

## Parental Interest in Students' Achievement in the Subject of English at Early Childhood Stage

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### Abstract

The article analyzes the interest of parents for the achievement of their children in the subject of English. It was a case study conducted in a private English medium school. The study aimed to find two types of relationships; firstly, the relationship between educational level of parents and achievements of students in the subject of English and secondly relationship between interest of parents and achievement of students in the subject of English. 59 students and their parents (only one of the parents who filled in the questionnaire) participated in the study. It was a census study therefore, 100% sample was taken which consisted of all the pupils and their parents. Pilot testing was conducted on the population with same characteristics. A questionnaire with 26 items for parents was developed and its validity and reliability was determined. Students' achievement in English was calculated on the basis of English result of the school final term examination. Data collected through questionnaires was analyzed by applying Pearson product moment correlation. The results of correlation showed no relationship between students' achievement in the subject of English and parents' educational level, whereas significant relationship was noticed between parental interest and students' achievement in English.

**Keywords:** parents' educational level, students' achievement, parental interest, English language

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## Introduction

The current decade has observed a worldwide interest in second language acquisition at early childhood stage. This interest has proven controversial, because one group of parents as well as teachers are of the view that learning of English as an additional language at early childhood stage can be arduous for the young learner resulting in the hindrance of even native language achievement (Crawford, 1999; Burns, Werker, & McVie, 2003). The other group presents the opinion by saying that the early stage is the best stage to receive a new language as the child's mind is more receptive at this stage (Billak, 2013).

In the twentieth century acquisition of second language in a global perspective establishes the dominance of English language. English language speakers have been increased in number ten times than in 1900. According to a rough estimate in 2010 "The Status and Role of English", reported this strength to be from 700 million to one billion across the world. This swift boost in the status of English as a language has given a chance to debate in all the socio-linguistic groups. It is also viewed that with next period of approximately ten years, the ratio of English language speakers will surpass the local speakers' number. Schools providing English medium education are a source of social and economic influence in countries like India and Pakistan where parents as well as children consider it as a great mechanism for their progress and success both socially and economically.

According to Javed, 2008 in post-colonial countries like Pakistan, English is considered as a language of great importance either from educational point of view or from economic realization. It is being taught as a compulsory subject from class one onward. In spite of all this, the standard of English language teaching in government as well as in primary schools is not satisfactory (as cited in "English language teaching in Pakistan", 2010).

Undoubtedly, there are exceptions. There are some public and private institutions which are providing quality education but as a matter of fact, they also undergo the problem of parent's interest in their children's studies. This problem is more evident in institutions of small cities especially those dealing with rural area community. For example, in Murree, English medium schools are catering for the population from the surrounding suburbs. These schools are following Oxford and Paramount syllabus to meet the quality education but this has put the teachers in a difficult situation where they have to teach students with all sorts of backgrounds effectively. Teachers alone cannot undertake the charge without the support of parents regarding the provision of quality

education. The interest from parents is always desired in various activities like regularity and punctuality of student in school, reinforcement in homework assignments and cleanliness of the students.

### **Factors affecting Interest of Parents**

It is quite evident from the research that interest of parents in their children's education is greatly influenced by the family background. It is observed that parents from working communities do not usually involve in their children studies especially the full time working mothers cannot spare time to care for kids regarding their school tasks. The research also shows that the parents of elementary school children take more interest in the educational level of their children than those of the high school students.

Epstein, 1993 was of the view that it is in power of the school to get parents and guardians involved in their children educational activities. Both school administration and teachers can involve parents in various activities of their children like to assign homework tasks to establish rapport between parents and teachers and to arrange parents' workshops for building up communication between teachers and parents. Parental observations and perspective can be predictive in the matter of interest. The educational goals set by the parents for their children can be decisive for their interest. Their own educational level is also important in this regard. Additionally, parents own views about education, their realization of their responsibilities and their observation about their children's interests can also be predictive in their interest in their children studies.

### **Influence of Parents' Interest on academic achievement of Children**

In academics, the appropriate level of parental interest at the suitable moment can be a cause to improve the achievement level of the student. The school administration should encourage the interest of parents in school functions and activities. The researches have proved that interest of parents is very imperative for the success of students. It is the psychology of children to find their elders around in all the spheres of life. Therefore, parental interest is seen as a socializing force to promote readiness toward learning among the young kids. The same force can be a connecting agent in developing parent-child collaboration in school

atmosphere. The wish to attend to school in children is increased when they see their parents' desire so. In this way, parent-child relationship is further reinforced.

Christenson (2004) discussed that although there are also some situations when interest of parents is not conducive for the education of their children but the importance of interest cannot be denied at any case. "Family-school partnerships are a viable and essential way to increase the opportunities and support for all students to enhance their learning progress and meet the recent demands of schooling" (p.83). There are chances that the children do not accept the unaccustomed culture of school in comparison with the known home or family culture. The parents who do not visit schools and do not take interest in their kids' education are less inclined to connect to school environment. As it is the responsibility of the parents to build up a constructive relationship with school environment, it is also the obligation of the school staff and teachers to encourage parents' participation. Moreover, only educated parents are not required to be encouraged but the less privileged and less educated parents need to be more welcomed as their native language is not English and they too, need guidance to deal with their kids' education.

The significant role of parental interest to support the educational level of the students cannot be ignored. There is ample literature which verifies the connection of students' achievement and parental interest. The studies reveal that the schools which involve parents in education achieve better results. It is a matter of concern that school must contact all sort of families from different backgrounds because the schools must be aware of the parents; aspirations about the school. Therefore, it is observed that the schools which understand and appreciate the needs of all sorts of parents from different backgrounds meet the higher levels of success for their students by involving their parents.

The literature of various researches notifies the benefits of parental interest for parents, teachers and students. For students, the benefits include in improved behavior, mental fitness and regularity in school (Christenson, 2004). The dynamic parental interest can be helpful in growing teachers' morale; building healthier school environment and cultivating parent-teacher bond. The interest of parents in their children education can be connected with improved level of parental confidence and contentment (Epstein, 2001).

## **Relationship between Parental Interest and Students' Achievement**

The results of researches in education over the years have provided evidence of positive results of parental interest in education of children at early school level. These findings of these researches are very helpful for the schools where parents are involved for the better education of their children. The interest of parents brings good scores of their children. The children also improve their social skills and behavior and are well adjusted at school.

Parents can be effectively involved in their children education by providing them a suitable learning environment at home. There are other activities too, which can be the matter of parent' apprehension and care including discussions with their children about school matters of all sorts and to administer the activities which children perform when they are out of school.

Dixon, 1992, stated "Parental interest in almost any form produces measurable gains in student achievement" (p.16). Parental interest either with the school or with the student, undoubtedly, is an imperative concept with recompensing production for all the stakeholders. According to Vandergrift & Greene (1992), 'The combination of level of commitment and active participation is what makes an involved parent', (p. 57). In Christenson, (2004), words "Family-school partnerships are a viable and essential way to increase the opportunities and supports for all students to enhance their learning progress and meet the recent demands of schooling" (p.83).

It is observed that parental interest brings changes in children. These changes can be in the attitude and behavior, regularity in school and mental fitness of the child (Christenson, 2004). If parents are actively involved, the morale of the teachers is heightened and parent-teacher relationship is further strengthened. Parents also increase the level of their confidence and satisfaction with the school when they improve their interest level in their children studies (Epstein, 2001). Grolnick (1997), established that the interest of parents also proves influential for the achievement of students as the improved parental communication has great effects on students' motivational level, competency level and confidence level with the realization that they can administer their school achievements. The knowledge, skills and attitude of parents is proved influential when they get involved with the studies of their children. The children may have the feelings of being successful at school with parental interest (Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

## **The Influence of Parental Education on Students' Achievement**

There is an abundance of literature which advocates the positive and direct influence of parents' education on the achievements of their children (Corwyn & Bradley, 2004; Linver et al., 2002; Yeung et al., 2002). It is noticed that parents with higher education background may clearly outline the higher level of education for their children as compared to the parents with lower level of education. Such parents are likely to play their role in encouraging children to perform better at school and may also frame higher expectations about their achievement at school (Davis- Kean & Schnabel, 2002). The development of children is promoted due to the teaching styles of the parents as parents with strong education may have their own method of making their own children to understand. So the educational fulfillment of parents increases development in children (Harris, Terrel, & Allen, 1999), deliver motivational learning environment and cognitive literary activities at home (Kohl, Legua, & McMahan, 2000; Linver et al., 2002), therefore they are more at ease to be involved with the education of their children, school staff and educational administration (Brody & Flor, 1998).

Keeping in view this situational background, the basic objectives of the study were to find out the relationship between educational level of parents and achievement of students in the subject of English and the relationship between interest of parents and achievement of students in the subject of English

The following null hypotheses were formulated as the base of the study.

H<sub>01</sub> There is no significant relationship between the educational level of parents and achievement of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students in the subject of English.

H<sub>02</sub> There is no significant relationship between the interest of parents and achievement of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students in the subject of English.

## **Methodology**

The present study is a case study in nature with survey research design.

## Population

The population of the study consisted of 59 students and their parents (Father or Mother who responded) from both sections of Grade 2 of the School.

## Sample

100% population was taken as census.

Table 1

*Sample of the Study*

Types	Class 2 A	Class 2 B	Total
Students	31	28	59
Parents	31	28	59

## Instruments of the Study

The tool for data collection was questionnaire. There were 30 items in the questionnaire that was administered on parents. The items of questionnaire were about the qualification of parents, children tuition, and parents' awareness about their children performance at school, interaction with teachers, home assignment, extra coaching, and parents' efforts for the improvement of their children success. All these items were framed keeping in view the objectives of the study which focused on determination of parental interest in the achievement of students in the subject of English. To calculate the reliability Cronbach's alpha was used and it was measured as  $\alpha = .72$  which was within acceptable range according to McMillan & Schumacher, 2006. Another consideration for students' achievement was the final term English results of the students.

## Results

The first null hypothesis was "There is no significant relationship between the educational levels of parents and the achievement of students in the subject of English." The academic qualification of mother or father of the pupils was a deterrent factor for the educational level of the parents.

Table 2

*Descriptive statistics of Parents' education*

Fathers' Education levels	Percentage%	Mothers' Education levels	Percentage%
No schooling	00	No schooling	03
Primary	00	Primary	02
Elementary	05	Elementary	08
Secondary	07	Secondary	17
Higher Secondary	39	Higher Secondary	36
Graduation	32	Graduation	22
Post graduate	17	Masters	12
Total	100	Total	100

The educational level of parents (mother or father) was analyzed keeping in view the total years of schooling or educational institutions.

To see the relationship between the parents' educational level and children achievement in the subject of English, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used.

Table 3

*Relationship between parents' education levels and students' achievement*

Education level	Students' Achievement	Sig.
Fathers'	.140	.291
Mothers'	.212	.106

Significance level 0.05

The results of the data as presented in the table show that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for father's education level and academic achievement of their children was  $r = .140$  at  $p = .291$  which was not significant enough to reject the null hypothesis and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for mothers' education level and academic achievement of their children was  $r = .212$  at  $p = .106$  was not significant enough to reject the null hypothesis. Thus the null hypothesis, there is no significant relationship between the educational levels of parents and the achievements of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students in the subject of English was accepted.

The second null hypothesis was "There is no significant relationship between the interest of parents and achievement of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students in

the subject of English" Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to check the relationship between parental interest and children academic achievement in the subject of English.

Table 4

*Relationship between parents' interest and their children's academic achievement*

Variables	Parental Interest	Children's Academic Achievement	Sig.
Parental Interest	1	.257*	0.05
Children's Academic Achievement	.257*	1	

\* Significance level 0.05

The result of the data as shown in the table that  $r = .257$  at  $p = 0.05$  is significant enough to reject the second null hypothesis. Thus the alternate hypothesis, there is a significant relationship between the interest of parents and the achievements of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students in the subject of English was accepted.

## Discussion

The results were contradictory with the findings of most of the studies with implications that the educational level of parents is not decisive for the achievement of their children's education. The results were against the findings of the studies in the field presented by Corwyn & Bradley, 2004; Linver et al., 2002; Yeung et al., 2002; Davis- Kean & Schnabel, 2002, Harris, Terrel, & Allen, 1999; Kohl, Legua, & McMahan, 2000; Brody & Flor, 1998. These studies verify that the educational level of parents has positive effects on academic achievement of their children. The results of the present study revealed that the educational level of parents has no significant relationship with the academic achievement of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students in English which are contradictory to the above mentioned studies and that may be attributed to the teacher and teaching methodology as intervening variables. Therefore, the results are quite opposite to the other studies in this field. Furthermore, the tuition culture is quite common in the area where study was conducted. Academies are commercial centers of education in this area. Parents usually do not bother about their children education at primary level and it is considered as a duty of school or academy to bring

results. Thus the educational level of parents does not matter as a success factor.

On the contrary, parental interest was correlated with the academic achievement of the students as hypothesized in the present study. These results of present study confirmed the studies on 'Parental interest and children's achievement' conducted by Dixon, 1992; Christenson, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Grolnick, 1997; Dempsey & Sandler, 1997.

Concluding results show that parents' educational level did not prove influential factor in the academic achievement whereas parental interest did prove as effective cause for students' achievement in the subject of English at early childhood stage.

## **Conclusions**

Majority of the parents (Mother and Father) possessed almost twelve years of schooling having no significant effect on the educational achievement of their children in the subject of English. Further, most of the parents were found with established interest in their children's studies in various ways resulting in the significant relationship between the interest of parents and the achievements of students in the subject of English.

## **Recommendations**

The results of the present study lead to the following recommendations on the basis of indicators of parental interest:

The parents may take time out to pay attention towards the home assignments of their children especially the correction work given by their teachers. There is need for positive reinforcement by the parents with higher educational level to improve the academic performance of the students as compared with those having parents with lesser educational background. The parents are required to provide the extensive study material and supervise its appropriate usage by their children. The parents may also seek guidance from home tutors if they are themselves unable to participate in their kids educational activities. The parents may possibly interact with the teaching staff and try to attend all the functions, meetings and workshops organized by the school to monitor the progress of their children.

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