Parental Involvement in Community Schools:
The examination of a model of the influences of parents’ perception of their parental role, self efficacy, invitation for involvement from school, the homeroom teacher and the child, and parental resources of time, energy, skills and knowledge

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Abstract

Extensive literature indicates consistent and strong relations between parents' involvement and academic success (high achievements, low levels of anti-social behavior and high rate of attendance). However, little is known about the factors promoting or inhibiting parents' involvement. The present study, conducted in collaboration with the Social and Youth Administration (Minhal Hevra Venoar) at the Israel Ministry of Education, seeks to understand parents' involvement in schools, especially in Junior High and High schools which are defined as ‘Community Schools’, and test a theoretical model of the multiple factors that determine parental involvement.

This study examines the model developed in 1997 by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler and that was later modified by Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler and Hoover-Dempsey (2005), that is one of the few that presents a combination of factors influencing parents' involvement. The current research expands the original model by further examining the correlations between the variables used in the model, and by adding variables at the school level in addition to the variables at the parent level.

Research variables:

The dependant variable is parental involvement. This variable includes the location in which the involvement occurs (school vs. home), whether it is passive or active, and its target of impact (child vs. school).

The independent variables are parents’ perceptions of: a) motivational beliefs (parent role perception and self efficacy); b) invitation for involvement (a general invitation from school and specific invitations from the child's teacher and from the child him/herself); and c) life contexts (parents' perceptions of their available time and energy, and their relevant skills and knowledge).
Other independent variables examined at the school level are school size, length of time as a community school, and socioeconomic status of the local authority in which the school is located.

**Research Hypotheses:**

At the school level, it was hypothesized that levels of parental involvement will be higher in larger schools, in schools that were community schools for a longer period of time, and in schools located in local authorities with higher socioeconomic status.

At the parent level, it was hypothesized that a positive relation would be found between parental involvement and parents’ perception variables, namely, higher levels of involvement among parents who view themselves as having available resources (time and energy, skills and knowledge), who perceive themselves invited to be involved (by school, child’s teacher and the child himself/herself), and who have high motivational beliefs (parental role perception, as an important agent in the child’s success, and self efficacy).

It was hypothesized that parental role perceptions will mediate the relation between parents’ perception of invitation for involvement, from all parties (school, child’s teacher and child) and parental involvement. In addition it was hypothesized that parental role perceptions will moderate the relation between parents’ perception of life contexts (available time and energy and available skills and knowledge) and parental involvement.

**Research Method:**

Data was collected from 5,999 parents in 26 junior high and high schools in Israel (15 Jewish and 11 Arab), during the academic year of 2006-2007. All these schools had a ‘community’ ideology. Data was collected through self-report questionnaires distributed to
parents while waiting for their scheduled parent-teacher meeting, or were delivered to parents’ homes by the students. Parents’ participation was anonymous, voluntary and was not rewarded monetarily.

The questionnaires were based on the original questionnaire developed by Walker, et al. (2005) and were adjusted to the population of parents of junior and high school-aged children in community schools in Israel. Arab parents responded to a version in Arabic.

Questionnaires were analyzed with two main data procedures: Hierarchical Linear Modeling, a technique that takes into account the hierarchical social structure of the educational system (students within schools or parents within schools in the case of the present study), and Structural Equation Modeling, which takes into consideration the error component in measuring latent variables through observed indicators and also the covariance of the model variables.

**Research Results:**

Results indicate very little variance in parental involvement between schools, indicating that parental involvement is more a function of parents’ level variables, meaning parents’ perception, and less of school level variables. Nevertheless, findings support other studies indicating that more parental involvement is reported in larger schools. Significant correlations were also found between socioeconomic status of the local authority in which the school is located and parental involvement variables (both involvement at school and active parental involvement at home), but contrary to expectations a negative relationship was found. Length of time as a community school was not found to be related to parental involvement.

Overall, the findings confirm the original model developed by Walker et al. (2005). Results indicate significant relations between parental involvement and parents’ perception of
life contexts (available time and energy and available skills and knowledge), parents’ perception of invitation for involvement (from school, child’s teacher and child), and parental role perceptions.

According to research hypothesis, parental role perception was found to mediate the impact of parents’ perception of invitation for involvement on parental involvement. Moreover, parental role perceptions moderated the relation between parents’ perception of life contexts and parental involvement.

Research findings indicate high levels of involvement among parents of junior high and high school children, nearly as high as involvement of parents of elementary school children. In addition, there were clear differences in frequency between parental involvement at home as opposed to involvement at school, which was far less common.

Finally, a recurring finding indicates that parents are focusing on furthering the achievements of their own child and less on improving the overall functioning of the school.

**Implications for decision making and development of involvement intervention programs:**

The present study indicates the importance of parents’ perception of their parental role vis a vis the school and academic work. Therefore, programs aimed at enhancing parents’ involvement should focus on strengthening parental role perceptions as an important agent to their child’s success in school.

Another implication of the findings would be the enhancement of home-school relations at home since parental involvement at home was found higher than involvement at school. In addition, the fact that levels of involvement with junior high and high school children was found
almost as high as with elementary school children, indicates the importance of such involvement with older ages.

Last but not least, it appears that parents’ perceive their involvement with regard to their own child and less with regard to the entire school. Therefore, schools should examine the extent to which they are willing to promote parental involvement in the school as a whole, and this type of involvement should be further examined in relation to the improvement of children’s academic success and the fulfillment of schools’ goals.