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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Identifying and Prioritizing Effective Factors in Increasing the Participation of Families in Educational and Sports Activities of Schools

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Schools are among the most significant educational and pedagogical institutions in society, necessitating the active participation of all stakeholders, especially families. “Active parental participation” refers to leveraging the latent intellectual, scientific, skill-based, and professional capacities of parents in managing and directing the educational and athletic affairs of students. In general, effective and continuous parental involvement in the educational system is recognized as a fundamental pillar of the teaching-learning process and can significantly impact the quality of instruction and students’ academic achievement. However, in many instances, a lack of sufficient awareness among parents regarding the school’s goals, programs, and responsibilities hinders the formation of effective home-school collaboration, thereby weakening the supportive role of families in the students’ educational process.

One of the hallmarks of successful schools is the maximum utilization of parental involvement. For this reason, in developed countries, home-school collaboration has become a cohesive framework, where these two institutions carry out their shared responsibility—the upbringing of the society’s children—through consultation, cooperation, and coordination. Generally, involving families in education leads to increased knowledge and awareness, broader participation in other social spheres, a greater sense of solidarity with other parents, a stronger sense of belonging to the organization, increased trust in institutions, a reduction in individual and organizational costs, and enhanced organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, the collective participation of all individuals in school affairs fosters the expansion of democracy and democratic values (Sahraei, 2018).

Parental involvement plays a vital role in shaping students’ academic success by creating a supportive learning environment both at home and at school. Research has consistently demonstrated that when parents are actively involved in their children’s education, student’s exhibit improved academic performance, better school attendance, higher motivation, and more advanced cognitive development.

Methodology

The present study is applied in terms of its objective and follows a mixed-methods (sequential exploratory) design, conducted in two qualitative and quantitative phases. In the first phase, a qualitative approach using content analysis was employed. The statistical population for this phase consisted of experts and key informants, including principals, teachers, and parent representatives in Gilan province. Purposive sampling was used, based on criteria such as subject matter expertise, possession of scientific publications (books and articles), teaching background, and relevant executive experience. Data collection was carried out through document analysis and semi-structured face-to-face interviews (lasting 30 to 50 minutes). The sampling process continued until theoretical saturation was reached, which was ultimately achieved after 18 interviews, meaning that new data did not add any new codes or concepts to the previous findings. Qualitative data analysis was performed using manual coding in three stages (initial coding, emergence of sub-categories, and main categories). To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, a dual-coding system was utilized. In this process, 95 initial codes were identified, which, after screening and merging, resulted in 34 verified final codes.

The second phase of the study was conducted using a descriptive-survey method. The statistical population for this section included all principals, teachers, and parents of schools in Guilan province. Multi-stage cluster sampling was used to determine the sample. For this purpose, Guilan province was divided into three geographical clusters: Eastern (Rudsar, Langarud, Lahijan, Siahkal, and Amlash), Western (Talesh, Rezvanshahr, Masal, Sowme'eh Sara, and Fuman), and Central (Rasht Districts 1 and 2, Anzali, Rudbar, and Astaneh-ye Ashrafiyeh). Subsequently, 5 educational districts were selected from each cluster, and 5 schools were selected from each district. Questionnaires were distributed among principals, teachers, and parent representatives, resulting in a total of 475 collected questionnaires. The data collection tool in this section was a 34-item researcher-made questionnaire (derived from the findings of the qualitative phase) based on a five-point Likert scale. This tool comprises five main components: structural factors (7 items), informational factors (6 items), motivational factors (8 items), educational factors (7 items), and socio-cultural factors (6 items). SPSS software was used for quantitative data analysis. Construct validity was examined using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test for sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. Furthermore, one-sample t-tests and the Friedman test were utilized to test the hypotheses and rank the factors.

Findings

Based on the table of findings, an overarching category for increasing the level of parental involvement in schools was identified. This category consists of several components, referred to as environmental factors affecting involvement (specifically: structural, informational, motivational, educational, and socio-cultural factors).

Furthermore, an examination of the correlation matrix indicates that all values significantly exceed 0.33, suggesting that the components are interrelated. Consequently, this matrix is deemed suitable for factor analysis.

Subsequently, the comparison of mean ranks reveals that structural factors hold the highest mean rank (3.42). This implies that, from the perspective of the statistical population, structural factors are the most significant component of parental involvement. Following this, the most significant components of involvement were identified as socio-cultural factors, motivational factors, educational factors, and informational factors, respectively.

In this study, based on the data analysis, the factors contributing to the increased participation of families in educational and sports activities were identified. According to the Friedman test ranking, these factors were found to

have the highest mean ranks in the following order: structural factors, socio-cultural factors, motivational factors, educational factors, and informational factors.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the Friedman ranking test indicated that structural factors are among the primary contributors to increasing parental involvement in schools, securing the highest mean score among the identified components ($M=3.8029$). The prominence of this factor may be attributed to the critical role and importance of regulations and organizational procedures within schools. Consequently, to foster parental involvement in school affairs, formulating strategies based on organization and adopting policies that catalyze maximum participation is both essential and necessary. However, such participatory policies must be accompanied by strategies to shift the attitudes of both principals and parents toward establishing mutual communication, alongside increasing their motivation to achieve effective results.

Socio-cultural factors were identified as another significant contributor, ranking next in importance ($M=3.6908$). The results suggest that the more the socio-cultural component is promoted among families, the more prominent its role becomes. Socio-cultural factors function as an “umbrella,” overshadowing other factors affecting parental involvement. Every decision within the educational system—whether during the design or implementation phase—is intertwined with the socio-cultural characteristics of the society. Any educational plan or decision inevitably interacts with cultural and social contexts, which may either diminish its efficacy or, conversely, enhance its strength and impact.

The Friedman ranking results designated motivational factors as the third component influencing increased family participation in educational and athletic activities in the schools of Guilan province ($M=3.6176$). Motivations are considered the key to any human activity and can stimulate, reinforce, and direct behavior, or conversely, control and inhibit it. Today, school principals must adopt a deeper perspective, leveraging new horizons in psychology to better understand the interests and desires of parents.

Informational factors also play a vital role in increasing family participation ($M=3.5664$). The results demonstrate that the informational dimension is significantly effective in attracting parental and public involvement in schools. In the contemporary era, known as the age of information and communication, a major part of generational socialization occurs through the media. The influence of media is such that some communication theorists believe media determines our mental and even behavioral priorities. Undoubtedly, schools will be successful only if they utilize needs assessment and effective recognition of up-to-date communication tools, employing a “media mix” to advance their goals. Therefore, the growing role of media in human social life is undeniable. Today, new communication tools, such as the internet and social networks, have opened new horizons for interpersonal interaction, which deserve careful consideration in the realm of parental involvement.

KEY WORDS

Home–School Interaction, Physical Education, Social Support, Education.

