

Parental Involvement In Diverse Family Structures: a Qualitative Analysis of its Role in Elementary Students Learning Outcomes

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Parental involvement plays a crucial role in supporting children's academic success. Previous studies have mostly focus on quantitative relation and have not deeply explored the form of parental involvement in specific elementary school contexts. This study aims to describe the forms of parental involvement and its relationship with students' learning outcomes at SDN Kromengan 1, Malang Regency. The research uses a qualitative approach involving six students who met the criteria along with their parents to allow in-depth exploration. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that parental involvement is strongly associated with students' learning outcomes, particularly in the cognitive domain (academic achievement) and the affective domain (motivation and classroom engagement), while differences in psychomotor aspects were less prominently observed. On the other hand, students who receive less involvement are more likely to have lower academic results. Parental involvement can include involvement in learning activities, effective communication, as well as moral and material support. In conclusion, This study indicates that parental involvement is closely associated with students' academic achievement in the observed context. This study contributes by providing a contextual understanding of how different forms of parental attention shape students' learning outcomes at the elementary level.

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Introduction

In recent years, issues related to student learning outcomes and weak character education have become increasingly serious global problems. This is also driven by rapid technological developments and increasing family disputes (Aningsih et al., 2022; Jeffery-Schwikkard et al., 2025; Lampropoulos & Sidiropoulos, 2024). The development of student character is based on how parents are involved as the first educator. (Kirsch & Bergeron-Morin, 2023). Parental involvement is one of the main functions that influences character development and student learning outcomes (Claussen et al., 2024; Li & Guo, 2022; Schroer & Yu, 2023). Parental involvement can take many forms, such as providing advice and guidance, supervising children while they study at home, motivating and rewarding children for good behavior, helping children solve problems, and creating a pleasant atmosphere (Koşkulu-Sancar et al., 2023; Salavera et al., 2022).

In the Indonesian context, these challenges are increasingly evident due to the rapid expansion of digital technology and shifting family dynamics. The widespread use of smartphones and online media among elementary school students has influenced learning habits, often reducing direct parental supervision and meaningful interaction during study time (Chun et al., 2023). At the same time, socio-economic demands have led to increased parental busyness and a rise in non-traditional caregiving arrangements, such as children living with grandparents or extended family members. These conditions potentially weaken consistent parental involvement, which is crucial for both character development and learning outcomes.

Student learning outcomes aren't solely measured by exam grades. In the in-depth learning currently implemented by the government, learning outcomes aren't just measured by grades and numbers, but also by the depth of experience students gain (Shu & Gu, 2023; Wong & Chan, 2022). So that student learning outcomes must be based on how students connect the knowledge they gain with the conditions around them (Arizmendi et al., 2023; Owan et al., 2022). The domains of student learning outcomes are then divided into three main dimensions, namely cognitive, psychomotor, and affective.

These broader issues are also reflected in the local context. Based on preliminary observations and interviews conducted at SDN Kromengan 1, Malang Regency, several students experienced learning lag and poor learning outcomes in grade VI. Based on the statements of the grade VI teacher, several of these students received less involvement from their parents, some of them also lived with their grandparents which caused the lack of involvement they received. In addition, the factor of the level of busyness of parents also made parents not focus in devoting their involvement to students. This attracted the interest of researchers to find out how the involvement received by students from their parents or guardians regarding the learning outcomes they obtained.

from the research that has been carried out, it was found that parents play a significant role in students' learning at home, and the involvement children receive from their parents is closely linked to their learning outcomes (Shao & Kang, 2022; Zhao et al., 2024). The level of involvement given can vary due to the influence of many factors, such as the parents' disposition and personality. According to Kong & Yasmin, (2022), these factors can influence the parenting styles parents employ when raising their children, which, of course, has a significant impact on

students' learning outcomes. Parental involvement had a strong impact on students' learning outcomes in elementary school. Two of the articles stated that parental involvement plays more than just a role in student achievement (Yang et al., 2023).

Although numerous studies have demonstrated that parental involvement influences student learning outcomes, most studies still focus on quantitatively measuring levels of involvement without in-depth examination of the concrete forms of involvement that occur in students' daily lives. Furthermore, previous research tends to be limited to specific family contexts, such as highlighting the role of fathers or intact families, thus failing to provide a comprehensive picture of variations in parental or guardian involvement across various family settings. Thus, there remains a research gap regarding the contextual understanding of how parental or guardian involvement manifests and how it relates to student learning outcomes, particularly at the elementary school level. Recent reviews and qualitative syntheses have highlighted that, while quantitative studies dominate the field, there is still limited in-depth exploration of how parental involvement is experienced and enacted in everyday contexts, particularly in diverse family structures and socio-cultural settings.

This study aims to describe how parental involvement differs from the level of parental support provided by students. Furthermore, the researchers also examined the impact of student learning outcomes on the level of support provided by their parents or guardians. Previous research by Morales-Castillo, (2022) found that the role of fathers' involvement significantly impacts students' academic achievement. Students without fathers tend to have lower learning outcomes than those with complete families. Furthermore, this study focused solely on students without a father figure; it is unclear what the impact would be if the student did not have any parents at all.

Based on the objectives above, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) What forms of parental or guardian involvement are experienced by students in their daily learning activities? (2) How do different levels of parental or guardian involvement relate to students' learning outcomes? (3) How do variations in family conditions influence the type and intensity of involvement received by students?

This research contributes by providing a deeper and more contextual understanding of the forms of parental or guardian involvement in supporting student learning at the elementary school level. Using a qualitative approach, this study not only identifies the various forms of involvement provided but also explains their relationship to student learning outcomes in real-world situations. The results are expected to serve as a reference for parents, teachers, and education policymakers in designing more effective strategies to increase parental involvement to support student learning outcomes.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach conducted at SDN Kromengan 1 over a two-month period to explore parental involvement in students' learning experiences. The primary data sources consisted of six sixth-grade students and their parents or guardians, while secondary data were obtained from the homeroom teacher. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on variations in family background, including students living with both parents, single parents, and without parents, in order to obtain diverse and in-depth

perspectives. The number of participants was considered sufficient because the study emphasized depth of exploration rather than generalization, and data collection was continued until thematic saturation was achieved, indicated by the absence of new significant information or patterns. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation using interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation checklists as research instruments. The interview guidelines focused on forms of academic support, supervision during study, communication patterns, motivational strategies, and problem-solving assistance, while the observation sheets emphasized students' learning behaviors, engagement, independence, and visible parental or guardian support. To ensure instrument credibility, the interview guidelines were reviewed by educational experts and piloted on participants with similar characteristics, followed by member checking to confirm the accuracy of interview interpretations. Data validity was strengthened through source and technique triangulation by comparing information obtained from students, parents, and teachers as well as across interviews, observations, and documentation (Abraham & P, 2025). Data analysis referred to the Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, in which the researcher selected and simplified field data, organized them systematically in narrative form, and continuously interpreted and verified the findings to ensure consistency and validity (Creswell, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Result

Parental involvement in this study was analyzed based on several key themes, including learning facilities, supervision, communication, and emotional support. The provision of learning facilities varied among students. Only two students (K and C) had access to a dedicated study room, while one student (P) did not have a proper space for studying. In general, most students received basic learning tools such as stationery and school supplies. However, differences were found in the availability of additional learning support such as tutoring and supplementary books. In some cases, limited facilities also affected students' ability to concentrate, as they had to study in shared or noisy environments.

Parental supervision was mainly observed in controlling students' activities, particularly in limiting the use of mobile phones and monitoring outdoor activities. Only two students received consistent supervision when outside the home. Furthermore, only a few parents or guardians consistently accompanied students during study time at home. This lack of consistent supervision often resulted in students spending more time on non-academic activities, particularly excessive mobile phone use.

Communication between parents and teachers was found to be minimal. Most parents only interacted with teachers during formal school meetings. One parent stated, "*We only meet during report card distribution and rarely communicate with the teacher.*" In terms of parent-child communication, differences were observed. Some students (K and C) actively shared their school experiences, while others (S and A) were more passive and rarely communicated their learning difficulties. This limited interaction reduced opportunities for parents to monitor students' academic progress more closely.

Support in the form of motivation, advice, and assistance in problem-solving was uneven. These differences in emotional support are reflected in participants' statements. For instance, the parent of student K stated, "I always try to accompany my child when studying and encourage them when they feel tired, so they stay motivated." This contrasts with the experience of student S, whose parent mentioned, "I often don't have enough time to assist, so I just remind them to finish their homework." Meanwhile, the guardian of student P expressed, "I rarely assist with studying because I also have other responsibilities at home," indicating very limited emotional and academic support.

Some parents actively encouraged their children, while others only provided limited support, mainly focused on instructing students to complete homework. The categorizations presented in the table (e.g., high, moderate, low) are interpretive summaries derived from qualitative data rather than numerical measurements. These categories were constructed based on patterns identified across interviews and observations. For more detailed data, please see the table below.

Table 1. Comparison of Parental Involvement

Student	Family Condition	Facilities	Communication	Supervision	Support Level
K	Complete parents	Complete	Active	High	High
C	Complete parents	Complete	Active	Moderate	High
S	Single parent	Complete	Limited	Low	Moderate
A	Single parent	Moderate	Passive	Low	Low
D	No parents	Limited	Very low	Very low	Low
P	No parents	Very limited	Minimal	Very low	Very low

Learning outcomes among students showed clear variation. Student K achieved the highest academic performance with an average score of 92 and demonstrated active classroom participation, such as asking questions and assisting teachers. In contrast, student P showed the lowest performance, both academically and behaviorally, often disrupting classroom activities and showing low engagement in learning. This pattern is also supported by students' perspectives. Student K stated, "My parents always remind me to study and help me when I don't understand the lesson," while student P mentioned, "I usually study alone, and sometimes I don't know who to ask when I have difficulties."

These findings indicate a pattern in which students with higher levels of parental involvement tend to demonstrate better academic performance and more positive learning behaviors, while students with limited involvement show lower achievement and engagement. These patterns were consistently observed across different data sources, including interviews, observations, and documentation, reinforcing the relationship between parental involvement and student learning outcomes within the studied context.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that parental involvement plays a significant role in shaping students' learning outcomes, particularly through the provision of learning facilities, emotional support, communication, and supervision. However, beyond merely confirming previous findings, this study highlights how these forms of involvement operate in real-life contexts and interact with students' learning behaviors.

From a theoretical perspective, the availability of learning facilities supports students' ability to engage effectively in learning activities (Pandita & Kiran, 2023). Students who have access to adequate learning resources, such as a dedicated study space and supporting materials, tend to demonstrate better academic performance. This finding aligns with the view that environmental support is an essential component in facilitating learning processes. However, this study also suggests that facilities alone are not sufficient without active parental engagement.

Furthermore, emotional and academic support provided by parents or guardians appears to be a crucial factor influencing students' motivation and persistence in learning. Students who receive consistent guidance, encouragement, and assistance when facing difficulties tend to develop more positive learning attitudes and achieve higher academic outcomes. This supports the notion that parental involvement functions not only as external support but also as a motivational driver that shapes students' internal learning processes (Peng et al., 2022; Vadivel et al., 2023).

Communication between parents and children also plays a significant role in mediating learning outcomes (Geng et al., 2023). Effective communication allows students to express their difficulties and receive appropriate guidance, which in turn enhances their problem-solving abilities and emotional well-being. Conversely, limited communication may hinder students' ability to cope with academic challenges, leading to lower engagement and achievement.

In addition, supervision was found to influence students' discipline and learning behavior. Students who receive consistent supervision tend to manage their time more effectively and avoid behaviors that disrupt the learning process. This finding reinforces the idea that parental monitoring is essential in guiding students toward productive learning habits (Jeynes, 2024; Lambert et al., 2022). This is particularly evident in the context of mobile phone use, where limited supervision often leads to excessive engagement in non-academic activities. As observed in the findings, students with minimal parental monitoring tended to spend more time on their phones, which reduced their focus on learning tasks. Conversely, consistent supervision helped regulate technology use and supported more disciplined study habits.

Interestingly, this study reveals that the completeness of parents (whether students live with both parents, a single parent, or guardians) does not solely determine the level of parental involvement. Instead, the quality of parenting practices and the commitment of caregivers play a more decisive role. This finding extends previous research by showing that even in non-traditional family structures, high levels of involvement can still be achieved and can positively impact students' learning outcomes (Merdović et al., 2024; Nieuwenhuis, 2022).

This finding challenges traditional perspectives rooted in social capital theory, which often emphasize the structural advantages of intact families in providing better educational support. While previous studies suggest that two-parent households tend to offer greater resources and stability, the present study indicates that structural completeness alone does not guarantee effective involvement. Instead, the consistency, attentiveness, and commitment demonstrated by caregivers appear to be more critical in shaping students' learning experiences. In this sense, the quality of interaction may outweigh the structural composition of the family. Based on these findings, this study proposes a conceptual interpretation in which caregiver commitment functions as a moderating factor between family structure and student learning outcomes. In this model, family structure (e.g., complete parents, single parents, or guardians)

does not directly determine learning outcomes; rather, its influence is mediated and strengthened by the level of caregiver commitment, which is reflected in consistent supervision, emotional support, communication, and provision of learning resources. High caregiver commitment can lead to positive learning outcomes regardless of family structure, whereas low commitment may result in poor outcomes even in structurally complete families.

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing a contextual and qualitative understanding of how different forms of parental involvement are manifested in everyday learning practices. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on measuring the level of involvement, this study highlights the dynamic interaction between various forms of involvement and students' learning outcomes in diverse family contexts. More importantly, it offers a nuanced perspective by positioning caregiver commitment as a key explanatory factor that redefines the relationship between family structure and student learning outcomes.

The findings of this study have several practical implications. For parents and guardians, active involvement in children's learning through communication, supervision, and emotional support is essential regardless of family structure. For teachers, strengthening collaboration and communication with parents can help create a more supportive learning environment for students. For schools, programs that encourage parental engagement should be developed to ensure that all students receive adequate support at home.

Conclusion

In conclusion, parental involvement plays an essential role in supporting students' learning outcomes through academic assistance, emotional support, communication, and supervision, with the quality of caregiver engagement proving more influential than family structure itself. The findings demonstrate that students raised by single parents or grandparents may achieve stronger academic support and outcomes than those living with both parents when caregivers are actively engaged in the learning process. These results contribute to the understanding that effective parental involvement is shaped by commitment and consistency rather than the completeness of parental presence. Practically, the study emphasizes the importance of strengthening collaboration between schools and families through structured communication, parenting workshops, guidance sessions, and continuous monitoring of students' learning progress. In this context, the proposed "Parental Engagement Program," consisting of structured communication, parental guidance, and monitoring and feedback systems, offers a practical framework for enhancing family participation in elementary education. Nevertheless, the study is limited by its small sample size, single-school setting, and qualitative focus, meaning that the findings should be interpreted within the specific socio-cultural context of the research. Therefore, future studies are recommended to examine the effectiveness of this program across diverse educational settings and explore strategies for strengthening caregiver commitment in supporting children's learning.

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Authors' Note

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