

Research article

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# Maternal Perspectives on Family Involvement in Preschool Education: An Exploratory Study

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Received Date: December 14, 2023

Published Date: December 22, 2023

## Abstract

Family involvement is recognized as a pivotal component of effective preschool education, influencing academic skills in subsequent years. This study aims to enhance the comprehension of preschool teachers and professionals by delving into the perspectives and experiences of family members, particularly mothers, regarding their active participation in preschool education. Data for this study were gathered through interviews conducted with mothers whose children are enrolled in preschool education institutions. Employing a semi-structured interview technique, the study sought to explore mothers' thoughts concerning their children's involvement in preschool education.

The results of the interviews were categorized under two primary themes. The findings illuminated variations in mothers' understanding and attitudes toward the concept of family involvement. While some mothers perceived their children's engagement in preschool education as an activity primarily conducted at home, others believed that physically bringing their children to school and actively participating in preschool activities throughout the day would significantly contribute to their child's adaptation process and overall education.

Furthermore, some mothers expressed challenges in actively participating in their children's education and provided distinct reasons for their limited involvement. Ultimately, the outcomes of this study are anticipated to foster heightened awareness among families regarding their children's participation in early education experiences. Moreover, the findings may inform educators about familial perspectives on involvement, encouraging them to intensify collaborative efforts with families for the betterment of preschool education.

**Keywords:** Family Involvement; Preschool Education; Maternal Perspectives; Early Childhood Education; Parental Involvement

## Introduction

The impact of early education experiences on an individual's life, with lasting effects spanning many years, has been widely acknowledged in academic literature [1]. It is widely accepted that children's performance in the early stages of institutional education serves as a crucial predictor of their subsequent academic success [2, 3]. Numerous studies in the literature have delved into the identity formation process established during the initial years of education and its profound influence on subsequent academic trajectories [4] (Rouse et al., 2005). Therefore, it is paramount to identify and support factors that contribute to children's academic success, particularly rooted in their preschool education experiences.

The two primary environments exerting direct influence on a child's developmental trajectory are the home and school environments. [5] emphasize the impact of interactions within each context and the communication between these environments, emphasizing joint participation, effective communication, and the presence of environmental stimuli. [6] contends that home and school environments create "overlapping areas of influence" on children's development and academic success. The ability of children and family members to maintain positive relationships is posited as a crucial determinant of academic success.

Contemporary researchers recognize the pivotal role of a

strong and positive bond between home and school in children's development and education [7-9]. Numerous studies support the theories proposing that effective cooperation between schools and families significantly impacts children's academic success and fosters innovative educational initiatives [9,10].

Additionally, research on schools achieving high academic success indicates their presence in low socio-economic areas. However, it is evident that establishing robust and positive school-family relationships is closely associated with academic success [9]. Importantly, schools fostering a positive climate actively engage with families through teachers and communities, underscoring the significance of continuous efforts to ensure effective collaboration. This is supported by evidence indicating that a supportive home environment enhances the likelihood of promoting and improving children's academic success [8,9].

The purpose of the study, derived from these findings, is to assess the notion of family involvement in early childhood education from the perspective of mothers and to elucidate factors

influencing their attitudes towards family participation. Exploring mothers' viewpoints on engaging in their children's preschool experiences offers a valuable opportunity to gain insight into their beliefs regarding preschool education and their anticipations for formal schooling. In this regard, the primary objective is to elucidate mothers' comprehension of their participation, identifying potential barriers to involvement, and examining the modes through which they actively engage.

## Methods

This qualitative study was conducted at a private kindergarten in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, during the academic year 2022-2023. The kindergarten provided full-day education to children within the age range of 3 to 6. Prior to commencing the study, requisite legal permissions were acquired. The school administration was apprised of the study's content, and mothers were approached through the school administration. Information and consent forms were subsequently disseminated to the mothers, ensuring their informed participation in the research.

## Participants

**Table 1:** Characteristics of Interviewed Mothers (N = 15).

Characteristics	%
<b>Age</b>	
18-25	6.6
26-35	60
36-45	33.3
<b>Education Background</b>	
High school graduate	33.3
University graduate	66.6

The school administration proactively engaged with families, providing them with sufficient time to complete the consent forms for mothers interested in participating in the study. Mothers expressing interest in the research were duly informed about the nature of in-depth interviews, including the potential use of voice recordings and note-taking during the sessions, with an assurance of maintaining confidentiality concerning personal information about both themselves and their children. A total of 15 mothers willingly consented to participate in the in-depth interviews. Among them, 33.3% held high school degrees, while 66.6% were university graduates. The age distribution of the participating mothers ranged from 18 to 25 years (6.6%), 26 to 35 years (60%), and 36 to 45 years (33.3%). The choice of conducting interviews with mothers stemmed from their greater inclination toward educational participation. Signed informed consent forms were obtained from the participating mothers. Table 1 outlines the demographic characteristics of the 15 mothers interviewed within the scope of this study.

## Interviews

The primary objective of the interviews conducted in this study was to obtain comprehensive insights into family involvement,

parent-teacher communication, and the perceptions and understandings of mothers regarding their active participation. The researcher-initiated contact with the participating mothers and coordinated meetings at their children's kindergartens, selecting a day and time convenient for them. The face-to-face interviews with mothers had an average duration of approximately half an hour. Each interview was systematically audio recorded, and a unique code was assigned to each participant to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the data.

The interviews were executed employing a semi-structured interview form crafted with predetermined questions, as well as questions that were expanded upon in response to the dynamics of each interview session. The interview questions encompassed both general and specific inquiries designed to unveil the nuanced perspectives of mothers regarding family involvement and collaborative efforts between the school and families during the preschool period.

## Data Analysis

The verbatim transcription of the audio recordings from the interviews was meticulously carried out, aligning with the designated codes. The acquired data underwent thematic analysis,

where specific themes were identified and grouped. The researcher autonomously assessed and categorized the data into themes, and to ensure the reliability of the process, discussions were conducted with another expert. The reliability between these transcriptions was established with a minimum agreement rate of 85%.

## Findings

In this section, we present a synthesis of our findings by categorizing the themes that encapsulate mothers' perspectives

**Table 2:** Main themes of the interviews.

<b>Maternal Perceptions of Family Involvement</b>
<i>"As I have a good rapport with the teachers, I am someone who contacts them during the day to inquire and discuss various matters. Actively participating in school activities and spending time there is something I find enjoyable, contributing to ensuring family involvement. On occasions, I consult with the teacher about potential contributions I can make within the classroom. Engaging in school-related matters is a source of joy for me in connection to my child. Given my non-working status, I am able to dedicate more time to involvement in school activities. I am eager to participate in various aspects as much as possible."</i>
<i>"Beyond the routine of dropping off and picking up my daughter, I don't have extensive interactions with the school. Occasionally, I refrain from posing too many questions to avoid interfering with the teachers' responsibilities, considering that they already provide ample information. Once we are back home, we generally prefer not to engage in school-related activities. Both my child and I require some downtime for relaxation."</i>
<i>"So, if I can arrive a bit earlier, around 3 o'clock, to pick up my daughter, then we can have more opportunities to meet with the teacher. The teacher suggested some activities for us to do at home, which we can undertake when we find the time. I believe family involvement is connected to what we engage in with our kids at home. The teacher is already covering everything necessary for instruction during school hours."</i>
<b>Barriers to Family Involvement</b>
<i>"In reality, I anticipate that teachers will take the initiative regarding educational involvement. I am unsure whether they can facilitate our participation or not. To date, there hasn't been any classroom activity in which we, as parents, have been involved. I would appreciate it if teachers could guide us on how to contribute in this regard."</i>
<i>"I strongly believe that parents should be equipped to actively engage in their child's education. Therefore, there is a need for educators to instruct us on how to do so. Providing guidance or sending notes specifying what activities to undertake at home, such as 'We are covering these topics at school, and you should reinforce this learning at home,' would be immensely helpful."</i>
<i>"I wish I had more opportunities to discuss my child's education with the teacher. However, due to my work commitments, I find myself rushing between dropping off my other son at school and picking up my daughter. Our meetings are usually brief, and I often bring items requested by the teacher or fulfill financial requirements as needed."</i>
<i>"The time available for conversations with teachers at the end of the day is quite limited. I often wish to engage in more detailed discussions about my child's daily experiences or explore opportunities for my involvement in her education. Unfortunately, this is not always feasible. Either my daughter is eager to leave promptly, or our discussions are cut short as teachers need to allocate time for other parents. Consequently, I believe our primary challenge lies in the constraint of time."</i>

## Discussion and Conclusion

In the course of this study, our aim was to provide insights into family participation, preschool education, and the challenges hindering family involvement, specifically from the mothers' standpoint. The evaluation of our findings drew upon Epstein's model of the partnership between school, family, and society. The interview results were categorized under two primary themes. The findings illuminated variations in mothers' comprehension and attitudes toward the concept of family involvement. Some mothers perceived their children's engagement in preschool education solely as an activity conducted at home, while others believed that physically bringing their children to school and participating in institutional activities during specific times of the day would significantly contribute to their child's adaptation and educational progress. Additionally, some mothers expressed challenges in actively participating in their children's education, delineating various reasons for their limited involvement.

In contemporary research literature, an extensive body of work has emerged demonstrating that family involvement yields

and understandings regarding family participation in preschool education, alongside the challenges they identify as impediments to such involvement. Within this analysis, we employ Epstein's family participation framework as a lens to interpret the ways in which mothers engage in parenting, decision-making, collaboration, and volunteering. Table 2 delineates the principal themes derived from our interviews, accompanied by illustrative quotes from the interviews with mothers.

enduring positive consequences for children across various age groups and their families [11-13, 10]. The findings of this study, contributing to over four decades of research on family participation in education, have solidified its recognition as one of the paramount elements in effective educational and developmental trajectories. Epstein (2001, 2009) contends that there are numerous compelling reasons to foster a partnership among school, family, and society. The primary objectives of such collaboration encompass enhancing the school environment and programs, elevating parental skills and involvement, facilitating connections between families and other stakeholders in the school and community, and providing support to teachers in addressing educational concerns. These rationales collectively underscore the pivotal role of families in actively engaging with their children's education and fostering a robust and positive relationship with the school.

As elucidated by [14], the engagement of families in education necessitates educational institutions to engage in dialogue with parents, underlining the establishment of trust-based relationships. The critical emphasis lies in fostering mutual relationships among families, educators, and experts. To achieve optimal efficiency in

children's development and education, an organizational system grounded in relationship-building is deemed imperative for the effectiveness of collaborations with families. As parents immerse themselves more profoundly in the developmental and educational journey of their children, relationships with experts and educators tend to become more positive, contributing to a robust school climate and rendering the educational experience more appealing to both children and their families [15].

### Acknowledgement

We express our gratitude to all the mothers who participated in this research and shared their candid opinions, contributing significantly to our study.

### Conflict of interest

None.

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