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Parental Attitude and Involvement in Children’s Education: A Study on the Parental Aspiration among Form Four Students in Selangor

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Abstract

Parents' aspirations appear to be one of the important predictors for children’s academic and social development, especially in decision makings for the children’s tertiary education. This study identifies the parental attitude in involving themselves towards the enhancement of the children’s education among parents of students from secondary schools in Selangor. The factors of interest are: parents’ income and qualification, finance preparation in children’s tertiary education, involvement in activities at children’s schools and children’s exposure on future carrier. The findings positively demonstrated that parents are providing high considerable attention in terms of decisions, expectations and financial towards their children’s academic future.

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1. Introduction

Involvement of parents’ in the future academic plan is defined as the degree to which a parent dedicates resources and energy to his or her child in a given developmental or educational domain. Several investigators have documented that levels of parent involvement are related to socioeconomic status, beliefs about the role and place of parents in school. Involvement of parents in activities at school and how much the parents keep abreast of their children’s educational opportunities and developments are looked into.

2. Literature Review

Parents’ involvements have become major educational issue since 1980’s. Since school aging children spend approximately about 70% of their waking hours outside of school, parents’ involvement and influence can become very significant for developing a child (Cotton & Wiklund, 2001). Parents’ involvement includes playing a role in home learning activities in the form of teaching, being a model and to guide them during the learning process. Concern on how children organize their time, providing conducive environment in the house, monitoring outside school activities, focusing on self-discipline, expressing high expectations and encourage development in school are also examples of parents’ involvement (Michigan Department of Education (2001)). Series of researches have proven that the activities mentioned above contribute towards students’ achievements. Research have proven that for all types of children and age the more intensively parents are involved in their children learning, the more beneficial the achievements are. Early childhood education with strong parents’ involvement is a healthy situation and an effective approach for children’s development. It is believed and proven that parents with high expectations of their children and continuously communicating and motivating them to strive for their best in whatever they are doing will result in improved achievements (Stagelin, 2003).

Influential effects in parents’ involvement is essential in the education system and are very welcome by teachers and schools as the activities would result in more beneficial achievements. However there are a number of issues being discussed by researchers on matters pertaining to parents’ involvement with their children’s education. Among the issues are when exactly should parents be involved, support for parents wanting to be involved and how much involvement is consider healthy for the child (Xu, 2002). The impact of parents’ involvements and major factors influencing parents’ involvement and type of involvements are among research topics being highlighted when parents’ involvement is concern. A collaboration study done by the College Board and Art & Science Group in the US which involved 1778 responses of high school seniors who took SAT found that generally the college bound high school seniors are satisfied with the involvement of their parents in the search of college. It is comforting to know that 30% of the respondents expect more parental involvement. Engaged and interested parents are known to be one of the essential component in improving student academic achievement and school performance. A study completed by Harvard Family Research Project portrays that parental expectations is a great influence towards achievement of grades K-12. Parental involvement is more pertinent for less motivated students. Another finding of the research is concerning the aspects of involvement. The findings show that parents have greatest involvement when college matters are concern as compared to everyday matters like TV programs, apparels worn or books read. 50% of the respondents indicated that their parents are very much involved in decisions pertaining to college matters.
3. Methodology

In this study, a convenient random sampling method was utilized to collect data from seven secondary schools around the area of Selangor. Data was collected through the distribution of questionnaires to 560 students after permission from the Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Selangor is sought. Students of form four from the 2009 cohort had been identified and dates and time confirmed before the questionnaire are taken to the schools. In this study, parents and students have to respond to different questionnaires. The questionnaire for the students consists of a section for demographic profile and sections on four different aspects which are closely related to the development of human resources. The four constructs are the Mathematics and Science Anxiety, Quality of Life and Learning Style. Students answered the questionnaire in a hall and they were allowed to consult the researchers to clarify uncertainties or questions which they found vague. Then the students brought back home the set of questionnaires to be given to their parents. Once their parents completed the questionnaires, they submitted them to their counselors to be submitted to the researchers. This study focuses only on parents’ aspiration. The questionnaire on the parents’ aspiration is a self-developed questionnaire pertaining to their plan for the future education of their children and some demographic details. It consists of items which range from academic discussions with their children, hopes for tertiary education, obtaining information on furthering education, willingness to spend on their children’s education, deciding area of study, and preparations made to finance tertiary education of their students.

4. Results and Discussions

![Percentage of Parents Respondents According to Schools](image-url)
This survey was carried out among 294 parents who sent their children to seven selected schools in Selangor. The distribution of parents classified by schools is shown in Fig. 4.1. The highest percentage of 31.3% are the parents from SMK Seri Kundang, 16 percent are parents from SMK Seksyen 7 and SMK Ungku Aziz, followed by SMK Dato Mustaffa (15.6%). However, less than 10 percent are the parents who come from SMK Cyberjaya, SMK Bandar Rinching and SMK Taman Melawati who made up only 8.2%, 7.5% and 5.4% respectively. 186 out of 294 (63.3%) parents are fathers, while another 36.1 percent are mothers of the respondents. On average, the parents’ age is around 48 years old (mean=47.67, standard deviation=5.973) (Table 4.1). In terms of race, majority of the parents (92.5%) are Malay and only a small amount of them are Chinese and Indian who made up 3.4 percent and 3.1 percent respectively (Fig. 4.2). While another one percent are among other races such as Caucasian. About 50 percent of the respondents live in rural area, while 35.7 percent live in town and only 16.3 percent of the respondents live in city area (Fig. 4.3).

Table 4.1. Descriptive of Parents’ Age

|                     | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Median | Standard Deviation |
|---------------------|---------|---------|------|--------|-------------------|
| Parents Age         | 31      | 69      | 47   | 47.67  | 5.973             |

Fig. 4.2. Distribution of Race
In Fig. 4.4, 25.5 percent of the parents have total number of dependents of four followed by 3 (21.8%), 5 (18.0%) and 6 (10.9%) in their households. Only 2.7 percent of the parents have only one dependent in the household.
Based from Fig. 4.6, most (40.3%) of the parents both obtained secondary education, this is either SRP or SPM. 27.2% of the parents, both obtained tertiary education. 11.3% of the parents both obtained only primary education. The rest of the parents (21.1%) are those parents with combinations of qualification. For example one of them may have secondary education as the highest education and the other parent have tertiary education.
Fig. 4.7 demonstrate the employers of the parents involved. It is found that 38.4 percent of the parents are working with the private sector followed by fathers who are self-employed (30.6%). Twenty four (24.4%) of the fathers are working as a government servant, only three percent work with statutory body and another 3.7 percent are not working.

On the other hand, Fig. 4.8 portray that more than 50 percent of the respondents’ mothers are housewives (62.3%). 19.8 percent work in government sector, 5.6 percent in private sector and only small amount work with statutory body (1.1%). In addition, about 5 percent of the mothers are self-employed (5.6%) such as having their own business.
In terms of income, about one-third (31.5%) of the parents earn moderate monthly income which is RM1000-RM3000. While 26.5 percent earn less than RM1000. The percentage of parents earning more than RM5000 is 26.5 percent. At the same time 15.4 percent is made up for parents who earn between RM3000-RM5000 per month (Fig. 4.9).

Fig. 4.9. Distribution of Parents’ Monthly Income (RM)

Fig. 4.10 shows positive efforts by parents in the preparation to finance their children’s tertiary education in which majority (88.1%) of them are allocating some money in saving accounts and 38.4% of the parents buy insurance education as their preparation. Other preparations done by the parents are getting part-time jobs (21.4%), 6.1% willing to sell available assets and only 4.4% of them will borrow some money from close relatives or friends.

Fig. 4.10. Preparation Done to Finance the Tertiary Education of Child
Since their children began attending secondary school, 26.5% or 78 of the parents were not involved in any activities relating to the school. However, most of the parents are involved in varieties of activities in connection with their children’s education. The findings show 38.4% read university’s brochures, attended education fairs (33.7%), visited universities website (27.2%), visits some universities (24.1%), spoke to counselor (13.3%) and attended volunteered activity (18.4%). Other relevant activities they had involved together also include sport’s day, attending PIBG and school open day activities that made up 6.8% of the population (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Activities Done when Child Began Attending Secondary School

| Activities                                | Frequency/Percentage |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Read a university's/college's brochure    | 113 (38.4%)          |
| Attended any education fairs              | 99 (33.7%)           |
| Visited any university's/college's website| 80 (27.2%)           |
| None                                      | 78 (26.5%)           |
| Visited any university/college            | 71 (24.1%)           |
| Spoke to a teacher or counselor           | 54 (18.4%)           |
| Volunteered at your child's school        | 39 (13.3%)           |
| Other activities                          | 20 (6.8%)            |

Table 4.3. Association between Parents’ Highest Academic Qualification and Child’s Course Planning Preparation

| Parents' Qualification | Child's Course Planning Preparation | Total |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
|                        | Often  | Sometimes | Never |       |
| Primary Education      | 13     | 13        | 6     | 32    |
|                        | (40.6%) | (40.6%)   | (18.8%) | (100.0%) |
|                        | (7.8%)  | (13.4%)   | (31.6%) | (11.3%)  |
| Secondary Education    | 77     | 30        | 7     | 114   |
|                        | (67.5%) | (26.3%)   | (6.1%) | (100.0%) |
|                        | (46.4%) | (30.9%)   | (36.8%) | (40.4%)  |
| Tertiary Education     | 44     | 30        | 3     | 77    |
|                        | (57.1%) | (39.0%)   | (3.9%) | (100.0%) |
|                        | (26.5%) | (30.9%)   | (15.8%) | (27.3%)  |
| Combination Level of Education | 32     | 24        | 3     | 59    |
|                        | (54.2%) | (40.7%)   | (5.1%) | (100.0%) |
|                        | (19.3%) | (24.7%)   | (15.8%) | (20.9%)  |
| Total                  | 166    | 97        | 19    | 282   |
|                        | (58.9%) | (34.4%)   | (6.7%) | (100.0%) |
|                        | (100.0%) | (100.0%) | (100.0%) | (100.0%) |

Chi-square = 15.265  p-value = 0.018
From Table 4.3, it is clear that parents are providing high considerable attention towards their children’s preparation for their tertiary education. More than half of the parents (166 parents, 58.9%) who acquired variety of academic qualification often making the preparation for their children. Out of 166 parents, 46.4% of them are parents who acquired secondary education, either SRP or SPM. It is a good indication as the parents are aware of the importance of the education although they themselves did not obtain tertiary education. There was a significant association between parents’ education level and their child’s course planning preparation, with value of chi-square = 15.265, p-value < 0.05.

However there are also parents who are never involve with their children’s planning for education. These parents come from all categories of level of education. It is expected that the highest percentage come from the parents with the lowest education background. More than half of the parents surveyed (162 parents, 58.3%) are often involved in their children’s course planning preparation regardless of how much they earn. Among those parents, the group earning RM1000-RM3000 takes the highest percentage (35.2%) followed by parents who earn more than RM5000 per month (27.8%). In the category of those who sometimes doing the preparation, the group earning less than RM1000 takes the highest score of 30.9% as well as for the category of those who never done the preparation, which takes 57.9% (Table 4.4). There was a significant association between parents’ monthly income and child’s course planning preparation where chi-square = 14.878 and p-value < 0.05.

Table 4.4. Association between Parents’ Monthly Income and Child’s Course Planning Preparation

| Parents’ Monthly Income | Child’s Course Planning Preparation |  |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
|                         | Often                          | Sometimes | Never |
| < RM1000                | 32 (43.8%)                     | 30 (41.1%) | 11 (15.1%) |
| RM1000 - RM3000         | 57 (64.8%)                     | 28 (31.8%) | 3 (3.4%)  |
| RM3000 - RM5000         | 28 (65.1%)                     | 13 (30.2%) | 2 (4.7%)  |
| > RM5000                | 45 (60.8%)                     | 26 (35.1%) | 3 (4.1%)  |
| Total                   | 162 (58.3%)                    | 97 (34.9%) | 19 (6.8%) |

Chi-square =14.878    p-value = 0.021

Based from Table 4.5, 104 parents (37.3%) are willing to spend RM100-RM499 per semester for their children’s tertiary education. Among those parents, 36.5% are parents who earn RM1000-RM3000 per month, followed by parents’ who their monthly income is less than RM1000 (35.6%). Among the parents who earn more than RM5000, about half (48.9%) of them are willing and ready to spend more than RM1500 since financial is not a big problem to them. It is encouraging to see that those who are earning less than RM1000 are also willing to commit themselves for their children’s education where 50.0% of them are willing to spend between RM100-RM499 and 9.5% willing to spend even more than RM1500. This shows that commitment of parents in terms of money for their children’s future does not depend on how much they are earning. There is a significant association between parents’ monthly income and their willingness to spend for their children's education where chi-square = 8.592 and p-value < 0.05.
income and amount of money willing to spend for their children’s tertiary education per semester, where chi-square = 33.774, p-value < 0.005.

Table 4.5. Association between Parents’ Income per Month and Amount of Money Willing to Spend per Semester for Child’s Tertiary Education

| Parents’ Monthly Income | Child’s Course Planning Preparation | Total |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
|                        | Not willing | 100-499 | 500-999 | 1000-1499 | >1500 |
| < RM1000               |             |         |         |           |       |
| 8                      | 37 (10.8%)  | 12 (16.2%) | 10 (13.5%) | 7 (9.5%) |
| 37 (50.0%)             | 37 (50.0%)  | 12 (16.2%) | 10 (13.5%) | 7 (9.5%) |
| RM1000 - RM3000        |             |         |         |           |       |
| 3                      | 38 (18.8%)  | 22 (35.6%) | 15 (28.3%) | 10 (21.3%) |
| 38 (18.8%)             | 38 (18.8%)  | 22 (35.6%) | 15 (28.3%) | 10 (21.3%) |
| RM3000 - RM5000        |             |         |         |           |       |
| 3                      | 9 (34.9%)   | 9 (20.9%) | 7 (20.9%) | 7 (20.9%) |
| 9 (14.4%)              | 9 (14.4%)   | 9 (14.4%) | 7 (14.4%) | 7 (14.4%) |
| > RM5000               |             |         |         |           |       |
| 2                      | 14 (12.5%)  | 16 (21.6%) | 19 (25.7%) | 23 (31.1%) |
| 14 (12.5%)             | 14 (12.5%)  | 16 (21.6%) | 19 (25.7%) | 23 (31.1%) |
| Total                  | 16 (5.7%)   | 59 (21.1%) | 53 (19.0%) | 47 (16.8%) |
| 16 (5.7%)              | 104 (37.3%) | 59 (21.1%) | 53 (19.0%) | 47 (16.8%) |

Chi-square = 33.774  p-value = 0.001

It is clear from Table 4.6 that parents are providing high attention towards their children’s direction after SPM, since whatever academic qualifications the parents acquired, majority (97.9%) of them expecting their children to further study until tertiary education to any higher education institutions either local or abroad universities, polytechnic, teacher’s college or training institute. 164 out of 281 parents (58.4%) are expecting their children to further study at local universities since the cost is lower, followed by 23.5 percent hope their children to further study abroad, polytechnic or teaching college (8.5%) and to trade, skill and technical training centre (7.5%). Only small amount (2.1%) of the parents decided for their children directly go into workplace may be because of difficulties of life. Out of 6 parents who decided their children to directly get a job after SPM, 83.4% come from the group where the parents’ qualification is below secondary education. It was quite impressive to see that more than 80 percent (87.1%) of the parents with primary education are hopeful to see their children further their studies until tertiary education either to universities, college, polytechnic or training centre. There was a significant association between parents’ qualification and direction of the children after SPM, where chi-square = 56.621 and p-value < 0.001.

From Fig. 4.11, almost half of the parents believe that students should start preparing for their tertiary education when they were in upper secondary school (49.8%) which is between Form 4 and Form 5. Interestingly a total of 44.7% agree that the preparation should be done at an earlier stage that is when their children were in primary and secondary schools, which is an indication that the parents have awareness that early education has some impact on the future education of their children.

When deciding for the area to further their education 81.6% of the parents suggest that decisions should be made by the children themselves. 51 percent of the respondents agree that the father should make the decision and 49.6% of them agree that the mother will decide on the area of study of their child
(48.6%). Interestingly some of the parents thought that their children are following the decision made by their friends. There are 2.4% of the parents who agree with this. All these can be viewed in Fig. 4.12 below.

Table 4.6. Association between Parents’ Qualification and Direction They Expect of the Children after SPM

| Parents’ Qualification | Local Universities | Universities Abroad | Polytechnic/Teacher's College | Trade, Skill and Technical Training Centre | Directly into the workplace | Total |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Primary Education      | 15 (48.4%)        | 5 (16.1%)           | 5 (16.1%)                      | 2 (6.5%)                                   | 4 (12.9%)                   | 31 (100.0%) |
|                        | (9.1%)            | (7.6%)              | (20.8%)                        | (9.5%)                                     | (66.7%)                     |       |
| Secondary Education    | 70 (61.9%)        | 16 (14.2%)          | 14 (12.4%)                      | 12 (10.6%)                                 | 1 (0.9%)                    | 113 (100.0%) |
|                        | (42.7%)           | (24.2%)             | (58.3%)                        | (57.1%)                                    | (16.7%)                     |       |
| Tertiary Education     | 39 (50.6%)        | 35 (45.5%)          | 1 (1.3%)                        | 2 (2.6%)                                   | 0 (0%)                      | 77 (100.0%) |
|                        | (23.8%)           | (53.0%)             | (4.2%)                         | (9.5%)                                     | (0%)                        |       |
| Combination of Level   | 40 (66.7%)        | 10 (16.7%)          | 4 (6.7%)                        | 5 (8.3%)                                   | 1 (1.7%)                    | 60 (100.0%) |
| Education              | (24.4%)           | (15.2%)             | (16.7%)                        | (23.8%)                                    | (16.7%)                     |       |
| Total                  | 164 (58.4%)       | 66 (23.5%)          | 24 (8.5%)                       | 21 (7.5%)                                  | 6 (2.1%)                    | 281 (100.0%) |
|                        | (100.0%)          | (100.0%)            | (100.0%)                       | (100.0%)                                   | (100.0%)                    |       |

Chi-square = 56.621  p-value = 0.000

Fig. 4.11. Level Where Students Should Start Preparing to Continue Study after SPM
Fig. 4.12. Decision Maker of Children’s Area of Study

Fig. 4.13 shows the highest level of education the parents wish their children would achieve. Almost half of them wish their children could achieve until Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) level (48.3%). In addition, 37 percent of them wish their children could reach until Bachelor Degree level, followed by Master (33.2%), Diploma (24.7%) and Certificate (9.9%).

Fig. 4.13. Highest Level of Education Parents Wish Their Children Could Achieve

5. Conclusion

Parents’ involvement was found to be a positive and powerful source of influence towards the achievements of adolescents. The study concludes that parents of the state of Selangor specifically and Malaysia in general have high expectation in the academic achievements of their children and are willing to make monetary contributions and other sacrifices for the sake of the education of their children. Although the finding is quite positive in many aspects of parents’ involvement in education, awareness of the importance of education needs to increase among parents of Malaysia. Further encouragement must
be provided to parents to get more involvement from them by the schools, which may bring positive impacts towards students’ achievement in academic.

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