PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S SCHOOLING: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: Research in parental involvement in students’ learning has shown significant impact on students’ success and achievement. The aim of the study was to investigate the extent of parental involvement among primary and secondary school children in Malaysia. An extension of parental involvement model by Epstein has been used as a framework of this study to investigate parental involvement among primary and secondary school levels. The factors of parental involvement studied were parenting, volunteering, communicating, collaborating with community, religiosity, school engagement, life goal achievement and learn at home. A total of 916 students responded to the questionnaires. An independent t-test was used to analyze the data. Overall findings indicate a significant difference between parental involvement in primary and secondary school level. Further details and discussions are elaborated.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Volunteering, Monitoring, Communication, Parenting

I. INTRODUCTION

Previous researches have proven that parental involvement can escalate student achievement. (Epstein, 2001; Sanders, Simon, et.al.; 2002; Stegelin, 2003). Epstein (1995) has defined parental involvement as families and communities who take active roles in creating a caring educational environment. Specifically, many studies have indicated positive relationships between parental involvement in their child’s learning and academic achievement, better behaviors, accountability, social skills, and attendance (Billman, Geddes, & Hedges, 2005; Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hill & Craft, 2003; Jeynes, 2005; Overstreet, Devine, Bevins & Efrem, 2005). Epstein’s model of parental involvement has been adapted as the framework for this present study. Similar framework has been tested in the context of changes in student behavior that led to student higher rates of homework completion (Dauber and Epstein 1993), reduced dropout rates (Cotton Wikeland, 1992) increase student achievement and success (Epstein 2011 and Sheldon 2003) and improve school activities (Epstein 2011, Henderson & Mapp 2002 and Sheldon 2003). There is still a gap in the research of parental involvement in the comparison of primary and secondary school levels specifically in Malaysian context.

Parents at home must provide not just the essential needs of biological and physical needs but also emotional support and their involvement to prepare their children for schooling. Alma Harris (2010) suggests that the proportion of influence on achievement is 80% home-related and 20% school related. Secondly, parents interactions with schools and children promote academic success (Hill, et al; 2004). With the advent and technology innovation of social networks, the social interactions between teachers, students and parents are more conducive, faster and easier thus help in improving towards better collaboration with the school.

Literature Review

Literatures have shown that many studies have indicated high positive correlations between parental involvement in their child's learning and academic achievement, better behaviors, accountability, social skills, and attendance (Billman, Geddes, & Hedges, 2005; Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hill & Craft, 2003; Jeynes, 2005; Overstreet, Devine, Bevins & Efrem, 2005). Additionally, Jeynes (2005) found that the positive correlation was stable across racial groups and gender. Epstein (1995) has revealed that parental involvement in their school activities relate to demographic and their residential areas. The distance has contributed to less school involvement unless time and places are flexible. To date, there is no standardized research framework in guiding researchers to study Malaysian parental involvement in children’s schooling. There is a need to inform the Ministry of Education on the extent of parental involvement in schools.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

An adapted questionnaire with 40 items has been used to measure parenting, volunteering, communicating, collaborate, learn at home, religiosity, engagement, and life goal achievement. The questionnaires were distributed to five primary schools and five secondary schools in Kuala Terengganu. The participants were selected on stratified random sampling. A total of 916 students responded to the questionnaires.

In analyzing the data, SPSS version 20.0 was utilized to reveal the descriptive and t-test result. The level of
students’ agreement was measured from 5-Likert scale indicating the level of their agreement ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Further, strongly agree and agree were collapsed to ‘agree’ and strongly disagree and disagree to ‘disagree’ for the purpose of data display. Moreover, mean and standard deviation were computed. The independent t-test was used to show the difference between the levels of the study (primary and secondary school students) in parental involvement (i.e., parenting, volunteering, communication, collaborate with community, learn at home, religiosity, school engagement and life goal achievement). The questionnaire was pilot-tested to establish the preliminary reliability of items. with r = 0.803.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There has been 916 students (458 primary; 458 secondary) responded from 1000 questionnaires distributed. The initial breakdown of data is based on mean and standard deviation. The highest mean The item religiosity (my parents always pray for my success) shows the highest mean (M = 4.80, SD = .588). While, the lowest mean is revealed in item 18 (collaborate with community) "my parents had booked the school ground/facilities for community activities (field, hall, cafeteria etc.)" before" with (M = 2.18, SD = .873). This indicates that parents’ prayers for their children and reminding students to pray are important factors in parental involvement as perceived by students. Further, 95.5% of the students have agreed that their parents pray for their success while the lowest item was recorded 8.2% showed that the students agreed that their parents booked school ground for community activities. It is clear that religiosity plays an important role in parental involvement as perceived by students.

In Table 1.0, mean differences are revealed as compared between primary and secondary school in the parental involvement factors. Firstly, overall comparison was carried out using a total mean score for all the factors of parental involvement. Then individual factors are compared for the difference between school levels. The results are based on the independent t-test with p is less than 0.05 as significant difference.

To further understand each parental involvement activities, it is found that parental support in learning at home and student engagement in schools show no difference between both primary and secondary schools. Firstly, there is an indication that parents show similar support in guiding their children at both primary and secondary levels. The mean score is high (more than 3.0) suggesting that students perceive their parents to be involved at home where they may provide conducive learning environment and not reluctant to spend money for tuition classes for their children. Secondly, students perceived that they are engaged in learning with a mean score of more than 3.9 for both primary and secondary schools. Thus, schooling is important for the Malaysian students regardless at primary or secondary levels where they show high engagement.

Other parental involvement activities show differences where volunteering, communicating, collaborating, religious support and students perceived life goal achievement. Specifically, volunteering, communicating, collaborating and religious support show low mean scores in the primary as compared to secondary schools. There is an indication that secondary schools show more welcoming school environment with better volunteering activities, open communication between parents and schools and allow parents to collaborate. Religious support by parents are crucial at secondary level since exposure towards truancy, gangsterism in secondary schools are very obvious. By providing consistent guidance and monitoring mechanism for religious practice will mould the students to be on the right path.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The present research has contributed to important issues in investigating the different parental involvement and student engagement at primary and secondary schools. The findings revealed that religiosity support were perceived highly by both primary and school students resulting the highest mean. This finding was parallel with previous study by Che Noraini and Sharifah (2014) which revealed that religious value and practices can act as influential factor in parental involvement. In all the activities, the parental involvement factors show differences between school levels except learning at home and school engagement. The study has embarked on the importance of parents to ensure more involvement in
volunteering and communicating in school communities are needed since low mean scores were detected. This study contributes to the significant use of Epstein’s framework for future research but further adapted in the context of Malaysia where religious activities, student engagement and life goals are studied. These factors need further investigation in predicting a model that works in the Malaysian school environment.

REFERENCES


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