

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION: BARRIERS AND THEORETICAL MODELS FOR EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP

Ram Winkler

Ph.D. Student, Department of Psychology
Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"

Abstract: *The parents' involvement in education is defined as the constellation of actions performed at home and at school in order to advance their children's success in academic, social, and behavioral aspects. The research literature differentiates between types of involvement such as involvement at home as opposed to involvement in the school, when every type has unique influence on the students' success. This involvement contributes greatly to academic and emotional achievements, but deals with diverse challenges, including gaps in perceptions, socioeconomic barriers, levels of education, family structure, and number of children in the family. A number of theoretical models provide a framework for the understanding of the factors and means that shape the parental involvement. Despite the significant advantages of this involvement, there are systemic and personal barriers that make it difficult to realize the potential of involvement between the parents and the education system.*

Keywords: *Parents' involvement in education, parent-teacher communication, theoretical models, barriers of involvement.*

Introduction

This article addresses the parents' involvement in education as a main factor that influences their children's academic, social, and emotional success. This involvement is expressed both at home, through assistance in the learning, and at school, through partnership in activities and ongoing communication with the teachers. The research literature proposes theoretical models for the analysis of the parents-education relationships, with reference to the influence of demographic and structural variables on the level and quality of the involvement. However, alongside the significant advantages, there are significant barriers that prevent the optimal implementation of this involvement, such as gaps of perceptions between teachers and parents, lack of resources, and lack of a clear outline for the division of responsibility. The

article seeks to present the theoretical background of the parents' involvement, to identify main patterns of involvement, and to shed light on the main challenges. Last, the article suggests practical recommendations that will strengthen the partnership between the parents and the education system.

1. The Parents' Involvement in Education: Definition and Background

The parents' involvement in education is defined in the research literature as a constellation of actions that take place at home and at school, which aim to promote the success of students in academic, social and behavioral fields (Baquedano-López , Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013; Epstein, 2018; Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, Van Voorhis, Martin, Thomas, Greenfeld, Hutchins, & Williams, 2018; Henderson, 2018; Kaplan Toren, 2018; Wilder, 2023). However, the definition of the concept is challenging because of the great difference in the measures and the characteristics used by researchers and education systems (Emerson, Fear, Fox, & Sanders, 2012; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Despite the research arguments over the definition, there is a broad consensus among researchers and professionals on the importance of cooperation between the education system and the parents. This cooperation is perceived as a main characteristic of successful schools (Fisher & Friedman, 2009). In fact, parents are the ones who bear direct responsibility for ensuring and facilitating all stages of their children's socialization, including assisting teachers within the framework of school education (Lazarov, 2016). In Israel, the Ministry of Education, in the Director General's Circular (2022), emphasizes the joint responsibility and the respectful communication between the parents and the education system, out of the aspiration for continuous, regular, and respectful cooperation.

2. Types of Parent Involvement in Education

The research literature identifies primary differentiations between different types of the parents' involvement in their children's education. The main differentiation is between involvement at home and involvement at school (Bakker, Denessen, & Brus-Laeven, 2007; Henderson & Mapp 2002; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007; Reparaz & Sotés-Elizalde, 2019). The involvement at home focuses on activities such as help with homework, choice of courses, and conversations about learning topics. In contrast, the involvement in the school includes participation in the parents' meetings, conversations with teachers, and attendance at school events.

Research studies indicate the positive contribution of parent involvement both in the social-emotional field (Wentzel, 1998) and in the academic achievements (Kaplan Toren, 2013; Spera, 2005). However, the implementation of this involvement poses significant challenges, which derive from the complexity of the relations between parents, teachers, and students: (1) lack of formal institutionalization – lack of official and clear definition of areas of responsibility (Cohen, 2009; Passberg, 2020), (2) gaps in perceptions – differences in approaches of teachers and parents towards involvement (Anderson & Minke, 2007), (3) the issue of authority – while the teachers are considered the authority at school, the parents are the authority at home (Amit, 2009).

3. Theoretical Models of Parent Involvement

Over the years, many researchers have attempted to understand and classify the types of parental involvement in the school, while developing models that describe the multidimensional reciprocal relationships between the parents and the education system (Choi, Chang, Kim, & Reio, 2015; Feuerstein, 2000; Gonzalez-Pienda, Nunez, Gonzalez-Pumariega, Alvarez, Roces, & Garcia, 2002; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Kim, 2018). These models emphasize the parents' influence on the students' achievements and the different aspects in which they can participate in the educational process.

The ecological approach of Bronfenbrenner (2013) describes the child's environment as a combined space of family and education system, with emphasis how the integration between them influences the child's cognitive achievements and social and emotional abilities. According to this approach, the parental involvement is not only direct intervention but also the creation of a support environment, which constitutes a basis for growth and learning. These ideas serve as a broad framework in which other models operate.

In the continuation, the model of Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, and Closson (2005) focuses on two main questions: why parents are involved in their children's education and how this involvement influences the students' achievements. The model differentiates between two types of involvement: basic involvement – concern for the physical and academic needs, which includes the supply of equipment and support of the adjustment to the home learning, and extended school involvement – participation in decision making processes, help in learning, and holding a conversation with the child on the learning processes.

The extended model of Hoover-Dempsey, Whitaker, and Ice (2010) broadens this perception and classified the factors that influence the nature and scope of the parental involvement into three types of motives. The personal motives include the parents' perception of responsibility towards their children's education and their sense of efficacy to help in the learning and the teachers' perception of their role in the creation of a relationship with the families. The contextual motives focus on the influence of the school's invitation to cooperate and on the systemic and organizational support. The practical motives examine the suitability of the activities to the parents' abilities, availability of resources, and cultivation of the relationship between the teachers and the parents and the promotion of effective involvement.

Like these approaches, the researchers Ritbo, Look, and Berg (2018) presented a four-stage model for educational partnership. The first stage focuses on informing and updating, while passing on information about the student and the conduct of the school. The second stage offers an invitation to participate, which allows parents to take part in activities at the individual and system levels. The third stage deals with consultations and joint thinking, regarding both the needs of the specific child and broad systemic issues. The fourth and concluding stage focuses on full cooperation, which includes joint decision-making and division of responsibilities and roles, while referring to both the individual level and the broad systemic level.

The model of partnership of Epstein (2018) complements these approaches in that it details six main components. The model begins with the family commitment to provide an appropriate growth environment and support for the children as students and emphasizes the school's commitment to regular communication and the transfer of information about programs and the students' situation. The model includes the creation of opportunities for the parents' volunteering, support of the performance of home learning tasks, encouragement of the participation in processes of educational decision making, and recruitment of the parents to community collaborations.

Last, the researchers Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) examined psychological models for parents' involvement among students in grades 7-9. The research study focused on four main components: (1) the building of the parents' roles, (2) the parents' sense of self-efficacy to help their adolescent children succeed in the school, (3) the parents' perceptions of the invitation of the teachers for involvement, and (4) the parents' perceptions of the invitations from the students. The findings showed that the influence of the models changes according to

the grade level. In addition, it was found that the parents tended to be involved, at home and at school, when they perceived that the teachers or the students expect or are interested in their involvement.

To summarize, the presented models emphasize the importance of the parents' involvement in personal, social, and systemic aspects. Together they offer a comprehensive perspective that combines theoretical and practical approaches, while coping with challenges and opportunities in the modern era. The understanding of the models can contribute to the advancement of effective partnerships between the parents and the education system.

4. Barriers Influencing the Parents' Involvement in the School

The parents' involvement in education is a significant component in the educational process and has considerable importance both for the parents and for the educators. Research studies show that this involvement contributes to the improvement of the students' educational, social, and emotional results. In addition, the parents' involvement helps the school understand and evaluate in greater-depth the needs and barriers of the different families and thus enables the school to provide a more customized and accurate response to the students' needs (Watson, Sanders-Lawson, & McNeal, 2012).

Despite the proven advantages of parental involvement, research studies have identified a range of barriers that inhibit the parents' involvement and make effective cooperation between the parents and the teaching staffs difficult (Davies, 1993; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Humphrey-Taylor, 2015; O'Donoghue, 2014; Williams & Sánchez, 2013).

Socioeconomic Status

The socioeconomic status is a significant factor that influences the parents' degree of involvement in education, its nature, scope, and quality, both at school and at home. This involvement depends on the family's economic resources and sometimes creates gaps in the educational possibilities available to the children (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Desimone, 1999; Rapp & Duncan, 2012; Zedan, 2011).

Parents from a low socioeconomic status deal with barriers such a lack of time because of the need to work many hours, which prevents them from participating in school events or sessions with the education staffs (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). In addition, they are limited in the access to educational resources such as private lessons, advanced learning materials, and required technology, including computers and Internet infrastructures (Bol,

2020; Brown, Doom, Lechuga-Peña, Watamura, & Koppels, 2020). In contrast, parents from a high socioeconomic status display active and more significant involvement. Their involvement includes participation in school activities, financial contribution to education institutions, influence on the educational policy, challenging teachers' decisions, and ability to initiate changes in the curriculum, and access to resources and advanced learning support (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Jeynes, 2007).

Child's Age

Research studies indicate a consistent decline in the parental involvement as the children grow up and advance in the education system (Eccles & Harold, 2013; Green et al., 2007; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). In the stage of the elementary school, the parents tend to high involvement that includes participation in events, help in homework, and continuous communication with the teaching staff, because of a high sense of efficacy and their understanding of the study material (Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). With the transition to the middle school and high school, there is a decline in the parenting involvement, which derives from two main factors: the adolescents' aspirations for independence, which characterizes the stage of adolescence, and the increase in the complexity of the study material, which reduces the parents' sense of efficacy to support the learning (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Parents' Education

The professional literature indicates that there is a direct relationship between the parents' level of education and the quality and intensity of their involvement in their children's education. This relationship is expressed in different ways, such as the parents' active participation in school events, continuous and ongoing communication with the educators, and support of the learning processes at home (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Fischer & Lipovská, 2013; Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000). In addition, parents with low education tend to see the education system as a less significant partner in their children's development and therefore often their involvement is less. In contrast, parents with high education perceive the school as an important and main source that supports their children's development (Ardila, Rosselli, Matute, & Guajardo, 2005).

The parents' level of education also influences the quality of their relationship with the educational staffs. Parents with low education may feel less confidence in the understanding of the school's professional language, and therefore sometimes refrain from active involvement,

while in contrast, educated parents display greater confidence, understand in-depth the pedagogical processes, and can conduct a professional and productive dialogue with the teachers (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Barg, 2019).

Single Parent and Divorced Families

Research studies indicate the unique barriers to the involvement of divorced parents and single parents in the education system (Baluyot, Yap, Gatchalian, Jose, Juan, Tabiliran, & Tus, 2023; Anthony, DiPerna, & Amato, 2014). Divorce detrimentally influences the adolescents' achievements, among other reasons because of a decline in the economic, social, and emotional resources that support the learning (Lansford, 2009; McLanahan & Sandefur, 2009).

Single parents deal with significant difficulties in the integration between work and personal life, which limits their involvement in school activities and their support of learning (Baluyot et al., 2023; Dronkers, 1999). The economic burden may harm their ability to finance private lessons and additional educational resources. In parallel, feelings of discomfort and shame in the encounters with the education staffs may lead to avoidance of the continuous relationship with the school (Robinson & Harris, 2014).

Families with Many Children

Research studies indicate that as the number of children in the family increases, the level of parental involvement in the educational field tends to decline because of the sharing of the family resources – financial, social, and temporal – among the children (Blake, 2022; Downey, 1995, 2001).

Parents in families with many children deal with the challenges of time management between the demands of the job, the care of the children, and the participation in school activities, which leads to a decline in their involvement in the school life (Anderson & Minke, 2007). In addition, having a large number of children influences the parents' ability to dedicate attention and personal resources to every child, which creates economic and emotional load. This load may lead to avoidance of school activities and difficulties with maintaining continuous communication with the educational staff (Blake, 1981, 2022).

5. Methodology

The research study is based on the constructivist-qualitative paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of the understanding of the social reality from the participants' perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). This approach was chosen because of

its ability to reveal the complexity of the human experience and deepen the understanding of the teachers' interactions in the coronavirus period.

According to this paradigm, the theoretical framework is based on grounded theory, which enables the development of theoretical insights from empirical data. This approach emphasizes the social and cultural context in understanding the researched phenomena and focuses on the way in which the participants interpret and shape their social reality (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 2017).

5.1 Research Population and Sample

The choice of the research population in constructivist qualitative research is carried out according to the principle of purposeful sampling, which emphasizes the importance of the choice of participants who can provide rich and in-depth information on the researched phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014; Patton, 2015). Accordingly, the research study includes 25 parents who meet the following criteria: they are parents of students in grades 7-12 and they consent to participate in interviews and share their experiences regarding the challenges and communication with the parents in this period.

5.2 Research Instrument: In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

This research study uses in-depth semi-structured interviews as the main method of data collection, based on principles of the grounded theory approach. This method was chosen because of its ability to enable the teachers to express their experiences in an authentic and direct manner, while maintaining the process of in-depth investigation of the researched phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The interviews were based on a flexible outline of questions, which enabled the researcher to adjust the process of the interview to contents that arose from the interviewees' statements. This approach enabled in-depth investigation of significant topics that arose during the conversation, while maintaining the balance between focus on the research questions and openness to new insights that derived from the field (Patton, 2015). In addition, the use of semi-structured interviews contributed to the deepening of the phenomenon from the participants' perspective and thus strengthened the authenticity and trustworthiness of the data.

5.3 Interview Guide

The interview guide that was developed for this research study was planned to ensure the comprehensive and in-depth coverage of the main research topics, while maintaining

correspondence to its objective (Patton, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). The guide is divided into two main parts: a demographic questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide.

The demographic questionnaire focuses on the collection of essential background data in two areas: personal data – gender, age, and family status, and professional background – educational background of the parents and information on the participants' children, including the name of the school where they live and their age groups. The second part of the guide is organized around five main axes: (1) barriers of the parents' involvement according to socioeconomic status, (2) barriers of parent involvement according to the child's age, (3) barriers of the parents' involvement according to the parent's education, (4) barriers of the parents' involvement according to the single-parent and divorced families, and (5) barriers of the parents' involvement according to families with many children.

These questions were designed to reveal the parents' subjective interpretation regarding the difficulties and challenges they experienced and regarding the processes of learning and adjustment that occurred in this period (Aurini, Heath, & Howells, 2021; King, Brooks, & Horrocks, 2018).

5.4 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis in this research study was based on four main stages, which were intended to deepen the understanding and create meaningful insights from the data. In the first stage, holistic reading was carried out, during which the researcher went over all the interviews in order to obtain a general picture of the narratives and experiences the participants described. In the second stage, open coding was performed, in the framework of which the researcher analyzed the text and identified basic units of meaning, which served as raw material for the formation of initial concepts from the data. In the third stage, axial coding was performed, during which the categories that were identified in the open coding were organized and the system of relationships between them was examined, thus enabling the construction of a hierarchical system composed of themes and categories. Last, in the fourth stage, focused coding was carried out, which included refinement of the main themes with the re-examination of the data in light of the insights found in the previous stages, in order to formulate a clear and consistent theoretical framework (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016; Givton, 2001; Shimoni, 2016).

6. Findings

The findings show that the coronavirus period caused a significant change in the parents' manner of involvement with the educators. The shock that occurred was expressed especially in five main axes: (1) the socioeconomic status – the parents from a low socioeconomic status had more technological barriers and less access to educational resources, (2) the child's age – the degree of involvement changed according to the child's age, (4) the parents' education – parents with a low level of education found it more difficult to adjust to the use of digital platforms and to help in distance learning, sometimes without adequate support, and (5) families with many children – the parents had difficulties managing distance learning for a number of children in parallel, both in terms of technological resources and in terms of time.

A. The Economic Crisis and Its Influence on the Involvement of Parents from a Low Socioeconomic Status

The economic crisis that accompanied the coronavirus pandemic seriously harmed the economic situation of many families, while creating especially significant barriers among families from a low socioeconomic status. These families dealt with situations of unemployment – sometimes of one of the parents, sometimes of both of them, significant declines in salary, reduction in position scope, and even uncertainty regarding the continuation of their employment. The result was economic distress and lack of occupational stability, which led to the increase of the pressure in the home and directly influenced the parents' ability to be involved in their children's education. Thus, for example, the parent NS shared: *“Our family was influenced by the economic difficulties during the coronavirus crisis, especially when my husband did not work in this period. We were forced to tighten our belts and avoid unnecessary expenses so as not to go into debt. The economic difficulty was very significant and influenced our involvement with the school.”* In many cases, parents from a low socioeconomic status encountered difficulty maintaining contact with the teachers and the education system, as the parent SS described. *“This period was characterized by lack of financial certainty, when many parents did not know whether they could cover their expenses. I know parents whose socioeconomic status was low and they were afraid to lose their job and were less available to be updated about their children's learning situation or be involved with the teachers.”* These barriers were created because of the economic difficulties themselves and the parents' preference to focus on the everyday struggle for survival over involvement with the educators.

B. Adolescence and Its Influence on the Parents' Involvement in the Distance Learning

The transition to distance learning in the coronavirus period created a new and challenging reality, in which adolescence became a main factor that influenced the parents' degree of involvement with the teachers. The adolescent students, who are characterized by the aspiration for independence and the tendency to take responsibility for their learning, put the teachers in a situation in which sometimes they avoided turning directly to parents regarding academic or social difficulties that arose among their children. This situation created obstacles in the communication and collaboration between the parents and the education system, which led in the end to a general decline in the parenting involvement with the educators in this period. Thus the parent S describes the teachers' lack of involvement with the parents of adolescent students. *"In the coronavirus period the high school teachers tended to believe that the students, because of their age, can manage the learning themselves. This caused that they less involved us, the parents, in the processes that occurred in the class. This influenced our involvement with them."* The parent G also addresses aspects of the teachers' attitude towards the adolescent students and the communication with their parents. *"In my opinion, there is a tendency among the high school teachers, in contrast to the parents in the elementary school, to believe that the students can deal independently with the results of their decisions. As a result, there isn't always the updating of the parents regarding their children's progress or academic difficulties."*

C. The Influence of the Parents' Education on Their Involvement with the Teachers in the Distance Learning

The parents' education is a significant factor in the shaping of the teachers' degree of involvement in the learning process, especially in distance learning. Parents with high education tend to enjoy greater support from the teachers, because of their ability to deal better with pedagogical and technological challenges. In contrast, parents with a lower level of education may encounter difficulties in providing learning support and dealing with the demands of distance learning. These difficulties may lead to lack of confidence or hesitation when turning to the teachers, thus reducing the involvement and level of support they receive. As the parent N describes. *"Gaps in the parents' education may influence their degree of involvement in their children's education, especially in the period of the coronavirus pandemic. Parents with high education tend to initiate communication with teachers and ask for support, while in contrast parents with less education may avoid contact, perhaps because of the sense of lack of confidence or fear that they will not receive an appropriate answer from the teachers. "The*

parent NS describes the gaps in the teachers' communication and reference. *"Educated parents for the most part are more aware of their rights, which may influence the teachers' involvement towards them. The teachers may involve these parents more, perhaps out of the concern that the lack of involvement on their part will lead to complaints. Conversely, parents with only a high school education deal with more significant barriers and sometimes do not receive the same attitude or support from the teachers, which made it difficult for them to be involved in their children's education."*

D. Barriers in Involvement of Single Parent and Divorced Families

The coronavirus pandemic created significant challenges for different families in general and for divorced, separated, or single parent families in particular. The economic and emotional stress accompanying the crisis limited these families' ability to support their children comprehensively in the academic, social, and emotional fields. In this reality, the teachers were required to deal with unique barriers, such as coordination between different homes, lack of certainty regarding the availability of the two parents, and sometimes even the absolute disconnection on the part of one of the parents. These barriers led to a decline in the parental involvement in the education system, primarily because of the difficulties with communicating effectively with the teachers and responding to the demands of the distance learning. The parent DP describes the challenges of a divorced mother in the distance learning. *"As a divorced mother, I dealt with repeated questions from the teachers about my daughter's absence from the Zoom lessons when she was with her father up North, without my being able to supervise her studies. I explained to the teachers the complexity of our family situation, and I asked to refer questions directly to her father. Unfortunately, there were teachers who did not exhibit consideration, which led to the end of the communication with them."* The parent G also emphasizes the need for increased involvement by the school for single parent mothers. *"As a single parent mother, I found it difficult to support my son's learning in the coronavirus period. With the need to work and without another parent at home, I could not supervise his learning continuously. I expected higher involvement from the teachers, especially on the part of the homeroom teacher and the counselor. But unfortunately I did not receive any contact initiated by the school to examine our needs or an offer of assistance."*

E Barriers in the Parents' Involvement for Families with Many Children during the Distance Learning Period

During the distance learning period, parents of families with many children encountered significant barriers that harmed their involvement in the education system. The prominent barriers include lack of adequate communication on the teachers' part, which sometimes derived from mistaken assumptions regarding the parents' availability and ability to deal with the situation. In parallel, the parents were required to deal with the technological and academic load, which included support of a number of children simultaneously, lack of digital devices, and limited Internet infrastructures. The lack of a customized response on the part of the education staffs worsened the situation and led to a significant decline in the parents' involvement in the learning process. The parent H noted. *"There were teachers who avoided dealing with the challenges of families with many children. They preferred to communicate with parents of one or two children, assuming that they are more available. When academic difficulties came up, teachers sometimes hesitated to turn to parents in these families out of the perception that they do not have the required time or resources."* The parent Sh added a description of the difficulties that arose in the learning environment. *"I know a family with many children when one of her children learns in the class with my son. In the distance learning period, the parents attempted to create for him a quiet learning environment, but disruptions on his younger siblings' part made it difficult for him. Although the homeroom teacher updated the teachers about the unique challenges, he did not receive appropriate support, which led to a decline in achievements."*

7. Discussion and Conclusions

The coronavirus pandemic effected a profound change in the nature of the parents' involvement in the education system, while creating significant barriers that were characterized by different levels of influence on diverse groups of parents. The findings show that these barriers cross five main axes: (1) socioeconomic status, (2) child's age, (3) parents' level of education, (4) family structure, and (5) number of children in the family.

1. Socioeconomic Status

The economic crisis that accompanied the coronavirus crisis created an especially challenging reality for families from a low socioeconomic status. The decline in the incomes following unemployment or the reduction of the salary forced families to reduce expenses and sometimes give up activities vital to their children. The lack of economic stability and the daily struggle influenced the parents' emotional availability and their ability to be involved in their children's lives, which harmed the relationship with the education system and the follow-up

after the children's progress. The transition to distance learning required increased home management, which emphasized even further the importance of the parental involvement, but deepened the gaps for families in economic distress. The testimonies of the parents NS and SS emphasize how the economic crisis became an inseparable part of the everyday experiences and directly influenced the dynamics between the parents and the education system.

Conclusions and Ways of Action for the Reduction of Socioeconomic Gaps in the Education System

The education system can be a significant factor in the reduction of the socioeconomic gaps created following the crisis. Therefore, it is necessary to act in a number of main dimensions.

1. Make educational resources accessible
 - A. Subsidize digital means of learning such as computers and tablets.
 - B. Loan educational equipment for free or in a subsidized manner.
 - C. Make the means for digital and physical learning accessible at no cost, so that every student can receive equal opportunities.
2. Provide emotional and social support
 - A. Provide emotional counseling for the students and their parents through educational counselors and professionals.
 - B. Create social activities that reinforce the sense of belonging and encourage positive interaction between students.
 - C. Provide financial education that helps the parents and the students understand and manage their resources effectively.
3. Provide individualized support and reduction of the economic burden.
 - A. Organize individualized and group lessons for reinforcement for students who have difficulties.
 - B. Reduce the parents' costs through the elimination or subsidy of the parents' payments.
 - C. Provide economic assistance for extracurricular activities, such as trips and social events.

2. The Child's Adolescence

The transition to distance learning in the coronavirus period revealed gaps and challenges in the relationship between the parents and the teachers, primarily in all that pertains

to the students during adolescence. This period is characterized by the aspiration for independence and expectation for the strengthening of the students' personal responsibility. Many teachers assumed that the students can cope by themselves with the challenges of distance learning, but this approach created distance between the teachers and the parents and brought up a decline in the communication and collaboration between them, especially in the middle schools and high schools. The parents' testimonies indicate that the high school teachers tend to take their role differently from the elementary school teachers, out of the belief that the students can deal independently. Consequently, updates and availability for the parents were less frequent, which strengthened the parents' sense of disconnection from their children's learning process.

Conclusions and Ways of Action regarding Adolescence in the Education System

The education system needs to recognize that also in adolescence the students need their parents' support and involvement, especially in situations of sudden change, such as the transition to distance learning. Research studies show that parental involvement remains critical to the students' success also in this stage, but the absence of proactive communication by the teachers with the parents can strengthen feelings of disconnection and harm the students' functioning. To cope with these challenges, it is recommended:

1. To encourage cooperation between the parents and the teachers.
 - A. To promote ongoing, proactive, and comprehensible communication between the teachers and the parents.
 - B. To create platforms for the sharing of information on the students' achievements and difficulties, through the parents' involvement in the making of meaningful decisions.
2. To train teachers
 - A. To develop designated training programs that will provide the teachers with tools for effective communication with the parents of adolescent students.
 - B. To emphasize the importance of the balance between giving independence to the students and maintaining the parental involvement.
3. To emphasize the importance of the parental involvement.
 - A. To encourage the parents to continue to be involved in the educational process, even when their children express the desire for independence.
 - B. To explain to the parents how their involvement can contribute to the improvement of the students' achievements and the reinforcement of their self-confidence.

3. Parental Education

The parents' education significantly influences their involvement in the distance learning and their relationship with the teachers. Parents with low education deal with complex barriers, such as sense of lack of confidence or fear of inappropriate attitude on the teachers' part. These barriers lead sometimes to avoidance of a proactive request and a sense of disconnection from the education system. In the testimonies presented, the parent N notes that a high level of education enables the parents to initiate communication and ask for help, while the parents with a low education find it harder to fit into the process.

Conclusions and Ways of Action regarding Parental Education

Parents with high education have a significant advantage in accessing communication with the education system and in receiving support from it. This situation may intensify existing gaps between groups of parents with a different educational background and influence the progress of students from families with low education. To deal with this challenge, the education system is required to act in a number of dimensions:

1. Support of parents with a low education
 - A. Develop designated mechanisms for technological support that will help the parents deal with the challenges of distance learning.
 - B. Provide personal direction suited to the parents' needs, which include a simple and accessible explanation about the ways of communication with the teachers and the use of the learning systems.
 - C. Strengthen the parents' sense of confidence to turn to the education system through encouragement and respectful discourse.
2. Awareness of perceptual biases
 - A. Train teachers to identify and deal with possible biases towards parents with a different educational background.
 - B. Create an equal approach in communication with all the parents, while emphasizing the importance of parental involvement regardless of the educational background.
3. Programs of intervention and empowerment
 - A. Organize workshops for the empowerment of the parents, which will provide tools for the acquisition of basic technological skills.
 - B. Encourage the parents to actively participate in their children's educational process, through activities that incorporate guidance and emotional support.

4. Single Parent and Divorced Families

The coronavirus pandemic intensified the challenges of divorced, separated, and single parent families in the education system, primarily in distance learning. Unique characteristics, such as the need to coordinate between different homes or inconsistent availability of the parents, made the parental involvement more complicated. The testimonies emphasize the gap between these families' needs and the level of support by the education system. For example, the divorced mother DP described the difficulties in communication with the school and the need for flexibility on the teachers' part. The single parent mother G emphasized the sense of powerlessness that derived from the lack of proactive support by the school staff, which harmed her sense of efficacy and her involvement in the educational activities.

Conclusions regarding Single Parent and Divorced Families

The education system needs to recognize the challenges of divorced, separated, and single parent families and adjust the response to their needs. It is necessary to emphasize the importance of the proactive support of the teachers, homeroom teachers, and counselors, such as proactive contact to coordinate between divorced parents or to examine the situation of students from single parent families. Teachers need to display flexibility in times, requirements, and definition of success, in order to provide a response to the special needs of the students in complex family situations. This flexibility can improve the parents' feeling of belonging to the education system and strengthen their commitment.

1. Recognition of challenges: The education system needs to recognize the challenges faced by divorced, separated, and single parent families and provide a tailored response to the needs of the students in complex family situations.
2. Proactive support by the educators: It is necessary to emphasize the importance of the proactive support of teachers, homeroom teachers, and counselors. The support can include proactive contact to coordinate between divorced parents or examine the emotional situation of students from single parent families.
3. Flexibility in teaching: Teachers need to display flexibility in times, requirements, and definitions of academic success, to provide a response to the special needs of students who are in complicated family situations.
4. Strengthening of the sense of belonging: This flexibility may improve the parents' feeling of belonging to the education system and reinforce their commitment to their children's studies.

5. Families with Many Children

The distance learning period presents unique challenges for families with many children and significantly influenced the parents' involvement and the children's achievements. These families dealt with the lack of digital devices and with inadequate Internet infrastructures, which made it difficult to manage learning for a number of children simultaneously. The technical and academic load on the parents was sometimes exacerbated by the absence of appropriate response on the part of the education system. Some of the teachers assumed that parents in families with many children are less available or less able to deal with the challenges, which created a gap in the communication and prevented the giving of suitable support. The economic crisis, which was expressed in the decline in the income or in unemployment, harmed the parents' ability to dedicate resources to their children's support and harmed the children's motivation to participate in the distance learning. In addition, the parent Sh describes that children from these families were sometimes forced to learn in a noisy or crowded environment, without adequate consideration on the teachers' part of these challenges, which led to a decline in the achievements and sense of frustration among the parents and the children.

Conclusions regarding Families with Many Children

It is necessary to ensure proactive communication on the teachers' part with the parents of families with many children, alongside the adjustment of the teaching methods and support commensurate with the unique technological and home challenges. The education system must implement initiatives such as the loan of digital devices, the providing of technical assistance, and the reinforcement of Internet infrastructures for families in economic distress. In addition, it is necessary to incorporate emotional support programs for families and to promote collaboration with social organizations that can help reduce the economic burden. The training of the teachers to deal with the needs of families with many children, while creating a flexible and inclusive learning environment, will enable the children to succeed even under challenging conditions.

The education system needs to know that families with many children deal with increased difficulties, especially in situations of sudden change, such as the transition to distance learning. The teachers need to exhibit flexibility in times, requirements, and definition of success, so as to provide a response to the special needs of students in challenging family situations. This flexibility can improve the sense of belonging of the parents to the education system and to reinforce their commitment. To deal with these challenges, it is recommended:

1. To initiate communication with the parents: It is necessary to ensure proactive communication on the teachers' part with the parents of families with many children and adjust the way of communication to each family's unique challenges.
2. To adjust methods of teaching and support. The education system needs to adjust methods of teaching and support that suit the technological and home challenges of these families.
3. To provide technological assistance and resources. It is necessary to deploy initiatives such as the loan of digital devices, the supply of technical assistance, and the reinforcement of Internet infrastructures to families in economic distress.
4. Emotional support and social organizations. It is necessary to incorporate programs of emotional support for families and to advance collaboration with social organizations that can help reduce the economic and emotional burden.
5. Training of teachers. The training of the teachers to deal with the special needs of families with many children, while creating a flexible and comprehensive learning environment, will enable the children to succeed even under challenging conditions.

8. Research Limitations

The present research study faced a number of methodological and contextual limitations that must be taken into consideration in the interpretation of the findings.

Limitations of context and sample. The research study focused on teachers in the middle schools and high schools (grades 7-12) in Israel. Accordingly, the findings may not accurately reflect the educational reality in different age groups, such as elementary schools or preschools, or in other education systems with different cultural, economic, and social contexts. In addition, the unique cultural and social context of the Israeli education system is another limiting factor that may influence the ability to generalize the findings to education systems in other countries.

Methodological limitations. The research study was based primarily on the participants' self-reports, which were conveyed using personal interviews and analysis of documents. This methodology may be exposed to biases, such as selective memory, tendency to intensify negative experiences, or perceptual distortions. The integration of additional information sources, for example direct observations or quantitative data, may have strengthened the validity of the findings and enabled the delineation of a more comprehensive and objective picture.

Limitations of time. The research study was carried out in the period after the coronavirus pandemic, and therefore it is not possible to evaluate the long-term implications of the crisis on the teachers in particular and the education system in general. The research study focuses on a short-term look and does not go in-depth into the systemic and social changes that may occur over time. A longitudinal research could have provided a more in-depth understanding of the changes and processes that occurred following the crisis. Longitudinal continuation studies, covering a number of years, can deepen the understanding of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and provide significant insights regarding the system's coping with future crises.

To tackle the aforementioned limitations, it is recommended to carry out complementary research studies based on the integration of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. These research studies can include statistical analysis of student, parent, and teacher data, alongside interviews and observations, in order to provide a multidimensional understanding of the challenges. In addition, it is important to expand the research to additional populations, such as parents of children in elementary schools, and to examine how cultural and social contexts influence the parents' coping with crisis situations. Such research studies can serve as a basis for the development of a global educational policy, based on lessons from the current crisis.

9. Summary

The present research study emphasizes the need for a systemic and holistic approach for dealing with the challenges of the education system in times of crisis. The findings indicate the existence of significant barriers that influence at different levels the diverse groups of parents, while crossing five main axes: (1) the socioeconomic status, (2) the child's age, (3) the parents' level of education, (4) the family structure, and (5) the number of children in the family. The research results illustrate the complexity of the difficulties that the families faced during the period of the coronavirus crisis and distance learning, with emphasis on the need for a comprehensive and effective response. This response is necessary for support of families, in order to ensure the continuation of effective and stable functioning also in times of emergency.

Theoretical and Applied Contributions

The main contribution of the research study is the extension of the theoretical understanding of patterns of communication and the interaction of patterns in times of crisis. The findings provide a significant basis for the development of innovative models for the

improvement of the communication and cooperation between the parents and the teachers – both in times of routine and in times of crisis. These insights can serve as a basis for the formation of an evidence-based policy that will help diverse groups of parents cope with barriers such as the socioeconomic status, the child’s age, and the parents’ level of education. Thus, equality of opportunity will be advanced and the integration of families in Israeli society will be improved.

Future Directions of Research

To deepen the understanding and implications of the phenomenon, it is recommended to carry out similar research studies and continuation studies that will include broader samples, which are spread over diverse geographic locations and represent different populations and cultures. These research studies may enable an in-depth examination of the long-term influences of crises on the education system. In addition, applied models should be developed for the improvement of the communication between all the partners in the education system in general and between the parents, the teachers, and their students in particular. The implementation of these insights may contribute significantly to the promotion of the education system in Israel and to the effective coping with future challenges, both in times of routine and in times of crisis.

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