

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ACCORDING TO THEIR GRADE AND FAMILY INCOME AT BASIC EDUCATION HIGH SCHOOL, KWANTHAIR VILLAGE, CHAUNGZON TOWNSHIP, MON STATE, MYANMAR

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Abstract: The primary purpose of this research study was to compare students' perceptions of community involvement, according to their grade and family income, in Kwanthair Village High School, Chaungzon Township, Mon State, Myanmar. The study was conducted with grades 10 and 11, a total of 136 students, during the academic year 2016-2017. It was designed as a quantitative and comparative study. A questionnaire was used for data collection which was adopted from Rivera (2001) based on Epstein's (1995) six types of framework of involvement. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part I investigated the participants' grade and family income, and Part II compared students' perceptions of community involvement. The data collected from the survey was analyzed by Descriptive Statistics, Frequency and Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation, t-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Although the research finding results showed that there were no significant differences with students' perceptions of community involvement, according to their grade and family income, students had positive views for continued community involvement in their education. The findings of this study could be helpful to administrators, teachers, parents and future researchers as to the importance of students' perceptions of community involvement, and how it impacts on their achievement and educational performance.

Keywords: Perception, Community Involvement, Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering Learning at home, Decision Making, Collaborating with the community.

Introduction

It is no secret that parental involvement is an integral part of a successful educational framework. Numerous studies have identified parent engagement as a critical factor affecting the success of individual students and the school environment itself.

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However, numerous schools and educational institutions have found that high rates of students' success are generally the result of three groups collaborating to provide the best possible outcomes, teachers, parents, and the community (Pride Surveys, 2016).

Community involvement strengthens educational outcomes, because a school's effectiveness is enhanced by its relationship with the community. A school mission and goals, guide a successful school community partnership to achieve educational objectives, with projects that integrate with established curriculum. Programs it has been documented that parent-school-partnerships improve schools, strengthen families, build community support, and increase student achievement and success.

There is a strong belief that parental and community involvement is a key issue in securing quality education provision. Unless formal opportunities for parental involvement and community participation are made available, there will be little progress made in assistance offered to schools (OECD, 2006).

The importance of community involvement in school cannot be over stated because what happens outside of school impacts the ethos within the school. Learning is not confined just to the classroom (Morgan, 2006). Today, Myanmar and other developing countries have built-in 'School Management Committees' (SMC), to monitor local-level participation in schools as an integral part of recent decentralization reforms, and increase educational access and equality, bringing about sound beneficial relationship between communities and school. Although some research indicates that decentralization would be a way to increase local-level participation, it is in no way a guarantee of this. The government's strategy of decentralization is to promote rural and national development, something Myanmar and other developing countries desperately need. To upgrade the level of community contribution to schools, there are two organizations in Myanmar which are linked: Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and School Board of Trustee (SBTs) that was introduced after 1988. These two organizations are comprised of a school head, selected teachers and parents, elected by the parental community (Win, 2014).

However, developing countries have many difficulties that prevent effective participation of parents and community members, especially low-income families. They are unlikely to have parental involvement and unlikely to be concerned with community work or the educational progress of their children, as they are engaged in subsistence farming and working full time. Research in various African and South Asian regions has revealed an unequal access to participation, in bodies such as School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) of socio-economic status, race, caste, social class, location, political affiliation and gender (Afridi, Anderson & Mundy 2014).

In poor rural locales in countries such as Ghana, the local elite and more educated community members tend to take on the role of decision-makers, and through their actions, restrict opportunities of representation and participation by a more inclusive group of community members in the affairs of schools (Aslam, Banerji, Beteille, Kingdon, Little, Moe, Parton, Patrinos, Rawal, & Sharma, 2014).

In respect of community involvement, in the 30 Year Long Term Educational Development Plan (2001-2031) of Myanmar also encourages basic educational activities in collaboration with community. The government also encourages

communities to participate in school management and contribute to the school's operation and development, in school finances and community relations (Win, 2014).

However, in both developed and developing countries, there is also a gap between the structures and implementation of parental involvement. It is important to remove barriers at the most basic level and this means that all parents are informed about their rights and opportunities to have a say. If parent and community involvement in school governance and learning is to be encouraged, then teacher development and leadership training must be considered, as observed in a few studies (OECD, 2006; USAID, 2011; Save the Children, 2013). With these important benefits in mind, it's clear that a focus on increasing community involvement programs and opportunities should be a consistent goal for every school.

Research Objectives:

There were three objectives:

1. To identify students' grade, and family income at High School, Kwanthair Village, Chaungzon Township, Mon State, Myanmar.
2. To determine the level of students' perception of community involvement at High School, Kwanthair Village, Chaungzon Township, Mon State, Myanmar.
3. To compare students' perception of community involvement according to their grade and family income at High School, Kwanthair Village, Chaungzon Township, Mon State, Myanmar.

Literature Review

Education is not an isolated activity but a social affair promoting a vibrant school environment. Schools are charged with the responsibility of educating and preparing students to take their place in society and help them to develop their potential that will result in successful careers and life choices. In addition, the vital role that parents, family members and the broader community play in this objective cannot be overstated. In the past, parental involvement was characterized by volunteers, mostly mothers, assisting in the classroom, chaperoning students, and fund raising. Today, the old model has been replaced with a much more inclusive approach: School-family-community partnerships now include mothers and fathers, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, relatives and caregivers, business leaders and community groups, all participating in goal-oriented activities aimed at student achievement, at all grade levels, for school success (Roekel, 2008).

In order to improve educational access and quality, the benefit of community involvement in education is well documented. Policymakers, educators, and others involved in education are seeking ways to utilize limited resources efficiently and effectively, in order to identify and solve problems in the education sector, and to provide quality education for children. Their efforts have contributed to recognizing community participation as one of the strategies for improving educational access and quality (Uemura, 1999).

In the context of global movements such as 'Education for All', the aim is to ensure that all children have access to free quality primary education by 2015. Low income countries are under domestic and international pressure to meet these goals,

and many developing countries have embraced community involvement as an integral part of their educational reform strategy in an effort to improve quality education.

When Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University found research confirmed the lack of families and community involvement in schools, she developed a research-based framework which described six types of involvement. They are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. That types of involvement would offer a broad range of school, family, and community activities that engaged all parties and helped meet student needs. The school's overall mission and goals, successful school-parent community partnerships are not stand-alone projects or add-on programs. Parents, schools, teachers, community members participation improve schools, strengthen families, build community support, and increase student achievement and success is well documented in research and fieldwork studies (Roekel, 2008).

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 is the conceptual framework of this study based on the theories that presented above.

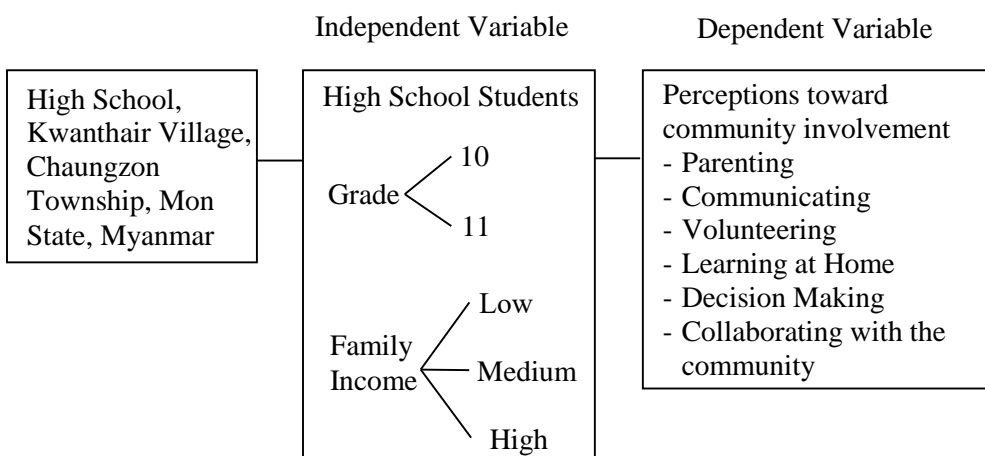


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of This Study

Research Instrument

A questionnaire consisting of two parts addressed three research questions:

In Part I of the questionnaire, the demographic profile of students, consisted of 2 items, students' grade and family income. In Part II: "School-Family-community Partnership Survey".

A validated survey instrument developed by Epstein and Salinas (1993) was used to survey and assess the views of students regarding community involvement. There was a total of 30 items in this questionnaire.

The survey was used in this study was adopted from Rivera (2001), which she modified and adapted from the School and Family Partnership survey by Epstein and

Salinas (1993) for the ‘Center of Schools, Family, and Community Partnerships’ of John Hopkins University.

Rivera (2001) figured a test of reliability to analyze all the survey items. The parents’ raw data for reliability ranges from an alpha of .91 and a .92 standardized item alpha which was considered as the instrument was reliable.

Population

The study was focused on the 136 students at grade 10 and 11, in Kwanthair Village High School, during the 2016-2017 academic year. High school students were mature enough to be able to express their understanding of community involvement and the population was accessible for this study.

Findings

The findings of this study based on three main objectives.

Research Objective One

The researcher used frequency and percentage to analyze the result of objective one and these two factors in respondents’ demographic data, grade and their family income are shown in table 1 and 2. From a total of 136 students, 75 (or 55.1%) were Grade 10 and 61 (or 44.9%) were Grade 11. 72 (or 52.9%) were from low income families, 51 (or 37.5%) were from middle income families and 13 (or 9.6%) were from high income families. Therefore, the majority of students were from low income families.

Table 1: The Details of Participants by Grade (N=136)

Grade	Number	Percentage
Grade 10	75	55.1
Grade 11	61	44.9
Total	136	100

Table 2: The Details of Participants by Family Income (N=136)

Family Income	Number	Percentage
Low	72	52.9
Medium	51	37.5
High	13	9.6
Total	136	100

Research Objective Two

Table 3 demonstrates the total mean score of students’ perceptions was 3.91 which was interpreted as positive according to our interpretation standards. It indicates that students from the selected school felt positive perceptions towards the community involvement. Parenting achieved the highest mean score (4.46) and collaboration with the community got the lowest mean score (3.59) among all six dimensions. The highest mean score indicates that students perceive parent involvement (parenting) as valuable for their education. The lowest mean score indicated that students viewed

collaborating with the community as the least important among all components. In conclusion, the students' perception of their expectancies in terms of parenting dimension was high as evidenced by the ranged score for each dimension and data presented in the tables corresponding to this question.

Table 3: Summary of Overall Means and Standard Deviation for Students' Perceptions of Community Involvement at The Selected School in Kwanthair Village, Chaungzon Township, Myanmar (N=136)

Community Involvement	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Parenting	4.46	.40	Positive
2. Communicating	3.87	.54	Positive
3. Volunteering	3.68	.66	Positive
4. Learning at home	4.11	.49	Positive
5. Decision making	3.73	.64	Positive
6. Collaboration with the community	3.59	.56	Positive
Total	3.91	.38	Positive

Research Objective Three

For research objective three, the researcher utilized independent sample t-test and one- way ANOVA to compare the data based on students' grade and family income.

Grade

The results of the t-test did not evidence statistical significance at $p < .05$ between the variable of grade and the six dimensions of involvement. The compiled data evidences that students' grade does not affect the perception of the six dimensions of involvement.

Table 4 below indicates the comparison of students' perceptions of community involvement according to their grade in the selected school. The result of t-value was 1.153 and Sig (2-tailed) was .251 which was bigger than the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the result was interpreted as there was no a statistically significant difference of students' perception of community involvement according to their grade and family income.

Table 4: Comparison of Grade 10 And 11 Students' Perception of Community Involvement

Grade	N	M	S.D.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Grade 10	75	3.87	.386	1.153	134	.251
Grade 11	61	3.95	.381			
Total	136					

Family Income

The results of the one-way (ANOVA) did not show any evidence of statistical significance at $p < .05$ between the variable of students' family income on community involvement in the six dimensions of involvement. The compiled data evidences that students' family income does not affect the perception of community involvement.

Table 5 presents the comparison of students' perceptions towards community involvement according to the respondents' family income. According to the results of the one-way (ANOVA) was .178 which was bigger than .05 of the significant level. The result was interpreted as there was no a statistically significant difference of students' perceptions towards community involvement according to their grade and family income.

Table 5: The Comparison of (One-Way ANOVA Result) Students' Perception of Community Involvement According to The Respondents' Family Income

Source of Variance	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.513	2	.257	1.751	.178
Within Groups	19.487	133	.147		
Total	20.000	135			

Discussion

1. Students' Grade, and Family Income

1.1 Grade: According to the findings, from a total of 136 students, the majority of students were from Grade 10, (75 out of 136) and 61 were Grade 11. A possible reason for this variation could be the dropout rate after Grade 10, a result of various factors, from economic considerations to a more demanding commitment of study required at this higher level.

1.2 Family income: The majority of student participants were from low income families. 72 out of 136 students were from low income, 51 were from middle income and 13 were from high income families.

According to the findings, there were some reasons why the majority of students came from the low-income families. Regarding a report by the United Nation Developments Program (UNDP), approximately 26% of people from rural areas are living under the poverty level. Kwanthair Village is also located in a rural area where parents had lower levels of education and lower incomes which struggle to survive with almost no employment prospects. Therefore, the researcher was no surprise why major of students from Kwanthair Village were from low income family.

2. What Is the Level of Students' Perception of Community Involvement?

The researcher applied Epstein's (1995) six types of involvement in order to analyze the depth perceptions of students on community involvement. The six dimensions of involvement exemplify what should occur in schools as they interact with parents and communities to support their efforts in keeping informed and involved in the children's education.

Parenting: From the findings stated above in terms of parenting component, the students from the selected school had positive views on how school, parents and teacher can promote family participation concerning goal setting, health issues, rearing techniques, discipline and discussions on test results with individual parents. This parenting element scored the highest mean score in all six dimensions of involvement.

Indeed, the previous researcher Rivera (2001), in the dissertation study of Parental involvement has always been present in American education since its foundation when schooling was obtained at home or through apprenticeship. This Educate America Act (Goals 2000) of 1994 act incorporated Goal 8, concerning the promotion of partnership to increase parental involvement and participation in developing the social, emotional, and academic growth of children to its fundamental goals. In the USA, parental involvement was incorporated as a major component of all federally, funded educational initiatives.

Communicating: The students had positive opinions how teachers should develop communication skills between parents regarding school programs, answering parents' questions for students' success, open communication with parents on students' progress via telephone or other communication channels. It is noted that students want very good communication between teachers and parents on the future of their educational prospects.

However, in previous research, Rivera (2001) found that teachers telephoning parents, informing them of their child's progress, scored lowest in the communicating dimension. Moreover, he concluded that there would be some factors to consider, such as parents not able to access phone facilities or teachers preferring 'face to face' communication with parents.

Volunteering: The research findings stated that students were feeling positive on the volunteering dimension which meant how school and teachers should set up schedules in order to use parents and former students to volunteer in the school. However, students were averse to parents volunteering in classroom activities.

Rivera (2001) also found out that volunteering also got the lowest mean score in his study. This response is due to parents limited or lack of information pertaining to the programs and projects the school is developing; parents' having never before experienced this strategy in the schools; or to the educational level of the students who partake in these programs.

Learning at home: The students had a positive view on learning at home dimension. That meant teachers should inform parents of the skills required for each subject area, how to help in their children's assignment and to improve their child skills and assessments and should provide parents of proposed school trips. They also had a positive view, that parents should check their daily homework.

However, most students' parents are from hard working families, with limited education. That would be one possible answer for parents unable to check their children' homework, activities and so forth. The researcher believed that the students' perceptions on their parents' involvement on 'learning at home' would occur in the near future. Moreover, the previous researcher, Rivera (2001) found parents felt teachers should provide summer packets or activities if they are expected to assist in 'learning at home dimension'.

Decision making: The students had positive feeling about the finding of how the schools and teachers should encourage, promote and motivate parents for decision making roles in school and how parents should undertake the actual activities and trips. The result showed that students felt less importance about school promoting parental participation in district and school councils. The possible reasons would be students' parents from low socioeconomic background tend to have low literacy or

no education, so that they feel their parents might not contribute in making good suggestions regarding academic rules and regulations.

However, the previous researcher, Rivera's (2001) found the decision-making dimension indicated that the schools are limiting or not taking into consideration the perspectives and concerns of teachers and parents to improve school-parent connections. The parental involvement in decision making policy of the State is not being addressed as required by the existing laws and regulations regarding the expectations of teachers and parents.

Collaborating with the community: Students were less enthused that school should offer training to enable parent leaders to serve as representatives of other families, to foster community integration through partnerships involving the school with other agencies, organizations and businesses to disseminate community activities that link learning skills and talents, and to integrate child and family services with education, providing information for all students and families on community programs and services. Reasons for this response could be student concerns that collaborating with the community is challenging for parents, particularly when low-income families may be hindered by transportation difficulties, conflict with work schedules, not to mention parents' own limited education and confidence to participate in training programs involving community activities and providing information to others.

According to a former researcher, Rivera (2001), the lowest percentage of responses of "strongly agree", relating to 'collaborating with the community' was approximately 32%, from parents whose ages were in the early 30's. The Scheffe analysis of multiple comparisons evidenced that in the dimension of communication and collaborating with the community, parents' educational level contributed to the difference in the perception of parental involvement.

3. Are There Any Significant Differences between Students' Perception of Community Involvement according to Their Grade and Family Income?

In this study, the researcher compared students' perceptions towards community involvement according to their grade and family income at the selected school. From testing the research hypothesis, it revealed that the probable score of comparing students' perceptions towards community involvement by their grade and family income are higher than the significant level 0.05. Therefore, the research accepted null hypothesis, (which means there were no significant differences) in students' perceptions towards community involvement according to their grade and family income. In this study, the researcher assumed there would be many factors that would influence students' perceptions of community involvement, (relating to their grade and family income).

Grade Differences: The inferential analysis of data t-test result showed there was no significant difference among the students' perception of community involvement, in regard to their grade. It has to be noted that the respondents from this study were mostly young adults and thus, their perceptions did not differ significantly.

Family income differences: Moreover, the study found there was no significant difference in students' perception of community involvement in regard to family income. There seemed several considerations that might influence students'

perception in this regard. For example, the majority of parents in the study has little formal education and therefore lack of the ability to help their children through involvement, such as collaborating with the community, volunteering and decision making in school activities (Brown, 2015). Other possible considerations are students lack of experience on how to answer the survey, or more importantly, without properly understanding it. In any event, the results indicate that regardless of the family income and the above considerations, no significant difference was evident.

Previous researchers, Bevill (2007) dissertation study, looked at the effect of parental involvement upon student achievement and student diligence: a study of students and parents in Grenada, where results indicated that the level of income of parents had no relationship to level of parental involvement. This finding is contrary to suggestions made by Smith (2006), who indicated that lower socioeconomic families provide less parental involvement to students.

Although this study found no significant differences in the students' perceptions towards community involvement according to their grade and family income at the selected school, all of the responses indicated positive attitudes on community involvement. This researcher considered all students had participated well but need to know the value of research. They should be aware that the results can benefit and support their future needs through their responses in the survey.

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