-being in children. This gap in understanding also extends to examining how these forms of involvement interact with one another to produce cumulative effects on child development. Moreover, although correlations between parental involvement and positive outcomes are evident, studies often fail to establish causal relationships. Longitudinal research that tracks children's development over time, while controlling for confounding factors like teacher quality and socioeconomic background, is essential for understanding the long-term impact of parental involvement on academic success and social-emotional growth (Jeon, 2020).

Contextual Research Gaps

In terms of contextual gaps, much of the existing research, such as Nair (2025) and Cosso (2022), has not fully explored how socioeconomic factors and cultural differences influence the effectiveness of parental involvement programs. The nature and intensity of parental engagement often depend on socioeconomic status (SES), with parents from higher SES backgrounds more likely to participate actively in school activities due to factors such as time availability, education level, and access to resources. However, lower-income families face significant barriers, such as financial constraints, work schedules, and limited educational resources at home, which can hinder their ability to engage in their children's learning. Further research is needed to examine how these socioeconomic variables affect parental involvement and whether interventions can be tailored to better support families with fewer resources. Additionally, cultural factors play a pivotal role in shaping how parents engage with schools and their children's education. There is a need to explore how cultural norms around education and parenting influence the forms and impact of parental involvement, particularly in multicultural and immigrant communities (Jeon et al., 2020).

Geographical Research Gaps

There is a geographical gap in research regarding the role of parental involvement in enhancing early childhood education outcomes, particularly in non-Western and low-resource settings. While studies such as Nair (2025) have explored parental involvement in India, much of the research on this topic has been concentrated in developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. In contrast, there is limited research examining how parental involvement influences early childhood outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, or other low-income regions. These regions may face unique challenges related to access to education, cultural differences, and policy gaps that affect how parents interact with schools and contribute to their children's learning. Comparative studies that explore these contextual differences would shed light on the global applicability of parental involvement models and provide insights into how these strategies can be adapted to various geographical contexts. Additionally, while research in urban settings is abundant, rural areas often have fewer resources and unique challenges that may impact parental engagement. Further studies are necessary to understand how parental involvement plays out in rural communities, particularly in developing countries, where families may face additional barriers to participation in their children's education (Magnuson & Schindler, 2024).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In conclusion, parental involvement plays a crucial role in enhancing early childhood education outcomes, particularly in terms of academic achievement, social skills development, and emotional well-being. Research consistently demonstrates that when parents actively engage in their children's learning whether through home-based activities, attending school events, or maintaining communication with teacher's children exhibit improved academic performance and stronger social-emotional competencies. However, the impact of parental involvement is influenced by several factors, including socioeconomic status, cultural norms, and available resources. While many studies underscore the positive effects of parental engagement, there remains a need for more contextual and geographical research to understand how these practices function in low-income settings or non-Western cultures. To fully maximize the benefits of parental involvement, schools and policymakers must implement structured, inclusive programs that provide parents with the training and resources necessary to support their children's development, while considering socioeconomic barriers and cultural differences. Ultimately, fostering strong home-school partnerships is key to improving early childhood outcomes and preparing children for lifelong academic success.

Recommendations

Theory

From a theoretical standpoint, further research is needed to refine conceptual frameworks that explain the relationship between parental involvement and early childhood education outcomes. Specifically, Ecological Systems Theory and Social Capital Theory should be extended to incorporate how different forms of parental involvement (e.g., emotional support, school participation, homework engagement) intersect to influence academic achievement, social skills, and emotional well-being. Researchers should investigate how the social, cultural, and economic contexts in which families live shape the nature of their involvement and its effectiveness, thus developing more nuanced theories of parental engagement that are contextually relevant. Furthermore, the role of longitudinal studies should be explored to understand how sustained parental involvement influences children's outcomes over time, providing a clearer picture of the long-term impact of engagement on academic and personal success. Theoretical contributions should also focus on differentiating types of parental involvement that best support children's development in specific domains (e.g., cognitive, emotional, social), leading to more targeted interventions.

Practice

In practice, schools and early childhood programs should establish structured parental involvement frameworks that are designed to be inclusive and accessible, particularly for families from low-income or disadvantaged backgrounds. Practitioners should develop interactive, hands-on training for parents on how to engage in their child's academic development at home, with a focus on improving literacy, numeracy, and social skills. In particular, schools should encourage parent-teacher partnerships that involve regular communication and feedback, creating a collaborative

approach that supports shared decision-making. Early childhood educators should also ensure that they are equipped with the tools and knowledge to foster effective parent engagement, providing family workshops on developmental milestones and school readiness. Schools must adopt culturally sensitive approaches, acknowledging the diverse ways in which families engage with education and ensuring that programs are flexible enough to accommodate different cultural practices and family structures.

Policy

At the policy level, education policymakers should prioritize the creation of national and local policies that support parental involvement as a core component of early childhood education. Policies should allocate resources to train parents, empower teachers, and develop community-based support systems that foster positive home-school connections. Moreover, policymakers should ensure that parent involvement is a mandatory and integral part of early education curricula, with training programs and resources provided to parents, particularly in underfunded or rural areas. To bridge the accessibility gap, government and educational institutions must ensure that parent engagement programs are equitable and inclusive, particularly for families in economically disadvantaged communities. Additionally, policies should incentivize schools to create a welcoming environment for parents and actively encourage their participation in school activities and decisions. Long-term, sustainable funding for parent involvement initiatives is crucial to ensure their success and longevity.

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