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Families as partners: Insights from kindergarten teachers on parental engagement in Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Research validates the link between parental engagement in education and improvement of student outcomes. Although this link is agreed upon by educators, particularly in Saudi Arabia, the perceptions of teachers regarding parental engagement are very scarce. This study explores kindergarten teachers' perspectives on parental engagement in Saudi Arabia, examining its impact on children's academic, social, and emotional development, as well as barriers and strategies to enhance engagement. Based on survey data from 273 teachers, the findings highlight the critical role of parental involvement, with work-related commitments and socio-economic constraints identified as major barriers. Private schools reported more proactive engagement strategies than public schools, emphasizing structured communication and collaboration. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions, including resource allocation, teacher training, and community partnerships, to foster equitable and effective family-school collaboration in early childhood education.

KEYWORDS: families and schools relationship, kindergarten teachers' perspective, parental engagement, nurturing environments

Introduction

The relationship between families and schools plays a pivotal role in shaping children's educational experiences and outcomes. Over time, the conceptualization of this relationship has evolved, reflecting changes in research, policy, and practice (Martin, 2023). Epstein's typology of parental involvement, first introduced in 1995, remains one of the most influential frameworks for understanding and enhancing family engagement in schools. This typology identifies six types of involvement: Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community (Epstein, 2018). Serving as a foundation for educational policies and practices, this framework has been instrumental in fostering family-school partnerships. McBride and others emphasized its utility in connecting families, schools, and communities, which is critical for effective parental involvement initiatives (McBride et al., 2003).

Over the past two decades, however, the terminology has gradually shifted from "parental involvement" to "family/parental engagement." This evolution reflects a deeper understanding of the role families play in education and addresses the limitations of the traditional concept of involvement, which often focuses on participation in school events. In contrast, engagement emphasizes meaningful, collaborative partnerships between families and educational institutions (Martin, 2023). Research in the early 2000s began highlighting the importance of family engagement in enhancing children's educational outcomes. For example, one study demonstrated that various forms of family involvement, such as home-based support and communication with teachers, significantly contributed to children's literacy development (Dearing et al., 2006; Deeba, 2021). By the 2010s, many scholars advocated for the term "family engagement" to reflect a more inclusive and reciprocal relationship. Another study stressed that engagement involves not only parental actions but also the responsiveness of schools to family needs, underscoring its reciprocal nature (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011). Parental engagement, as it is now understood, is a multifaceted concept that encompasses active and meaningful participation in children's educational experiences. It extends beyond attending parent-teacher conferences or assisting with homework to include a wide range of activities and interactions that support learning at home and school (Muller & Kerbow, 2018; Martin, 2023). This deeper engagement is increasingly recognized as one of the major determinants of educational success and personal development (Kennedy et al., 2021). Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that students achieve higher grades when parents actively participate in their children's learning processes (Sankaran et al., 2020; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011). Furthermore, parental engagement fosters better behavior (Epstein, 2010) and enhances social skills (Harris & Goodall, 2008). However, despite its undeniable benefits, engagement is not without challenges. The current study explores kindergarten teachers' perspectives in Saudi Arabia on the role of parental participation in children's learning and its impact on academic performance, emotional well-being, and social development. Additionally, the study examines common barriers to parental engagement identified by teachers and suggests strategies to overcome these obstacles.

Parental Engagement in Child's Education: Importance and Benefits

Parental engagement plays a crucial role in a child's educational development, serving as a foundation for academic success and overall growth (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). Research over the years has consistently shown that when parents actively engage in their children's education, it significantly boosts the child's academic performance, social skills, and emotional well-being (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014; Parveen & Reba, 2016). Beyond being primary caregivers, parents act as their children's first teachers and lifelong advocates, shaping their learning journey. The positive effects of this engagement are far-reaching, going beyond better grades to fostering a love for learning, boosting self-esteem, and developing essential life skills (Erdem & Kaya, 2020; Romsaitong & Brown, 2020). Parental engagement can take many forms, from engaging in school activities and attending parent-teacher conferences to helping with homework and promoting reading at home (Feuerstein, 2000; Froiland, 2020). Each of these actions helps create a nurturing and supportive learning environment (Sime & Sheridan, 2014). Research indicates that children whose parents are actively involved in their education often exhibit better school attendance, increased motivation, and a stronger sense of responsibility towards their studies (Erdem & Kaya, 2020). Furthermore, these children are more likely to develop essential skills such as effective communication, problem-solving, and resilience, all of which are vital for their future success (Newman et al., 2019).

One of the areas in which parental engagement is most impactful is students' academic performance. Research consistently shows that children with engaged parents perform better in school, evidenced by higher

grades, test scores, and even graduation rates, leading to further education in college (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2016). This increase in academic performance may be due to several factors, including improved parental expectations, better study habits instilled at home, and more frequent positive reinforcement (Tan et al., 2019). Parental interest in a child's education provides emotional support and serves as a standard of valuing education, motivating the child to strive for academic excellence (Moreeng et al., 2024). Additionally, when parents are actively engaged with their children, it signals to those children that education has purpose and value, fostering a lifelong appreciation for learning and personal development (Feuerstein, 2000). As a result, parental engagement often leads to closer relationships between teachers and students, as educators recognize the support and commitment from the family, leading to a more individualized and effective educational process.

Beyond academics, parental engagement has significant social and emotional benefits. Children with involved parents often exhibit better social skills and emotional regulation. They are more likely to have positive relationships with peers and teachers, reducing the risk of behavioral problems and enhancing their overall well-being (Jeynes, 2016). The impact of parental engagement is also evident in schools and communities. Schools with high levels of parental engagement often experience more robust communication between teachers and parents, leading to a more cohesive and supportive educational community (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Such collaboration results in effective teaching strategies tailored to meet the unique needs of students and enhances the overall school climate. Furthermore, communities benefit when parents and schools work together to set high standards for education, creating a culture of shared responsibility and concern for the future success of all children (Erdem & Kaya, 2020).

Barriers to Parental Engagement in Their Children's Education

Parental engagement is a major contributor to the success of children academically and developmentally. However, one can notice clearly that, despite its benefits, many parents experience significant challenges standing in their way to fully participate in their child's education. Understanding these barriers is paramount for educators, implementers of policy, and community developers who would like to see educational settings that are more inclusive and better supported. These barriers are multi-dimensional, ranging from socio-economic to cultural and to time limitations and psychological dimensions as well (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Socio-economic hindrances often prove to be most important; parents with fewer financial resources may struggle to make time for school activities because of long working hours or the cost of childcare (Şengönül, 2022). Language barriers and cultural differences may also create significant challenges, especially for immigrant families, that may cause them to feel cut off from the whole school system or experience a communication breakdown (Antony-Newman, 2018). A parent's level of education also determines their confidence in supporting the academic pursuit of children; some feel unequipped to get involved in school functions or to provide homework help (Davis-Kean et al., 2020).

Furthermore, research suggests that parental work hours play a huge role in their level of participation. The transportation challenges, coupled with working hours that do not allow parents to make time for school-related activities and conferences, further aggravate the situation (Pilarz et al., 2019). The psychological barriers to participating include intimidation, negative experiences that the parent might have had while in school, and also not understanding how the school system works (Goss, 2017). For example, parents can feel unwelcome, intimidated by school personnel and settings, and unaware of their importance in their child's education. Unwelcoming feelings may also result from perceived or real biases and discrimination. Parents from different minority backgrounds, including racial, ethnic, or socio-economic groups, may be inclined to have a feeling of not being entirely accepted and regarded in the school community (Ho & Cherng, 2018). These emotions eventually turn out as a lack of desire to participate in school activities and to communicate with teachers, isolating them and their children even further from the educational process (Lechuga-Pena & Brisson, 2018). Schools may unconsciously endorse these feelings by not acknowledging or celebrating all families' diverse backgrounds and contributions. Without clear communication and guidance from the school, parents might not know how to effectively support their child's education or navigate school policies and expectations. This can create a sense of helplessness and frustration, discouraging them from attempting to engage further (Oranga et al., 2022). Addressing psychological barriers requires a concerted effort from schools to build trust and foster a sense of belonging among all parents. Schools can take proactive steps by offering workshops and resources that empower parents with knowledge and skills, ensuring that communication is clear, respectful, and culturally sensitive, and actively seeking to include parents in decision-making processes.

Teachers' Perspective on Parental Engagement

Teachers are at the forefront of home and school. They play a central role in fostering and modeling the engagement of parents in education. Their perception of this partnership allows school-family partnerships to be seen in lived reality, allowing for what is perceived as a benefit, challenge, and effective approach to engagement (Willemse et al., 2018). Globally, it has been found that teachers understand the importance of parental engagement and believe this to be helpful in the learning process for students' development (Paccaud et al., 2021). They consider concerned parents as worthy partners in creating a warm, enriching education environment (Oswald et al., 2018). However, teachers' expectations of parents' engagement are likely to vary in terms and extent, as per influences such as grade level, subject area, or individual teaching philosophy, among others (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Ho & Cherng, 2018). In studying teacher perceptions, certain benefits that have been derived from parental engagement are typically emphasized in research results. Some of these benefits are increased student academic performance, better communication between home and school, enhancement of student motivation, and more efficient classroom management support (Núñez et al., 2021; Froiland, 2020)

Teachers also recognize the benefits that the parents can bring through what they know about their children in relation to strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles, which could then guide instruction and create a more tailored learning environment for students (Schecter & Sherri, 2008). However, the teachers also understand that establishing and maintaining substantive parental engagement can be challenging. This is due to time or work schedules, in conjunction with socioeconomic status, which might bar parents from further involvement in children's education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). In addition, cultural and linguistic differences, as well as perceived or real negative attitudes of staff in schools, may also stand in the way of accessing effective communication and collaboration (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Walker et al., 2005). Perceived from the Saudi Arabian perspective, the perception of teachers toward parental engagement is a mix of cultural values, societal expectations, and ever-reforming educational reforms. Educational reform endeavors in Saudi Arabia, such as Vision 2030, have recently emphasized the role of parental engagement and family-school partnerships. However, translating these policy aspirations into practice at the school level demands persistent attention to teacher development, resourcing, and ongoing support (Aldawsari, 2020). Thus, it is essential for many reasons to consider how teachers in Saudi Arabia view parental engagement. Teachers' perspectives can have an invaluable understanding of the contemporary situation, challenges, and prospective strategies for enhancing parental engagement (Alghamdi, 2019). This indicates that further research is needed to examine teachers' views regarding parental engagement in Saudi Arabia. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the views of kindergarten teachers in Saudi Arabia, shedding light on their experiences and providing valuable information to inform policy and practice aimed at strengthening school-family partnerships in this context.

Materials and Methods

The main issue that this study investigated was the extent to which teachers in Saudi Arabia believe that parents are involved in the education of their children, the extent to which teachers recognize the benefits associated with parental engagement in their children's education, and the initiatives used by schools and educators to promote parental engagement. The research evolved around these questions:

(1) What is the teacher's perception of parental engagement?
(2) What are some of the initiatives the schools and teachers took to encourage parental engagement?
(3) What are the challenges from the teachers' point of view that can hinder parental engagement?
(4) What are the differences between public and private schools regarding parental engagement?

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the perspectives and experiences of kindergarten teachers in Saudi Arabia. The primary data collection method was a survey administered online via Microsoft Forms. The researcher developed the survey questions.

Participants

The targeted population was kindergarten teachers who had worked with children for at least one year in Saudi Arabia. There were 273 female participants. The participants were from multiple parts of Saudia but mainly from the Eastern region.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher made a list of the kindergarten schools in the area, then contacted the head of each school, explained the study, and encouraged them to send the survey link to the teachers in their school for volunteer participation. No phone numbers or emails were required from all participants. Teachers who consented to join the study were forwarded a survey link by their school heads. The link directed them to a safe online survey hosted on Microsoft Forms. Each participant first had to sign a mandatory consent form. The consent form outlined the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Once the participants sign the consent form, they would be able to move to the first page of the questionnaire, which contains a section with details about the researcher, including the researcher's personal and contact information and a comprehensive background of the study, ensuring participants understood everything clearly about the research itself and their participation within it. The researcher invited the participants to make any inquiries through email or telephone. The average time to complete the survey was 5-8 minutes. The survey was structured into four parts, each covering the following points: General Background Questions, Importance of Parental Engagement, Strategies to Encourage Parental Engagement, and Barriers to Effective Parental Engagement. Data collection took place from March 6th to June 6th, 2023, a three-month period during which the online survey remained open for participant responses. Survey data was analyzed initially by basic descriptive analysis to identify frequency, percentages, and mod using the statistical software (SPSS). After running the frequency test, a few trends came out, which led to conducting a Crosstabulation test (chai-square) to find out if any relationship exists between some of the variables.

Results

A total of 273 kindergarten teachers in Saudi Arabia participated in this study. The majority (n = 206, 75.5%) reported having 5-8 years of teaching experience, followed by those with more than ten years of experience (n = 37, 13.6%). Fewer teachers had 3-5 years (n = 23, 8.4%) or 1-3 years (n = 4, 1.5%) of experience. Most teachers held a Bachelor's degree (n = 258, 94.5%), while a few had a Master's degree (n = 11, 4.0%). Four respondents did not provide this information (n = 4, 1.5%). Most participants were employed in public schools (n = 217, 79.5%), with the remaining teaching in private institutions (n = 56, 20.5%). When asked to rate the socio-economic status of the majority of learners in their school, almost all teachers described it as "average" (n = 266, 97.4%), with only 7 (2.6%) indicating "above average." (See Table 1 for the survey demographic information.)

Table 1. Demographic information.
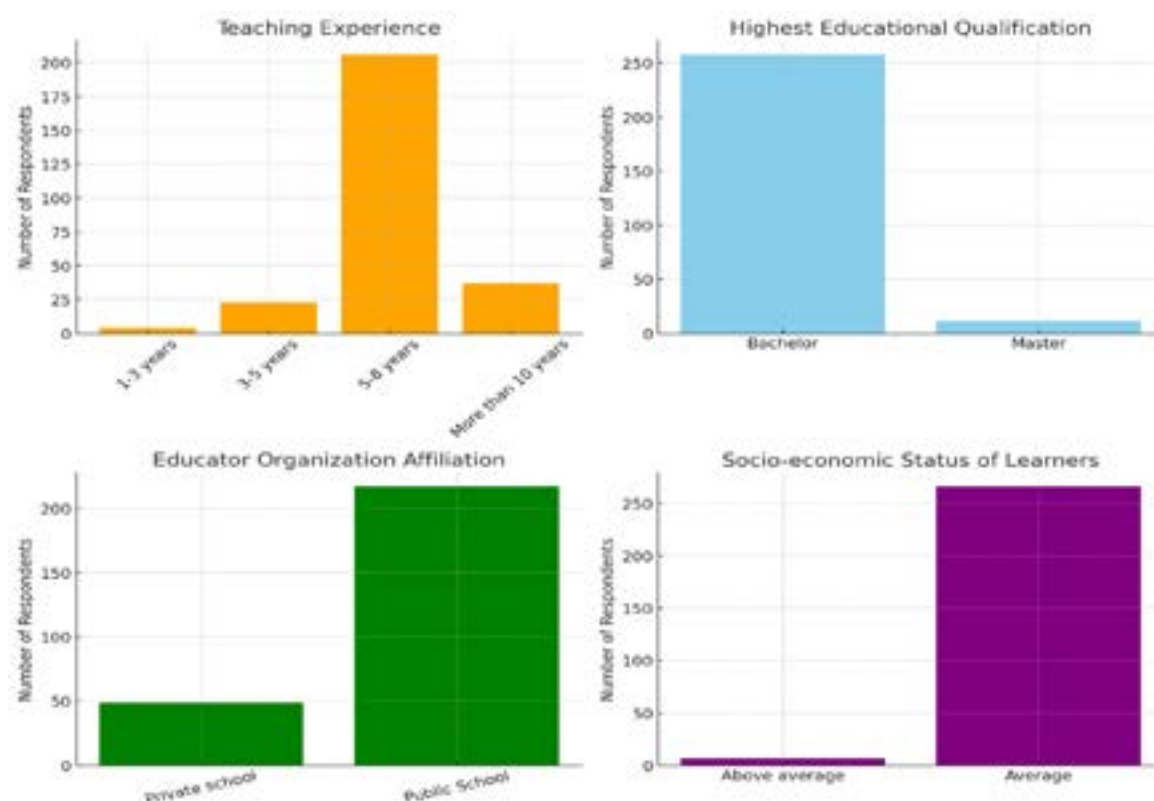
Teacher Perceptions of Parental Engagement

Teachers were asked about their views on the importance of parental engagement in various activities. Most considered parental engagement in classroom activities and homework to be "very important" (n = 123, 45.1% and n = 146, 53.5%, respectively). In contrast, parental engagement in sporting activities was rated as "important" by most teachers (n = 147, 53.8%), with fewer deeming it "very important" (n = 126, 46.2%). Similarly, parental engagement in social activities was rated as "important" by the majority (n = 180, 65.9%), with fewer considering it "very important" (n = 93, 34.1%). Regarding the perceived effects of parental engagement on student outcomes, a majority of teachers agreed that it improves learners' academic skills (n = 142, 52.1%), school attendance (n = 148, 54.2%), social behavior (n = 201, 73.6%), and problem-solving skills (n = 238, 82.1%). Furthermore, most teachers disagreed (n = 176, 64.5%) or strongly disagreed (n = 56, 20.5%) that parental engagement has no effect at all, while a minority agreed (n = 37, 13.6%) or strongly agreed (n = 4, 1.5%) with this statement. (See Table 2). In terms of the frequency of parental contact, the most common response was "sometimes" (n = 191, 69.9%).
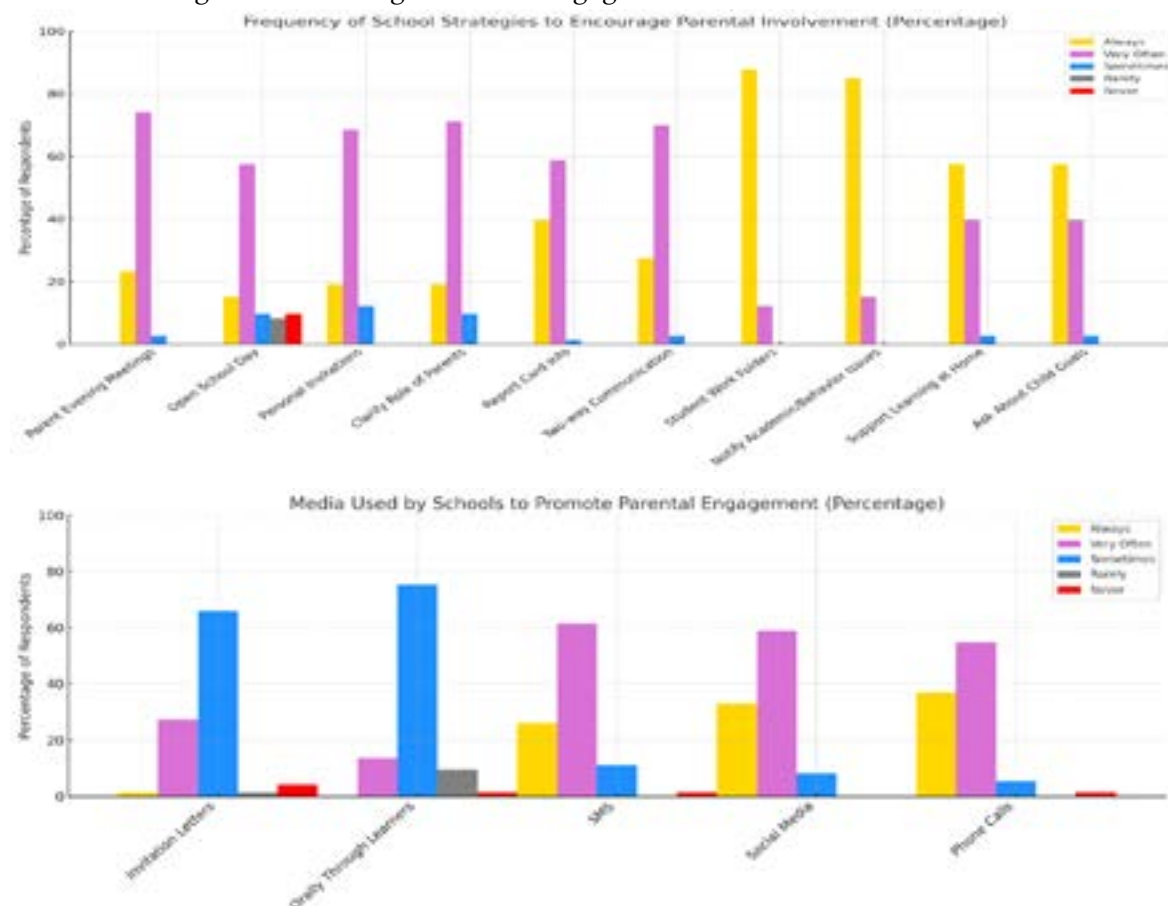
Table 2. Importance of Parental Engagement.
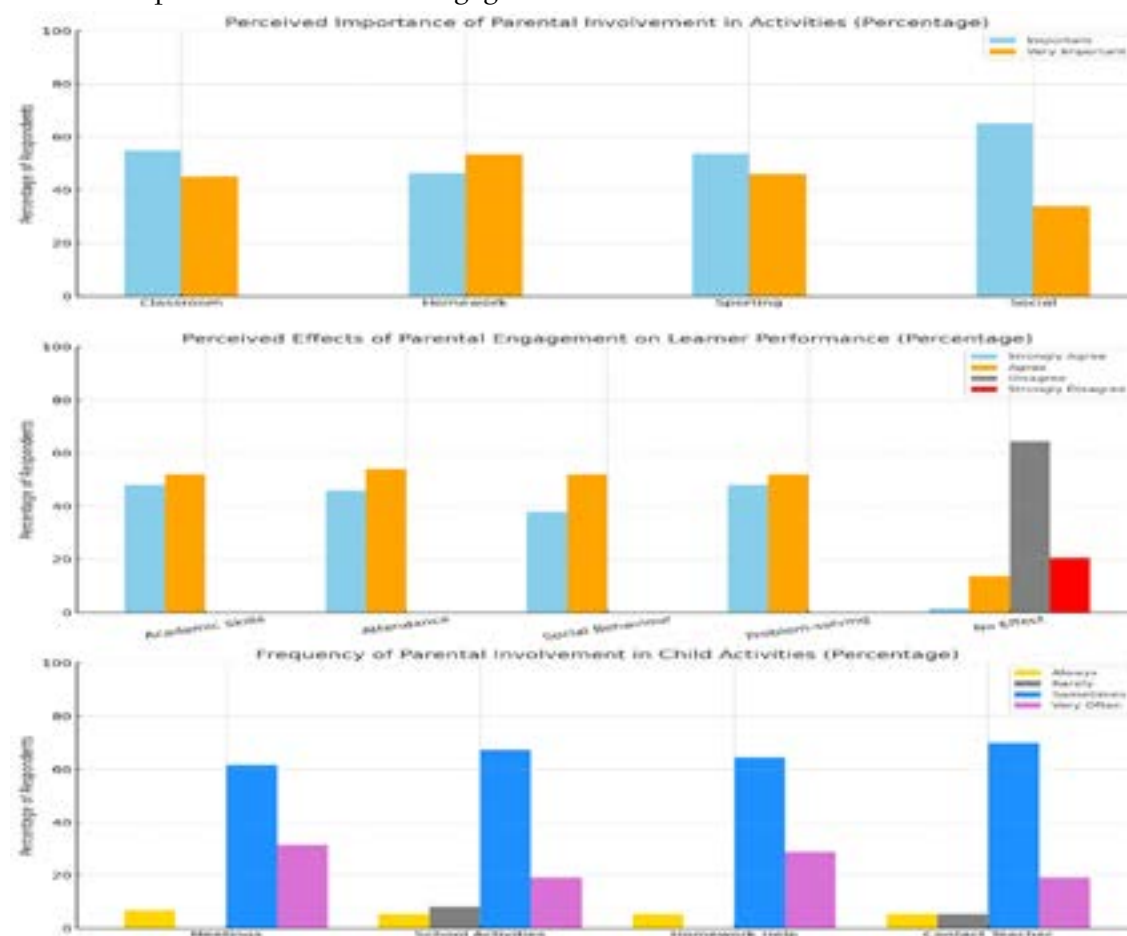
Strategies to Encourage Parental Engagement

To better understand how teachers encourage parental engagement, they were asked about the frequency with which their schools use various strategies and communication methods. The most frequently reported strategies were sending folders of student work home for review (reported as "always" by n = 239, 87.5%) and notifying families of student academic or behavior problems (n = 232, 85.0% "always"). In terms of communication methods, short message systems (SMS) and phone calls were among the most preferred, with n = 168, 61.5% "very often" and n = 148, 54.0% "very often", respectively, reporting frequent usage. Other responses can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Strategies to Encourage Parental Engagement

Frequency of School Strategies to Encourage Parental Involvement (Percentage)

Media Used by Schools to Promote Parental Engagement (Percentage)

Barriers to Parental Engagement

The data presented in the table below (see Table 4) highlights the barriers to parental engagement as perceived by teachers. The most substantial barrier identified was work-related commitments, with a majority of respondents (n = 209, 76.6%) indicating this was "always" a barrier and an additional 23.4% (n = 64) reporting it as "very often" a barrier. Socio-economic status was also noted as a significant obstacle, with 12.5% (n = 34) of teachers viewing it as "always" a barrier, 56.4% (n = 154) as "sometimes," and 31.1% (n = 85) as "very often" a barrier. Teachers frequently cited two additional concerns: a lack of awareness about school activities and school initiatives to involve parents. For both of these potential barriers, the modal response was "sometimes" (63.0% and 64.5%, respectively), followed by "very often" (35.5% and 34.0%, respectively). Notably, only a small percentage of respondents perceived teachers' negative attitudes toward parents as a significant barrier, though nearly two-thirds (64.5%) acknowledged it as at least "sometimes" a barrier. These findings suggest that logistical challenges related to work and socio-economic circumstances, along with school communication and outreach efforts, may be key areas to address to facilitate greater parental involvement in children's education.

Table 4. Barriers to Effective Parental Engagement.

Barriers to Effective Parental Engagement (Percentage)
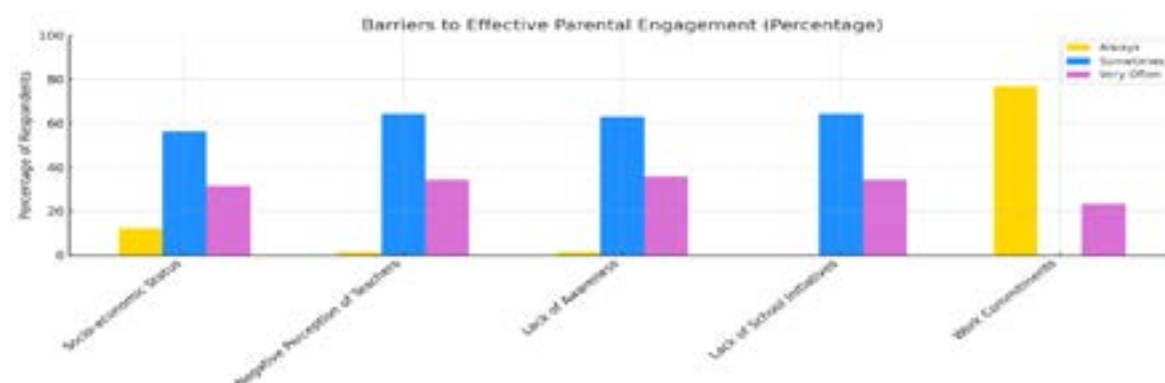
Chi-Square Analyses of School Type and Parental Engagement Strategies

Chi-square tests of association were conducted to explore the relationship between school type (public or private) and the frequency with which various parental engagement strategies were utilized. The analyses revealed several statistically significant associations (see Table 5). Notably, a highly significant difference was observed in the organization of open school days for parents (χ^2 = 64.2, p < .001). Private schools reported "Always" organizing such events (84.6%); on the other hand, public schools reported organizing open school days "Very often" (69.6%). Similarly, sending personal invitations to parents differed significantly between school types (χ^2 = 46.7, p < .001). Private schools reported "Always" sending invitations at a rate of 84.6%, higher than the 5.5% reported by public schools. In contrast, public schools more frequently indicated sending invitations "Very often" (83.2%). The establishment of two-way communication channels between home and school also showed a significant association with school type (χ^2 = 33.8, p < .001), with private schools reporting "Always" establishing these channels at a rate of 92.3%, considerably higher than the 14.3% reported by public schools. This practice was more commonly reported in public schools as occurring "Very often" (83.2%). Additionally, a significant difference was found in the provision of strategies to support learning at home (χ^2 = 11.7, p = .02). Private schools consistently reported: "Always" providing these strategies (100.0%), whereas public schools did so only 48.4% of the time, equally reporting providing these strategies "Very often" (48.4%). Further analysis of communication methods also revealed significant differences based on school type. Private schools were more likely to send invitation letters "Sometimes" (χ^2 = 16.4, p = .04), utilize oral communication through school learners "Sometimes" (χ^2 = 39.0, p < .001), and employ social media for communication "Always" (χ^2 = 20.1, p < .001). Moreover, private schools demonstrated a significantly higher likelihood of using phone calls to communicate with parents "Always" (χ^2 = 50.5, p < .001). In contrast, public schools were more likely to utilize short message systems (SMSs) "Very often" (χ^2 = 43.5, p < .001).

Table 5. Parental Engagement by School Type.
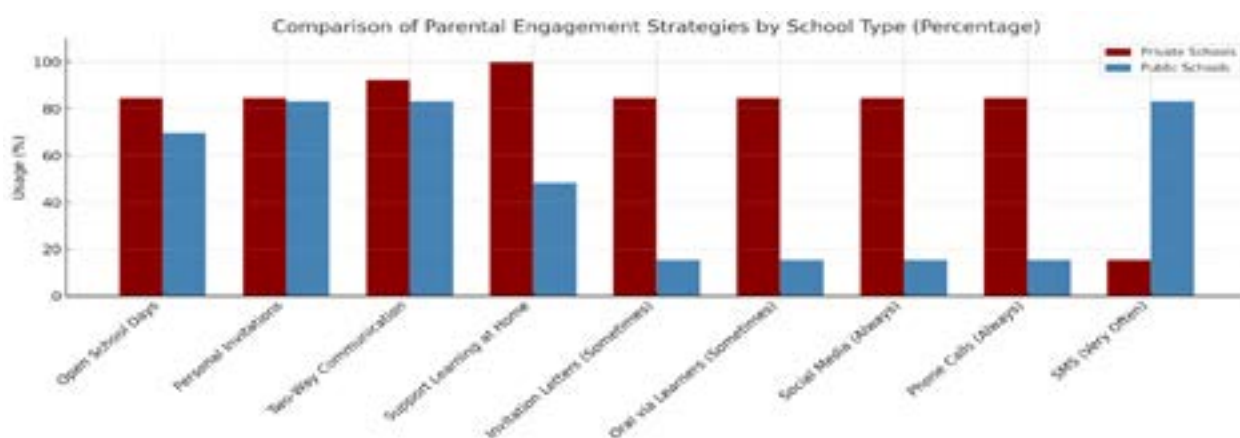
Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the critical importance of parental engagement in early childhood education, a view strongly upheld by kindergarten teachers in Saudi Arabia. Teachers overwhelmingly recognized the positive impact of parental engagement on students' academic, social, and emotional outcomes. This aligns with Wilder's findings, which demonstrated that closer parental engagement yields substantial improvements in student performance (Wilder, 2013). However, the study highlights a nuanced perspective on the types of engagement valued by teachers, revealing a strong emphasis on academic-related activities, such as classroom participation and homework support, over extra-curricular activities like sports and social events. This prioritization may reflect cultural and institutional norms within Saudi education, where academic achievement traditionally outweighs non-academic pursuits in perceived importance. Nonetheless, this narrow focus raises questions about how schools can expand engagement to encompass a more holistic view of student development. To overcome this, schools and policymakers need to adopt strategies that emphasize the value of well-rounded student development. For example, schools could design and promote extracurricular activities that integrate both academic and non-academic elements, such as project-based learning events, family sports days, or cultural festivals that encourage parental engagement in informal and interactive settings. Schools should actively

communicate the benefits of non-academic activities to families, emphasizing their role in building students' social, emotional, and physical well-being. This could be achieved through workshops, newsletters, or parent-teacher meetings where educators discuss how extracurricular activities complement academic performance and prepare children for life beyond the classroom. Additionally, schools could establish collaborative programs that invite families to co-organize or participate in non-academic activities, such as volunteering as coaches for sports teams, organizing cultural exchange events, or leading community service projects. Such initiatives not only foster greater parental engagement but also build stronger relationships between schools and families, reinforcing the importance of holistic development. Lastly, policies should provide teachers with professional development opportunities focused on fostering engagement across academic and non-academic activities. Training programs could include strategies for creating inclusive extracurricular activities, effectively communicating their importance to parents, and tailoring engagement efforts to the specific needs and interests of their school community. Barriers to parental engagement were also thoroughly examined, with work-related commitments emerging as the most significant obstacle. This finding echoes global research (Şengönül, 2022), which identifies long working hours, inflexible schedules, and occupational demands as key factors limiting parental participation. In the Saudi context, addressing these barriers will require innovative policies that promote flexibility for parents. For example, scheduling parent-teacher meetings during evenings or weekends, offering virtual engagement opportunities, and leveraging asynchronous communication tools could help accommodate parents with demanding work schedules. Socioeconomic status was another critical barrier identified in this study. Financial limitations often restrict families' access to educational resources, transportation to school events, or the ability to take time off work for parental engagement activities. To address this, policymakers should consider introducing targeted interventions, such as subsidized transportation, community-based outreach programs, or the provision of low-cost digital communication platforms to bridge the gap for low-income families. Interestingly, while teachers in this study acknowledged logistical barriers like work commitments and socio-economic constraints, they were less likely to view negative teacher attitudes as a significant impediment to parental engagement. However, the potential for unconscious biases or unintentional microaggressions to deter parental participation cannot be overlooked.

Teachers may not always recognize how their attitudes or communication styles impact parents, particularly those from marginalized communities. Previous research (Ho & Cherng, 2018) highlights the importance of fostering inclusive school environments that actively encourage and support all families. This requires professional development programs that equip teachers with the skills to communicate effectively and empathetically with diverse families. Training in cultural competence, equity, and responsive communication can help mitigate biases and foster positive relationships between schools and families. The success of parental engagement initiatives also depends on teachers' confidence and their ability to navigate the challenges of working with parents. Teachers must feel equipped to engage families effectively, which requires access to ongoing professional development. Training programs should focus on building teachers' communication skills, cultural awareness, and strategies for overcoming barriers such as work-related commitments or socio-economic challenges. When teachers feel confident and supported, they are more likely to initiate meaningful engagement activities and foster stronger partnerships with families. This highlights the need for schools and policymakers to invest in teacher training as a cornerstone of parental engagement efforts. A key finding of this study was the disparity in parental engagement strategies between public and private schools. Chi-square analyses revealed that private schools were significantly more likely to adopt structured and resource-intensive strategies, such as sending personalized invitations, organizing regular open school days, and maintaining two-way communication channels with parents. These practices reflect the greater flexibility and resource allocation often available in private schools. In contrast, public schools, constrained by limited budgets and rigid institutional policies, reported less frequent use of such strategies. Educational leaders and administrators from private schools can collaborate with public school stakeholders to design professional development programs. These programs could focus on training public school teachers and staff in areas where private schools excel, such as personalized parent outreach, organizing open school days, and maintaining consistent two-way communication. Workshops, mentorship programs, and peer-learning opportunities between public and private school educators could facilitate the exchange of knowledge and foster a culture of collaboration. Policymakers can encourage partnerships between private and public schools through collaborative initiatives. For example, joint events

shared extracurricular programs, or inter-school teacher training sessions can create opportunities for public schools to learn from private school approaches. Cross-sector collaborations foster a sense of shared responsibility for improving educational outcomes and allow public schools to benefit from the expertise and resources of private institutions. According to the findings of this study, Saudi Arabia recognizes the importance of family engagement and has implemented various practices to foster it; however, this study reveals key areas for improvement. First, there is a pressing need to enhance the capacity of public schools to adopt effective engagement strategies. Allocating additional resources to public schools or implementing policies that encourage innovation in engagement practices can help bridge the gap between public and private institutions. Second, professional development for teachers should be prioritized to ensure they have the skills and confidence to foster meaningful collaborations with parents. Third, fostering partnerships between schools and community organizations can help address socio-economic disparities, ensuring that all families—regardless of income or circumstance—have opportunities to engage actively in their children's education. Future policies should focus on creating inclusive frameworks that address logistical challenges, support low-income families, and empower teachers to lead engagement efforts effectively. These efforts will be critical in building a more equitable and supportive educational environment, ensuring that all children receive the benefits of strong family-school partnerships. Ultimately, this study emphasizes that successful parental engagement is a shared responsibility requiring collaboration, innovation, and sustained commitment from educators, families, and policymakers.

Conclusions

This study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in Saudi Arabia regarding parental engagement in early childhood education. The findings affirm the well-established link between parental engagement and positive student outcomes while also highlighting significant barriers that hinder effective parental engagement. These barriers, particularly those related to work commitments and socio-economic status, require targeted interventions to ensure that all parents, regardless of their circumstances, can participate meaningfully in their children's education. The study also uncovers another disparity in parental engagement practices between public and private schools, with private institutions exhibiting more frequent and proactive strategies to engage parents. These findings underscore the potential for public schools to enhance their parental engagement by adopting the robust and structured approaches observed in private schools. Future research should explore the experiences of parents themselves, particularly those from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers to parental engagement. Educators and policymakers, through collaborative efforts to address identified barriers and enhance parental engagement, can cultivate an educational environment that fosters the holistic development of all children, ultimately maximizing their full potential for academic and personal success.

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