

## A systematic literature review on levels and effects of parental involvement in children's learning

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this systematic literature review is to analyze the literature on parental participation in their children's education in primary schools in Malaysia. This review procedure entails searching, screening, evaluating, and synthesizing publications on parental engagement from several electronic databases, including Scopus, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, Google Scholar, MyCite, and Research Gate. The publications included in the analysis were published within the last 10 years (2012–2021). The findings of the analysis reveal that the degree of parental involvement in their children's education is high in most studies. Furthermore, there are several effects of parental involvement in their children's education, with a positive effect being the most common. Some challenges faced by parents are also reported, including factors related to parents, children, teachers, and schools. This review suggests that the relationships between parents, teachers, and children could be better organized to maximize the impact of educational opportunities on children. Additionally, more empirically-based studies are needed to enhance our understanding of the effects of parental involvement on children's learning.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the national key result areas (NKRA) [1] and the 12th Malaysian plan (2021-2025) parents in Malaysia are believed to have a critical role to play in enhancing children's educational performance [2]. As well as the schools and teachers, parents are an integral part of the education system. Moreover, children spend the most time with their family members, so they have the closest attachment to them [3]. Different researchers have used different operational definitions of parental involvement [4]. For instance, home-based and school-based have been widely utilized as components of parental involvement in empirical research in the local studies [5], [6] and international studies [7], [8]. Other forms of parental involvement include among others: communication with children [9]–[13], monitoring academic progress [12], parenting practices [11], and reading activities with children [14]. Empirical studies have shown that parental involvement in education correlates with academic achievement [15], [16], students' engagement at school [17], school attendance [18], and students' motivation [19]. Even though parental involvement is encouraged, it is also important to acknowledge their limitations when supporting the learning of their children [20].

Parental involvement for children's education has received a lot of attention at the international level but there is scarce research in the Malaysian context. Thus, this systematic literature review (SLR) aims to gain a better understanding into parental involvement in the Malaysian primary school children. Building on

previous work by researchers [4], this paper highlights the level of parental involvement, the extent of its impact on children's learning as well as the challenges that impede parental involvement in children's learning. Furthermore, this SLR provides a deep understanding of the existing body of work, and identify gaps that need to be addressed [21]. Additionally, the goal of this SLR is also to provide a better understanding of any pertinent concerns needed for analytical examination, reflection, and recommendations [22].

The purpose of this SLR is to examine the literature on parental participation in children, by focusing on the primary school children in Malaysia. Particularly, this paper highlights level of parental involvement and its influence on children's learning. Besides that, this paper also reports challenges to parental involvement as found by researchers in the past study. Therefore, a few research questions are developed: i) What is the level of parental involvement reported in the research literature?; ii) What is the influence of parental involvement on children's learning?; and iii) What are the challenges that parents face while getting involved in their children's learning?

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted using rigorous standards in order to identify, evaluate, and synthesize the literature that has been published on the topic [23]. The number of strategies that were used in the search process as well as the identification of literature were modelled after the work of several scholars [21], [22], [24]. Search strategy encompasses search, screen, appraise and synthesis. Identification of literature involves applying keyword searches in databases and using inclusion and exclusion criteria in finalizing the literature.

### 2.1. Search strategy

As part of the review, the researcher used several databases to locate and collect relevant sources: Scopus, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, Google Scholar, MyCite, and ResearchGate. There are many different fields covered by Scopus, which combines a comprehensive abstracts and citations database with enriched data and scholarly literature. On the other hand, Taylor & Francis publishes open access research at the forefront of the global publishing industry. In addition, the ERIC, the all-inclusive and easy-to-use digital library facilitates online education information. There are also many academic articles in education in Google Scholar, including those written in the Malaysia's national language; Malay. In addition, ResearchGate provides access to a wide range of publications and projects, as well as incorporating social network features. Besides that, Malaysian scholarly journals are indexed on the Malaysian Citation Index, MyCite.

Journal articles from the period 2012 to 2021 were chosen for review. The researchers also conducted backward and forward searches in accordance with [25]. As shown in Figure 1, the article selection process incorporates search, screening, appraisal, and synthesis. A total of 96 documents were recorded during the search stage, and 17 documents were removed during the screen stage. Following an appraisal of 79 documents, 24 were considered suitable for review.

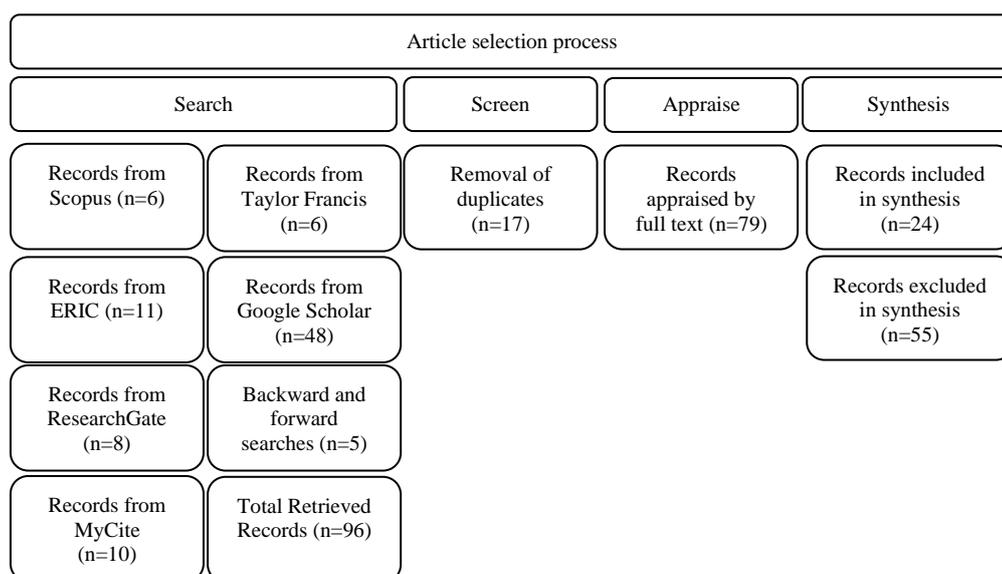


Figure 1. Article selection process

## 2.2. Identification of literature

Generally, articles are selected in four major steps: search, screen, appraise, and synthesis. This process begins by searching several major databases, namely Scopus, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, Google Scholar, MyCite, and ResearchGate, for relevant articles. Elly and Scott [26] suggest to make use of keyword searching and combining keywords using the operators "AND" and "OR". Besides English, the keywords used in all the databases also included Malay, the Malaysia's national language [27]. Particularly in Google Scholar and MyCite, Malay keywords were applied by the researcher in light of the limited availability of research report in English. Further, researchers usually share Malay-language articles through Google Scholar and MyCite. Table 1 lists the combinations of search terms used in databases.

Table 1. Keywords searches in the databases

Database	Keyword searches
Scopus, Taylor Francis, ERIC, and ResearchGate	Parental involvement, parent participation, parenting style, parental support, parents-teacher partnership, academic achievement, English as a second language (ESL), reading, science, mathematics, primary school, children, and Malaysia
Google Scholar and MyCite	Parental involvement, parent participation, parenting style, parental support, parents-teacher partnership, academic achievement, ESL, reading, science, mathematics, primary school, children, and Malaysia <i>"Penglibatan ibu-bapa, gaya keibu-bapaan, hubungan ibu-bapa dan sekolah, pencapaian akademik, Bahasa Inggeris, membaca, literasi, Sains, Matematik, sekolah rendah, kanak-kanak, and Malaysia"</i> (in Malay)

The authors include five databases and backward and forward searches in the identification process, resulting in 96 records. A duplicate article was removed from the search results of relevant articles. A total of 79 unique records were generated as a result of this process. To identify articles that could be reviewed, the researcher then appraised the full texts of the records. As shown in Table 2, inclusion criteria adapted from Lim and Yunus [24] were applied to this process. By determining which records to include and exclude, the synthesis process is completed. The process yielded a total of 24 documents.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Type of article	Journal articles, proceedings	Books, book chapter, thesis
Year of publication	2012-2021	<2012
Peer-review	Peer-reviewed	Non-peer reviewed
Context	Primary school	Pre-school, secondary school, special education, special needs
Setting	Malaysia	Outside Malaysia
Text	A full text	Not a full text

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Research question 1: Literature reports on parental involvement levels

The results of the analysis indicate that parental involvement levels can be divided into a few categories. These are high, moderate, and low levels. Besides that, mixed findings are also discovered from the study analysis.

#### 3.1.1. High level of involvement

Ishak, Satar, and Zakaria [6] stated that, in general, the participating parents in their study had a high involvement in their children's education matters. Giving motivation is the highest type of involvement, followed by providing facilities and equipment to the child. On the other hand, reading together and participating in community activities are the least type of activities that the parents are involved in. Besides that, Shahri, Safar, and Parman [28] stated that parental involvement of parents in their study which comprising two elements, namely interaction and communication, and parenting practices are high. Parents also report a high level of involvement in the study by Termize, Mohd, and Zamri [13] who measured a few aspects of parental involvement, including discussing with children, communicating with children and parental support at home.

Furthermore, Vellymalai [29]–[32] studied parental involvement using 14 categorizations, namely: Discussion of future planning; Discussion of school activities; Identifying learning pattern; Identifying academic problems at school; Identifying academic problems at home; Assisting with homework; Identifying homework; Guidance for examination; Monitoring academic performance at school; Motivation; Time limits; Getting reading materials; Sending to tuition; and Monitoring activities. The author of all studies found the

participating parents as highly involved in their children in all constructs. Other studies by the similar researchers [33]–[35] who defined parental involvement as home-based found that the involvement of parents in their children's education is high. Additionally, Latif and Abdullah [36] reported that a high level of involvement was found in both home-based and school-based involvement constructs. The home-based construct comprises of home learning environment, social interaction with children, communication with children and providing support for children's success, while the school-based construct includes parents attending report card day, sport's day, parent-teacher meeting and excellence awards ceremony.

### 3.1.2. Moderate level of involvement

Ramalingam, Maniam, and Karuppanan [10] revealed that all participating parents in their study are moderately involved in their children's learning. The parental involvement constructs used in the study include parenting, communication, learning at home, decision making, community collaboration and volunteerism. Learning at home is the most practiced activity, while communication is the least practiced activity. Similarly, Hashim *et al.* [37] reported a moderate level of parental involvement with children and a low level of parental involvement with teachers and parent-teacher associations. Conversely, Kuan and Chuen [38] reported that a moderate level of parental involvement was found among participating parents in their study with a high level of involvement in the aspect of parental role construction and the lowest level is in the component of specific invitations from child's teacher.

### 3.1.3. Low level of involvement

Raslie *et al.* [11] reported a low level of involvement when the frequency of mother-child shared reading sessions was found to be generally low. Majority of the participating mothers attended primary school and high school. Only one mother received tertiary education. Most of the participating mothers are also housewives. The study was conducted among Bidayuh mothers living in rural areas of Malaysia with limited English literacy skills.

### 3.1.4. Mixed findings

Koh and Wing [9] reported mixed findings in their study of parental involvement in music learning. In one-to-one piano classes, for instance, a few parents support the practice, while others oppose it. Although all parents believe it is essential for the existence of home environment and home practice, only one parent agreed that music had been part of their family life and leisure activity. Other parents express the challenges they face to establish a meaningful musical experience at home. For the construct of 'effective communication', most parents believed that parent-teacher communication is essential, with a few parents talking about the challenges faced to establish such a practice.

Furthermore, Wahab, Mustapha, and Talib [39] also reported mixed findings in their study of parental involvement with indigenous parents of Malaysia. For example, many parents had aspirations and educational goals for their children. Almost all participating parents in the research wanted their children to succeed in their studies and secure a good job. It has been reported that some parents also assist their children with school activities and take measures to ensure that they succeed. Parents in the study provided learning materials, monitored the child's homework, sent their child to the boarding school despite being separated from their child. However, some parents could not participate in their children's learning due to some limitations.

Additionally, according to Kamal and Hashim [14], all parents engaged in reading-related activities with their children at home, and parental involvement levels varied between each parent to the other. School-related activities are the critical domain relating to how the parents worked with their children at home. The results of another researcher on parental involvement level were also mixed [17]. A high involvement of parents in three aspects, namely providing a learning environment at home, social interaction with children and communication with children. However, moderate levels of involvement were found in the aspect of supporting children's success, which involves reading with them, helping them with their homework, and guiding them. Among the findings from a review of previous studies on parental involvement in Malaysian primary schools, as shown in Figure 2, are the following: i) The majority of studies reported that parents were actively involved in their children's education; ii) Many of the parents are reported to interact and communicate with their children; iii) A few studies reported moderate and mixed levels of involvement; and iv) One study reported a low level of involvement.

This SLR reveals that parents, in general, are highly involved in their children's learning. In particular, parental involvement in communication and interaction seems to be widely practiced by the parents. This finding suggests that parents can be empowered by using strategies such as communication and interaction more effectively with their children to facilitate their children's learning. On the other hand, parents are reported to read to their children infrequently. These findings suggest that parents lack knowledge and confidence to participate in their children's learning, which corroborates the challenges faced by the parents in

the reviewed past studies. Therefore, family literacy programs that help educate parents and empower the roles of parents and family members can be conducted to impart parents with relevant knowledge to support their children at home [20].

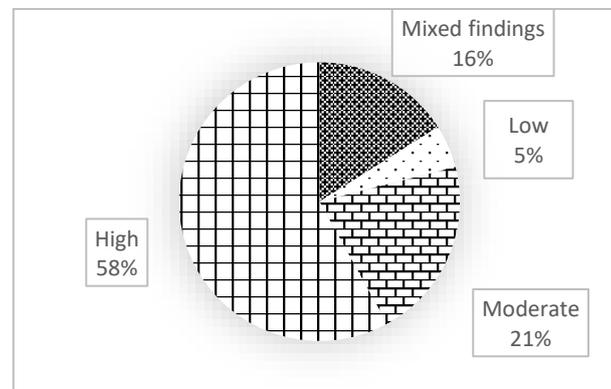


Figure 2. Levels of parental involvement reported in the previous research

### 3.2. Research question 2: The influence of parental involvement on students' learning

According to the analysis, studies show mixed results regarding parental involvement and its influence on students' learning relationships. Ahmad *et al.* [17] reported that parental involvement, namely making home a learning environment, interacting with children socially, communicating with them, and supporting their academic goals, has influenced students' engagement in schools, which has affected students' life goals. Similarly, Manukaram, Abdullah, and Hasan [40] reported a significant relationship between support, participation, and involvement of parents and students' self-regulated learning. Conversely, Ramalingam, Maniam, and Karuppanan [10] identify a significant relationship between achievements of students and parental involvement, namely in the aspects of at home learning, parenting, making decisions and volunteering. Besides that, Raslie *et al.* [11] revealed a positive relationship between the way parents get involved with their children in home literacy and students' academic achievement despite the low level of involvement.

In contrast, Kuan and Chuen [38] stated academic achievement and parental involvement do not appear to be significantly correlated. However, academic achievement is positively associated with parental self-efficacy, a construct of parental involvement. In addition to that, according to Latif and Abdullah [36], home-based involvement such as providing a learning environment at home, interacting with children, and assisting children to succeed has not influenced achievement of children in science. Besides that, the higher the social interaction between parent and child at home, the lower child achievement in science subjects. There is, however, a link between school-based involvement and student achievement in science disciplines. As shown in Figure 3, previous studies on parental involvement in Malaysian primary schools indicates mixed findings on the relationship between parental involvements with students' learning and a positive relationship is nonetheless found in the majority of the studies.

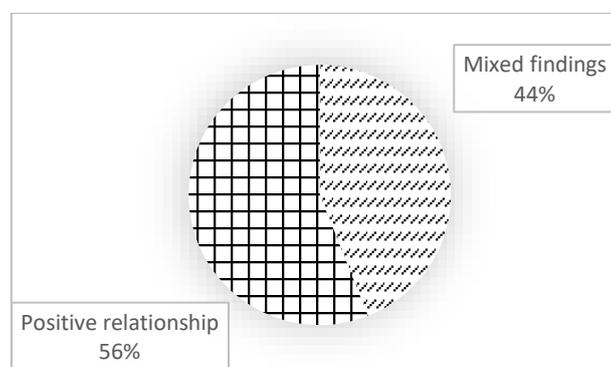


Figure 3. The relationship between parental involvement and students' learning in the past studies

This SLR reveals that, in general, parental involvement in their children's education is positively correlated with their learning including students' participation, self-regulated learning and academic performance. This study suggests that children's learning appears to be greatly impacted by their parents on the whole. Children learn more as a result of parental participation, regardless of the degree of involvement. However, due to the inconsistent variables of parental involvement utilized in each study, it is challenging to ascertain particular significant variables to the children's learning, to draw general conclusions from studies [41] and to analyze and interpret differences in the definition of this construct between studies [42].

The variety of variables employed also indicate that there is no consensus among researchers regarding the exploration of parental involvement in their children's education from a theoretical perspective [3]. Therefore, the use of a more standardized categorizations of parental involvement may help yield practical findings for Malaysian education practitioners. For instance, parents/caregiver's toolkit developed by the Malaysian Ministry of Education can be a useful framework for future research on exploring parental involvement in Malaysia [4].

### 3.3. Research question 3: Challenges to parental involvement in children's learning

The results of the analysis indicate that parental involvement presents some significant challenges. For example, several studies [20], [35], [39] stated that parental factors are one of the challenges to parental involvement discovered in their study. Knowledge and confidence were lacking among parents. Therefore, parents had to leave the educational matters to their children's teachers [39]. Parents also had time constraints to assist their children academically due to other commitments [9], [20] such as work commitments, caring responsibility and their children's tight schedules. Lack of time is also a hindrance for parents to meet the teachers at the parents-teacher meeting [9]. Additionally, financial constraints become a challenge for parents to provide a home learning environment [9] and give pocket money for their children in school [39].

Besides that, school and teacher factors are another challenge in parental involvement. It is reported that it was difficult for parents to find help, to get in touch with their children's English teachers, and did not get invitations from school for English related activities [20]. The parents also felt that insufficient homework was given to their children [20]. In another study, Simon [43] found that the parents were disappointed when some teachers seemed to be not supportive and talked negatively about the children with learning difficulties. Moreover, the parents felt that the teachers were skeptical about parental involvement and regarded the parents as non-professional. The parents also believed that they had been treated coldly because of their socio-economic status. On the other hand, Koh and Wing [9] believed that parents might interfere with the teacher's personal space and time if they come up and talk to their children's teacher personally.

Furthermore, child factors which is another form of challenge consist of rejection from the child when help with homework is offered and dealing with their child's temperament [20]. The findings of the past study on parental involvement in Malaysian primary schools can be summarized as seen in Figure 4, namely: i) Challenges to parental involvement can be divided into three factors: parents, school, and teacher and children and ii) Parents' challenges are the most reported factor in the past studies, followed by school and teacher and children's factors.

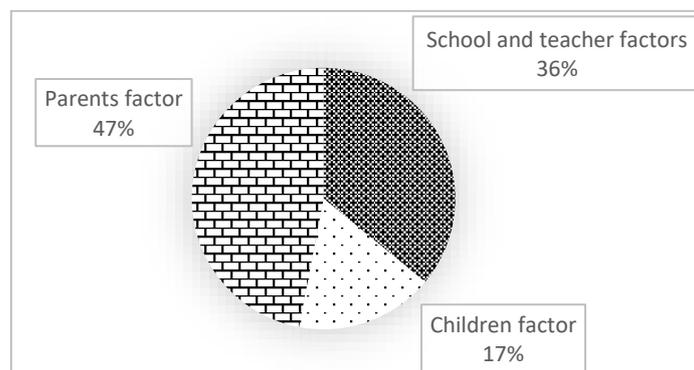


Figure 4. Challenges to parental involvement reported in the previous studies

The findings of this SLR show that factors that influence parental involvement are pretty similar across studies. The most prominent challenge is from the parents who lacked knowledge, time and money to dedicate to their children's learning. The findings also suggest parents-teacher relationship was not in harmony.

Therefore, the Malaysian Ministry of Education should assist the school party to strengthen the home-school relationship for the more significant benefit of children. Schools can re-examine their policies regarding parental involvement and develop an educational strategy that enables families and school members to engage in multiple, varied interpersonal interactions [44]. The communication process between both parties can further be improved. Teachers may need to reconsider their professional role to comprehend and respond to family demands. For example, their role as teachers is not limited to teaching, but they also serve as counsellors for their students' families [44].

By collaborating closely, teachers can gain a deeper understanding of the children, which will help them better interact with them and teach and learn in the classroom [45]. Teachers, parents, and students all will gain benefits from improving this kind of cooperative behavior [46]. Moreover, by facilitating the exchange of ideas between parents and educators, they can "find ways of understanding each other's problems and supporting each other effectively" [47].

Time constraints were cited by parents as one of their challenges, so teachers can discuss with parents' effective ways to take an active role in their children's education. To assist children in learning, parents can involve other family members. It is also possible for teachers to highlight how learning at home can happen more regularly or consistently with the children to demonstrate how to make the most of their time together.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Multiple individuals and parties are involved in a child's development, such as the teacher and parents. As a whole, this SLR founds that parents of Malaysian primary school children are willing to participate in their children's education. Their involvement in their children's education is often centered around communication with them. Also, this review discovers that parental involvement has a positive influence on children's learning. A number of challenges are also reported in past studies that hinder parents to get involved more actively in their children's education.

According to the findings of this SLR, it is possible to strengthen the school-home partnership in order to help teachers gain a better understanding of how parents' parent at home. Apart from that, children's education can benefit from parents discussing their challenges with teachers. Additionally, parents need guidance in parenting aspects, such as communication, so that they can utilize their skills to the fullest extent possible.

Nonetheless, this SLR is limited to parental involvement within the Malaysian primary school students' context. Besides that, this paper also examines a few non-experimental research designs, which make it difficult to isolate causal relationships. Parental involvement in preschools and secondary schools might be the subject of future studies. Besides that, a comparison of parental involvement in children across countries and continents can also be conducted to identify the distinct beliefs and practices of parents from different cultures. In addition to that, parental involvement in specific school subjects such as English as a second language can also be examined to determine good parenting practices across cultures. This SLR also calls for more empirical studies to determine how parental involvement affects children's learning in Malaysian schools since there is a paucity of such research.

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