

## HOW PARENTS' ACADEMIC BACKGROUND CAN AFFECT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRESCHOOLER'S EDUCATION

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### Abstrak

Keterlibatan orang tua dalam pendidikan anak telah diakui dapat membawa banyak manfaat terhadap pendidikan anak, khususnya dalam meningkatkan performa akademik anak-anak di sekolah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap pengaruh tingkat pendidikan orang tua terhadap upaya melibatkan diri dalam memfasilitasi belajar anak. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kuantitatif dengan sampel sebanyak 230 orang tua yang memiliki bersekolah di lembaga-lembaga pendidikan anak usia dini di Kabupaten Buleleng, Bali Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan Family Involvement Questionnaires-Short Form (FIQ-SF) yang dikembangkan oleh Fantuzzo et al. (2013) serta telah diterjemahkan dan disesuaikan dengan konteks Indonesia. Data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis menggunakan teknik statistik *Independent Sample T-test*. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkap bahwa orang tua yang berpendidikan yang lebih tinggi menunjukkan tingkat keterlibatan yang lebih tinggi dalam pendidikan anak-anak mereka, terutama dalam keterlibatan berbasis rumah dan konferensi sekolah-rumah, namun tidak dalam keterlibatan berbasis sekolah. Alasan dari hasil yang diperoleh serta arah penelitian selanjutnya dibahas dalam penelitian ini.

**Keywords:** keterlibatan orangtua, pendidikan anak usia dini, pendidikan, anak usia dini

### Abstract

Parental involvement in children education has been acknowledged to bring about many advantages to children education, especially in boosting children's academic performance at school. This study is aimed at revealing the effect of parents' educational level on parental efforts to facilitate the learning of their children. It is a quantitative research in which the samples were 230 parents whom their children were admitted in fifteen early childhood education institutions in Buleleng Regency, Bali Indonesia. Data were collected using Family Involvement Questionnaires-Short Form (FIQ-SF) developed by Fantuzzo et al. (2013) which had been translated and adapted to Indonesian context. Data were analyzed using Independent Sample T-test technique. The results demonstrated that parents who are well educated exhibit higher level of involvement in their children education compared to less educated parents, especially in home-based involvement and home-school conferencing, but not in school-based involvement. The reasons of this result and the direction for future research were discussed in this study.

**Keywords:** parental involvement, early childhood education, education, preschooler

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the growing number of researches on parental involvement worldwide, the related research on such field in Bali, Indonesia, especially Buleleng remain scarce. Buleleng is a small district in the northern part of Bali, Indonesia. Buleleng has great potentials in education as it has many well-known and reputable schools and universities. Buleleng has long been a destination for

people from middle to east part of Indonesia to continue their study. Thus, the educational awareness and aspirations of people in Buleleng are interesting to be investigated, especially in regard to children education. Parental involvement on children education in particular becomes very crucial as it is one of the determinants of children's accomplishment at school.

The term parental involvement is used interchangeably with parental engagement which has been investigated long enough by the researchers. LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling (2011) contended that parental involvement refers to parents' investment on children's education, be it in or out of the school hours. Parental involvement in children's education is series of behaviors and practices that parents do at home, at school, and in the community to open opportunities for children to learn and ensure that children can learn at their best (Marin & Bocoş, 2017). Fan (2011) saw parental involvement ranging from parents' aspiration for academic success of their children, communication between parents and children about education and school matters, communication between parents and teachers regarding the children, parents' engagement in school activities, as well as parental supervision toward their children at home. Although there is no universally accepted definition of parental involvement, but many has recognized that parental involvement is a multifaceted construct because parental involvement covers varied parenting practices related to education (Fan & Chen, 2001). Looking at those definitions, parental involvement is seen as a broad concept by which it is started from any efforts parents do at and outside their home to help their children achieve a good academic attainment at school. In this case, parents have varied ways in improving academic performance of their children, including checking children's homework, volunteering at school, attending discussion or forum of school activities, and many more. In this article, parental involvement is seen as participation in any academic activities to support children to achieve success at school.

Epstein (1995) suggested six types of parental participation to facilitate their children's learning. Those types include parenting, learning at home, communicating, decision making, volunteering, and collaborating with community. Parenting refers how parents raise happy, healthy, and successful children through some activities with the children. Learning at home refers to how parents assist their children with any related academic activities at home such as doing homework. Communicating refers to any communication between parents and school that aims to create the best educational experience for children, such as parents inform teachers about their children's health, academic history, etc. Decision making refers to how parents participate in the decision making performed by the school, especially through participating in parents committee. Volunteering refers to voluntary participation of parents in school programs and students' activities. Last but not least, collaborating with the community includes identifying which community services and resources that are appropriate to support schools, students, and families. In line with Epstein's framework, (Fantuzzo et al., 2000) identified three dimensions of parental involvement, namely school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and home-school conferencing. Home-based involvement is defined by creating a conducive learning environment for children at home, such as providing sufficient learning materials, initiating learning activities together with children, as well as giving learning experience with the community. School-based involvement refers to parents' support and participation in school activities such as taking part in parents committee, volunteering at school, going on school trips with children, etc. Home-school conferencing refers to parents and school communication regarding children' experience and progress in education. Thus, participation of parents in children education is ranging from educational activities at school and outside of school such as at home or in the community.

Ecological System Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner contends that human development is very much influenced by the environment around us that is always changing (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). In this case, children's success in education is very much influenced by their environment, especially their home environment including parents, siblings, etc. This is the closest interaction of children which is called *microsystem* (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Parents are supposedly the most influential party in children development, therefore parental involvement in children education is very important. Research indicated that high level of parent's participation in children's activity in school is associated with good academic performance (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005, 2007). Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci (1991) suggested that parental involvement will increase children intrinsic motivation to study and achieve better academic performance. In addition, Hoover et al., (2014) found that

parental involvement in educational setting has a big role in helping children learn; shaping positive behavior with friends, teachers, and their social environment; as well as the ability to better adapt with the impact of globalization. Thus, both academic performance and social-emotional functioning of the children are affected by how much parents are willing to involve in children education. A good social-emotional functioning will contribute to children being able to get friends and building healthy relationship which then leads to optimal development of the children.

The question remains as to what factors may contribute to the degree of parental involvement to support learning of their children. A study by Magwa & Mugari (2017) suggests that there are three factors that have impact on parental involvement in children's education, which are factors related to parents, school, and students themselves. Parents' level of education is deemed as one of the parents-related factors. With low level of education, parents rarely possess enough knowledge and skills needed to assist children with their education. Moreover, Bæck (2010) as well as Lee & Bowen (2006) suggested that barriers such as cultural norms, insufficient monetary resources, and parents' lack of educational accomplishment may prevent parents from taking part in children education. In addition, Marin (2000) suggested that parents with medium or high educational level outperform the low educational level in terms of the degree of parental involvement in their children's education. This shows that parents' educational level will make parents able to contribute more to their children education and bring about great influence in shaping children academic success at school.

It is interesting to find out if this is also the case in current situation considering that there are many sources of information available on the internet. People can freely browse things on the internet, including parents browse for the information related to their child development, education, parenting, and all things related to it. Current research is a continuation of previous research conducted by Magta & Handayani (2019) which suggests that majority of parents with children enrolled in early childhood institutions in Buleleng Regency exhibit low level of involvement in general on their children education. The main concern in this research is to reveal if there is a significant difference in the level of parental involvement among parents with higher and lower level of education. Moreover, Buleleng Regency as one of the regencies in Bali, Indonesia is considered having great potentials in education and educational level possibly become a significant differentiator between people which affects how people behave and make decisions, especially in their child's education. More importantly, the purpose of this study is not only showing the effect of parent education on their level of involvement, but also we will explain what kind of involvement parents usually do in attempt to get participated in their children's education.

H1: well-educated parents have significantly higher level of involvement in their children's education than less-educated parents

H2: well-educated parents have significantly higher level of home-based involvement in their children's education than less-educated parents

H3: well-educated parents have significantly higher level of school-based involvement in their children's education than less-educated parents

H4: well-educated parents have significantly higher level of home-school conferencing in their children's education than less-educated parents

## **METHODS**

The current study was carried out as quantitative research aiming to investigate the influence of parents' education level on parental involvement level among 230 respondents with children of the ages 4-5 enrolled in pre-school programs from 15 early childhood education institutions in Buleleng Regency, Bali. Respondents were selected using simple random sampling in which every sample in the population has similar chance of being selected. Demographic data were also collected, such as sex, ethnic group, and occupational status. From the total number of respondents, there were 72 male parent and 158 female parent. Based on the ethnic group, there were 207 Balinese and 23 non-Balinese. In terms of whether their employment status, there were 154 working parent and 76 non-working parent. Parents' education is differentiated based on whether or not they have college degree. Therefore, there are two groups, one is parents with non-college degree (high school diploma or lower) and parents with college degree (starting from Associate's Degree or higher).

Data were collected using Family Involvement Questionnaires-Short Form (FIQ-SF) developed by Fantuzzo et al. (2013). FIQ-SF is developed and validated from Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) by Fantuzzo et al. (2000) for the use in preschool education. They identified three dimensions of parental involvement, namely school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and home-school conferencing. FIQ-SF consisted of 21 items with 4-point Likert scale in which 1 indicates rare, 2 indicates sometimes, 3 indicates often, and 4 indicates always. The items of English version instrument were translated to Indonesian and validated using expert judgment. The result of the expert judgement indicates that all of the items were a good fit to be used in Indonesian context. Sample items for each dimension were “*I talk to my child’s teacher about his/her daily school routine*” (home-school conferencing), “*I participate in planning classroom activities with the teacher*” (school-based involvement), and “*I spend time with my child working on reading/writing skills*” (home-based involvement). Data were analyzed using *Independent Sample T-test* which was performed using IBM SPSS, version 23.0.

## RESULT

The research aimed at determining whether there is an effect of parents’ education level on the degree of parental involvement in children academic performance. This research was conducted to 230 parents who have young children enrolled in early childhood education institutions in Buleleng District. Descriptive statistics showed that approximately 51,7% of the total sample have lower level of education (non-college degree) and 48,3% identified as having higher level of education (college degree). Table 1 below shows the frequency and percentage of parents who have higher and lower level of involvement.

Table 1.  
Frequency and Percentage of Higher and Lower Degree of Involvement

Variable	High		Low	
	F	%	F	%
<i>Parental Involvement</i>	120	52.2	110	47.8
Non-college degree	53	44.5	66	55.5
College degree	67	60.4	44	39.6
<i>Home-based involvement</i>	155	67.4	75	32.6
Non-college degree	73	61.3	46	38.7
College degree	82	73.9	29	26.1
<i>School-based involvement</i>	57	24.8	173	75.2
Non-college degree	26	21.8	93	78.2
College degree	31	27.9	80	72.1
<i>Home-school conferencing</i>	96	41.7	134	58.3
Non-college degree	42	35.3	77	64.7
College degree	54	48.6	57	51.4

From the table above, it is shown that there were 120 parents (52.2%) who have higher level of involvement and 110 parents (47.8%) who have lower level of involvement. In addition, there was more people attaining higher scores (67.4%) than those who reported lower scores on home-based involvement (32.6%). In school-based involvement, 24.8% of parents reported higher level of involvement and 75.2% reported lower level of involvement. Similar result was also found for home-school conferencing in which 41.7% of parents reported higher level of involvement and 58.3% reported lower level of involvement. This result shows that in general, there are more parents show higher scores in overall parental involvement and home-based involvement than in school-based involvement and home-school conferencing. However, the result is varied among parents with non-college degree and parents with college degree.

Table 2 below shows the result of Independent Sample T-test on each of the variable of parental involvement. As shown in Table 2, there was a significant difference in the scores of involvement for parents with non-college degree ( $M=2.28$ ,  $SD= 0.54$ ) and parents with college degree ( $M=2.47$ ,  $SD=0.54$ );  $t(228)= -2.76$ ,  $p=0.006$ , that is parents with college degree reported significantly higher level of involvement than parents with non-college degree. Further analysis was conducted to see whether there is a significant difference in each dimension of parental involvement.

It was found that parents with college degree ( $M=2.86$ ,  $SD=0.57$ ) compared to parents with non-college degree ( $M=2.63$ ,  $SD=0.54$ ) demonstrated significantly higher home-based involvement scores,  $t(228)=-3.12$ ,  $p=0.02$ . Parents with college degree ( $M=2.48$ ,  $SD=0.67$ ) compared to parents with non-college degree ( $M=2.23$ ,  $SD=0.73$ ) demonstrated significantly higher home-school conferencing scores,  $t(228)=-2.75$ ,  $p=0.006$ . This means that scores of home-based involvement and home-school conferencing are significantly higher in parents with college degree than parents with non-college degree. Different result was found in school-based involvement. There was no significant difference of school-based involvement,  $t(228)= -1.22$ ,  $p=0.224$ , despite parents with college degree ( $M=2.08$ ,  $SD=0.66$ ) attaining higher scores than parents with non-college degree ( $M=1.97$ ,  $SD=0.66$ ).

Table 2.  
Result of Independent Sample T-Test on Each Variable

Variable	Mean	SD	Sig.
<i>Parental Involvement</i>			
Non-college degree	2,28	0,54	0,006*
College degree	2,47	0,54	
<i>Home-based involvement</i>			
Non-college degree	2,63	0,54	0,002*
College degree	2,86	0,57	
<i>School-based involvement</i>			
Non-college degree	1,97	0,66	0,224
College degree	2,08	0,66	
<i>Home-school conferencing</i>			
Non-college degree	2,23	0,73	0,006*
College degree	2,48	0,67	

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that well-educated parents exhibit greater level in their involvement in children's academic activities than those with less-educated background. The study demonstrates that there is a significant difference in the level of overall parental involvement, home-based involvement, and home-school conferencing among parents with non-college degree and parents with college degree. Thus, the first, second, and fourth hypothesis were supported in this study. This result was aligned with previous research which suggested that compared to less educated parents, well-educated parents are more likely to be involved academically in their children's education (Jaiswal, 2018). Not only in young children, Shumow et al. (2011) also demonstrated that parents' involvement in their children education in high school is positively associated with their level of education. The reason why more well-educated parents are more engaged in their children education at home and at communicating with the school compared to parents with lower level of education is the feeling of adequacy. Most well educated parents have better knowledge and understanding about children education compared to less educated parents. In particular, they know better about how to create a rich environment for their children to study, what are their role and responsibilities, or how education should be held in general in pushing their children excel at school. Those parents understand better their children's need for education and are more motivated to provide children with educational resources such as educational games, story book, drawing materials, and other stuffs to facilitate learning at home. In terms of communicating with the school, suggestions and discussions are more likely to be given by parents with higher educational level in order to make sure that their children get appropriate educational facilitation. Better understanding in education in fact boosts their confidence and feeling of adequacy, particularly it influences their belief that they are capable enough in helping their students succeed as well as keeping high expectations on their children's success, therefore, they tend to be more proactive in participating in children's educational accomplishment (Bandura et al., 1996; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010).

In comparison to less educated parents, active participation in children's education is limited due to the feeling of inadequacy which is originated from the lack of knowledge in education. This

feeling of inadequacy influences their confidence in such a way that can hinder their participation in children education. Education is valued lower among parents with lower level of education, thus they may not see it as valuable or precious as parents with higher level of education see it, which possibly due their upbringing or lack of success in school (LaRocque et al., 2011). According to Yulianti et al. (2019), low level of involvement in children learning among parents with low educational level are reported to be caused by low self-efficacy and educational incapability. Less educated parents feel uncomfortable in interacting with teachers in order helping their children academically because they feel less efficacious (Zhan, 2006). Low self efficacy is often link to low self-confidence in regard to children education. As reported by one study in Yulianti et al. (2019), parents who were at least senior high school graduates had higher self-confidence than parents who were junior high school graduates or less especially in the ability to take part in their children's education. In home-school conferencing, parents are supposed to keep in touch with the schools to talk about language, curriculum, etc, that turn out preventing parents from communicating the school (Flynn, 2007), especially among the parents with non-college degree. In home-school conferencing, communicating with teachers or meeting with teachers face to face for a discussion takes a lot of courage and confidence and this is not easy for parents with non-college degree. They are afraid of not being able to contribute to the discussion effectively due to the lack of knowledge and experience in education itself. Well educated parents will be more advantaged when talking about curriculum or other school-related things because they have gone through it before and their education might contribute to their deeper understanding about school and education in general.

The third hypothesis was not supported in this study which then denies most of the relevant research that says otherwise. The study revealed that there is no significant difference in school-based involvement between parents with non-college degree and parents with college degree. There are two reasons why the result is not as what was expected in this study. First, most of the schools being investigated in this study was public schools and opportunities for parents to get involved at school are rarely designed. In Buleleng, Bali, the differentiation between public and private school is still very thick where private schools are believed to be carrying out better quality of education and using more up-to-date approach compared to public schools. Thus, there are more programs made in private schools in which parents should be able to take part, as compared to public schools. Although parents want to get involved in school activities, but because the opportunities are scarce, this cannot be done which makes their score for school-based involvement are lower than other types of involvement. Thus, both parents with higher or lower educational level cannot actively participate in school-related activities with the children. This is similar with the study conducted in Java, Indonesia which revealed that not only that the opportunities are rare, but also parents with higher level of education also reported lack of power for active parental involvement at school (Yulianti et al., 2019). The lack of power and opportunity are due to a resistance from teachers that caused parents feeling lack of power which eventually hindered their involvement. Better schools might have better understanding on how important it is to include parents in school decision making, therefore they open for any inputs from the parents and create program in which parents can actively be involved at schools.

Second, both parents with non-college degree and parents with college degree work and their work time coincides with the school events in which parents can take part. In this study, about 75,7% parents with college degree are employed and about 24,3% are unemployed. Among parents with non-college degree, there are 58.8% employed and 41.2% unemployed. Therefore, they do not have much of the time to attend school activities or be involved in parents and teachers meeting, a since their work time usually coincides with their children school time. As an alternative, parents who cannot join the school activities ask their relatives to come and attend it. For example, in the end of the semester parents are usually asked to come to collect children academic result. Many parents are not able to make it because of work, so then they ask someone to represent them. It is a pity remembering that parents attendance at the end of the semester is considered as an important moment for children since children can introduce their parents to their friends or teacher and it is also a moment of appreciation to the hardwork that has been done by the children.

## CONCLUSION

Clearly, there is a significant difference in terms of parental involvement among parents with well-educated background and less-educated background. In particular, parental involvement, be it home-based involvement or home-school conferencing of parents with higher level of education is significantly higher than those with lower level of education. Different result was found in terms of school-based involvement, in which the difference in school-based involvement between parents with college degree and parents with non-college degree was not significant although the score was higher in parents with college degree than in parents with non-college degree.

The result of this study is especially beneficial for early childhood education institutions in Buleleng to be able to identify the background of their students' parents and provide different treatments to students whom their parents are not really involved in their children education. This different treatment includes more structured and unthreatening approach to parents who are known to have lower level of education and show less involvement in their children education. Schools are expected to be more accommodative to parents' aspiration and communications regardless of their educational backgrounds. Teachers can also educate parents about the importance of parental involvement in children education as well as how to get more involved at home, school, or in school decision making related to children education. Moreover, schools are especially advised to provide more opportunities for parents to be part in school activities, such as in end-of-year performance, school trip, volunteering activities, and so on. Future research should be directed to investigate the effect of other factors on parental involvement such as parents' employment status, sex, marital status, etc. It is also important to reveal if child's gender can also influence the degree of parental involvement remembering a strong patriarchal culture in Bali, Indonesia.

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