



Beyond the Classroom: A Narrative Inquiry into Parental Home Engagement and Student Academic Performance in Nepal

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Article Info

Article History:

Published: 04 Feb 2026

Publication Issue:

Volume 3, Issue 2
February-2026

Page Number:

43-52

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Abstract:

This qualitative study is based on the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence developed by Epstein to explore the impact of the parental home engagement on the academic outcomes of the students in the Nepal secondary schools. Using narrative inquiry model, the data were collected using in-depth interviews with six parents whose backgrounds were diverse in terms of socioeconomic statuses within the city of Pokhara and supported by observations and reading of documents. The results reveal that parental involvement in the form of communication, support and emotional encouragement significantly increased student drive, classroom performance and the general academic success. Recognizing that there is a positive impact, which continues even with parents experiencing a low-level of formal education or limited access to technology. Those parents, who frequently communicated the school topics, checked the homework as well as helped their children to feel secure were discovered to be very essential in encouraging their children to possess an academic discipline and an aspiration power. Some of the major problems recognized are perception of modern curricula, lack of literacy among parents, and digital illiteracy. More importantly, the research highlights the fact that emotional presence and continuous reinforcement is in most cases more important than technical academic skills are. The study comes to the conclusion that, despite the limitations provided by the structure, the supporting home environment fostered by active parents is an essential, underestimated facet of student achievement. In order to promote equal educational performance, policy makers and educators should identify and encourage home based parental engagement by adopting any of the inclusive pattern like literacy workshops, easy learning resources and lastly and most importantly, the flexible and technology-threatening pattern.

Keywords: Parental involvement, home involvement, academic performance, student motivation, qualitative studies, Nepal and secondary education.

1. Introduction

The academic development of a learner can rarely be an individual activity. It is a joint venture where the three actors, namely, the student, teacher, and parent interact to influence the outcomes. As a secondary school teacher in Nepal, I have always noticed a notable difference: those students who receive active parental support are often incredibly resilient and showed improvement, whereas those who do not have such support in their lives have problems with motivation and performance. It is this observation that supports the fact behind the current study of the idea that education is a collaborative activity, and that parental role so especially at home is a key lever that can be used to enhance student morale and academic performance.

Although the formal structure of learning occurs in schools, the home environment forms the basement area where attitudes to learning are developed. Monitors, communications, and emotional support offered by parents provide a favorable learning environment, which helps children overcome academic tasks and socio-emotional stressors (Epstein, 2011). This role plays a specially important role in the secondary level, during which the academic pressure and identity formation are inherently heating up.

However, the assumption of the positive relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement has been disputed. Other researchers believe that social economic status (SES), school quality, and peer influence have a greater impact on a student than parental activity (Robinson and Harris, 2014). Additionally, current studies have a gap in geography and methodology: primarily, the focus of literature is primary schooling (Western countries) with the possible dominance of quantitative variables, which leaves a lack of qualitative and lived-experience literature of parent involvement in secondary education in developing countries like Nepal (Wang and Holcombe, 2019).

This research paper fills this gap by considering the subtle importance of the involvement of parental home in the academic experiences of Nepalese secondary school children. It goes beyond quantification to explain the how and why of the actions of parents and their perceived effect. The research question that will be used to conduct this investigation is as follows How do parents describe their experiences and practices of supporting the education of their children at home?

Theoretical Framework: The Overlapping Spheres of Influence.

The current study takes a theoretical framework of the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence by Joyce L. Epstein (1987, 1995), which assumes that three main contexts interact and enter into a partnership, namely family, school, and community in influencing a child to learn. The extent of overlap between those spheres can be influenced by the time, experience, and policy to establish the degree of support towards the child learning.

Of particular relevant is the type of parental involvement developed by Epstein. This paper dwells on two major forms:

1. Parenting: Creating a learning environment in the home.
2. Learning at Home: Direct participation in academic activities i.e. homework help and educational conversation.

Within the context of Nepalese cultural and socioeconomic constraints, this framework will help to study how the following roles are operationalize by Nepalese parents.

2. Methodology

Research Design and Approach:

The research uses a qualitative research paradigm, namely, narrative inquiry, because this type of research best suits establishing rich, detailed, and contextualization stories of the participants, which will be able to provide profound information about their experiences, motives, and issues (Bhattarai, 2023).

Site and Participants:

The study was carried out in Pokhara, district of Kaski. A purposive sampling was done to select six parents who represented diversity by geography (urban/rural), occupation (homemaker and farm/business owner/teacher/labourer), education background, and the type of the school that their children attended (public/private). This diversity was considered very necessary in order to perceive a wide range of engagement experiences.

Data Collection:

The primary data was gathered using semi-structured, in-depth interviews in Nepali language, each of the interviews has been of 20-30 minutes. Transcription of the interviews was done word-to-word and translated into English through naturalised transcription approach in order to maintain the emotional content and contextual aspects (Azevedo et al., 2017). The field notes took reference to non-verbal cues and circumstantial aspects.

Data Analysis:

The data of the narratives were thematized. The transcripts were checked several times to find some patterns, stories and ideas associated with parenting practices, perceptions, and difficulties. These were later coded and divided into general themes.

Ethical Considerations:

About the report Our study on parental Engagement in children's education follows rigid ethical guidelines as required by the International Guidelines on Research Ethics to protect the rights, dignity and well being of all participants. All participants had informed and voluntary consent before data collection. Each participant was given clearly informed about the purpose, scope and nature of the study, the types of questions to be asked and the intended uses of the data, to give them sufficient time and space to make their decision on participating, free from any coercion or pressure. Verbal consent was recorded and the participants were notified that their participation was entirely voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study as transcripts and/or the final report were prepared using pseudonyms of the participants which tended to prevent the identification of the participants. The questions we used were carefully planned in order to minimize discomfort and distress, in line with the ethical guidelines of Pietilä, Nurmi, Halkoaho and Kyngäs (2020).

In addition to protecting participants, ethical rigorous was incorporated into all aspects of research design (in terms of the conduct of interviewing), data analysis, and subsequent reporting. Accuracy, honesty, and transparency are emphasized to ensure that data presented faithfully reflect the participants' authentic voice and lived experiences as indicated by Panter and Sterba (2011).

in accordance with the above ethical considerations, the aim of this study is both to obtain informed consent for study participation and the necessary confidentiality of the data obtained, to involve voluntary participation from the parents, to establish non-maleficence by treating all the participants humanely and ethically, and finally to explore the level to which the voices of parents are being brought onto a positive footing in educational practice.

3. Result and Discussion

The findings show that engagement between parents and children, beyond the physical acquisition of education or the provision of material resources, often plays an important cultural, emotional and spiritual role. Political conflict in education and parenting both has structural and institutional parameters, as the authors say. But there are not so many parents that can have an impact on the academic identity and capacity of their children than others. Contribution on this is discussed quietly in this chapter and practices in school are also encouraged to be supportive to all kinds of parents.

Aspirations and the Value of Education

One of the most profound concepts that emerged from the interviews was that parental aspirations have an effect on how children view the educational concept of education.

“He is very active and he has questions all the time. He told me he wants to be a doctor. I tell him ‘if you want to become something, you need to study hard’”..... Parent A who completed schooling up to Grade 10 had a sense

of emotional investment in her son's potential educational success didn't stop there. Similarly, Parent B shared a tender reflection:

"My daughter likes building things with blocks. She said she wants to be an engineer. We tell her because it is her dream. "..... Even Parent D with limited formal education had a pretty heartfelt understanding of the transformative power of learning:

"No matter if I can't help him with studies, I tell him every day only education will take you forward in life. "..... These evidence support Fan and Chen (2001) finding that parental expectations significantly influence children's academic performance. Aspirations as driven by parental belief and emotional reinforcement can serve to encourage children to persevere even in limited resources. At my school, students who are more motivated by the conversations they have with their parents generally demonstrate greater focus and drive regardless of academic standing. Their motivation often stemming from the conversations they have with their parents becomes the backbone of their journey in school.

Structured Involvement and Daily Support

Another strong theme was that of daily routines and structured parental involvement, as parents frequently assessed their role not in terms of academic know how but in terms of constant presence and supervision. *"After dinner I ask him what you learned today; I help him revise the notes, check his homework, prepare him for the next day, and try to make him sleep in time, "....* said Parent A. Parent C highlighted a shared effort:

"We both take turns (sometimes my husband checks her work, sometimes I do) and we never let her drop any tasks at school. "..... Parent E stressed minimizing distractions:

"During study time there are no phones allowed. I look at her notebooks every day, even if I don't understand everything". Those behaviour represent the behavioral aspect of parental involvement described by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994), and they are compatible with Eccles and Wigfield (2002) ('Children with consistently engaged parental involvement have an academic identity more easily established'). In my view, such routines are actually something that students tend to bring into the classroom - the discipline that it introduces is the framework of their learning habits

Emotional Support and Motivation

More importantly, emotional involvement emerged as a powerful motivator. Many parents noted behavioral changes in their children after they started showing greater interest in and appreciation for their efforts.

Parent A shared a touching example: *"A lot of the times he would hide his bad mark. Now he shows it off and says 'I'm going to do better next time. ' I think just knowing I care somehow makes him take things more seriously.* Parent C expressed pride: *"My daughter double checks her homework now. She feels proud when I say she's doing good".....* These findings can be broadly echoed by Kim and Sheridan's (2024) idea that emotionally involved learning enhances academic self-esteem and commitment. The proponents of responsive parenting at Garbacz et al.(2022) also say that school acquired connected ness is enhanced through responsive parenting.

I have discovered that the students who have involved and emotionally present parents are more resistant and active. They are able to overcome academic disappointments in a healthy manner exercising a growth mindset, as they realize that there is a chance to succeed, someone at home believes in them.

Barriers to Engagement

The narratives revealed several barriers that impeded parental involvement, with parents feeling an overwhelming sense of their need for their children, but having significant challenges such as limited literacy, difficult work hours and lack of access to digital tools.

Parent D candidly admitted: *Would love to come and help, but I don't even know the books. I just ask him to read aloud so I can say I know he's studying.....* Parent F, a working mother, reflected emotionally: *"I come home late and tired... Sometimes I don't even get to ask him how school was. I feel bad, but what can I do?".....* Parent A also shared the challenges of technological gaps: *"We do not have internet at home. When he asks me to help him with computer or math I can't do it. I only studied until Grade 10.* These findings align with the ones provided by Liu et al. (2021), who also indicate parental self-efficacy and digital inequality as some of the most common obstacles. Nevertheless, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) find it important that the attitude of a parent matters, even in case of minimum practical aids. Student motivation can be increased by simply showing an example of care and inspiration. As a teacher I consider that schools should have flexible and inclusive outreach programs especially for impoverished parents home learning kits, materials in their own language and, above all, empathy will help bridge that divide and make no parent feel left out.

Alignment Between Children's Interests and Parental Reinforcement

If parents were actively listening to their children's interests and motivating them to follow their dreams, then children were more motivated and purposeful.

Parent A shared: *"My son likes science and wants to be a doctor. I get books on human body and tell him about good doctors.* Parent B proudly said: *"She builds things out of blocks and says she wants to be an engineer. I tell her if you keep learning you can build anything."* Parent E observed her daughter's storytelling skills..... *"My daughter loves storytelling. She wants to be a teacher I tell her read more practice speak better you will be great* Both of these observations are consistent with According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan 2000), nurture of autonomy is the process of forming individual interest in goals that are wanted. According to the report by Zhou et al. (2021), learning persists when students learn to respond to questions and are taught to respond to them in their natural way.

Personally, I can observe it in my classroom. When real interests of their children are promoted and assisted by the parents (even unconventional ones) then the said children tend to become more inspired and concentrated students.

The most effective ways in relation to the contribution of a parent to the learning of a child are stories told by the parents to their children; a dreaming, a daily routine, emotional engagement or even a personal appearance of the parent; all these forms are informative and encouraging.

From my experience as a teacher I can tell you that children with even moderate parental involvement have greater self-discipline, more curiosity and greater emotional stability, traits which are not learned in elite tutoring centers but in the everyday rhythms of the home.

Schools must not become only advocates but also careful agents on the development of a child's educational journey. Schools also must be socially just and sensitive to parents' lived experiences and their potential for service, in order to ensure that education systems, from the most basic through to the most advanced, move toward a model of equal opportunity and student centered learning.

4. KEY INSIGHTS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The educational experience of children is highly influenced by the role of parents, as it does not only influence academic outcomes but also contributes to development of self-esteem, discipline, resilience, and motivation. The review of the interviews with parents revealed several interrelated methods of helping children in their studying and significant challenges they have. The evolution of a particular kid and their achievements in academic life is predetermined by the emotional, behavioral, and motivational engagement of their parents who cannot be just sources of material goods.

The role of the goals of their parents in motivating their children is one of the most shocking findings. When the parents have a proper sense of what they would like to become in the future (be it a doctor, engineer, teacher or a business owner), they give children the sense of purpose and identity, which guides behaviours in their academic life. An example given by Parent A was that he had revealed to her that he wanted to become a doctor. I suggest that he should work hard to attain success in his academic life. As a school teacher I have found out that students, whose parents present correspondence goals, are more focused, perseverant and long term planners. I can recall one student who had parents who always encouraged her to become a doctor; despite the fact that at the initial stage of her study she had troubles in science subjects, when she always received support at home, she continuously became more successful. The importance of these objectives is high emotionally in Nepal, as social mobility and the welfare of the family is highly interconnected with education. They become a guide to young people, such that they know how to maneuver challenges at school, financial constraints, or when one is lacking in motivation.

Emotional support is yet another factor which has been discovered to contribute to academic performance. Encouragement, recognition and belief in their potential offer an emotional safety net that will enable the kids to resurrect their mistakes and losses. Parent C said her daughter just rechecking her homework. Her pride goes up in the air when I tell her that she is fine. I have found that children that have the emotional support like this one are stronger, they will be more willing to attempt challenging things, and will be less deterred by temporary setbacks. An example is seen in one kid who was constantly praised on his/her effort instead of his/her performance and was empowered to answer questions in class even at the time when he/she was not sure about the answer showing the power of emotional support. By nurturing such learners, the effects are a self-confident learner who internalizes the motivation and develops the notion that he takes personal ownership of the learning process.

Regulated parental involvement and the routines were also proved significant. The parents attached so much importance to monitoring assignments, setting up specific study times and avoiding distractions. The practices instil discipline, accountability even without adapting to advanced understanding of the academic work. "I come home after dinner: I ask him what he has learned today; I revise the notes with him, check his homework, explain what he will do tomorrow, and attempt to get him to sleep on time," described Parent A of a typical evening schedule. Children whose families have consistent routines, in my experience, are better prepared in the classroom, more active and focused, and better organized. An example is that one child always did his homework and only played afterwards, therefore his performance was boosted as he could contribute to the discussions in classes and his projects were delivered on time. All of these routines form the basis of life-long skills that can apply outside the classroom, including self-control and time management.

Co-parenting responsibility was the other important finding. The combined efforts of both the parents results in a balanced and dependable support system in which the women control the daily study sessions and the fathers communicate with the school or see the progress come in. This joint activity demonstrates that education is something prioritized in a family and acts as a model of how a team should work. In my classroom, children whose parents are very active in motivating them to learn are more responsible and self-starters. I can recall one of my students that had parents alternating studying with him as well as attending school activities; the collaborative effort made this student feel secure and helped him be able to progress by being a consistent and steady participant through the years.

Emotional presence is one of the important aspects in improving academic self-esteem. When parents take an interest in their children, congratulate them on their achievements and use up time attending school functions kids will potentially grow up to be self-confident and proud of their learning. Such an emotional validation influences the desire of children to continue and engage in education considerably in the Nepali culture, where family recognition is of top importance. Driven by parents attentiveness and constructive criticism I have seen pupils who initially tried to hide low marks to divulge all the results with parents. This type of care also builds parent child relationships, creates the secure background of learning and engages the spirit of effort, curiosity and participation.

Alongside the wish to participate, the performance of such involvement is impaired by several barriers. On the most occasions, their common problems were lack of access to technology, long hours of work, low literacy and semi-distance to schools. Parent F claimed he was tired, comes home late. I do not have a chance to ask him about how he did at school all the time. What can i do? I have already observed children who experience difficulties without not having continuous attention and support of parents at home since they have to work abroad or in distant areas. To ensure every family has quality parental engagement, these challenges dictate the need to introduce school interventions with the potential to provide educational materials or flexible meeting times or home-based support.

Interestingly, the research revealed that according to the presence of encouragement and good attitudes, it is a strong influence even on the rich and poor parents. When education, working hard, and exploring are appreciated, children will find motivation to perform well as long as there is no structural or economic barrier. Parent D said that she says to him every day that only education will bring him ahead in life even as she is unable to assist him with his studies. My experience with students of these households often reveals that such students have supreme endurance and inner motivation. The student reported here had parents with little formal education and hence due to the constant moral support he got at home and the constant verbal reinforcement at home he continued to excel with reading and writing assignments. This indicates that in matters relating to influencing student performances, attitude and support can at times matter more than actual work.

This was good because another aspect considered was how well parental support was in sync with the interests of the kids. This is long term and intrinsically motivated because parents recognize and promote the inherent capabilities in their child; be it in science, art, storytelling or construction. Parent B: My son enjoy building materials in the blocks. She told: I want to be an engineer. We explain to her since it is her dream. I observed that, children with parents who reinforce their interests and hobbies, are active, creative, and enthusiastic in the classroom. The language skills and the sense of being confident about telling a story were thus developed by one of children, who was interested in telling stories, as her parents gave her books and engaged her in practicing home practice. In case education is aligned with personal interests, it is not a chore anymore but a fun and meaningful process.

It is also very essential that the values are modeled by parents. Children often adopt the attributes of their parents which are like work ethics, discipline, punctuality and problem-solving. It is a possibility that students who possess more independent, responsible, and tenacious parents will be featured by these traits because it is observed often enough by parents in my classroom. To demonstrate how silent studies at home can be highly influential in learning habits, an example of a student who observed her father performing household duties systematically replicated this system of structuring when carrying out an assignment at school. Support has been found to promote the parental effective involvement in schools. The most motivated of parents may occasionally simply require assistance overcoming barriers of technology, geography or even literacy. The participation is more inclusive because schools provide home learning resources, flexible meeting schedule, and local languages study materials. When parents are very much involved in schools, I have noticed that there is a difference: those students whose parents received home-learning kits or training to support their studies at home are better engaged and are resulting better. With the support of the institution, parental participation will be ensured to be equal, sustainable and significant.

Finally, the latter relies on parent-school collaborations in the process of developing egalitarian education. It enables the educational system to be more inclusive because schools view parents as active collaborators who are involved in decision-making activities, whose cultural knowledge is valued and encouraged to engage in school activities. High-quality education can be provided to all children irrespective of their financial background due to common responsibility. In my personal experience, classroom setting, a child thrives well in a situation in which parents are keen on their child education and also initiatives of a greater diverse nature, building stronger ties within the community itself, school, and home.

On the whole, this research demonstrates that the academic motivation of students, resilience, and accomplishment can be significantly determined by parental involvement in terms of aspirations, emotional support, structured routine, behavioral participation, value deployment, consistency to the interest of children, and partnership with schools. In situations where parents do not have the formal expertise or are faced with structural barriers, positive attitudes, parents encouragement and support that are consistent with the children interest will yield good results. To ensure all children can be exposed to an environment that fosters learning, personal growth and future prosperity, as a teacher, I have learned that establishing effective parent-school alliances, providing inclusive learning materials, and acknowledging the lived experience with parents are important strategies. The research stresses the fact that parental engagement is a complex issue and that it is worth empowering parents to play a substantial role in the education of their children.

It raises important questions about how schools, policymakers and educators can contribute to better outcomes for their students. First, our study affirms that parent involvement in schools and households in ways such as emotional support and daily routine contributes to children's motivation to learn and their school identities. Even if parents have very little expertise in teaching children the value of continuous encouragement and interest can greatly enrich a child's commitment to education.

More importantly, the study underscores the importance of respecting the socioeconomic context in which families operate. Many parents from marginalized or working-class backgrounds have limited time, limited literacy and limited resources, yet they maintain care in culturally meaningful and emotionally meaningful ways. The only way that schools can recognize and validate these contributions is by rewarding and acknowledging what these families have done, rather than just focusing on formal or academic activities.

The research also emphasizes the importance of strong partnerships between home and school. Having a true partnership between parents and teachers is an effective method of improving student engagement, better discipline and better self-regulation. To do this, schools need to develop educational practices that are more than simply parent-teacher workshops, because many families have technological, linguistic or literacy barriers and it is in the institution's interest to develop outreach activities that are user-friendly, multilingual and take into account the lived experiences of parents.

Finally, parental mood also has a crucial impact on learning. As children feel supported and encouraged by their parents it supports resilience and improves academic performance (see above), which also further illustrates that it is not just about having materials available or the homework being monitored, but about the emotional and relationship environment in the home itself.

5. Conclusion

This research contributes to this already comprising volume of proof because of the fact that parental interest in the education process of children can extend past straight-forward academic support. Narrative interviews with six parents of different backgrounds and socioeconomic status from Pokhara revealed that parental belief, care and emotional connection are responsible for child's motivation and achievement in school. In cases when children are continuously encouraged, listen to and emotionally supported in the home, they exhibit higher levels of confidence, greater self-discipline and a greater commitment to learning.

So even when one faces obstacles like low literacy, work hours that are long and at times limited to access to technology, there is always the hope that good dialogue with parents can take place that will help their children succeed. And if these parents are persistent, moral, and interested their children will greatly benefit from this dialogue. That's why schools must shift their focus from an transnational approach to parents' involvement to one of inclusiveness, and empathy.

In the end, education is a process that begins at home with the student and ends with the school. The presence of families playing a big role in the education of their children has several advantages in the long run as enrolment

in school and the status of the family socially and economically as well as in some other ways improves. It is important that a basis of trust and respect be built between parents and teachers so as to enhance performance of students and culture of the school system.

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