

# PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT: INSIGHTS FROM INDONESIAN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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## Abstract

Parents play a vital role in supporting their children's academic achievement. This study aims to identify the types of parental involvement that support students' English learning at SMPN 3 Langsa and to examine how these forms of involvement relate to students' English achievement. This study addresses this gap by examining the forms and effects of parental involvement on English achievement among eighth-grade students in an Indonesian public middle school. Guided by Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement, this study categorizes parental practices into six types and investigates their relationship with students' formal English achievement scores. A qualitative-dominant design was employed, triangulating three data sources: (1) questionnaires measuring the frequency of involvement across Epstein's types, (2) semi-structured interviews exploring parental practices and motivations, and (3) official English score documents quantifying students' achievement. Findings show that parenting, learning at home, and volunteering were the most frequently practiced types of involvement, with rates of 89%, 84%, and 82%, respectively. Qualitative patterns indicated that learning-at-home involvement—including homework supervision and structured study routines—was strongly associated with higher English achievement scores, particularly among students consistently surpassing the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). The study contributes context-specific evidence for designing targeted parental engagement programs that address the unique demands of L2 learning in Indonesian middle schools.

**Keywords:** *English learning; parental involvement; students' achievement.*

## 1. Introduction

English has become an essential global language for academic mobility, digital participation, and economic advancement. In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory foreign language beginning in secondary school, and mastery of English increasingly determines students' access to higher education and future opportunities. Despite its importance, national assessments and classroom-level evidence consistently show variation and persistent gaps in English proficiency among Indonesian middle school students. Many students struggle to meet the expected Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM), indicating that

additional support beyond classroom instruction may be necessary to enhance English learning outcomes at this level.

A growing body of research recognizes parental involvement (PI) as a critical contributor to students' academic achievement across subjects (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Epstein, 2013). Parental involvement refers to a multidimensional set of interactions through which parents support their children's learning, including home-based behaviours, school-based activities, and collaborative engagement with teachers (Epstein, 1992, 2002). Effective involvement encompasses more than attending school events; it includes supervision of learning routines, communication with teachers, provision of learning materials, and emotional encouragement. These forms of involvement help shape students' motivation, confidence, and learning strategies.

However, much of the existing literature focuses on PI and general academic achievement, particularly mathematics, science, and first-language subjects, while the specific demands of second-language (L2) learning, such as English in the Indonesian context, remain underexamined. Unlike L1 learning, L2 acquisition requires substantial exposure and practice outside the classroom, making home-based parental support uniquely important. Yet many Indonesian parents face constraints such as limited English proficiency, time pressures, and lack of access to L2 learning resources, which may hinder their ability to engage in effective L2-related involvement. These contextual challenges highlight the need for empirical research that identifies which types of parental involvement are most effective for supporting English achievement in Indonesia.

Middle school represents a critical developmental stage during which students begin to experience increased academic demands while still relying significantly on parental guidance. In Indonesia, Grade 8 students are at a transitional point where learning autonomy develops, but parental monitoring and encouragement remain influential. Understanding the specific ways parents can support English learning at this level is therefore essential for improving achievement outcomes.

Although parental involvement is known to enhance learning, there is limited evidence on which kinds of parental involvement are associated with improved English L2 achievement among Indonesian middle school students. This study addresses this gap by identifying the types of PI practiced by parents and examining how these types relate to students' measured English achievement. Therefore, this study aims to:

1. Identify and categorize the types of parental involvement practiced by parents of eighth-grade students, using Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement.
2. Examine the relationship between these types of parental involvement and students' English achievement scores, as documented in official school records

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Conceptualizing Parental Involvement

Parental involvement (PI) is widely defined as the set of behaviors, interactions, and practices through which parents support children's academic, social, and emotional development. Nermeen, Bachman, and Elizabeth (2010) describe PI as *any interaction between parents, children, and schools that enhances learning and development*. Haack (2007) similarly views PI as operating along a continuum ranging from home-based involvement (e.g., supervising homework) to school-based involvement (e.g., attending conferences) and, ultimately, to collaborative home-school partnerships (e.g., involvement

in school governance). These conceptualizations emphasize that PI is multidimensional, encompassing both routines within the home and more formal structures within the school.

Within educational research, PI is consistently recognized as a factor associated with improved student outcomes, including motivation, homework completion, classroom engagement, and academic success (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Epstein, 2013). Additionally effective involvement strengthens communication between home and school, enables early detection of learning challenges, and fosters supportive learning climates. These foundational understandings form the basis of the theoretical framework employed in the present study.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework: Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement

This study adopts Epstein's (2002) framework of Parental Involvement, one of the influential models in family, school partnership research. Epstein proposes six distinct yet complementary types of involvement:

1. Parenting – Establishing home conditions that support learning, including health, safety, routines, and emotional stability. Parenting is predominantly *behavioral and home-based*, forming the foundation for students' daily learning.
2. Communicating – Ensuring meaningful two-way communication between school and home about programs, expectations, and student progress. This form is both behavioral and organizational.
3. Volunteering – Parents' participation in school activities and functions, contributing time and expertise. This type is largely *organizational and school-based*.
4. Learning at Home – Parental support for homework, study routines, and enrichment activities. This is the most direct *behavioral* involvement influencing academic learning.
5. Decision Making – Parents' participation in school committees, governance, and policy discussions. This type is *organizational* and reflects shared responsibility in educational planning.
6. Collaborating with the Community – Connecting families with community resources (health, culture, recreation) to support broader learning goals. This type bridges school and community partnerships.

Epstein's framework (2002) provides a structured typology for categorizing parental practices and examining their differential impact on student outcomes. In this study, it serves as the primary coding scheme for questionnaire responses and interview data, enabling systematic identification of the dominant involvement types among parents.

## 2.3 Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement

English achievement in foreign language contexts is commonly measured through formal academic indicators, including: course grades, test results, proficiency assessments (reading, vocabulary, grammar), and teacher evaluation reports. These metrics reflect students' mastery of linguistic skills developed through classroom instruction and independent study. However, L2 learning is also influenced by affective variables, such as motivation, confidence, anxiety, and willingness to communicate. Gonida and Cortina (2014) note that parental encouragement, monitoring, and emotional support can shape students' motivational beliefs and achievement persistence.

In Indonesian secondary schools, English achievement is typically evaluated through a combination of daily tests, midterm assessments, final exams, and cumulative semester grades—such as the *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* (KKM), based on the 2013 Indonesian Curriculum (Permendikbud No. 104/2014). This study uses these official English score documents as the operational measure of achievement.

Research in Indonesia reveals unique contextual factors shaping PI in English learning. Many parents have limited English proficiency, making it difficult to assist directly with English homework. To compensate, parents often rely on private tutoring (*bimbel*), supplementary courses, or external learning materials. Cultural expectations also position teachers as primary authorities, sometimes limiting parental confidence or willingness to engage with schools (Komsu et al., 2018).

Moreover, studies show varied correlations between specific PI types and L2 learning outcomes. Fan and Chen (2001) demonstrated that consistent homework supervision is strongly associated with L2 reading proficiency. Fantuzzo et al. (2004) found that parental involvement predicted vocabulary development and communicative confidence. Conversely, excessive parental control or pressure may negatively affect L2 motivation, suggesting that not all involvement types yield equal benefits.

### 3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design (Cohen, Manion, & Morisson, 2018) to examine the relationship between parental involvement and students' English achievement in an Indonesian middle school. This approach was chosen to allow triangulation between numerical indicators of parental involvement (questionnaire results), documented English achievement scores, and rich qualitative insights from parental. Qualitative research generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words that reflect human behavior and observable actions, with the goal of understanding individuals and their experiences within their natural settings (Cohen, Manion, & Morisson, 2018). This approach centers the participants' perspectives and emphasizes detailed observation to produce rich and in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon under study (Morrison, 2002). This design aligns with Epstein's (2002) multidimensional conceptualization of parental involvement and enables a deeper understanding of how different forms of involvement manifest in students' learning contexts.

The participants in this study were eighth-grade students of SMPN 3 Langsa and their parents. Eighth-grade students were selected because this stage represents an important transition period, where students tend to explore new activities and develop varied learning experiences. Students in this grade at SMPN 3 Langsa also demonstrate diverse levels of academic achievement, making them suitable for examining variations in parental involvement. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants based on the objectives of the study.

Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The questionnaire captured general patterns of parental involvement, while interviews provided deeper insights into parents' and students' experiences. Students' English achievement scores were analyzed as supporting documents to understand how parental involvement might relate to academic outcomes.

The data analysis consisted of both quantitative and qualitative components. Questionnaire responses were tabulated to determine the frequency and percentage of

each parental involvement (PI) type, and descriptive statistics were used to identify the most dominant forms of involvement as well as patterns distinguishing high- and low-achieving students' families. For the qualitative analysis, interview transcripts were examined using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. Codes were developed inductively and subsequently aligned with Epstein's (2002) typology to identify consistencies between home-based practices and students' English performance, with particular attention to themes related to motivation, supervision, learning routines, and constraints.

To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, the study employed methodological triangulation by integrating questionnaire data, interview narratives, and documented English scores; member checking, in which parents verified the accuracy of interview summaries; and peer debriefing, where a senior English teacher reviewed the interpretations to minimize researcher bias. This triangulated approach ensured that the findings were both contextually grounded and analytically robust. Ethical approval was obtained from the school administration, participation was voluntary with informed consent from parents, and all personal identifiers were removed from transcripts and score documents to maintain confidentiality.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Types of Parental Involvement on Students' Achievement in Learning English**

This section presents the findings from the questionnaire, interview data, and documented English achievement scores. The integration of these three sources enables a comprehensive analysis of how specific types of parental involvement, based on Epstein's Six Types (2002), relate to students' English achievement. Quantitative questionnaire results are first reported, followed by qualitative insights illustrating differences between the parents of high-achieving and low-achieving students.

The parental involvement data were collected through a questionnaire completed by the parents. The researchers distributed this questionnaire, which measured the types of parental involvement, to 30 respondents. It consisted of 28 indicator items based on Epstein's (2002) six types of involvement: (i) parenting, (ii) communicating, (iii) volunteering, (iv) learning at home, (v) decision making, and (vi) collaborating with the community. Each statement provided four alternative response options. From the completed questionnaires, the researchers identified the types of involvement most frequently practiced by parents in supporting their children's English achievement as follow.

### **4.2 Results of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire measured the frequency of parental involvement across the six types of Epstein's model. Results showed that the most frequently practiced involvement type was Parenting (89%), followed by Educating Children at Home or Learning at Home (84%), Volunteering (82%), Decision Making (80%), Communicating (79%), and Collaborating with the Community (76%). These findings indicate that parents tend to be more engaged in home-based involvement rather than broader school–community collaboration.

### **4.3 Student English Achievement Levels**

Documented English scores from the school report showed clear variation. Of the participating eighth-grade students, 19 met or exceeded the KKM, indicating high achievement. Besides, 11 students did not meet the KKM, indicating low achievement. This distinction allowed for meaningful comparison of parental involvement patterns between higher- and lower-performing students.

### **4.4 Qualitative Findings: Themes Emerging from Interviews**

#### **4.4.1 Theme 1: Parenting and Daily Supervision Strongly Support High Achievement**

Parents of high-achieving students consistently emphasized their active role as caregivers and educators. These parents closely monitored daily routines, ensured adequate study time, and provided emotional support. For example, the parent of student AM (average score: 97) stated:

“The reason I support children is because it is the duty of parents to always educate and guide children so that they have good achievement in learning English at school, not just being taught by the teacher.”

This reflects the Parenting and Learning at Home types of involvement. Parents felt responsible for creating a structured home learning environment, which is known to enhance student motivation and task persistence. Similarly, the third interviewee, parent of student NP (average score: 94), explained:

“In learning, I give my children a special schedule and time to study at home. A conscious and planned effort from me is sufficient to create an atmosphere of learning and the learning process so that children can actively develop their potential...”

This demonstrates deliberate parental planning and consistent support—behaviors strongly associated with higher L2 achievement.

#### **4.4.2 Theme 2: Active Communication and School Engagement Reinforce Learning**

High-achieving students’ parents also described active communication with teachers and participation in school committees. The first interviewee, who served on the school committee, explained:

“As the school committee, I am quite involved in contributing and being involved in activities carried out at school... Parents trust teachers... but parents do not let go and give up their children’s learning from school.”

They further noted:

“There is a good interaction between me and the educator... so that students easily absorb the knowledge conveyed by educators and are able to apply it in daily life.”

These statements illustrate Communicating, Volunteering, and Decision Making involvement. This aligns with prior research showing that positive home–school communication enhances student confidence and consistency in learning.

#### **4.4.3 Theme 3: Limited time and low interest in English constrain parental support (Low Achievers)**

In contrast, parents of low-achieving students reported limited involvement due to work demands, reduced study supervision, or low confidence in assisting with English. The parent of student MA (average score: 66) shared:

“I leave the decision and freedom of the child to choose his education, interests and talents. I feel that my child doesn't really like English.”

This illustrates a hands-off parenting approach, which literature suggests may lead to reduced motivation and weaker homework discipline—especially in L2 learning that requires consistent exposure.

Similarly, the sixth interviewee, parent of student MF (average score: 60), stated: “*I can't always accompany children in studying, because I'm also busy on working.*”

This reflects constraints on Learning at Home and Parenting involvement. Limited time and work pressures prevented consistent guidance, which can hinder the development of L2 learning routines.

The triangulation of questionnaire and interview data reveals a clear and consistent pattern across parental involvement types. Parents of high-achieving students demonstrated strong engagement in Parenting, Learning at Home, Communicating, and Volunteering, providing structure, monitoring daily routines, maintaining communication with teachers, and participating actively in school activities. In contrast, parents of low-achieving students showed more limited involvement, particularly in Learning at Home, often due to demanding work schedules, limited English proficiency, reduced supervision, or the belief that children should manage their own learning independently. Across both groups, collaboration with the community emerged as the weakest involvement type, indicating an area where schools could strengthen outreach efforts and develop programs to build parents' capacity to support their children's learning more effectively.

The findings support previous research indicating that home-based involvement, particularly establishing routines and supervising learning, is the most influential factor in L2 achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Topor et al., 2010).

## **5. Conclusion**

This study has identified the dominant types of parental involvement practiced by Indonesian middle school parents and establishing an empirical relationship between these involvement types and students' English achievement. The findings show that Supporting Learning at Home—a behavioral form of involvement—stands out as the most influential predictor of higher English performance, surpassing organizational involvement such as volunteering or school decision-making. This confirms that, in non-immersion EFL contexts, home-based academic scaffolding is central to L2 success. The study contributes to ELT scholarship by contextualizing and validating Epstein's Framework (2002) within a Southeast Asian setting. The results demonstrate that when English exposure outside the classroom is limited, the home-school partnership must prioritize structured routines, study supervision, and motivational support, thereby reinforcing global evidence on effective parental mechanisms for L2 learning. Based on these findings, the study concludes that middle schools and ELT practitioners should shift from general parent outreach to targeted parent

education programs that train parents in practical Learning at Home strategies, including providing L2 media exposure, establishing homework routines, and maintaining supportive learning environments. These practices correspond directly with behaviors linked to improved English proficiency. The study's qualitative-dominant, single-site design limits the immediate generalizability of the findings. Future work should include large-scale quantitative studies across multiple regions to test the broader applicability of these results, as well as intervention-based research to measure the causal impact of parent training programs on L2 achievement. Overall, the study establishes that structured home-based involvement is essential for enhancing English learning outcomes in Indonesian middle schools and offers clear implications for ELT policy and practice.

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