A Sociological Study on Nature and Level of Parental Involvementin Primary Education in Rural Puducherry

C. Balaji, Dr. G. Ramathirtham

Ph.D. Research ScholarDept. of SociologyPondicherry UniversityPuducherry
Associate ProfessorDept. of SociologyPondicherry UniversityPuducherry
Corresponding Author; C. Balaji

ABSTRACT: *In the past few years, India has made great strides in improving the quality and accessibility of primary schooling. The annual average dropout rate at primary level has come down from 9.11% in 2010 to 4.13% in 2016. The enrollment rate has also increased from 81.6% in 2001 to 96.9% in 2016. This can be attributed to increasing focus on primary education related legislation, policy and schemes such as The Right to Free & Compulsory Education Act 2009, SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA), National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level. In spite of the above efforts, India's primary education system still faces a crisis. Several attempts have been made to improve the three basic strands of primary education viz. quality, quantity and equity but have not completely succeeded due to various reasons. Many researches indicates that through parental involvement in their children's education, these issues which affect the basic strands of primary education can be sorted out. Since a great deal of studies revealed the importance of parental involvement, many countries started giving attention towards parental involvement as much as they give to pedagogy and curriculum. But, in India the situation is totally contrary to that, especially in government schools. Hence, this study aims to understand the nature and level of parent's involvement in their children's education and also the perception of teachers towards parental involvement. Parents and teachers from Government primary schools in Rural Puducherry are the respondents for this study.*
KEYWORDS: *Sociology of Education, Primary Education, Rural Society, Parental Involvement*

I.   INTRODUCTION:

Parents are essential for children's optimal performance in school (Christenson, 2004). Many researches clearly document that when parents are involved in their children's education, those children have higher grades and test scores, more positive attitudes toward school, lower dropout rates, and better attendance and complete their homework more consistently regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background or the parents' education level (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).Bastiani (2003) identified a number of benefits getting from involving parents in their children's education like improved level of achievement, pupils positive attitude towards education. Even Toby Parcel (2013) says that Parental involvement is a more significant factor in a child academic performance than the qualities of the school itself.

The term "parental" typically denotes any person who is in a parenting role with children. This includes mothers, fathers, grandparents, and other members of the extended family, as well as foster parents and others who are acting as guardians.

Parental involvement in children's education is indispensable. It is significant for their children's academic achievement, motivation and well-being at school. In past decades parental involvement in children's education has received considerable attention from many researchers and also has become a key component in school policy and government policy concerning family education programs all over the world. Various definitions have been proposed for the parental involvement. It can be defined broadly as parental behavior with, or on behalf of children, at home or at school, as well as the expectation that parents hold for children's future education (Reynolds&Clements). Parental involvement is also defined as "parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children" (Jeynes, 2005).Ho and willms(1996) defined parental involvement through four constructs namely home discussion, home supervision, school communication and school participation. Dimock, O'donoghue and Robb (1996) proposed a range of dimensions that include school choice, involvement in teaching and learning activities in the classroom and at home, talk with teachers outside of formal meetings, help with homework and discuss school related issues with children and communication between home and school.

A greater understanding of the attitude that underlies parents' decisions about becoming involved in their children's education is needed. The way in which parents feel about schools and the emotional connections

that they had to school may influence the kinds of attitudes to school and their children's education. These feelings may be positive or negative, depending on the nature of those previous experiences. Negative feelings about school may prevent parents from making connections with their children's schools. Positive feelings about school experiences are likely to enhance parental involvement. Additionally, the expectations that parents hold for their children's future achievement are important. If parents expect high levels of academic achievement and commitment to schooling, the child is more likely to adopt these positive attitudes (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

And also there is a need for increased understanding about how, and why, parents understand and construct their involvement in different ways. Parental involvement may be active because parents believe that they bear the primary responsibility for children's educational achievement. Other parents may hold a notion of partnership with schools that responsibilities for children's learning are shared between parents and schools. Still other parents may not believe that they should take an active role or may lack the confidence to be involved. For these latter parents, developing personal self-efficacy beliefs that one can be effective in supporting children's learning at home and at school requires encouragement by teachers and schools, as well as opportunities to participate.

Parents' communication with schools and parental involvement are also influenced by school characteristics (Feuerstein, 2001). Schools play a strong role in determining the level and nature of parental involvement. Critical factors include teachers' beliefs about parents' role in the classroom and their responsibility to provide involvement opportunities to parents. Schools can help parents become involved by offering a range of options for engagement. Supporting parental involvement requires knowledge by teachers on how to involve parents, as well as leadership and support from the school administration. Invitations to parents to be involved convey to parents that their involvement is welcome and valued and provide motivation to be involved. Important invitations come from three sources: the school, teachers, and children themselves (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005)

Since a great deal of studies revealed the importance of parental involvement, many countries started giving attention towards parental involvement as much as they give to pedagogy and curriculum. But, in India the situation is totally contrary to that, especially in government schools.Hence, this study aims to explore the nature and level of parental involvement in children's education and also the perception of teachers towards parental involvement. Parents and teachers from Pondicherry Governmentprimary schools in rural puducherryare the respondents.

II.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE
BogunovićBlanka and Polovina Nada (2007) found in a study that the family stimulation is the resultant of the influence of cultural and educational profile of the family and active parental attitudes regarding education and attainment of their children. They examined the students' attitudes towards schooling, and to obtain answers to the question: which stimulating aspects of family context are the most predictable for the development of educational aspirations, i.e. attitudes towards school and gaining knowledge, educational interests and plans for further education. The sample consisted of 1.464 eighth-grade sample students, aged 15, from 34 primary schools in Serbia. The data were collected by the use of questionnaires filled in by the students and school principals. The results indicated a trend of interrelatedness of cognitively and educationally favorable conditions within the family and positive attitudes towards school, attainment, high aspirations and cognitive and intellectual interests for out-of-school activities.

Epstein (1995) developed a parental involvement framework that identified six types of parental involvement, which described practices and activities that foster parental involvement for parents, students, teachers, and the school community in order to implement and develop effective school community partnerships. The six typologies are: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration. Specifically, the parenting framework provides parents with rearing skills to create home conditions to support their children; the communication framework serves to establish an effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication system; the volunteering framework serves to improve and increase parental recruitment, and provide training for family involvement to support children; the learning at home framework provides activities to involve families with their children in the home setting with other curriculum-related activities; the decision-making framework serves to include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy; and the collaboration framework includes the community and coordinates community resources and services for the family.

Ghazi (2010) examined parental involvement in their children's academic motivation in rural areas at primary level. Study was conducted on a sample of 250 students from Bannu in Pakistan. Data were collected by structured interview from students and their parents. It was found that parental encouragement, discussion of importance of education and educational affairs had direct and positive influence on achievement motivation.

Williams (2002) surveyed 2019 parents of children aged 15–16 years attending schools in England to establish their degree of involvement in their children's education. A telephone survey was used to conduct interviews with parents to collect information regarding help in schools, their relationship with their child's teacher(s) and parent's involvement with homework. The findings indicated that parental involvement was the most strongly related to achievement of their children.

Devi and Kiran (2002) studied factors associated with scholastic backwardness of secondary school children. 100 low achievers from secondary schools of Hyderabad city were included in the study. Interview schedule was used to elicit factors related to scholastic backwardness. The results reported that low parental involvement and parental encouragement were found to be detrimental academic achievement.

Kohl (2000) conducted a study on family factors which potentially put parental involvement at risk. The participants in the study were parents, teachers and 350 children of America. Family and social data were collected through interviews conducted with parents. Parental involvement was rated by teachers and parents separately using a purpose designed instrument. Highly educated parents encouraged their children more to achieve. Findings also indicated positive relationship between academic achievement and parental education

Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990) also found that schools play a central role in determining levels of parent involvement in students' learning. In a study of six high schools in California and Arizona that were providing an environment in which language minority students and others achieve academic success, the authors found that the schools actively encouraged parent involvement. Through newsletters, parent advisory committees, parent nights, and student- parent-teacher conferences, the high schools fostered families' active participation in their teens' education.

Dornbusch and Ritter (1988) studied the effects of parent involvement in high school activities on student outcomes. The study was based on questionnaire data from students, parents, and teachers at six San Francisco Bay Area high schools. The authors found that regardless of educational background, adolescents whose parents attended school functions received higher grades than adolescents whose parents did not. The authors also found that the lowest levels of family involvement in school programs and processes were among the parents of average students, minority students, students in step-families, and students in single-parent households. It was concluded that without interventions designed to encourage greater family involvement in these subgroups, educational and economic inequalities will persist for many poor, minority students.

Aggarwal (1997) conducted a comparative study on the effect of parental encouragement upon the educational development of students on the basis of gender. The sample consisted of 100 male and female students of Pauri district. Data were collected by administering intelligence test and personal data form. The findings indicated that the parents showed more encouragement to their daughters in comparison to their sons. Parental encouragement was also found to be positively related with educational development of the students.

III.   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
Despite numerous efforts to improve primary school education, the scenario in India continues to be rather dismal. Several attempts have been made to improve the three basic strands of primary education i.e. quality, quantity and equity but have not completely succeeded due to various reasons. A high proportion of out of school and working children in rural areas, low enrolment, and low retention rates are the most common issues affecting the quantitative aspects of primary education whereas low achievement levelsand lack of proper infrastructure are the main issues affecting quality. If equity is to be attained, issues such as high drop-out rateamong girls and among children of socially and economically disadvantaged groups, problems based on gender differences etc. are to be sorted out.Considering the researches on parental involvement and its benefits all over the world, for instance, Reynolds and Clements (2005) reported that school programs that provide support and resources for parent involvement in their children's schooling yield greater and longer-lasting benefits than many efforts that consume a large share of public educational spending, such as smaller class sizes and after-school programs. Hence, both 'access' and 'quality' factors in primary education can be achieved simultaneouslythrough parental awareness and involvement programmes. While most programmes to improve primary education give utmost importance to the role of teachers, the equally significant role of parents seems often neglected. Hence, this study will give an overall picture about the nature and level of their parental involvement and in children's education, also the perception of teachers towards parental involvement and it will enable the policy makers to develop a framework which encourage parents to get involved in their children education.

Methodology:
The methodological aspects which has been followed for the execution of this research work are presented in this chapter.

Objectives:
- To study the Socio-Economic conditions of parents.
- To assess the nature and level of parental involvement in their children education.
- To examine Teacher's Perception towards parental involvement.

IV.   RESEARCH DESIGN:

Descriptive as well as explanatory research designs are used for the purpose of this study.

Profile Of The Study Area:

The study is conducted in the Union Territory (UT) of Puducherry. The UT Puducherry, with a population of 0.97 million, shares a state border and cultural and linguistic similarities with Tamil Nadu. Cross-migration between the two states for education, health, trade and tourism is very high. Puducherry is scattered over three different states and comprises of four coastal regions namely Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam. Puducherry and Karaikal are situated on the east coast in Tamil Nadu, Yanam in Andhra Pradesh and Mahe in Kerala.

Study Population And Sampling:

Three Government Primary Schools from rural regionof Puducherry are selected for this study namely Sedarapet GPS, Chettipet GPS, Madagadipet GPS. These schools are chosen purposefully from different socio-economical stratum to represent the general population. After required permissions has been obtained from the Directorate of School Education, Government of Puducherry, the parents and teachers are accessed through their School. All the parents and teachers from these schools are taken for this study.The Sample size of parents and teachers for this study is 234 and 15 respectively.

Sources Of Data And Tools Of Data Collection:

Primary Data are collected from the parents and teachers of Primary Government School Students in Puducherry. Secondary Data are gathered from Directorate of School Education (Government of Puducherry), Books, Journals, Research articles, E-thesis, etc.
An interview schedule has beenprepared to elicit information from the parents on various Socio-demographic and economic information, nature and the level of parental involvement and also the teacher's perception on parental involvement.

Analysis Of Data

The data collected using Interview Schedule are coded and converted into electronic format for analyzing by using Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). Basic tables for frequency distribution, cross tabulations, correlation and regression are used for analysis.

V.   MAJOR FINDINGS

1.   Socio-demographic and economic characteristics of Parents:

This section provides a brief description of socio-demographic and economic details of the parents. The profile includes background characteristics of parents likeRelationship of the respondent to the Student, age, educational qualification, income, occupation, nativity, marital status and other socio-economic variables.

More than half of the respondents (54.7%) who involve in their children's education are fathers, followed by mothers (45.3%). This is a clear indication that fathers are more involved with their children's education and spend more time with them in helping with their children's education. Father tend to have a greater responsibility in helping with their child's education compared to mother. The majority of the parents are aged between 31-40 years (69%). A majority of parents are Hindus constituting 97%, whereas just .4% and 2.1% belongs to Christianity and Islam respectively. Around 37% of parents belongs to Other Backward castes followed by Scheduled Castes (31.2%) and Most backward castes (30%).

Educational attainments of the parents reflect that they are largely educated up to school level with a majority (73%) having middle and high school level of education, while 15% of them only educated up to higher secondary and above. A majority of both father (37%) and mother (36%) respondents studied up to secondary level. In terms of occupation, majority of fathers respondents are daily wage laborers and agricultural laborerswhereas more than half (63.2%) of the mothers are housewife's. Seven out of ten (74.8 percent) respondent's family earnings are less than 10,000 rupees per month, one fifth (20.5 percent) of them earn between Rs. 10,001 to 15,000 while the remaining earn more. Since most of their socio economic situation is relatively low, they make use of the facilities provided by the Government schemes such as ration card, health facility etc. Almost all of the respondents (99 %) is currently married and lives along with their spouses. A greater proportion (78.6%) of the respondents is in nuclear families, while the remaining (18.6%) lives in joint

families. More than half (52.9%) of the respondents has two children Most of the respondents (96.3%) native place is Puducherry and their mother tongue is Tamil (96.2%).

2. Nature and level of parental involvement in their children education:

The Practices of parental involvement can be classified as Home based parental involvement which includes Communication with child, helping with homework, Enabling home-setting, and Parental support for child's personality development and School based Parental Involvement which includes Communication with teacher and Volunteering.

Present results support other recent literature (e.g., Fan & Chen, 2001; Hong & Ho, 2005) in emphasizing the importance of measuring Parental Involvement as a multidimensional construct. Parents has reported differences in their involvement activities. The mean value of various parental involvement activities are as follows: Communication with child (M =3.4), Helping with homework (M =3.2), Enabling home-setting (M =3.2), Parental support for child's personality development (M =3.3), Communication with teacher (M =3.1) and Volunteering (M =3.0). The above mentioned findings indicates that communication with child is the most performed parental involvement activity. It is also found father respondents has performed more in Helping with homework, Enabling home-setting, Communication with teacher and Volunteering whereas mother respondents has performed more in Communication with child and Parental support for child's personality development.

The overall mean values of Home based parental involvement and School based Parental Involvement are 3.5 and 3 respectively. These findings suggest that participating parents performed such home-based parental involvement tasks as communicating with children, creating a favorable learning environment at home, supporting child's personality development and helping their homework relatively more often. However they perform school based tasks less frequently, volunteering being the least performed task. This finding is crucial because parents' involvement at school is much more visible to school personnel than is parents' home involvement; schools may be underestimating parents' involvement if they consider only those activities that occur at school (e.g., communicating with teachers and volunteering). The finding also echoes the concerns of other researchers (e.g., Jackson ckRemillard, 2005; Lawson, 2003) who has reported that the contributions of minority parents are often overlooked because their involvement occurs primarily away from school grounds.

In addition to variations in parental involvement activities, this study also find that the levels of parental involvement varies too. It is found that on the overall parental involvement tasks, just 18% of parents has reported high level of parental involvement, whereas majority of the parents has reported moderate to low level of parental involvement. However, when comes to Home and School based parental involvement activity, majority of parents has reported moderate level at home based parental involvement, whereas in school based parental involvement practices around 67% of parents has reported low level of parental involvement. That implies a need to train parents to perform more school parental involvement tasks. Meeting the education needs of parents about various aspects of parental involvement (Gür& Kurt, 2011) seems half way to solution, but schools' roles in encouraging parental involvement cannot be underestimated especially in terms of volunteering.

Like other researches (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Pala-Günkan, 2007) suggest that parents' socio economic status is decisive in terms of parental involvement, this study also find that parents' socio economic status does cause significant differences in parental involvement practice.

3. Teacher's Perception towards parental involvement:

According to teachers, the primary factors which contribute parent involvement are parent education level, parents' perspectives about schooling, teachers' attitudes and willingness about collaboration with family, communication, and social & cultural activities. In addition, participants has also emphasized that student achievement, community where family lives, communication among family members, income and school community are other factors to increase parent involvement in schooling. Parent education level is highly stressed by teachers.

On the other hand, teachers say that the primary factors which limit parent involvement are low income, parent education level, indifference about schooling, family disturbance, unsuccessful students, and heavy workloads of both parents. Moreover, participants explains that intolerance, prejudice of families about school and teachers are other factors to limit parent involvement in schooling. Teachers say that income is most important factor for families. Low income families have to work lots of hours, so they are not involved social events at school and Parent teacher association meetings. The finding is consistent with previous studies which indicates that parents who work in minimum wage jobs and long hours might not be involved in many school activities because they lack the time.

Finally, teachers says that they make effort to increase parent involvement. Parent-teacher meetings, home visiting, communication, guide families about schooling and social-cultural activities are arranged by

schools. Schools sometimes use different time schedule to increase parent attendance in parent teacher association meetings.

VI.   CONCLUSION:

Findings from this study highlight the importance of building school-teacher-parent partnerships and the significant leading roles that schools and teachers can play in these partnerships. School administrators and teachers should improve their capacity and capability of understanding parent's perceptions and parental involvement practices. A good understanding of parents perceptions and involvement practices may help school administrators and teachers design effective and feasible programs and enhance parents' involvement in their children's education. Increased parental involvement in children's education may in turn support improved student academic achievement and other school related outcomes

REFERENCES: -

[1].   Ascher, C. (1988). Improving the school-home connection for poor and minority urban students. The Urban Review.
[2].   Baker, A. (1997). Improving parent involvement policies and practices: A qualitative study of parent perceptions. School Community Journal.
[3].   Christenson, S. L. (2004). The family-school partnership: An opportunity to promote the learning competence of all students. School Psychology Review.
[4].   Dauber, S. L., & Epstein, J. L. (1993). Parents' attitudes and practices of involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools.
[5].   Davies, D. (1993). Benefits and barriers of parental involvement: From Portugal to Boston to Liverpool.
[6].   Henderson, A. (1988). Parents are a school's best friends. Phi Delta Kappan.
[7].   Henderson, A. T., &Berla, N. (1994). A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.
[8].   Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Bassler, O. C., &Brissie, J. S. (1992). Explorations in parent school relations. Journal of Educational Research, 85(5), 287-294.
[9].   Hornby,Gary. (2000). Improving parental involvement,continuum education.
[10].   Hornby,Gary. (2000).Parental involvement in childhood education-bringing effective school partnership, springer.
[11].   Jeynes,Williams.(2011). Parental involvement in academic success, Rouledge.
[12].   Ji, S. C. &Koblinsky, A. S. (2009). Parent Involvement in Children's Education: An Exploratory Study of Urban, Chinese Immigrant Families. Urban Education.