

Parental Involvement in Children's Learning: A Study of ECEC Intervention Community Schools in Nepal

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Abstract

Context: Parental involvement is widely recognized as a key factor in children's learning outcomes, including overall well-being. However, many parents often show their involvement with ensuring homework completion and providing basic needs, while meaningful engagement in children's learning is often overlooked. Parental awareness, household responsibilities, and socio-economic pressure often limit the parents' active participation in their learning outcomes.

Purpose: This article aims to explore how parents effectively get involved in children's learning.

Methods: This study employed a qualitative case study design. Five ECEC Innovation in Education-intervened community schools were purposively selected from Belbari and Mahalaxmi Municipalities as case schools. Focus group discussion (FGD) with parents and an in-depth interview with the head teachers were conducted. The recorded information was transcribed, coded, translated, and analyzed thematically.

Findings: The study identified that parenting programs significantly influence the children's learning outcomes. Parents can be involved in children's learning through intentional engagement, maintaining health and hygiene, supporting homework, and ensuring regular attendance. Meaningful parent-child engagement enhanced children's confidence and communication skills. Parents can support children's self-regulation by setting boundaries and

responding positively to behavioral challenges. However, household responsibilities, limited awareness, and socio-economic pressure constrain consistent parental involvement.

Implication: Parenting education programs foster awareness and strengthen parenting skills, enabling parents to engage with their children and support intentional parenting. Schools need to focus on the parenting program and collaborate to improve children's overall learning outcomes.

Novelty: Meaningful parental engagement in children's learning fosters children's learning. However, parents' prioritization of household responsibilities and a lack of awareness constrain consistent co- involvement.

Keywords: Preparation for school, parenting program, child-parent engagement, parent - school collaboration, self-regulation.

Introduction

In Nepal's community school, parents instruct their children to complete their homework as soon as they arrive home. Parents are not aware of their active involvement in children's learning; completing written tasks does not guarantee learning. Parents feel satisfied when they see their children busy with homework, but they may not check whether the child has truly understood the tasks. Meaningful involvement can significantly accelerate their children's learning. Active participation in questioning, interaction, and support ensures effective learning for children.

In Nepal, children are rarely encouraged to read storybooks, receive proper support with homework, or receive guidance in understanding their emotions. Many families perceive time spent on child-friendly activities as unproductive. Parents often speak with their children, but meaningful two-way communication that addresses children's opinions is hardly considered. Involving children in conversations and activities fosters logical and critical thinking in learners.

Parents' commitment and active engagement in their children's education across both home and school contexts significantly influence children's learning (Bhandari, 2025). Moreover, parental involvement in children's learning is a vital component of educational development that positively impacts children's academic performance and personal growth. Students who receive steady academic encouragement from their parents are more likely to develop stronger motivation, higher self-confidence, and improved academic results (Topor et al., 2010).

The academic performance of children depends on parents' involvement in their children's education (Boonk et al., 2018). However, in the Nepali context, the majority of parents lack proper parenting awareness, understanding, and skills, and they also lack an understanding of the importance of their involvement in children's learning (Kunwar, 2024). Consequently, it affects children's learning, growth, and development due to parental involvement, support, and care.

Research Question

How do parents practice their involvement in children's learning in ECEC's intervention community schools in Nepal?

Methodology

ECEC Innovation in Education has implemented an intervention program in ECCD schools in Belbari and Mahalaxmi Municipality for 5 years under the school development program. The parenting program was one of the components. Five schools were selected as samples for this study to explore parents' involvement practices. The intervention program included: A comprehensive teacher training program was implemented, focusing on child development, curriculum implementation, teaching learning and assessment practices, classroom management, and teachers' personal and professional development. School leadership training was also provided, emphasizing goal setting and action planning. Additionally, the training focused on ongoing support for teachers to improve pedagogy.

This study employed a qualitative case study design. The case study research design helps me explore an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Ridder, 2017). Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with parents and head teachers were conducted. Five FGD meetings were held, with an average of 7 participants per meeting, and in-depth interviews were conducted with 5 head teachers and parents from the selected schools under the intervention program. The purposive sampling technique was adapted. Only those participants who were willing to participate and were available during the data collection period were included in the study. The parents were selected based on their involvement in the parenting program throughout the ECCD school intervention for more than 3 years.

The interviews and FGDs with the participants were recorded, transcribed, and translated to create codes and prepare themes for data analysis. During fieldwork, the researcher clearly informed participants of their responsibilities as study participants. The participants were informed about the provision of no remuneration and the benefits of their participation in the study. Verbal informed consent was obtained from participants for audio recording of the in-depth interview and FGD. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were maintained through the use of pseudonyms. The information was triangulated through interviews with multiple participants across various categories, including parents and head teachers. The researcher has respected participants' cultural values and norms across families and shown equal respect to all participants, irrespective of age, caste, gender, religion, or language.

Theoretical Understanding

Lev Vygotsky's social development theory explains how social interaction and cultural contexts support and shape children's learning and development. The social development theory, concerned with children's cognitive development, is enhanced through interaction, particularly with parents and caregivers. Parents play a significant facilitative role by supporting children within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the gap between a child's current level of development and their potential when provided with guidance and

support (Thapa, 2025). Parents can provide scaffolding to help children gradually achieve a higher level of learning through active involvement (Alias et al., 2024). This theoretical framework is particularly relevant to this study, as ECEC School consultation interventions that incorporate parenting programs enhance parents' awareness of the importance of actively engaging with their children through activities such as homework support, meaningful conversations, and self-regulation. Parents' involvement in these ways elevates their ability to support their children's learning and development to the next higher level.

Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory explains that child development is influenced and shaped by multiple layers of environmental systems that interact with one another, starting with the immediate environment, such as parents, schools, and friends (Alias et al., 2024). The microsystem involves direct interactions the child experiences every day, and the interactions and connections between these microsystems influence child development. This theoretical framework is also relevant to this study, as the parenting intervention program equipped parents to engage in various activities with their children, such as playing together, supporting them in doing homework, preparing them for school, being concerned about their health, and spending quality time with them (Velez-Agosto et al., 2017).

Combining these theoretical lenses provides a comprehensive framework for examining how, when integrated into community schools, parenting programs in ECEC enhance parental involvement and support children's learning.

Results and Discussions

The information derived from the participant, the themes were developed as preparation for school, intentional involvement in doing homework, maintaining children's health & hygiene, parents' school collaboration, and meaningful engagement with children were discussed as follows:

Preparation for School

Preparing children for school supports their social and emotional development, fostering the confidence needed for successful learning and overall growth. Well-prepared children for school feel confident and are more effective learners, which supports their physical and psychological well-being (Kunwar, 2024). The children learn necessary skills such as self-control, cooperation, and emotional expression at home rather than at school. Children who receive effective care exhibit greater levels of self-confidence and are more involved in classroom environments (Hossain et al., 2015). Parental involvement in children's preparation for school is discussed below:

Supporting Children for Independence

Parents play an important role in preparing children for school. It requires good planning and family cooperation. Parents need to ensure children's wake-up time, maintain personal hygiene, and be ready for school. Some children may have to start early because of the distance between their homes and schools (Sherpa, 2022). Consistent morning routines help children improve punctuality, emotional well-being, and learning readiness (Thornberg et al., 2017). The parents

can also show their involvement by attending parents-teacher meetings, supporting their children with homework, and creating a positive learning environment at home. During the focus group discussion (FGD), participant parent P1 stated:

I helped to wash their faces. I brush and polish their shoes. I put oil in their hair and combed it. I ask my daughter to put her books in the bag and help her put on her dress. I ask her to brush her teeth and check her hygiene.

The parents were sensitized and were aware of their' children's preparation. The parents are more conscious and intentional in supporting their children in getting ready for school. Supporting children helps them learn more effectively. Parents in Nepal are unaware of their role in supporting their children's education (Heys et al., 2017). They believed that providing children with basic needs is their primary role, but as parents, they are not expected to support their educational development.

Parents provide educational materials to their children; however, they do not invest in children's educational development and instead spend their time socializing on unimportant matters that hinder children's education (Porumbu & Necsoi, 2013).

The children's good academic performance is due to their parents' recognition of the positive impact of parental involvement on academic achievement. On the other hand, in Nepal, parental involvement in academic development is low, as they focus more on household tasks and other socio-cultural activities, which leads to low academic performance (Poudel, 2025).

In this context, participant parents P2 asserted that, "due to household work, the children are kept at home. But even one day of absence from school may hamper their studies. It will be harder for the children, but parents are concerned about completing their own work."

The statements affirm that the parents play a significant role in preparing the children for school and supporting their overall educational development. However, all parents do not realize that their children's learning and educational support often focus on basic needs rather than on active involvement in learning. It also shows that when parents are made aware through seminars, they become active and intentional in ensuring their children's readiness, hygiene, and learning routines. Likewise, completing household responsibilities and prioritizing social culture often led to inconsistent school attendance among children.

Intentional involvement in doing homework

Intentional involvement in children's learning increases their academic success, making them feel loved and confident, which develops strong logical reasoning abilities (Bhandari, 2025). Active involvement, along with continuous encouragement and support from parents, helps children perform well and positively influences their academic achievement.

The interview with the participant headmaster, HT1 stated that "the majority of students performed well academically and socio-emotionally, with parental support, encouragement, and involvement in their studies." The statement asserts that parental purposeful contribution is needed for the children's effective learning.

In the same vein, participant parents, P2 stated that, "the children continuously do their homework when their parents are concerned and supportive." Similarly, in this regard, participant parents P3 stated:

We get involved in their studies, especially in exam preparation. Initially, they used to get irritated and go to bed. But now at least they write by themselves. Now, within an hour, they finish around 3-4 hours of their homework. Before, they were not ready to write. Even today, yesterday, my son did not do the homework, so when I asked him to do it early in the morning, he said he would do it after taking a bath and breakfast. And he did it. There were 4 pages of homework, and he did not even take half an hour.

This statement illustrates that parents' intentional involvement in homework helped children to develop their competence. They did their homework with enjoyment. Parents' involvement in their children's lives will also help them better understand their children. Additionally, studies in Nepal's public schools show that parental involvement not only enhances academic achievement but also promotes students' interpersonal and personal growth (Utami, 2022). In this regard, the Head teacher, HT2 asserted:

I find the involvement of parents in their children's studies now. Apart from this, I find them present at special events and occasions too. Parents are very positive towards this change. Before, there was the idea that learning was happening when they saw their children getting written classwork and homework. Now, parents seem happy when they see their children being involved in various tasks, such as singing, dancing, art and craft, and free play, which influence physical, emotional, and social development. ECEC plays an important role in this change. ICDP programs. (Parenting program) have helped parents understand their children's emotions and support them.

The parents' and the head teacher's statements assert that parents' support and involvement positively influence their learning. Parents who are unable to contribute meaningful time with their children create difficulties in children's learning and performance. Thus, the parenting program is essential for children's learning effectiveness.

Maintaining Children's Health & Hygiene

Maintaining children's health and hygiene is a key parental responsibility (Sormunen et al., 2018). Home is the first institution where children learn about good hygiene practices such as handwashing, proper nutrition, safe drinking water, and personal cleanliness. During the FGD, participants' parents started by saying, "I take care of my children's hygiene regularly before they go to school." In the same issues, another participant's parents stated, "I am not giving time to my children." The participants' statements indicate that some parents were unaware of the importance of caring for their children's health and hygiene. In this connection, participant teachers expressed that "A few parents give their children a handkerchief, unaware of their children's neatness and cleanliness". Similarly, participant head teacher H2 asserted:

In the past, parents were not educated and were less aware of health, hygiene, and school activities. Parents are more conscious now, and they understand the importance of health and hygiene. They also talk to their children about what they do in school.

The above statements asserted that the parents were supporting their children in maintaining their health and hygiene. However, some parents were careless in maintaining health and hygiene. Parental care and maintenance of children's hygiene help keep children healthy, which is important for learning. The basic practices of personal hygiene, such as handwashing

and cleanliness, eating proper, nutritious food, clean drinking water, and regular health check-ups, protect children from vital diseases. Parental caring and continued practice of healthy habits develop children's overall well-being.

Parents -School Collaboration

Collaboration between school administration and teachers is crucial to supporting students' learning and overall development. Effective parent-teacher collaboration, based on communication and shared responsibility, enhances students' learning outcomes (Poudel, 2025). In this regard, participant parent P6 shared:

My son is a little stubborn and doesn't show interest in the studies. He leaves home during school time but doesn't come to school; when it is time to depart, he comes home. Therefore, when I am available, I drop him off at school. I communicated with the teacher, and we agreed that I would call around 10 am to check whether my son had arrived at school. The teacher asks us to send the children to school, and we request the teachers to scold them so they also obey us at home.

The statement shows the parents communicating with the teacher to know about their children. Communication with the teacher and parents informs the children's learning achievement. Concerning this issue, the 'participants' headteacher, H3, stated:

Parents express their concern about education, and if the results are not good, they inquire about tuition and coaching classes. They came to pick up their children and also expressed concern about homework. Such parental care has made it easy for the school to focus on parents who take care of their children at school, and teachers seem to do the same. However, not all parents come to school, as some work as laborers and have to leave early.

The statement asserts that only a few parents visit the school and are concerned about their children's teaching and learning, and that these concerned parents have influenced teachers' caring and teaching. Parental collaboration in school needs to increase to improve children's learning effectiveness. Another participant headteacher, H1, asserted as:

We have now gained the parents' trust. We regularly provide parents with information about the teaching method. We do have meetings once a month. Initially, attendance at the parents' meeting was low, but now the meeting hall is full. Regular meetings with parents have made teaching and learning easier in schools, as this collaboration helps divide responsibilities between schools and parents.

In the above assertion, it is assured that the parents and the school are sharing the same goal: providing the best education for the children. The schools and parents must collaborate in different ways. The collaboration supports elevating children's cognitive development and improving their writing abilities (Yang & Chen, 2023). The parents' and schools' collaboration, strengthened effective communication, increased parents' participation in meetings. Parental involvement needs to be meaningful, with parents actively involved, to highlight issues in their children's activities at home, socio-cultural aspects, and their influences. Therefore, parents' participation and their outcomes depend on the quality of engagement and on coordination between schools and parents.

Meaningful Engagement (Quality time) with Children

Meaningful engagement between parents and children fosters strong bonds and a sense of security. Strong social relationships, emotional regulation, physical health, and academic success are associated with children's success (Djambazova Popordanoska, 2016). Participant parent P1 claimed as:

I arrange things for my children, and when they return from school, they communicate, sing, and recite poems and songs. My son often introduces topics and actively involves everyone in the conversation. I have noticed a clear improvement in his communication skills.

The statement shows engagement with children, the development of a harmonious emotional bond, and a sense of closeness between parents and children. Similarly, children feel safe and encouraged to inquire about their quirks and seek clarification (Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). In this regard, participant parent P4 shared:

I involve myself in their daily lives, such as preparing for school. They plan the activities and involve me. We communicate all the issues that happened throughout the day. We plan what we eat and talk about stories.

Meaningful engagement with children increasingly has a positive impact on the child-parent relationship, thereby contributing to a child's well-being (Li & Guo, 2023). Therefore, parents must be encouraged to engage meaningfully with their children. Quality time with children significantly influences their overall development, including social, emotional, and intellectual abilities. Mainly reading storybooks and discussing the issues in stories with the children develop the children's vocabulary and reading skills, thereby enhancing their language skills (Heys et al., 2017). Additionally, participant parent P5 shared that, "I have a busy schedule with household chores; however, I still make time for my children and address all their curiosities. Sometimes I engage with my children by playing chess and badminton". The statement shows that the parents spend their time with their children, fostering their social and emotional development. When parents get involved, children are more open to sharing their activities and are more likely to seek clarification. Meaningful engagement with children increasingly has a positive impact on the child-parent relationship, thereby contributing to a child's well-being (Li & Guo, 2023).

Therefore, parents need to be encouraged to engage meaningfully with their children and intentionally create moments for meaningful interaction every day, such as completing household chores, listening to their children's daily experiences, and sharing their own thoughts and experiences.

Engaging in Children's Activities

Parents can create a meaningful engagement with children through shared activities such as reading together, watching cartoons, visiting places, and playing together (Havigerova et al., 2015). Such activities strengthen language skills, provide an opportunity for the family to bond, help children become strong, and offer a space to discuss lessons from the stories and activities. Those moments created a warm environment where children feel valued and connected. In this context, participant parent P1 articulates:

I play football with my children. I kicked forcefully. They become strong through play. If they watch only on mobile, they will be addicted and paralyzed. Sometimes, I spend time with my child by doing homework, playing “chi-musi-chi”, and dancing together. We both enjoy doing these activities.

The statements show that parents spend time with their children through different activities. They seem to come to the level of children and do the activities. It also shows that the child-parent bond is strong and helps children become stronger. The environment is safe enough for the children to be themselves with their parents. In this context, participant parent P5 shared:

She loves to watch cartoons. Sometimes I watch together with her as I don't have enough time due to household chores. She prepares tea and asks me to have it. I pretend to have tea.

The statement shows that parents spend time with their children playing games and watching television programs, which is needed for children's overall development. The engagement develops emotional bonding through the moment of watching cartoons and playing games. However, most Nepali parents face time constraints from household chores, hindering intentional engagement. The parents' intentional involvement can enhance the child's overall development.

Meaningful Support for Self-regulation

Meaningful support for children's self-regulation helps them be disciplined and honest. Moreover, self-regulation develops a child's ability to manage emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to achieve goals and adapt to different situations. It is essential for guiding children towards discipline by helping them understand and manage their own emotions and behaviors, and channel them appropriately (Montroy et al., 2016). In this regard, participant parent P1 shared:

I am concerned about giving mobile phones to the children for more than two hours, as it can gradually lead to addiction. I have noticed that they become irritated when we ask them to put the phone away. So instead, we can allow them to play outside. But limitations and boundaries need to be set up. As parents, we need to know the limitations.

The statements show that parents spending quality time with their children for effective use of mobile devices. Excessive use of mobile devices may increase the risk of irritability in children and hamper the effectiveness of alternative approaches to emotional and mental issues. Outdoor games are essential. In the same issue, another participant, parent P5, shared: “I am facing many challenges. They show their tantrum. Sometimes my son demands things I cannot afford. He sees other children's playing materials and different goods, and asks me for the same”. Similarly, another participant, parent P1, shared:

My three-year-old grandson told me to say sorry. If I slap him, he comes back and slaps me. The youngest one does not listen to me and insists that I apologize. Only when I say sorry does everything settle down.

From the above statements, self-regulation in children is shaped through everyday interaction, consistent guidance, and emotional modeling at home. The parents' experiences reveal that

children often struggle to manage disappointment and boundaries, and are highly responsive to parental behavior and discipline, often imitating what they observe. It also indicates that supporting parents with practical strategies for setting limits and modeling respectful behavior may help foster children's self-regulation.

Discussion

In Nepal, many parents have traditionally viewed their responsibilities as limited to providing basic needs, while educational development was considered a sole responsibility of schools. However, when parents are offered seminars and workshops, they become more aware of their responsibilities and more actively engaged in their children's educational activities (Hossain et al., 2015). The importance of supporting their children's education and accepting that regular school attendance and parental encouragement positively influence children's learning outcomes. Family priorities and social obligations often unintentionally hinder children's learning opportunities. Household demands and social obligations often constrain parental involvement in children's learning in Nepal (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2024). Although parents have become more conscious of their educational roles, household responsibilities, and social obligations hinder their involvement in children's education. Therefore, parental awareness programs are essential to strengthen parental involvement and support children's independence in learning.

The study further highlights that intentional parental involvement enhances not only children's academic achievement but also their socio-emotional development. Across the identified themes, it is apparent that when parents are actively engaged in their children's learning, children demonstrate greater confidence and improved academic performance. Similarly, Bhandari (2025) also emphasized that purposeful parental involvement contributes to better academic success. Many parents reported actively promoting hygiene practices at home and supporting healthy habits among their children. Nevertheless, some families have continued to face challenges due to limited awareness and additional social obligations. Collaboration between parents and schools to support students' learning is significant (Utami, 2022). Thus, regular meetings, interaction, and shared responsibility for children's education contribute to effective monitoring of students' academic progress. Meaningful parent-child engagement strengthens emotional bonding and enhances communication skills. In Nepal, parents can engage in activities such as oral history telling and play, and share their experiences. Such interactions contribute positively to children's emotional well-being and social development. However, many parents reported challenges maintaining meaningful engagement with their children due to occupational demands and household responsibilities, which limit the time available for it (Hossain et al., 2015).

In addition, parental roles play a significant role in the development of children's self-regulation skills. Setting clear boundaries and demonstrating appropriate emotional response help children to develop empathy. However, inconsistent parenting practices and limited

understanding of the importance of parental involvement hinder parents from maintaining them consistently.

Overall, the greater parental involvement remains essential for strengthening students' learning outcomes. They further emphasize the need for a parental awareness program that supports and encourages parents to be actively involved in their children's learning (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2024). By addressing barriers to parental involvement and fostering stronger collaboration between parents and schools, the parental awareness program significantly improves children's academic performance.

Conclusion and Implication

Parents create intentional moments for meaningful engagement with their children every day, such as completing household chores, listening to their daily experiences, and sharing their own thoughts and experiences. The parental support assists in overall development, including school readiness, homework, health and hygiene, emotional well-being, and self-regulation. When parents are actively engaged in their children's daily routines, children demonstrate increased confidence, improved learning outcomes, and better social-emotional development. Parents' household responsibilities, limited awareness, and socio-economic pressure affect consistent school engagement and support for children. Likewise, while positive changes and continuous efforts are necessary to strengthen parental involvement across all households. Enhancing awareness and promoting shared responsibility between parents and schools can support fostering children's learning outcomes. Schools play a vital role in strengthening parental involvement; hence, schools need to organize regular parent-teacher meetings, awareness programs, and find ways to collaborate with parents. This research was conducted in community schools under ECEC Innovation in Education's intervention program. However, parental practices in ECED community school practices could be a new contribution.

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