

## **Role of Parental Involvement in their Children Academic Achievement: A Comparative Qualitative Study of Public and Private Elementary Schools**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative research study compared the role of parental involvement in the academic achievement of public and private elementary school students. The purpose of this research was to understand how parental involvement affected the academic achievement of students, what dimensions contributed in parental involvement and how these dimensions contributed in students' academic achievement from the perspectives of teachers and parents. The population of the study consisted of all private and public schools of district Gujrat. Convenient sampling technique was used for data collection. One public and one private school were selected, four teachers of each public and private school were selected and seven parents of students of these two schools were also selected for data collection. Two semi-structured interviews were prepared and validated through experts' opinion and then used as an instrument of the study for teachers and parents. The data obtained from these interviews were recorded and analyzed. Findings of the perspectives of teachers and parents indicated that in all dimensions i.e. parenting, communicating, volunteering, and learning at home the parents of private school students were more involved than the parents of public-school students. Furthermore, the private schools had a better system of communication, parent-teacher meetings and involvement of parents. It was recommended that public school parents should ensure communication through mobile or face to face meeting with the teachers to enhance the academic achievement of their children.

**Keywords:** parenting, communicating, academic achievement, volunteering, parents-teachers' meeting

### **Introduction**

Parental Involvement is described as participation in school activities and helping children at home, agreeing with the progress of school about students' academic achievement, discussion with teachers about the progress of their children, helping their children in doing their homework and attending the meeting with teachers to know the academic achievement of their children in the school (Bower & Griffin, 2011a). It is considered very supportive to

improve the students' academic achievement or the participation of parents in the school meetings and function is also considered a key indicator for the improvement of academic achievement of their children (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). Modern systems of schools are motivating the parents to take part with interest in the school activities and work of their children (Griffith, 1996).

The future of any nation depends upon its children and teachers of these children, to build a strong and sustainable development in all fields of life especially in the field of education; students, teachers and parents are important. An effective triangular combination of student, teacher and parents provide solid bases for a good educational system. This triangle may lead the nation to the desired level of progress in an effective way. Some researchers suggest that there is a strong correlation between the achievement of the students and the involvement of their parents in education (Yan & Lin, 2005). The researcher described that the parents of lower education level and less income is no barrier in desiring high achievement of the children (Ogbu, 2014). Parents can be involved in the education of their children in different ways according to the environment, level of education and family structure, generally the level of parental involvement is high for lower grades and gradually decrease with student's progress (Paratore, Hindin, Krol-Sinclair, & Duran, 1999; Schneider & Lee, 1990).

Parental involvement is of great significance. Epstein (2018) describe that the attendance of the students in classes can be increased with the help of parental involvement. It can also improve their achievement and behaviour with other students and the most beneficial aspect of parental involvement is the regularity of doing homework and establishing study habits. If parents are involved in the students' study matters their achievement is high (Bogenschneider, 2014) irrespective of parental level of education or social and family structure. Shaver and Walls (1998) described that economic status and level of income also does not matter. In Pakistan, school councils are made in every public school and in these councils more than 50% of members are parents, these councils took part in every matter of school. They make a plan for the development of the school, increasing the attendance of the students, retention, academic development, effective home assignments and other financial matters. The government of Punjab is focusing on more than 95% of students' attendance in every public school, the attainment of this level of attendance is difficult without involving the parents. Parent-teacher meeting is an essential part of a school environment, the need is to make this meeting more effective.

Epstein (2018) described parental involvement in six different types, that is, parents' obligation about the care of health and safety of their children which is compromising of parental, rearing of the child, continues supervision, facilitation, discipline and guidance according to the age level. It is also about the facility of a good environment at home which is helpful for better learning and behaviour.

Many studies show that parental involvement is considered a very impressive, strong and significant independent variable, which have a significant effect on students to promote the motivation of their children to increase their academic achievement (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005). Parental involvement links different paradigm of school which are described as, the meeting of parents with teachers, parents' contribution towards extracurricular activities, observation of academic achievement of their children, helping their children in their homework, motivate their children intrinsically and extrinsically for better grades. It is also noted that most schools have failed to motivate the parents for their proper participation in school activities. It is due to the unavailability of proper literature in local or national language instead of English for the parents by the school. The schools are in an urgent need to consider parents a vital and significant stakeholder of the educational system. The schools should

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encourage the parents for collaboration and teamwork with the school and teachers (Lai & Vadeboncoeur, 2013).

Epstein (2018) suggested miscellaneous stages of parental involvement in the schooling of their children (1) assisting parents in child-care skills, (2) communication between school and parents, (3) providing help to the parents to access school (4) assigning home assignments to involve the parents (5) valuing the parent's suggestions in the decision about school matters (6) collaboration of community and school. Epstein explains that these issues are deducted from her studies and perception of school administrations to motivate the parents to be more involved in the students' matters. Low parental involvement in middle schools (Porter-Deal, 2017) is the general problem. The specific problem is the need to understand the challenges and barriers active duty Army parents' encounter when participating in parental involvement programs ((Paris, DeVoe, Ross, & Acker, 2010; Willerton, Schwarz, Wadsworth, & Oglesby, 2011). Gaps in the research exist concerning the barriers and challenges to the parental involvement of Army parents in middle schools (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Minkle, Sheridan, Kim, Ji, & Koziol, 2014).

Lai and Vadeboncoeur (2013) noted the duty of a school to promote parental involvement has become a passive act, rather than a genuine effort. Also, parents are often scapegoats when trying to find the blame to student achievement. For example, some educators blame parents for the children's academic failures (e.g., "If only the parents helped at home" or "Parents just don't care about school"). Despite these remarks, research continues to credit parental involvement as a way to increase academic achievement effectively. Studies show that parents are, in fact, a strong independent variable in motivating their children to learn (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005).

There are previous studies regarding parents' involvement and academic achievement effectiveness. Gonzalez-DeHass et al. (2005) described that parental involvement has a significant effect on motivation and academic achievement of the students. Haas and Reiley (2008) studied different ways for motivating students in doing their homework efficiently using different specific involvement among students at the elementary level. It was concluded that parents being involved in helping their children in homework and other school activities, their children showed better academic achievement at school. Hara and Burke (1998) observed the effect of parental involvement on academic growth for three grade students. It was observed the parents being involved with their children in their studies, the students had substantial and continuous academic achievement as compared to others. Bower and Griffin (2011b) during studying parental involvement in specific conditions such as poor economic status and as a minority in society observed 347 students of different backgrounds. It was concluded that the rate of participation of the parent in the school activities was very low although the efforts of the school to increase the participation of parents in school activities. The parents were not engaging with the teachers to know the progress of the school and their children. The researchers found that there was a lack of relationship between parents and teachers and teachers and school were failed to build effective interaction and relations with teachers to improve their participation in the school activities. During a study, Georgiou and Tourva (2007) observed the different perceptions of parents about the academic achievement of their children, beliefs of parents about the parental involvement and actual participation by the parents in the school activities and their children's academic achievement. The parents having the belief to change the attitude and motivation of their children were more committed to participate in the school activities and to be aware of the progress of their children in the school. The parents

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having belief that only teachers can help their children in their studies and be key to the success of their children academically, they restrain themselves from their involvement in school activities.

In a few words, there has been an emphasis of governments on raising educational achievements due to the perceived link between the educational performances with economic development (Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, & Ecob, 1988). The recognition of the impact of family on children's achievements and a growing emphasis on involving parents in education in some countries was also identified. Initially, it was thought that there was a crude association between social class (in terms of family income, parents' education and occupation) and parental involvement (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003), but gradually this idea changed and became more refined as large-scale studies such for example of Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, and Taggart (2004) and Strand (2007) revealed that a wide range of social and cultural factors influenced parental involvement, not just SES, ethnicity and family income but also religion and parenting styles.

In developed countries, it is necessary for the education of the children that parents should take part in educational matters, as they think parental involvement is a good way to motivate the student for better academic achievement, but in the Pakistani context, the involvement of the parents is seen differently. The parents of Pakistani culture are not well aware of the effectiveness of involvement in educational matters of their children, most of the parents do not like to attend the parent-teacher meetings at school and they try to arrange a private tutor for doing the home assignments of their children. The increasing number of private tutors is increasing the gap between parents and their children. It has been assumed that academic achievement of students may not only depend on the quality of schools and the teachers, rather the extent of parental involvement has a vital role to play in the academic achievement of their kids.

The elementary school learning environment may be more complex than secondary school and academic achievement expectations increase. Children are more likely to have higher academic achievement levels and improved behaviour when families are involved in their education (Bryan, 2005). This qualitative study focuses on a growing field of research, policy and practices parental involvement and its effect on academic achievement of the elementary students, and comparison between the role of parental involvement in the academic achievement of students in public and private elementary schools.

### **Research Methods**

This was descriptive qualitative research that aimed to compare the role of teachers of public and private schools in the academic achievement of students at the elementary level. This comparison was carried out using five dimensions, that is, parenting, communication, learning at home, volunteering, and participation in parents' teacher meetings in students of public and private elementary schools. The sample of the study was taken from the district Gujrat. One public and one private school were selected conveniently as the sample of the study. Four elementary school teachers from each private and public schools of district Gujrat teaching at elementary level classes were selected for data collection through convenient sampling technique. Then, seven parents from each public and private schools were selected whose children were studying in these schools with the help of convenience sampling. For data collection, the researcher developed the semi-structured interview protocol for both parents and teachers to understand the combined effect of dimensions in the academic achievement of

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students at the elementary level. Five dimensions were used in the interview guide, that is, parenting, communicating, and learning at home, volunteering and parents-teachers meeting. In this type of research, the researcher tries to gain knowledge of phenomenon through the perspectives of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Both the interview protocol were used after experts of qualitative research and education. All the interviews were conducted through proper permission and consent of headteachers, teachers and parents respectively. Four Elementary school teachers from each private and public sector were selected with seven parents from each private and public school for data collection whose children were studying in eight class in the respective schools. All interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants.

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive qualitative content analysis was conducted to compare the role of parental involvement in their children academic achievement in public and private elementary schools. It is “a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data” (Schreier, 2012, p. 1). The data was analyzed by transcription of interviews of both parents and teachers, summaries of data related to each dimension, and findings according to the objectives of the study in the light of these summaries. Data were analyzed based on five dimensions, that is, parenting, communicating, and learning at home, volunteering and parents-teachers meeting. These aspects are described as under.

### **Findings/Results**

The current study aimed to compare the role of parental involvement in their children academic achievement in public and private elementary schools. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted by teachers and parents. Following are five factors to explore the perspective of teachers and parents of public and private elementary schools for parental involvement and academic achievement.

#### **Teachers’ perspectives**

##### ***Parenting***

Parenting was explored through three sub aspects, that is, helping the child in his studies, managing time for students, and fulfilment of child study needs. According to the analysis, both the public and private teachers were of the view that most of the parents helped out their children in their homework and class tests. Many parents sent their children to tuition for their help. Few of the parents helped their children in English, mathematics and science. On the other hand, few parents had spared their weekend to help the child in his studies. In the view of private teachers, many parents helped their children in their homework and class tests according to diary work. Some children worked under the supervision of their parents. The public-school teachers were of the view that some parents helped their children at weekends. Most of the parents helped their children in reading and writing skills while few parents helped in computer learning, mathematics, science concepts, and Nazra Quran separately. On the other hand, private teachers also perceived that most parents helped their children in reading, writing and speaking skills. Some parents gave time in science models, one helped in Nazra Quran. According to the public-school teachers, some parents fulfilled the study needs of the children but most of the parents sent their children to tuition without bothering about the study of their children. One of the participants helped in easy subjects and sent his child to tuition for the study of difficult subjects. The private school teachers perceived that many parents fulfilled the

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study needs of the children and provided them with books, internet facility and computer but very few parents sent their children to tuition to fulfil their study needs.

### ***Communicating***

This aspect was explored through three factors, that is, communication with teachers, getting study report, and countersigning of class tests. According to the public-school teachers, some parents communicated with the teachers by telephone and some parents conducted face to face meeting with the teachers. But some did not contact with the teachers regarding studies of their children. On the other hand, the private teachers perceived that many parents communicated with the teacher by telephone and face to face parent teacher meetings. According to the public-school teachers, some parents got study report from the teachers and gave back the report by personally meeting with the teachers but many of the parents did not demand study report from the teachers. On the other hand, private school teachers were of the view that many parents got study reports from the teachers and gave back the report by personally meeting or by their children. According to the public teachers, some parents countersigned class tests of the children and some parents gave back the class after meeting the teachers. But some parents gave the class tests to their children and they gave back the tests to teachers. On the other hand, the private teachers were of the view that many parents countersigned class tests of the children and some parents gave back the class tests when they met the teachers. But many parents gave the class tests to their children and children gave back the tests to teachers.

### ***Volunteering***

Volunteering aspect was explored through helping the child in homework, monitoring after school activities of the child, and provision of extra coaching to the child. According to the public teachers, some parents helped their children in reading and writing of their homework but some parents let their children completed their homework intuition time. A few parents sat closer to their child and let their child study Urdu and Nazra. In the view of private teachers, many parents helped their children in their homework but some parents let their children complete their homework intuition time. Some parents motivated their children to complete their homework with good handwriting and make them learn their lesson with interest. According to the public teachers some parents monitored after school activities of the children. Some parents did not monitor after school activities of their children and there was no proper system of monitoring. Children remained busy in playing games and using mobiles. On the other hand, the private school teachers were of the view that many parents properly monitored after school activities of the children with a specific time to study, play and offer their prayers. Most parents themselves picked their children from schools. Some of the parents sent them tuition and after that, they had also some time to play. The public school teachers were of the view that some parents provided extra coaching in reading and writing, helped in arts and Nazra. But some parents did not bother to provide extra coaching to their children. Very few parents helped in mathematics and science concepts. The private teachers were of the view that many parents provided extra coaching in English, mathematics, science, essay and speech writing. But some parents provided extra coaching in painting, drawing and handwriting skills. Very few parents did not give extra time due to their busy job schedule.

### ***Learning at home***

Learning at home was explored through the motivation of the child, the development of occupational skills, and the role of parents to develop occupational skills. The public-school teachers were of the view that some parents motivated their children to give them a bike and

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personal computer. Some parents motivated their children by giving examples of their family members. Two parents motivated their children through competition with the class fellows and giving examples of intelligent students of his class respectively. The private school teachers responded that many parents motivated their children by offering them rewards and appreciation, trips and giving them bikes. Some parents motivated their children by giving examples of their family members and through competition with the class fellows respectively. According to the public-school teachers, most of the parents wanted their children to be doctor, engineer, army officer and teacher. Some parents wanted their kids to be bankers and technicians. In the same way, private school teachers were also of the view that most of the parents wanted their children to be doctor, engineer, army officer, pilot, and develop self-confidence in their children. Some parents also wanted their children to be good orator, teacher. One of the parents wanted to develop literary taste in his child. In the view of public-school teachers, most of the parents had been working on the self-confidence of the children and they also requested teachers to make their children participate in debates, essay writing, speech and Naat competition. Some parents had made their children learn the Holy Quran by heart. According to the private teachers, most of the parents had been working on self-confidence, mathematics and science concepts of the children and they also requested teachers to make their children participate in debates, essay writing, speech and Naat competition. They also engaged their children to practice extra-curricular activities at home. Few parents gave attention to reading and writing skills

### *Parent-Teacher Meetings*

The aspect parent-teacher meetings were explored through arranging parent-teacher meeting and discussion, the role of extracurricular activities, and discussion of ideas teachers and community. In the view of public-school teachers, most of the parents did not arrange formal meetings with the teachers. A very few parents arranged irregular meetings with the teachers and discussed the study performance, behaviour with class and teachers. Some parents complained to the teachers that the children were weak in studies and did not study and obey them. On the other hand, according to private teachers, most of the parents arrange meetings with the teachers. They met the teachers once in a week and discussed the study performance, behaviour with class and teachers. Some parents talked about class participation and performance of their children with other students of the class. The public-school teachers were of the view that most of the parents did not prepare their children for co-curricular activities and forbade them to take part in these activities. But some parents prepared their children when there were speech and debates competitions. According to private teachers, most of the parents prepared their children during speech and debates competitions. They made their children practice in front of them. Some parents also provided sports kits to their children to play and point out their mistakes. According to public school teachers, some parents discussed the study of their children and requested teachers to motivate their children to study to get good grades. Some parents also requested teachers to give extra time to their children.

According to the private school teachers, many parents discussed the confidence, study, regularity and behaviour of their children and requested teachers to motivate their children for study to get good grades. Some parents requested the teachers to keep their children away from the company of bad students and character building.

### **Parents' Perspectives**

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### ***Parenting***

Some of the public-school parents were of the view that they helped their children in their homework and class tests. But many parents sent their children to tuition for their help. They did not give much time to their children. Some parents helped their children in English writing, mathematics and science. However, very few parents sent their children to tuition for improvement and homework. On the other hand, the private school parents were of the view that many parents helped their children in their homework and class tests according to diary work. Some parents made their children work under their supervision. Very few parents rely on tuition. Some of the public school parents helped their children in weekend and most of the parents gave evening time to their children for the study. Most of the parents helped their children in reading and writing skills. Very few parents helped in mathematics and science concepts and one parent was of the view that he took his child with him in the academy for the preparation of class tests. On the other hand, most of the private school parents helped their children in reading, writing and speaking skills and some parents gave time in science models with tips for good handwriting of the children. Some parents managed evening and weekend time due to their job and also some mothers of the children managed time for the study of children. Most of the public-school parents sent their children to tuition to fulfil their study needs. They provided their children books, uniform and stationery items. Some of the parents requested the teachers to provide time. One participant was of the view that he gave two hours daily to his child. On the other hand, the private school many parents fulfilled the study needs of the children and provided them with books, internet facility and computer but very few parents sent their children to tuition to fulfil their study needs. One of the participants was of the view that he used audio-visual aids to help and fulfil his child study needs.

### ***Communicating***

Some public-school parents communicated with the teachers by telephone and few parents conducted face to face meeting with the teachers. But some of the teachers did not contact with the teachers regarding studies of their children. One of the parents communicated with teachers daily since he was the teacher in the same school. Similarly, from the private school parents, many of them communicated with the teachers by telephone and parent-teacher meetings respectively. Some parents got a study report from the teachers and gave back the report by giving it to their children but many of the parents did not demand study report from the teachers. While from most of the private school parents got a study report from the teachers and gave back the report in their meetings by giving remarks and comments on them. Some public school parents countersigned class tests of the children and some parents gave back the class tests when they met the teachers. But some parents gave the class tests to their children. Some of the parents did not bother about class tests of their children at all. On the other hand, most of the private school parents countersigned class tests of the children and some parents gave back the class tests on personal meetings. But many parents sent the class tests by their children. One parent was of the view that he wrote praising words for teachers after giving comments.

### ***Volunteering***

Some of the public parents helped their children in reading, writing and easy subjects of their homework but some parents let their children completed their homework intuition time. Some parents relied on tuitions for homework and study of their children. On the other hand, many private school parents helped their children in their homework but some parents let their children complete their homework intuition time. Some parents motivated their children to complete their homework with good handwriting and make them learn their lesson with interest.

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One participant stated that he took the written test of homework instead of taking oral tests of his child. Some of the public school parents properly monitored after school activities of the children. They had a specific time to study, play and offer their prayers. Some parents did not monitor after school activities of their children due to their tough job hours. In the result, Children were busy playing games and using mobiles. On the other hand, many parents from private schools, properly monitored after school activities of the children. They had a specific time to study, play and offer their prayers. Most of the parents themselves picked their children from school. Some parents sent them to tuition. One respondent did not monitor the after school activities of his child. Some parents from public school students provided extra coaching for writing. But some did not bother to provide extra coaching to their children. There were too very few who helped in mathematics and science concepts. On the other hand, most of the parents of private school students provided extra coaching in English, mathematics, science, essay and speech writing. But some parents provided extra coaching in painting, drawing and handwriting skills. Very few parents did not give extra time due to their busy job schedule. One parent stated that he advised his child to offer his prayers regularly and provided him with moral training.

### *Learning at home*

Some parents from public schools motivated their children by giving them rewards and trip opportunity. Some parents motivated their children by giving examples of their family members. Few motivated through competition with the class fellows. On the other hand, most of the parents motivated their children by offering them rewards and appreciation, trips, party in return and giving them bikes. Some parents motivated their children by giving examples of their family members and their intelligent class fellows. Some parents motivated through competition with the class fellows. Most of the public-school parents wanted their children to be doctor, engineer, army officer and police officers. Some parents wanted to develop self-confidence in their children. One participant wanted to develop speech and painting skills in his child. Similarly, from private school parents' point of view, most of the parents wanted their children to be doctor, engineer, army officer and pilot. Furthermore, they wanted to develop self-confidence, reading, writing and speaking skills in their children. Some parents also wanted their children to be good orator, painter and teacher. One parent wanted to develop literary taste in his child. Among most of the public school, parents had been working on the self-confidence of the children and they also requested teachers to make their children participate in debates, essay writing, speech and Naat competition. Some parents had been trying to develop computer and mathematical skills in their children. In the same way, most of the private school parents had been working on self-confidence, mathematics and science concepts of the children and they also requested teachers to make their children participate in debates, essay writing, speech and Naat competition. They also engaged their children to practice extra-curricular activities at home. Few parents gave reading and writing skills. One of the parents described that he arranged a speech and painting contest among his children and gave a reward for motivation.

### *Parent-Teacher Meetings*

Most of the public-school parents did not arrange formal meetings with the teachers. A very few parents arranged an irregular meeting with the teachers to discuss the study performance, behaviour with class and teachers. Some parents complained to the teachers about the students' weakness in studies and disobey. One of the participants reported to meet the teachers of his child in school and sometimes arranged the meeting. On the other hand, most of the parents of the private school arranged meetings with the teachers. They met the teachers

once in a week and discussed the study performance, behaviour with class and teachers. Some parents talked about class participation and performance of their children with other students of the class. One respondent reported that he discusses the abilities and future planning of his child with the teachers. Most of the public-school parents did not prepare their children for co-curricular activities and forbade them to take part in these activities. But some parents prepared their children during speech and debates competitions. They made their children practice in front of them. One participant described that he had provided complete sports kit to his child and watched him play and guided him. On the other hand, most of the parents from private school prepared their children for speech, debates, and essay writing competitions. They made their children practice in front of them. Some parents had provided sports kit to their children and watch them at play and tell them their mistakes. One respondent said that he had managed badminton ground for co-curricular activities for his child. Some of the public-school parents discussed the study of their children and requested teachers to motivate their children to achieve good grades but some parents did not meet and discuss ideas and meeting with the teachers. Few of the parents also requested teachers to give extra time to their children. On the other hand, many parents discussed the confidence, creative abilities, study, regularity behaviour, moral training of their children and requested teachers to motivate their children for study so that they might achieve good grades. Some parents also requested teachers to keep their children away from the company of bad students and character building. Some parents talked about teaching methods, competition environment of students in the class and provision of basic facilities with teachers and community so that children might study in a conducive environment.

### **Conclusions**

This qualitative research study compared the role of parental involvement in their children academic achievement in public and private elementary schools through the perspectives of teachers and parents. The results of the study showed that in parenting the involvement of private school parents was more than the public-school parents. Parents of private schools properly helped their children, manage time and fulfil study needs of their children. Most of the parents of public-school students did not help their children in their homework, very few manage time and fulfilled study needs. Regarding communication, private school parents communicated better than public school parents. The parents of private schools properly communicated with the teachers got a study report and also attended parent-teachers meetings. According to the aspect of volunteering, parents of private schools were better in helping their children in their home, monitoring after school activities and provision of extra coaching in comparison with parents of public schools. Regarding learning at home parents of private schools properly motivate their children through rewards, promote occupational skills in their children while in public school learning at the home of parents to their children is not bad but still needs improvement in comparison with private school parents. Regarding the parents-teachers meeting, private school parents played a much better role in comparison with public school parents. In public school, there were almost no parent-teacher meetings while private schools got the better system of parents-teachers meetings. In this way, private school parents attended parent-teacher meetings and they knew about the weaknesses and shortcomings of their parental involvement and tried to overcome these weaknesses. Hence it is concluded from the research study that private school has shown better involvement in all five dimensions in comparison with the public school.

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