Parents' Involvement Among the Arab Ethnic Minority in the State of Israel

Raed F. Zedan

Abstract

This study examined parent involvement in children's education among the Israeli Arab population and the degree of influence of various background factors on their involvement. The correlations between parent involvement and pupil achievement were examined in relation to the characteristics of the pupils (i.e., age, gender). About 400 parents participated in this research, and a parent involvement questionnaire was used to measure the degree of involvement. It was found that parents of girls participated and were involved in their daughters' studies more than parents of boys. It was also found that the more parents supported and believed in the importance of learning, the higher their children's achievement was. Regarding age level, it was found that parents of children in elementary schools participated and were more involved in the education of their child than parents of children in secondary schools.

Key words: parental involvement, Israel, Arab, ethnic minority, student achievement, age, gender, parents, expectations, aspirations, elementary, secondary

Introduction

Since the 1970s, social changes in Israel and throughout the world have increased the desire of parents to take an active role in the educational system (Friedman & Fisher, 2003). Beginning in the 1990s, attempts were made to understand the reasons that led to parental involvement (Friedman & Fisher,

2002), and there was an increased demand for expanding the involvement of parents and for creating models for the relations between the parents and the school (Toran-Kaplan, 2004).

Parents can have a strong influence over the education of their children. They have the ability to shape, nurture, and develop them as pupils who are active, interested, diligent, creative, and tolerant by showing positive involvement in their children's studies and in their educational activities in general. On the other hand, parents can destroy motivation and learning capabilities by negligence and indifference towards their children's achievements.

Henderson and Mapp (2002) reviewed 51 studies and concluded that there is "…a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement." This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students of all ages.

In view of the importance of this issue, and considering the paucity of data and findings that could clarify and describe the situation regarding this issue in the Arab sector in Israel, it is important to investigate the matter empirically from various aspects with reference to cultural and gender-related characteristics. The aims of this study are to measure the level of parent involvement among the Arab population in the State of Israel and to examine the relationship between the various background factors and the involvement of parents in the education of their children.

Parent Involvement

The definition of parent involvement includes a variety of activities by parents: (a) conversations at home; (b) attention and supervision at home; (c) contact between parents and school; and (d) participation in parent–teacher meetings. Henderson and Mapp (2002) defined parent involvement as:

- Engaging in learning activities at home, including helping with reading skills and checking homework
- Supervising children and monitoring how they spend their time out of school
- Talking about school and what children are learning
- Attending school events, going to parent–teacher conferences, meeting with teachers, and volunteering in the classroom or school

Similarly, Ho and Willms (1996) identified four basic types of involvement. Two are based at home and two at school:

- Discussing school activities
- Monitoring out-of-school activities

- Contacts with school staff
- Volunteering and attending parent–teacher conferences and other school events

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) conducted a literature review to learn why parents become involved in their children's learning. From their analysis, they developed a theoretical model to explain why parents are involved. Their model suggests that parents' involvement decisions and choices are based on several constructs. The first is parents' "personal construction of the parent role" (p. 8)—what parents believe they are supposed to do regarding their children's education. This construct suggests that different cultural and class contexts shape how parents define their role and how they engage in their children's education. The second construct focuses on parents' "personal sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school" (p. 8). This has to do with whether parents believe and are confident about their ability to be helpful to their child. The third construct influencing parents' decisions about their involvement comes from "general invitations, demands, and opportunities for family involvement" (p. 9). In this construct, the child's age and developmental level, overall level of performance, personality qualities, and general enthusiasm about parents' involvement at the school all influence parents' decisions about participation. Thus, school staff and children signal their expectations about involvement to parents, and these signals ultimately influence parents' decisions.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggest that schools and communities can better engage families by working actively to invite and welcome parent involvement and by developing programs that support and enhance parents' efficacy for involvement in their children's schooling. Shaped in part by Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1986) and based upon the results of psychological and sociological studies, the model of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) adds to our understanding by focusing on parental sense of efficacy and parental role construction. Parents decide to participate when they understand that collaboration is part of their role as parents, when they believe they can positively influence their child's education, and when they perceive that the child and the school wish them to be involved. The model of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler demonstrates that to increase parental involvement, the school and the teachers must focus, at least in part, upon parents' perspectives on the issue.

Friedman and Fisher (2003) note that parents' involvement is expressed in a wide range of activities that mainly concern the organization of parents in schools and the nature of their contacts with the school staff. Trusty (1999) points to two focal points of parent involvement: in the home, and in the school. This finding is further reinforced by Seginer (2002). Today it

has become a commonly accepted practice to indicate these two main bases for parent involvement. The involvement of parents in the home consists of educational activities of the parents with the aim of promoting the learning (academic) achievements of the child in three fields: cognitive, motivational, and behavioral (emotional support, help in preparing homework, counseling, and guidance). Parents' involvement in the school consists of engagement in extracurricular activities such as assistance within the school framework in the various social, organizational, or maintenance aspects (formation of school policy and informal activities) of the school (Seginer, 2006).

Parent involvement is multidimensional, composed of various kinds of behaviors, attitudes, and parental expectations (Toran-Kaplan, 2004). Involvement implies the dedication of resources by parents for the benefit of the child in a certain sphere and the total number of activities in which the parents can participate and that can contribute either directly or indirectly towards the education of their children (Slowiaczek, 1999, as cited in Ginsburg, 2008). Epstein (1996) emphasized the term partnership as an expression for parent involvement, which means to identify parents' and educators' interests in responsibility for the children to work together to create better programs. The participation of parents in the educational and social process in the schools is intended as the realization of their democratic right to do so (OECD, 1997). The decision of the parents to be involved is influenced in the wider sense by the social environment of the parents' lives (Jessor, 1995).

In an age in which the school is part of the community and in the competitive market in which schools compete over parent support, the involvement of parents is of the greatest importance (Wherry, 2002). Without the participation of parents, the educational system today is not only unable to succeed but finds it difficult to function (Glick, 2007). The integration of parents in educational activities constitutes one of the important conditions for contribution of the parents (knowing the world of the child, improving the self-image of the child) as well as of the teachers (practical assistance and emotional support that reduce burnout; Peled, 1999). Successful schools are those that promote positive and comprehensive communication with parents (Toran-Kaplan, 2007).

Minorities and Education

Various minorities in the world that have found themselves without a basis for their traditional form of existence have turned to new horizons in order to establish their future. In the modern period, when many states developed educational systems open to all, minorities regarded education as an alternative route for collective advancement. For example, the Jews in many countries around the world made use of education as a most successful strategy for

mobility. In the United States, where the Jews are one of the smallest minorities, they can be found today in the highest social and economic ranks, thanks to the adoption of this strategy (Rinawi, 1996).

The Palestinians in Jordan can serve as another example of a collective entity that adopted education as a strategy for group mobility. Jordanian residents of Palestinian origin have succeeded in surviving as a collective body and in attaining high positions in the state, whether in the government or in the Jordanian economy, by virtue of education and their awareness of its importance as the main means to achieve personal and group mobility, especially in a non-democratic regime such as the Jordanian Kingdom (Hallaj, 1980).

Other researchers have attempted to claim that the Palestinian minority in Israel has moved in this direction as well. For example, Mari' (1978), the first Palestinian researcher to examine Palestinian education in Israel, claims that the Palestinian citizens of Israel regarded education as an alternative to the land they lost after the establishment of the state and turned it into a means for mobility and for social and economic prestige. Al-Haj (1991) agrees with this view. He claims that:

> The deprivation of Arabs from their economic base (land) and their limited access to the opportunity structure have eventually increased the importance of education for the competition over local and national resources.…In the new system, education has replaced land as a major element of the individual's socioeconomic status. (p. 150)

However, the data on the low achievement of the Palestinian citizens of Israel in high schools and universities does not indicate that state education has become a means for mobility for most of the members of this group. The level of education of the Arab minority is very low in comparison with the Jewish majority. It is worth mentioning that more than 75% of the Arab population in Israel are Muslims. The guidelines and religious commandments of the Islamic religion obligate Muslim parents to take an interest in their sons and daughters, to educate them and raise them in the best possible way, beginning with the choice of an accepted name and going on to ensure food, clothing, and studies. Moreover, Islam considers that the highest form of charity is that which is offered to children and the family of a believing Muslim. There is an explicit command in Islam that every parent will be held in account for his or her sons and daughters and is required to care for their safety, their lives, and their future. There are very few studies in this field in the Arab sector in Israel and an insufficient picture of this phenomenon.

Cummins (1986) proposed a framework for changing the relationship between families and schools so that all children would have a better chance to

succeed. Citing research by John Ogbu, he points out that minority groups with low status tend to perform below standard. This is because they have taken to heart the inferiority that others assign to them. The central principle of Cummins's framework is that students from "dominated" groups can do well in school if they are empowered, rather than disabled, by their relationships with educators. Willis (1981) and Ogbu (1978, 1981) explain resistance and academic disengagement as a reaction or adaptation to an oppressive, stigmatizing sociocultural system (Foley, 2004). Ogbu (2003) agrees up to a point, but ends up stressing that Black students must be more pragmatic and less concerned about whether teachers and the system "care for" them.

Parent Involvement: Gender, Age, and Academic Achievements

Ginsburg (2008) found that parents are more involved with their sons than with their daughters, that mothers were more involved than fathers, and that the younger the child, the more the parents were involved. Parents were found to be interested in developing contacts with the school, especially when the children were in the lower grades (Power, 1985). Shulman (1995) also found that parent involvement decreases as the child's age rises, either because of the higher level of study demands, which makes it difficult for the parent to cope, or because of maturity (physical growth and sexual development) and the fact that as they grow up, children want to be independent of their parents.

Parent involvement constitutes an important component in successful learning achievements (Toran-Kaplan, 2004). There is a positive and direct correlation between various aspects of parent involvement and the behavior of parents in supporting the academic achievements of their children (Wentzel, 1998). Williams (1994) found that this correlation is consistent across ethnic lines. Wanat (1997) stressed that parents believe their involvement contributes positively to improvement in the achievements of their children, and Dayan (1999) also found this to be true. This connection can significantly be found among various age groups, at different school levels, and in different social sectors. Jesse (2001) likewise found that parent involvement contributes to the higher academic achievement of pupils and assisted in their advancement.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:
1. Is there a difference in the level of parent involvement and its factors between parents of boys and parents of girls?
2. Is there a positive correlation between parent involvement and learning (academic) achievements among boys and girls?
3. Is there a difference in the level of parent involvement according to the age level of their children?

Research Method

The design of this research is of the *ex post facto* type (examination after action). It is field research that is quantitative, correlative, and descriptive. Since the variables in this research occurred retroactively, the researcher had no control over the involvement of parents, even on other variables, and was an outside observer on the process after it had taken place. In this research, the description and measurement of the phenomenon of parent involvement in schools in the Arab sector of Israel was conducted, as well as an examination of the differences between the varying personal and learning categories with regard to the dependent variable. In order to describe the involvement of parents according to the perception of the parents themselves, a factor analysis was carried out by the method of Principal Axis Factoring in accordance with direct oblimin rotation. An internal consistency of reliability analysis was carried out to measure the reliability for the factors that were produced. The research questions were examined by one-way MANOVA.

Population and Sample

This study targeted a population of Arab parents and their children studying within the Arab education system in the State of Israel. This population suffers from enormous difficulties and serious educational problems as a result of a policy of continued negligence and discrimination, a dearth of resources, and the general implications this has for the process of teaching and education. Non-Jewish schools are underprivileged in the allocation of resources (Golan-Agnon, 2005; Jabareen, 2005). The Arab-Palestinian minority living in the State of Israel is considered to be lacking the resources that would provide their children with socioeconomic mobility, such as means of production, education, and professional skills (Jiryis, 1976).

The current research tries to shed light on this problem from a different perspective. A random sample was selected with 408 boys and girls of different ages, from Grades 3 to 11, in eight schools located in five Arab towns in the north of the country. Their parents were invited to participate in the research and completed a parent involvement questionnaire.

Research Tools

Surveys were used in this study as they are designed to obtain information about the performance, attitudes, habits, and interests of a particular group of people—in this case, parents of school-age children (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Surveys are also a quick and easy method of obtaining data. Researchers argue that the quantitative approach is more objective, structured with high

reliability and validity (Coolican, 1999). However, when using self-reporting questionnaires, there is no way to verify that the answers are correct; it is unclear whether some respondents exaggerate in describing their actions, or vice versa. The kind of people who agree to answer these questionnaires can be fundamentally different from those who refuse to answer.

For this study, a multiple-choice questionnaire was used (Seginer, 2002). The questionnaire was structured, anonymous, and was meant to be a personal account for measuring the level of parental involvement and its aspects according to the perceptions of the parents themselves. The answers were constructed according to a Likert scale of five levels (1 = very seldom to 5 = always); there were 35 statements describing parent involvement. The items on this questionnaire were composed on the basis of the distinction between the two focal points of parent involvement: the home, and the school. Toran-Kaplan (2004) made use of this questionnaire for a population of Jewish pupils and parents and carried out an analysis that produced five factors: (1) "continuous" home-focused involvement; (2) position of parents towards the school and studies; (3) "continuous" school-focused involvement; (4) involvement focused on the school when a problem arises; (5) involvement focused on the school during "special activities."

A factor analysis was carried out for this research; using the Principal Axis Factoring method according to direct oblimin rotation, six significant factors were constructed. The criterion for the number of factors was on the value basis of Eigenvalue above 1. For each factor, the items that were chosen were those which had a loading higher than 0.4 (see Appendix A).

It should be noted that in the first factor analysis, item 22 in the original questionnaire did not satisfy the criterion of the loading and was therefore omitted. Beside this, items 6, 15, 19, 20, and 21 were omitted from the composition of the first factor because they did not fully correspond to the factor content, and the influence of the latter was very minimal on the reliability of the factor. Item 8 was omitted from the second factor because it did not fully correspond to the factor content, which raised the level of its reliability. Item 16 was omitted from the third factor because it did not fully correspond to the factor content, and there was no significant influence on reliability.

Thus, a repeat factor analysis was carried out after the deletion of items that did not measure up to the criterion of the loading and the criterion of content and meaning correspondence in the first analysis (6, 8, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22). The analysis yielded the following factors: (1) monitoring (participation of the parent in the initiative of their child); (2) support and belief in the importance of studies; (3) participation in group activities in the school and contact with the teachers; (4) involvement when a problem arises concerning the child; (5) participation in personal activities; (6) indifference to the child's achievements.

(1) Monitoring (participation of the parent in the initiative of the child) included items like: My child tells me what he learned at school; My child involves me in his homework. (2) Support and belief in the importance of studies included items like: I think that education is a very important part of life; I think that education is very important to advancing in life. (3) Participation in group activities in the school and contact with the teachers included items like: When there are programs for parents in the school I attend them; I initiate talks with teachers. (4) Involvement when a problem arises concerning the child included items like: When my child returns from school unhappy because the teacher was angry with him, I immediately call the school; When the teacher gives my child a grade that he does not deserve, I immediately call or go to the school to speak to the teacher. (5) Participation in personal activities included items like: I accompany trips that the school organizes; I volunteer at the school. (6) Indifference to the achievements of the son or daughter included items like: I hardly ever see the school tests and assignments of my child; I don't really care about the grades that my child receives. The 3rd and 5th factors involved, respectively, activities that required participation of a group of parents working collectively or tasks that one parent could participate in by themselves; in some tasks, parents participated or refrained from participating depending on its nature, time, or interest.

Table 1. Factors of Parent Involvement

	Factor	Items	Cronbach Alpha Coefficient	M*	S.D.
1	Monitoring	14, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35	α = 0.884	4.054	0.854
2	Support and belief in the importance of studies	11, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25	α = 0.840	4.570	0.675
3	Participation in group activities and contact with the teachers	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	α = 0.762	3.906	0.884
4	Involvement when a problem arises	7, 9, 10	α = 0.674	3.639	1.061
5	Participation in personal activities	26, 27, 28	α = 0.603	2.113	1.077
6	Indifference to the achievements of the son or daughter	12, 13	r = 0.435**	2.319	1.381
7	**General Parent Involvement**	1 – 35	α = 0.881	3.867	0.580

*The scale of answers range between 1 and 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high.
**The factor of "indifference to achievements" is composed of only two items, therefore the Pearson-coefficient is considered as the measure of reliability.

First question: Is there a difference in the level of parent involvement and its factors between parents of boys and parents of girls?

In order to examine whether there is a difference in the level of parent involvement between parents of boys and parents of girls, a one-way MANOVA was carried out. Table 2 presents the sum of squares and the mean square for the source of the variance.

Table 2. Summary of the MANOVA for Comparison by Pupil Gender

Source of Variance	Dependent Variable	SS	D.F.	MS	F
Gender	Monitoring	9.31	1	9.31	13.14***
	Support and belief in the importance of studies	4.91	1	4.91	10.66**
	Participation in group activities and contact with the teachers	1.36	1	1.36	1.74
	Involvement when a problem arises	0.01	1	0.01	0.01
	Participation in personal activities	5.46	1	5.46	4.73*
	Indifference to the achievements of the son or daughter	9.66	1	9.66	5.22*
	General Parent Involvement	2.68	1	2.68	8.04**
Error	Monitoring	260.03	367	0.71	
	Support and belief in the importance of studies	169.09	367	0.46	
	Participation in group activities and contact with the teachers	286.81	367	0.78	
	Involvement when a problem arises	426.36	367	1.16	
	Participation in personal activities	423.55	367	1.15	
	Indifference to the achievements of the son or daughter	679.81	367	1.85	
	General Parent Involvement	122.33	367	0.33	
Total	Monitoring	6321.74	369		
	Support and belief in the importance of studies	7844.81	369		
	Participation in group activities and contact with the teachers	5910.03	369		
	Involvement when a problem arises	5342.25	369		
	Participation in personal activities	2087.67	369		
	Indifference to the achievements of the son or daughter	2624.50	369		
	General Parent Involvement	5628.24	369		

*$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.01$ ***$p < 0.001$

The analysis showed that there exists an outstanding difference in the factor of parent participation in the initiative of the child (monitoring) between parents of boys and parents of girls ($F(1, 369) = 13.14$, $p < 0.001$). This factor is much higher among parents of girls than among parents of boys. A significant difference was found in the support and belief in the importance of learning between parents of boys and parents of girls ($F(1, 369) = 10.66$, $p < 0.01$). This factor is also higher among parents of girls than among parents of boys. Another difference was found in the factor of participation in personal activities between parents of boys and parents of girls ($F(1, 369) = 4.73$, $p < 0.05$). This factor is higher among parents of boys than among parents of girls. A further difference appears in the factor of indifference to achievements between parents of boys and parents of girls ($F(1, 369) = 5.22$, $p < 0.05$). This factor is higher among parents of boys than among parents of girls. Additionally, a significant difference exists in the general involvement of parents between the parents of boys and the parents of girls ($F(1, 369) = 8.04$, $p < 0.01$). This factor was higher among parents of girls than among parents of boys (see the averages and the standard deviations of involvement by parents of boys and parents of girls in Appendix B, available from the author upon request).

Second question: Is there a correlation between parent involvement and learning achievements among boys and among girls?

In order to examine the correlation between the factors of parent involvement and learning achievements, Pearson coefficients were calculated for the variables among boys and girls separately (seeTable 3).

A significant and positive correlation was found between the factor of monitoring and the academic achievement of girls, as well as between the factor of support and encouragement and the achievement of boys and girls. The Pearson coefficient of correlation between the factor of support and encouragement and the achievement of girls is higher than the parallel Pearson coefficient among boys. A significant and positive correlation was also found between the factor of involvement when a problem arose and the achievement of boys and girls. The Pearson coefficient between the factor of involvement when a problem arose and the achievement of girls was higher than the parallel Pearson coefficient among boys. A significant and positive correlation was found between the general involvement of parents and the achievement of boys and girls. The Pearson coefficient between the general involvement of parents and the achievement of girls was again higher than the parallel Pearson coefficient among boys (see Appendix C, available from the author upon request).

Table 3. Correlation Between Factors of Parent Involvement and Achievement by Gender

Factor	Learning Achievements of Girls r_p	Learning Achievements of Boys r_p
Monitoring	0.281**	0.157
Support and belief in the importance of studies	0.263**	0.212*
Participation in group activities and contact with the teachers	0.000	0.054
Involvement when a problem arises	0.237*	0.208*
Participation in personal activities	0.008-	0.100
Indifference to the achievements of the son or daughter	-0.107	-0.004
General Parent Involvement	0.264**	0.188*

*$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.01$ ***$p < 0.001$

Third question: Is there a difference in the level of parent involvement according to the age level of their children?

In order to examine whether there exists a difference in the level of parent involvement between parents of children in elementary schools and parents of children in secondary schools, a one-way MANOVA was conducted. Table 4 presents the sum and mean square for the source of the variance.

The analysis showed that there is a significant difference in the factor of parent participation in the initiative of the child (monitoring) between parents of children in elementary schools and parents of children in secondary schools ($F(1, 369) = 17.48$, $p < 0.001$). This factor was higher among the former. A similar difference exists in the factor of support and belief in the importance of learning between parents of children in elementary schools (higher) and parents of children in secondary schools ($F(1, 369) = 10.83$, $p < 0.01$). There is a noticeable difference in the factor of participation in group activities in school and the contact between teachers and parents of children in elementary schools and parents of children in secondary schools ($F(1, 369) = 3.88$, $p < 0.05$). This factor was again higher among the first. A marked difference occurs as well in the factor of indifference to achievements between parents of children in elementary schools and parents of children in secondary schools ($F(1, 369) = 8.21$, $p < 0.01$). This factor was higher among the second. A significant

difference was found in the general parent involvement between parents of children in elementary schools and parents of children in secondary schools (F(1, 369) = 10.71, $p < 0.01$), with higher involvement in elementary schools (see Appendix D, available from the author upon request).

Table 4. Summary of MANOVA for Comparison of Involvement Factors According to Age

Source of Variance	Dependent Variable	SS	D.F.	MS	F
Age	Monitoring	12.36	1	12.37	17.48***
	Support and belief in the importance of studies	4.96	1	4.96	10.83**
	Participation in group activities and contact with the teachers	3.08	1	3.08	3.88*
	Involvement when a problem arises	2.28	1	2.28	1.99
	Participation in personal activities	1.74	1	1.74	1.50
	Indifference to the achievements of the son or daughter	15.05	1	15.05	8.21**
	General Parent Involvement	3.57	1	3.57	10.71**
Error	Monitoring	266.73	377	0.71	
	Support and belief in the importance of studies	172.66	377	0.46	
	Participation in group activities and contact with the teachers	298.57	377	0.79	
	Involvement when a problem arises	431.32	377	1.14	
	Participation in personal activities	435.90	377	1.16	
	Indifference to the achievements of the son or daughter	690.95	377	1.83	
	General Parent Involvement	125.81	377	0.43	
Total	Monitoring	6459.85	379		
	Support and belief in the importance of studies	8046.33	379		
	Participation in group activities and contact with the teachers	6043.64	379		
	Involvement when a problem arises	5464.47	379		
	Participation in personal activities	2129.11	379		
	Indifference to the achievements of the son or daughter	2721.50	379		
	General Parent Involvement	5755.84	379		

*$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.01$ ***$p < 0.001$

Discussion

After analysis of the factors that led to parent involvement in the educational process of their sons and daughters, six relevant factors were discovered in this research: (1) monitoring (participation of the parent in the initiative of the son or daughter); (2) support and belief in the importance of learning; (3) participation in group activities in the school and contact with the teachers; (4) involvement when a problem arises with the son or daughter; (5) participation in personal activities; (6) indifference to the achievements of the son or daughter. It must be noted that the analysis of the factors in the present research produced a new factor, "indifference to achievements," as well as the difference between participation with group activities in which the parent participates with other parents, and participation in individual activities, in which the parent is not dependent upon the participation of a parent group.

There is a certain overlap between these factors and the factors found in other studies. Seginer (2002) spoke about three central points: home-focused parental involvement, school-focused parental involvement, and monitoring—participation of the parent in the initiative of the child. Toran-Kaplan (2004) made use of the same questionnaire and carried out an analysis of the factors that yielded five factors: "continuous" home-focused involvement, position of the parents towards the school and learning, school-focused involvement, involvement focused on the school when problems arise, and involvement focused on the school for "special activities."

First Question: Parent Involvement and Gender

The findings showed that parents of girls were more involved in the initiative of their daughters and took greater part in the activities than parents of boys. In other words, the girls apparently involved their parents more than the boys did. The girls told their parents what they had learned at school, what occurred in class, and kept their parents informed of activities in the class. They mentioned their future plans, involving their parents in problems in the class and at school, and turned to them when they found difficulties with their homework. They did all this more than the boys. Parents of girls reported believing in the importance of learning more than parents of boys. Parents of girls also thought that scholarship was an important part of the lives of their daughters and that homework was a very important part of their studies. When their daughter received a grade that was not good, the parents encouraged her to make a greater effort. They thought education was important to advance in life and assisted their daughters when they asked for help in their homework.

A significant difference existed as well in the factor of indifference to achievements between parents of boys and parents of girls. Parents of boys were more indifferent than the parents of girls; they hardly ever looked at the tests and work done by their sons, and they do not seem to care as much about the grades their sons receive. Parents of girls were found to be generally more involved than parents of boys. The only positive difference in favor of the boys was the factor of participation in personal activities. Parents of boys participated in personal activities more than parents of girls, participating in parent programs, Parents Day, initiating talks with teachers, and were familiar with the educator of their children.

The findings of the present study contradicts those of Ginsburg (2008) who found that parents were more involved in relation to their sons than to their daughters. I think the greater interest and involvement of Arab parents in their daughters' studies than those of their sons has various reasons, and might be explained on three levels:

1. The level of study and scholarship: The rise in the percentage of girls who continue their secondary and higher education studies and the impressive achievements of many girls have caused parents to treat their daughters in a way that is different from that of previous decades. An additional report (OECD, 2007) emphasized that the self-image of girls is higher in relation to their professional future. More girls see themselves as belonging in the future to the "white-collar" sector.

2. The phenomenon of feminism: Al-Hajj (1996) pointed to the significant rise in the percentage of Arab female teachers. Eilyan, Zedan, and Toran (2007) note that the percentage of women in the Arab sector who are studying in kindergarten- and teacher-training institutions today is 92.4% of all the students. Women teachers are capable of developing positive attitudes towards their girl pupils rather than towards boy pupils. They are liable to encourage girls and to support them both educationally and morally, and their support has implications on the level of parental involvement.

3. The religious level: The religion of Islam encourages the education of girls. One of the Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad was: "Studies are the duty of every Muslim man and Muslim woman." The Prophet did not differentiate between the sexes and even recommended that girls should study in the same way as boys.

The rise of the Islamic movement at the end of the 20th century led to a return to religion and a change in values among Muslims throughout the world, and this did not exclude Israeli Arabs. Many of the supporters of the new Islamic movement are educated people, graduates of secular schools, products

of modernization (Ali, 2004). Arjomand (1984) claimed that the power of Islamic fundamentalism has strengthened as a result of the increase in the rate of educated people among the population, which has raised the level of involvement of urbanites and intellectuals, in general, and of students, in particular. This new spirit has brought about, among other things, a strengthening of the status of the Muslim woman and given emphasis to her education.

The increasing involvement of parents in the studies of their daughters is reflected in the equal treatment they receive in the school (Zedan, 2006). Zedan also found that teachers devoted equal attention to boys and girls in science subjects and mathematics (Zedan, 2010). Jesse (2001) found that parent involvement not only contributes to higher academic achievement of the pupils and assists in their advancement, but even improves the self-image of the teachers. Parental involvement assists teachers and supports them emotionally. Moreover, it was found that the involvement of parents contributes to the morale of the teachers and leads to an improvement of class climate and increased efforts by the teachers in educational processes (Fan & Chen, 2001). Zedan (2010) found that the teacher–pupil relationship and gender equality are two of the most important components in class atmosphere.

Second Question: Parent Involvement and Learning Achievements

It was found that the more parents supported and believed in the importance of learning, the higher were the achievements of both girls and boys. This correlation was stronger among the girls. The more parents were involved when a problem arose, the higher the achievement of both girls and boys. Here, too, the correlation was stronger among the girls. Achievement of boys and girls also increased the more that general parental involvement increased. The findings of the present research support those of Todd and Higgins (1998) and Henderson and Mapp (2002), showing that parents were the most influential factor on the achievements of their children. This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds for students of all ages.

Also influential were the educators, including educational advisors who worked together with the pupils and their families to solve pupils' problems and to promote their achievements (Amatea, Daniels, Bringman, & Vandiver, 2004). Toran-Kaplan (2004) found a positive relation between home-focused parent involvement and self-esteem and learning achievements. Generally speaking, a direct relation can be found between success in learning and pupils whose parents were "involved parents," as compared with those whose parents were not involved (Edwards & Young, 1992). Parents become more involved in their children's education at home and at school when they perceive

that their collaboration is actively encouraged by the teachers and the school (Deslandes, 2001). Perhaps teachers encouraging the parents of both boys and girls to be more involved in their child's education could result in higher academic achievement among the Arab population in Israel, as well.

Third Question: Parent Involvement and Age Level

With regard to age level, it was found that parents of children in elementary schools participated and were more involved in the initiative of their child than parents of children in secondary schools. Parents of children in elementary schools were also found to be more supportive and encouraging and believed in the importance of learning more than parents with children in secondary schools. On the other hand, parents of children in secondary schools were more indifferent to the achievements of their children than parents of children in elementary schools. Furthermore, parents of children in elementary schools were generally more involved in what was happening with their children than parents of children in secondary schools.

These findings support those of other researchers (Power, 1985; Shulman, 1995) who discovered that the younger the child, the more the parents were involved, and that as age increased involvement decreased. Parental involvement is highest at the primary level, declines significantly around the fourth grade, and reaches its lowest peak at the secondary level (Deslandes, 2001). Reasons for this decline are the child's developmental stage (e.g., adolescents who want more independence), parents' sense of efficacy for helping their child solve problems, and the greater complexity of school work at the secondary level.

However, the findings contradict studies that showed parents as being interested in developing contacts with the school mainly when their children are in lower grades. The present research shows that Arab parents of children in secondary schools in Israel participate in group activities in school and create contacts with teachers more than parents of children in elementary schools. It may be that the reason for this is the branching out of subjects in secondary schools and the multiplicity of problems in connection with the pupil. In elementary schools the number of teachers with whom the pupil comes into contact is relatively smaller than the number of teachers he/she comes into contact with in secondary schools.

Summary

This study has examined parent involvement among the Arab population in Israel and the degree of influence of various background factors on their involvement. The correlations between parent involvement and pupil achieve-

ment were examined in relation to the characteristics of the pupils (age, gender). With regard to the correlation between parent involvement and gender, it was found that parents of girls were involved in their daughters' studies more than parents of boys. An examination of the correlation between parent involvement and learning/academic achievement showed that parent involvement was very important for the success of the pupils. The relationship between parent involvement and age level showed that the younger the child was, the more the parents were involved. The task of those taking part in parent involvement in education is to avoid confrontations as much as possible, since the successful cooperation of parents in the educational process contributes greatly to its success. On this matter there is full agreement among the experts who think that the process of parental cooperation will continue to increase and broaden into many more spheres, and parents will become much more empowered.

Recommendations

The school–family relationship is currently a topic of interest among parents, teachers, policymakers, and all those involved in childhood education. Parents are one of the most influential factors on the lives of their children. They have the ability to shape, sustain, and develop pupils who will be active, interested, diligent, creative, and tolerant, through the parents' positive involvement in the learning process and educational activities. On the other hand, parents are also capable of repressing and destroying the motivation and ability of their children through neglect and indifference to their achievements (Zedan, 2011).

Based on the belief that parental involvement has a significant impact across various populations, schools should adopt strategies to enhance parental engagement in their children's schooling. Teachers, principals, and school counselors should familiarize themselves with the facets of parental involvement that can help the most so that they can guide parents on what steps they can take to become more involved. Educators should consistently encourage parents to become more involved in their children's schooling. It is recommended that this issue be studied more intensively, quantitatively as well as qualitatively. It might also be useful to perform confirmatory factor analysis and to apply more sophisticated statistical techniques in researching this topic, such as structural equation modeling.

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Raed F. Zedan is the deputy head of Graduate Studies Authority and head of projects and dissertations at the Academic College for Education in Israel and lecturer at the M.Ed. degree program for advanced courses in measurement and evaluation, research methods, and statistics. Dr. Zedan is interested in the study of issues in education and teaching among teachers and among students and parents from the Arab sector, including classroom climate, academic achievement and gender differences, parental involvement, teacher work stress, problems of beginning teachers, and the study of the processes of teacher training. Correspondence concerning this article maybe addressed to Dr. Raed Zedan, Kfar Manda 17907, P.O. Box 248, Israel or email raedzedan248@gmail.com

Appendix A: Factor Analysis by Direct Oblimin Rotation

Factor/Item		Loading
	A. Mentoring - Participation of the parent in the initiative of the son/daughter (Variance = 31.232%, eigenvalue = 10.931)	
1(14)	My child tells me what he learned at school	0.625
2(29)	My child tells me what happens in class	0.761
3(30)	My child informs me about activities in the classroom	0.779
4(31)	My child tells me about his plans for the future in school	0.654
5(32)	My child tells me whenever he has a problem in class	0.722
6(33)	My child involves me in his homework	0.529
7(34)	My child informs me about activities in the school	0.796
8(35)	My child tells me whenever he needs help in preparing his homework	0.720
	B. Support and belief in the importance of studies (Variance = 7.844%, eigenvalue = 2.746)	
1(11)	I think that education is a very important part of life	0.701
2(17)	I think that homework is an important part of studies	0.650
3(18)	When my child receives a bad mark I try to encourage him to make a greater effort	0.675
4(23)	I think that it is very important to advance in life	0.696
5(24)	When my child asks for help in homework I usually help him	0.672
6(25)	When my child receives bad marks I help him	0.601
	C. Participation in group activities in school and contact with teachers (Variance = 6.074%, eigenvalue = 2.126)	
1(1)	When there are programs for parents in the school I attend them	0.794
2(2)	When it is parents day at school I arrive	0.786
3(3)	I attend activities in school in which my child participates	0.662
4(4)	I initiate talks with teachers	0.463
5(5)	I know the educational supervisor of my child	0.439
	D. Involvement when a problem arises with the son/daughter (Variance = 4.168%, eigenvalue = 1.459)	
1(7)	When a problem arises in studies I talk with the teachers about it	0.390
2(9)	When my child returns from school unhappy because the teacher was angry with him, I immediately call the school	0.810
3(10)	When the teacher gives my child a mark that he does not deserve, I immediately call or go to the school to speak to the teacher	0.661
	E. Participation in personal activities (Variance = 4.023%, eigenvalue = 1.408)	
1(26)	I volunteer at the school	0.775
2(27)	I accompany trips that the school organizes	0.650
3(28)	I am a member of the school's parents	0.553
	F. Indifference to the achievements of the son/daughter (Variance = 3.357%, eigenvalue = 1.175)	
1(12)	I hardly ever see the school tests and assignments of my child	0.752
2(13)	I don't really care about the marks that my child receives	0.802