

Summary of Doctoral (Ph.D) Dissertation

**Parental role in child learning process among
displaced and non-displaced people in Iraqi
Kurdistan**

Peshawa Jalal Mohammed

Co-supervisors: Prof. Dr. Ágnes Engler and Dr. Gábor
Erdei



UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

Doctoral School of Humanities, Educational Sciences

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I. An introduction to the research

The dissertation aimed to explore parental involvement and perspectives within a specific demographic context, focusing on the local Kurdish and displaced population (including Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Syrian parents) in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. The research delved into the displaced and non-displaced parents' viewpoints and involvement levels of these groups in their children's education. Additionally, it examined teachers' opinions on the parents' involvement. The study analyzed parents' perceptions of their roles in their children's learning and development, hypothesizing that local parents and displaced parents would demonstrate differing levels of understanding and involvement in parent participation, potentially impacting students' learning and parental involvement in schooling. Emphasis was placed on socioeconomic factors influencing educational realities and how they shape perceptions and actions towards parental involvement. Moreover, the research aimed to uncover the intricate dynamics between families and schools, crucial for fostering children's overall educational advancement.

Author explored neglected facets of schooling within the Iraqi Kurdistan region. In a setting where education may confront unique obstacles, grasping the extent of parental participation carries considerable significance. Assessing the level of parental involvement allows researchers to pinpoint potential areas for enhancement and develop strategies to enhance student outcomes.

Engler et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of family life education in two main aspects: firstly, in preparing young individuals for future parental roles, and secondly, in offering assistance to working families in nurturing and tending to the needs of their children. Despite the changing nature and structures of families across different cultures, they continue to serve as valuable sources of support and resources (Engler, 2013, 2022). Parental involvement can be categorized into two primary forms: involvement at home and involvement at school. The term "home-based parental involvement" refers to the active engagement and participation of guardians in their children's educational and developmental activities while they are at home. This encompasses various activities and behaviors aimed at aiding children's learning, mental well-being, and overall growth outside of the school environment. Examples include assisting with homework, engaging in shared reading, participating in educational games, discussing learning topics, monitoring academic progress, fostering curiosity, setting expectations, and providing emotional support (Li et al., 2020). "School-based parental involvement" refers to parents' active participation in their children's education within the school setting. This involves actions and initiatives occurring directly within the school environment, as well as collaboration among parents, educators, administrators, and other school staff. Parental engagement in their children's education can take various forms, including volunteering, attending parent workshops, participating in school governance, utilizing communication channels, and engaging in parent-teacher conferences (Park et al., 2017).

Drawing upon a review of existing literature and prior research outcomes, we have developed the subsequent hypotheses.

H1: The socioeconomic status and cultural and social capital of parents can influence their children's likelihood of dropping out (Dunham & Wilson, 2007; Rumberger, 1983) .

H2: There are differences between the parenting roles of host community members and those of displaced people (Deng & Marlowe, 2013).

H3: Parents do not see their roles as important as a teacher in their children's education (Knopf & Swick, 2007).

H4: Parents are not prepared for high level of involvement (Van Korlaar, 2014) .

H5: There are less frequent meetings for displaced parents (Cureton, 2020).

H6: Face-to-face meeting is the main mode of communication (Lyubitskaya & Shakarova, 2018; Palts & Kalmus, 2015).

H7: Teachers have low expectations from parents regarding parent-teacher communication (Ramirez, 2003).

H8: Parents are dissatisfied with online education (Lau, & Lee, 2021; Zhu & Hong, 2022)

H9: There are associations between parents' socio-demographic background and the level of parental involvement (Ramirez, 2003; Casanova et al., 2005)..

II. Methodology

The dissertation was structured as a descriptive survey employing quantitative methodology, aligning with the research objectives. Surveys was seen the most appropriate tool to handle large volumes of data for statistical analysis. Participants included parents and teachers of 8th and 9th graders in public schools, recognizing these grades as transitional stages from basic to high school education. Parental support is crucial for children navigating academic, social, and emotional challenges. Stratified random sampling ensured a representative sample by categorizing participants into local and displaced groups, enabling comprehensive representation and facilitating insightful comparisons. Data collection occurred from October 2021 to February 2022 across three provinces (Erbil, Sulaimani, Dohuk) of Iraqi Kurdistan, encompassing both local communities and displaced populations in camps.

The sampling strategy involved selecting both local and camp schools across the three provinces of the region. Additionally, several local schools in the same area were randomly chosen for comparison with the camp schools. There were a total of 567 parent participants (219 from displaced communities, 348 from the host community) and 130 teacher participants (49 teaching displaced students, 80 teaching host community students). Parents

included those with children attending basic schools in the region, while teachers were currently employed in public schools. A questionnaire which was reviewed and approved by professors in the field, was utilized to gather insights into parents' and teachers' perspectives, focusing on the roles of parents in their children's education. The questionnaire was translated into Kurdish and Arabic to accommodate the languages spoken by both the local and displaced population. The questionnaire comprised three sections: Demographic details of parents, Parental roles in children's education, and Teachers' perceptions of parental roles. Demographic information is crucial as it can influence various aspects of human activities, including education, economics, and social dynamics, thereby providing valuable insights during analysis.

In the parents' section, the research aimed to understand how socioeconomic factors influence parental involvement, how do parents perceive their own roles compared to the roles of teachers in their children's education, what criteria guide the parent groups for their decisions regarding school choice, how can we characterise teacher-parent communications, what different outcomes can be attributed to these communication efforts among the parent groups.

In the teachers' section, the study aimed to explore the extent parents aware of parental involvement, how does the level of facilitations of parent involvement vary among participants, what is the role of gender in parental involvement, what characterises parent-teacher communications. The data was in this segment comprised the perspectives of the teacher regarding the roles of

parents. The research hypotheses were formulated based on the socioeconomic status of parents to examine its effects on the levels and forms of involvement in their children's education. To interpret the responses and quantitative findings, the study drew upon Human Capital theory while considering the specific characteristics of the research region.

III. The results of the research

The dissertation's theoretical framework explored concepts of displacement and social capital theory, providing a backdrop for understanding parental contributions to a child's social capital. This theoretical foundation facilitated an investigation into how parental engagement, guided by principles of social capital, impacts children's educational experiences. Additionally, the dissertation clarified terminology related to displacement, distinguishing between migrants, internally displaced individuals, and refugees. This conceptualization was essential for comprehensively analyzing the circumstances of displaced populations and discerning differences based on legal status and migration patterns.

The research uncovered contrasting viewpoints on parental involvement between local and displaced parents, revealing disparities in the extent of parental involvement. These differences shed light on the impact of socioeconomic and demographic factors on the educational experiences and trajectories of these groups. By analyzing contextual variables, the study aimed to

explore how socioeconomic factors influence parental attitudes and behaviors towards involvement in education. Furthermore, the study examined the dynamics of family-education interactions.

The first hypothesis assumed that parental involvement could influence student dropout rates. It was confirmed both direct and indirect parental contributions to student dropout. Factors such as poverty, limited access to educational resources, and parents' perception of their role as educational supporters were identified as antecedents of dropout. School choice which is seen as a potential solution to mitigate dropout rates. Contrary to expectations, a significant portion of parents lacked school choice, particularly among displaced populations.

This highlights the importance of providing early intervention and tailored support for students at risk of dropping out to prevent this outcome. While the dropout rate remains relatively low, it raises concerns about the inclusivity of education and the involvement of parents in the education system. One of the main reasons identified for dropping out was the need for children to contribute financially to their families. Additionally, it was observed that parents with higher levels of education are more actively engaged in their children's education. Therefore, schools should focus on creating more opportunities for parental involvement, such as regular parent-teacher conferences and workshops that educate parents on how to support their child's learning at home.

Per the second hypothesis, there are differences between the parenting roles of host community members and those

of displaced people. It was shown that parents' life quality is associated with better involvement and role in their children's lives. The low quality life prevented parents to meet the children needs. According to the research, there is a notable disparity in the level of autonomy between host community parents and displaced parents when it comes to selecting schools for their children. Specifically, the data revealed that host community parents have a far higher degree of autonomy in this regard, which is two-thirds, while it is nearly a quarter for displaced ones. Additionally, parent groups' priorities for choosing a school varied, but elements like student demographics (peer group) and the teaching approach in schools had a significant impact.

The third hypothesis assumed that parents do not see their roles as important as a teacher in their children's education. A considerable majority of parents held the perception that the duty of transferring knowledge is equally distributed between parents and teachers. When it comes to their children's "values, morals, and habits," however, many parents take a more serious stance of responsibility. The vast majority of parents thought they should have more of an impact than teachers do. This finding demonstrates the common cultural belief that a child's moral character and ethical beliefs should be more shaped by their family than by teachers and the education system.

According to the fourth hypothesis, parents are not prepared for high level of involvement. While a majority expressed willingness to positively impact their children's educational development, only half actively engaged in

understanding their children's tasks, suggesting a gap between intention and action. This data underscored the potential role of parents in facilitating the transfer of knowledge and information, as echoed by teachers' observations of parental efforts and awareness of active involvement. Teachers also showed the lowest level of satisfaction when it came to parents' ability to accurately assess children in terms of their academic ability and talents. A similar perspective is evident in the parental data, such as parents' education levels and their capacity to support their children with tasks, projects, and assignments. This lack of satisfaction highlighted the need for parents to be more informed about their child's academic progress and potential. By accurately assessing their child's abilities, parents can better support and encourage their educational growth.

In the fifth hypothesis, it was assumed that there are fewer meetings for displaced parents. The main mode of communication was assumed to be face-to-face meetings in the sixth hypothesis. A significant proportion of parents expressed satisfaction with school communication, feeling welcomed and accepted in the school community. However, concerns arose regarding the lack of specific guidance on how to support children's educational development, despite parents' involvement in school-related activities. Contrary to what was hypothesised, displaced parents showed a higher inclination towards engaging in communication with teachers, favoring direct interactions. Teachers shared similar preferences for communication methods, emphasizing face-to-face interactions and communication through students. Digital communication was least preferred, although its

significance became more apparent during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The seventh hypothesis was that teachers have low expectations from parents regarding parent-teacher communication. While parents participated in some school activities, they were less involved in managerial and policy decision-making processes. Schools aimed to foster parental engagement through initiatives such as school councils, acknowledging parents' contributions towards enhancing school quality. However, feedback from parents was deemed crucial for school improvement. This partially confirms the hypothesis. Around half of schools possess a policy or strategy aimed at fostering parental involvement, whereas the other half lack such measures.

It was also demonstrated that the eighth hypothesis predicting parental dissatisfaction with online education was accurate. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly half of parents reported minimal or sporadic communication with teachers, while about a quarter expressed limited involvement in assisting their children. These underscore the difficulties encountered by both parents and educators during this period. With the abrupt transition to online learning, parents grappled with assuming the newfound responsibility of serving as their child's primary educator. The diminished communication and support from parents impeded students' learning experiences and exacerbated pre-existing educational inequalities. It was revealed that a significant proportion of parents did not have access to the digital tools required for engaging in online learning. As a result, many students

were unable to fully participate in online classes and complete assignments. This further widened the gap between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. The finding underscores the presence of the digital gap and its impact on the educational experiences of students.

The final hypothesis hypothesised associations between parents' sociodemographic backgrounds and their level of involvement in their children's education including parents' age, education level, place of residence and number of children. The findings of the study revealed that there were variations in the level of parental involvement in school activities across three provinces, as well as differences in involvement policy across provinces and among parents residing in displaced camps and host communities.

The research also confirmed that gender influences parental involvement, although there was no statistically significant difference in contacting teachers between genders. However, it is crucial to recognize that cultural values, traditions, and societal norms play a substantial role in shaping the roles and responsibilities undertaken by mothers and fathers. These factors influence decisions about who takes the initiative to contact teachers and who engages in more frequent communication.

IV. The main research findings and novelty

The most of the results can be considered unique because the research context is an understudied area. This study sheds light on a significant but frequently overlooked issue. The correlation between financial difficulties in

households and the increased likelihood of children dropping out of school and engaging in child labor. Even in displaced communities, where vulnerabilities are already evident, these risks are increased. The identification of parental apprehension around their children's withdrawal from school highlights the imperative for focused interventions and support systems. The combination of financial challenges and a lack of understanding about child development and rights provides fertile ground for the emergence of child labor. It is troubling, albeit understandable, that families may prioritize immediate financial benefits over the long-term advantages of education for their children, particularly in informal labor sectors prevalent in many developing nations. Addressing this intricate issue necessitates comprehensive approaches that not only address economic adversities but also impart education and awareness regarding child rights and development.

The findings revealed that parents prioritize certain factors such as student demographics, teacher competence, and instructional approaches when choosing schools for their children. These criteria are commonly identified in literature as important considerations for parents when selecting schools. According to Rosenqvist (2018), parents often take into account the peer group their children will be part of, recognizing the positive influence peers can have on the learning environment. Similarly, research by Pusztai et al. (2023) suggests that Hungarian parents predominantly opt for schools that offer a culturally and economically homogeneous environment, perceived as safer for their children. The role of teachers emerges as a significant factor in school

selection, consistent with the findings of Cannata and Peñaloza's (2008) study, which highlights parents' preference for educators with strong qualifications and expertise. Previous research underscores the pivotal role of teacher quality in determining students' academic success, noting considerable variations in teaching styles among educators.

This observation highlights the widespread recognition of the collaborative nature of education, where parents and teachers are seen as crucial partners in shaping a child's academic journey. However, it is important to note that a smaller yet significant group of parents feel that teachers play a more dominant role or even bear total responsibility for this aspect of their child's education. Conversely, when it comes to instilling values, morals, and habits, parents feel a heightened sense of responsibility. A substantial majority of parents believe that parents have a greater influence than educators in this regard, with a notable portion even attributing sole responsibility for imparting values and morals to parents.

The multivariate logistic regression analysis revealed significant insights into the determinants of parental involvement. Among the key findings, it became apparent that factors such as place of residence, age, number of children, and level of education exerted a considerable influence on the level of parental engagement. This implies that where parents live, their age, the size of their family, and their educational background all play pivotal roles in shaping the extent to which they are involved in their children's education. Such findings not only provide valuable insights into the dynamics of parental

involvement but also underscore the importance of considering various socio-demographic factors when designing interventions or programs aimed at promoting parental engagement in education..

The results also revealed that a significant number of parents hold a positive outlook and express contentment with the school atmosphere and invites. Parents conveyed a sense of being embraced and acknowledged by the school community. This indicates that the school community effectively fostered an inclusive and welcoming environment, ensuring that parents feel appreciated and at ease when interacting with them. The frequency and extent of communication between parents and teachers were remarkably high. However, it is concerning that a significant majority of parents, nearly three-fourths, were not given specific guidance on how to effectively support their children's educational development, despite their involvement in school repairs and renovations at times. It was revealed that teachers shared the same preferences as parents when it came to communication. They showed a preference for direct contact, such as face-to-face interactions. Among the available options, digital communications were considered the least favored. The importance of digital communication became more evident with the onset of the pandemic, particularly in the context of online education. It has been discovered that educators encountered difficulties in maintaining consistent communication with parents. During the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly half of parents reported little to no communication with their children's teachers. About a fifth of parents were unable to assist their children. The lack of access to gadgets

among displaced parents exacerbated the situation, as they were unable to provide the necessary technology for their children to participate in online education.

The research unveiled novel and crucial insights in the realm of education, marking a significant stride forward. Its exploration into an under-researched context serves as a commendable initiative, laying a foundation for further scholarly inquiry. The deep quantitative analysis, coupled with insightful interpretations drawn from a synthesis of data, literature, experiential knowledge, and human capital theory, underscores the rigor and depth of the study. These findings not only contribute to the existing body of knowledge but also pave the way for future studies to delve deeper into this domain, enriching our understanding of educational dynamics and their broader implications.



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**List of
publications
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Foreign language scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)

1. **Mohammed, P. J.**, Casas, T. J. P., Saleh, S. T.,

Kovács, K. E.: An International Comparison of
Educational Systems: the Columbian, Iraqi and
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Cent. Eur. J. Educ. Res. 3 (2), 110-120, 2021. EISSN:
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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.37441/cejerr/2021/3/2/9803>

Foreign language scientific articles in international journals (2)

2. **Mohammed, P. J.**, Engler, Á., Erdei, G.: A

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and School Environment between Refugee and
Host Community Students.

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3. **Mohammed, P. J.**, Engler, Á.: The Role of Family and Family Context in the Learning Process of Children. *Vietnam J. Educ.* 6 (1), 1-9, 2022. ISSN: 2588-1477. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.52296/vje.2022.144>

List of other publications

Foreign language Hungarian book chapters (1)

4. **Mohammed, P. J.**: Education policy and higher education in developing countries.
In: International higher education. Ed.: Dabney-Fekete Ilona Dóra, Debrecen UniversityPress, Debrecen, 117-124, 2024. ISBN: 9789636151447

Foreign language scientific articles in Hungarian journals (3)

5. **Mohammed, P. J.**: Sociology of education: Theories, communities, contexts.
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7. Casas, T. J. P., **Mohammed, P. J.**, Saleh, S. T.: Students'

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.37441/CEJER/2020/2/1/5760>

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8. **Mohammed, P. J.:** Challenges and Strategies

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consideration the institutional diversity.

PedActa. 10 (1), 91-94, 2020. ISSN: 2248-3527.

The Candidate's publication data submitted to the iDEa
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