



## Review Article

# Are teachers not alone? The role of multi-professional support teams in fostering parental engagement and involvement: A systematic review

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## ABSTRACT

Despite extensive research on the role of teachers and school leaders in family-school cooperation, the contribution of school support professionals to strengthening family-school partnerships remains insufficiently explored. At the same time, the increasing number of non-academic school problems has expanded the responsibilities of these professionals, who play an important role in facilitating communication and cooperation between families and schools. This study presents a systematic literature review examining how school support professionals contribute to family-school partnerships and parental involvement and engagement, with particular attention to parents' interactions with school social workers, special education teachers, and school counsellors. The review was conducted following PRISMA guidelines, and the final sample consisted of 34 empirical journal articles. The findings reveal that existing research is dominated by small-scale qualitative studies focusing on the role of school support professionals in family-school partnerships. They also highlight the importance of multi-professional teamwork in schools, as effective family-school cooperation and parental engagement rely on the coordinated efforts of different support professionals. While these studies provide valuable insights into professional practices, interaction patterns, and collaborative processes, there remains a lack of robust empirical evidence that could support generalizable findings. By synthesizing international research across multiple professional groups, this review provides a more comprehensive understanding of their contribution to family-school cooperation and highlights the need for larger-scale quantitative research to support evidence-based educational policy and practice.

## 1. Introduction

Raising children is an activity that produces value, since the careful attention invested in children's physical, spiritual, and mental development yields returns at both individual and collective levels (Coleman, 1988; Pusztai et al., 2024). The increasing challenges in education have led to a growing number and diversification of support professionals worldwide (OECD, 2019). Therefore, when discussing the roles of schools in socialization, attention must be paid not only to school leaders and teachers but also to supporting professionals who work in, or collaborate with, public educational institutions. These professionals possess knowledge, skills, and competences that enable them to act as facilitators of family-school relationships and to mediate between these two key agents of education (Csók, 2025).

However, despite extensive research on the role of teachers and school leaders in family-school cooperation, the contribution of school support professionals to strengthening school-family partnerships remains insufficiently explored (Sylaj, 2020; Smith et al., 2022). While the benefits of school-family cooperation and parental involvement are well documented, most existing studies focus primarily on teachers and parents, leaving the role of support professionals in fostering these relationships largely overlooked. In addition, there has been limited synthesis of international evidence on how support staff contribute to parental engagement and cooperation between schools and families. Our review addresses these gaps by systematically analysing and synthesizing the available scholarly evidence on how school support professionals contribute to strengthening school-family partnerships.

At the same time, there are considerable differences between

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countries regarding the specialization of supporting professionals employed in schools. Typically, the helping services provided by public educational institutions are based on several main pillars (Masdeu Navarro, 2015; OECD, 2019; Csók & Pusztai, 2022). This study highlights the work of school social workers, special education teachers, and school counsellors. Our purpose is to move beyond the view that child-rearing can be placed on a continuum with the family's responsibilities on one end, the socialization and value-transmitting mechanisms of educational institutions on the other, and shared responsibilities between the two (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). In doing so, this review is among the first to systematically examine and synthesize international evidence on how school support staff can promote parental involvement and engagement and strengthen school-family partnerships. In this systematic review, we distinguish between parental involvement and parental engagement to capture the full spectrum of school-family dynamics (Epstein, 1995; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). While parental involvement is primarily school-led, focusing on the formal structures of school-parent partnerships and institutional requirements, parental engagement refers to the internal commitment and active agency of parents in their children's learning. We utilize both terms because the roles of support professionals often operate along a developmental continuum. Their baseline interventions are frequently aimed at establishing school-led involvement to ensure basic cooperation. However, their professional objective is to cultivate deeper parental engagement, as this shift toward an empowered, partner-based relationship is what leads to sustainable academic success and students' well-being.

In this study, the concept of the teacher support team refers to a group of school-based professionals who support teachers in addressing the diverse psychological, social, and educational needs of students. Contemporary school systems increasingly rely on multidisciplinary collaboration, in which different helping professionals work together to support both students and teachers within the educational environment. Within this framework, the present study focuses on three key professional groups working alongside teachers: school social workers, school counsellors, and special education teachers. These professionals represent complementary domains of support in schools. School counsellors primarily address students' psychological well-being, emotional

development, and learning-related difficulties. School social workers focus on social disadvantages, family-school relationships, and crisis situations affecting students. Special education teachers provide pedagogical expertise in inclusive education and support students with special educational needs (Csók, 2025; Dan et al., 2023). The selection of these three professional groups does not imply that they are the only actors involved in school support systems. Rather, they were chosen because together they represent three central dimensions of school-based support – psychological, social, and pedagogical assistance – and therefore provide a suitable framework for examining how multidisciplinary professionals contribute to strengthening family-school cooperation and parental involvement (Masdeu Navarro, 2015; Csók, 2025; OECD, 2019).

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Study design

This review explores the various patterns of contact between parents and school social workers, special education teachers, and school counsellors. The review addresses the question of how these professionals promote active interaction and communication between families and schools, as well as parental participation. This systematic review was conducted and reported in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2015; Page et al., 2021) (Fig. 1). The review process was conducted independently by five researchers.

### 2.2. Eligibility criteria

The included studies were required to meet several eligibility criteria. First, only empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals were considered. Second, the studies had to examine the role of school-based support professionals in communication with parents. Third, only publications written in English were included. Finally, the studies had to belong to one of the following disciplinary fields: education, humanities, social sciences, social work, sociology, or psychology. Non-empirical publications and non-journal sources were excluded

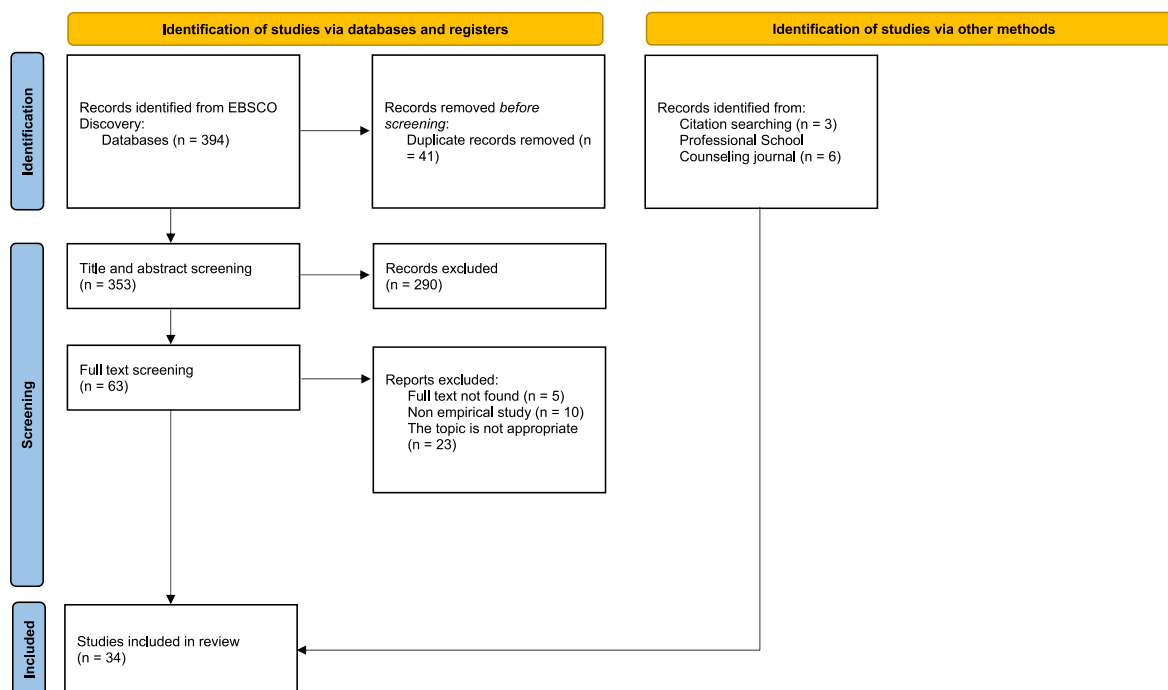


Fig. 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the study selection process.

from the review. Consequently, dissertations, newspaper articles, books, and book chapters were not considered.

### 2.3. Search strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted on 14 February 2024 in ERIC, PsycINFO, Education Source, and SocINDEX through the EBSCOhost platform. After preliminary test searches, the final search string combined terms related to parental participation with the three professional groups examined in this review. The search included the terms “parent involvement”, “parent participation”, “family involvement”, and “family engagement”, combined with the professional categories “school social worker\*”, “special education teacher\*”, “school counselor\*”, and “student counselor\*”.

Both parental involvement and parental engagement were included as search terms because the review aimed to capture both school-led partnership structures and parents' more active, agency-based participation in their children's learning. No time restrictions were applied. The search therefore covered all records available in the selected databases from their inception until 14 February 2024. To supplement the database search, additional studies were identified through screening the reference lists of the included studies and through a targeted manual search in a field-specific journal.

### 2.4. Article selection

The database search identified 394 records, which were imported into the Zotero reference management software. After the removal of 41 duplicate records, 353 articles remained for screening. These records were organised into three thematic categories. Within each category, abstracts were independently screened by two reviewers according to the predefined inclusion criteria (CC with AE, BK with DB, and CC with BK). The overall inter-rater agreement across screening decisions was 80%. Disagreements were resolved through consultation with a third reviewer (PG), who made the final decision. After the screening stage, 63 articles were retained for full-text assessment and exported into an Excel spreadsheet for content and methodological quality evaluation using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT; Hong et al., 2018).

### 2.5. Eligibility phase

Following the screening phase, all potentially eligible full-text articles were independently examined by two researchers using the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. A third researcher was consulted when consensus could not be reached. To identify additional relevant publications, the reference lists of the selected articles were screened. In addition, a targeted manual search was conducted in the journal *Professional School Counselling*. This search was undertaken because relatively few studies on school counsellors were identified through the database search. The journal was selected because it focuses specifically on school counselling research and practice in educational settings and therefore directly corresponds to one of the professional subgroups examined in this review. This supplementary search was intended to improve the coverage of school counselling studies and reduce the risk of overlooking relevant publications. Through reference screening ( $n = 3$ ) and manual journal searching ( $n = 6$ ), nine additional studies were identified, resulting in a final sample of 34 articles.

### 2.6. Data extraction

A standardized data extraction form was developed prior to the analysis and pilot-tested on a subset of five articles to ensure clarity and consistency. For each included study ( $n = 34$ ), bibliographic data, research objectives, terminology used, methodological design, target group, sample size, the role of parents, the role of supporting professionals, and the main findings were extracted.

### 2.7. Synthesis method

The analysis followed a structured narrative synthesis approach. The 34 included studies were classified into three thematic categories according to the professional target group examined: school social workers, special education teachers, and school counsellors. Within each category, a multi-step analytical procedure was applied. First, descriptive publication characteristics were compiled, including temporal distribution, geographical location, and publication outlets. Second, a conceptual analysis was conducted to identify the key theoretical frameworks and central concepts used in the studies. Third, a methodological mapping examined research designs, data collection methods, and sample characteristics. Finally, a thematic analysis was carried out to identify recurring patterns related to forms of parent-professional interaction, the roles attributed to support professionals, and the mechanisms through which parental participation was promoted. Themes were generated through close reading and constant comparison of the studies within each category. The synthesis aimed to provide an interpretative understanding of recurring patterns, differences, and contextual variations across the reviewed literature.

## 3. Results

We classified the eligible publications into three categories according to their target groups, namely school social workers, special education teachers and school counsellors, because they play different – but undoubtedly important – roles in the co-operation between schools and parents. This section provides publication and regional data of the studies and gives conceptual, methodological and thematic analyses of them for each profession.

### 3.1. School social workers

Researchers have found that school social workers can build bridges between parents and schools, promoting their partnership (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004; Drolet, Paquin & Soutyrine, 2006). To gain an insight into the process, we included in our review 12 journal articles discussing the role of school social workers in relation to family-school relationships.

#### 3.1.1. Publication and regional data

The temporal boundaries of the subject are shown by the distribution of the publication periods of the articles. Three main publication periods were established: 1980-1999 (3 articles), 2006-2010 (4 articles) and 2017-2021 (5 articles). The theoretical and empirical research of the subject began in the 1980s, but most of the studies relevant to our review criteria were published after the millennium. The subject has been of utmost relevance up to the present.

The subject is discussed by journals on education studies and psychology as well as journals on social work. One third of them were published in the journal *Children & Schools*. Of the nine other journals, four were issued in the United States and four in the United Kingdom. These data might be explained by the fact that social work originated in the United States (Costin, 1969), but social work at schools also has a long-lasting tradition in certain European countries, especially the United Kingdom (Budai, 2018). Half of the research has been done in the United States, and there is no doubt that it is in English-speaking countries that the subject is the most widely dealt with, as is evidenced by the large body of research in the United Kingdom and Canada. It is to be noted that our corpus includes studies from Romania and Sweden; furthermore, regional data from East Asia (China) and West Africa (Sierra Leone) add variety to our material, showing that problem-solving patterns rooted in the practice of English-speaking countries are in use worldwide (Table 1).

**Table 1**

The characteristics of the studies involved in the review. (Target group: school social work).

| Author(s), year                  | Concepts used                                                                                             | Research method                                                                           | Target group, sample size                                                                                                          | Country      |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Wolstenholme and Kolvin (1980)   | links between parents and school                                                                          | questionnaire survey                                                                      | teachers, N = 73                                                                                                                   | UK           |
| Kurtz and Barth (1989)           | parental involvement                                                                                      | questionnaire survey                                                                      | school social workers, N = 253                                                                                                     | USA          |
| Bowen (1999)                     | parental involvement, family involvement, school-family partnerships                                      | intervention, interviews                                                                  | 5 mothers who were subjects of intervention; data collection among parents and teachers before, during and after the intervention. | USA          |
| Drolet, Paquin & Soutyrine, 2006 | parental involvement, school-parent collaboration, school-parent partnership, school-parent communication | interviews                                                                                | parents, N = 60                                                                                                                    | Canada       |
| Randolph et al., 2006            | parent involvement                                                                                        | questionnaire survey                                                                      | school social workers, N = 167 (+ participants of the National School Social Work Conference in 2004)                              | USA          |
| Bye et al. (2009)                | parental involvement                                                                                      | questionnaire survey                                                                      | school social workers, N = 136; school administrators, N = 24, (22 school principals, 2 “superintendents”)                         | USA          |
| Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010      | parental involvement                                                                                      | interviews                                                                                | parents, N = 17                                                                                                                    | USA          |
| Isaksson and Larsson (2017)      | communicate                                                                                               | interviews                                                                                | 12 school social workers, 11 teachers                                                                                              | Sweden       |
| Bulanda and Jalloh (2019)        | parental involvement                                                                                      | mixed methods: interviews (with school principals), questionnaire survey (among teachers) | teachers, N = 105; school principals, N = 30                                                                                       | Sierra Leone |
| Trancă (2020)                    | family involvement, family-school-community partnership                                                   | interviews                                                                                | social workers (specialized in preventing early school leaving), N = 22                                                            | Romania      |
| Daftary et al., 2021             | parental involvement, parental engagement, parental school engagement                                     | interviews                                                                                | school social workers, N = 20                                                                                                      | USA          |
| Yuen-han and Tak-Mau, (2022)     | parental involvement, parent-teacher relationships                                                        | interviews                                                                                | parents, N = 20                                                                                                                    | China        |

### 3.1.2. Conceptual and methodological framework

The most frequently appearing concept during the review was *parental involvement*. Other concepts defined by the studies were *family involvement*, *parental engagement*, *school-parent communication*, *school-parent collaboration*, *school-parent partnership* and *family-school partnership* (Table 1). The theories analysed during the systematic literature review suggested two main pillars of parental involvement: the school-centred, individually oriented approach and the community-centred, collective approach. The first model, presuming a one-way family-school relationship, focuses on parents' voluntary involvement, which is not suitable for the initial involvement of low-status families contrary to the second approach, which puts family support and community building strategies to the fore. In these two-directional programmes, supporting professionals and teachers play an active part in exploring parents' life circumstances (everyday difficulties and challenges) and available resources. Disadvantaged families often feel that they lack the necessary social, cultural and economic capital to support their children's academic careers successfully. The reviewed studies conclude that parents with disadvantaged backgrounds must be empowered to promote their children's advancement at school relying on their own as well as the community's resources. Detecting and exploring the obstacles to parental engagement are the foundations of the developmental work connecting schools, families and the community (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2002; Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010).

A significant group of theories is based on the Epsteinian parent-school partnership model, which represents a systemic approach complemented by an ecological view of social work. Thus, the living conditions of the individual and the influence of culture, together with the mechanisms of macro-social, institutional and micro-environmental processes, form a conceptual whole. The core of the work done with families is the consideration of the social environment and the synergy of the levels of the social system (micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems) (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Accordingly, the papers of our analysis typically focus on low-status parents (Kurtz & Barth, 1989; Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010; Bulanda & Jalloh, 2019; Daftary, Sugrue, Gustman, & Lechuga-Peña, 2021), single mothers (Kurtz & Barth, 1989), culturally diverse communities (Bowen, 1999; Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010;

Daftary et al., 2021), and disadvantaged regions or student groups (Bowen, 1999; Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010). In addition, they occasionally address groups of students who need extra attention, such as suspended students (Drolet, Paquin & Soutyrine, 2006), children at risk of dropping out (Trancă, 2020) and children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Yuen-han and Tak-Mau, 2022).

Over half of the studies applied qualitative research techniques as most researchers used interviews to examine the role of social workers in school-parent communication. In accordance with the nature of qualitative research, sample numbers were predominantly low but were considered sufficient by the authors for revealing deep structures. It is to be noted that over 50% of the articles primarily discussed parental involvement at school. Social workers acted as partners in consolidating parental engagement. The target groups of the studies were supporting professionals, parents, teachers and school principals.

### 3.1.3. The role of school social workers in school-parent communication

Parental involvement at home and at school form an integral part of school social work since supporting staff, through their professional expertise (knowledge of family dynamics, socio-cultural knowledge) can act as catalysts for communication between the agents of education (Bowen, 1999; Kurtz & Barth, 1989; Drolet, Paquin & Soutyrine, 2006). In line with Bronfenbrenner's model, school social workers are well-functioning participants in the school-home mesosystem (Bowen, 1999), in which interactions between microsystems, e.g. parents and teachers, have a significant impact on children's development (Bowen, 1999; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The studies all suggest that school social workers serve as facilitators especially in establishing contact with barely accessible, low-status parents mainly by means of home visits. On these occasions, sympathetic attention, empathy and respect for cultural differences form the basis for building a relationship of trust and a real understanding of family situations (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010; Bulanda & Jalloh, 2019; Trancă, 2020). As a parent involved in intervention puts it: ‘The parents need to be dealt with ... { ... } A lot of these parents need an ear, someone who will listen to them ... So that's the start’ (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010: 176). According to the interviews, parents feel that social workers' continuous attention and sense of vocation

help them become more open and ready to cooperate and give them easier access to intervention programmes coordinated by supporting professionals. *'It [outreach] was a good thing 'cuz they were passionate about what they were doing. It wasn't like a quota they had to meet'* (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010: 177-178).

The studies state that school social workers can utilize their expertise and professional tools to establish and maintain contact with parents, take stock of community resources and involve parents actively in school life, serving as links or bridges between families, schools and communities (Wolstenholme & Kolvin, 1980; Bowen, 1999; Drolet, Paquin & Soutyrine, 2006; Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010; Bulanda & Jalloh, 2019; Trancă, 2020; Daftary et al., 2021). It has been found that there is growing demand on the part of school principals and teachers for social workers' mediation (Drolet, Paquin & Soutyrine, 2006; Bulanda & Jalloh, 2019; Isaksson & Larsson, 2017). *'I will use the school social worker to serve as mediator between the school and the community (principal)'* (Bulanda & Jalloh, 2019, p. 12). *'Several of the teachers said that they regularly ask the school social worker for help by asking for advice and hints in order to be able to communicate more easily with "difficult parents" (Teacher 1)'* (Isaksson & Larsson, 2017, p. 9).

Drolet, Paquin and Soutyrine (2006) distinguish five ways of collaboration, namely family-centred collaboration, working with community resources, the teacher as key person: intra-organizational collaboration, the principal as decision maker: inter-professional collaboration and intervention at the level of parental practice. It has been found that counselling on child-rearing knowledge, skills and practices or intervention are by no means the best way to start assisting families struggling with difficulties. School social workers first learn about the families' living conditions very thoroughly (often marked by lack of daily routine, ignorance, social marginalization and isolation), after which they collaborate with schools to alleviate problems, accepting all the extra work it involves. Supporting staff must provide a firm professional basis and an opportunity for interprofessional dialogue (Kurtz & Barth, 1989; Drolet, Paquin & Soutyrine, 2006; Isaksson & Larsson, 2017; Trancă, 2020; Daftary et al., 2021) to „help open the door” to parents (Drolet, Paquin & Soutyrine, 2006) and involve them actively in their children's education (Kurtz & Barth, 1989). As Kurtz and Barth (1989) already pointed out, school social workers devote much more time to communicating with parents than other actors at school, although they may be hindered if the number of institutions per social worker is high. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the value of support work (done e.g. by school-community connectors and family resource agents) rose considerably because of teachers' increased workload (Daftary, Sugrue & Lechuga-Peña, 2021).

From the studies on social professionals, a critical understanding of school socialization seems to emerge, according to which the transmission of social inequalities takes place in public education through the habitus shaped by the social status of the family. Teachers appear as representatives of power and legitimators of acculturation processes (Pusztai, 2015). However, we know from research in the sociology of education that the reproductive determinisms of social status can be compensated for by social capital (Pusztai, 2005, 2011, 2015). Based on the articles included in the analysis, school social workers have a significant function in mobilizing sources of capital outside and inside school (Colemanian social capital theory). In fact, by adopting an ecological approach, social workers can place the problems faced by their clients in an environmental context. They use the tools of social work to learn about the living conditions and daily challenges of families and thus represent the interests and rights of parents both in schools and in their wider communities (Dupper, 2003; Drolet, Paquin & Soutyrine, 2006). While responding to family needs, they also help schools to adapt to the specific challenges of parents and children. In this way, they support cooperation between the two agents of education and the process of constructive interaction (Drolet, Paquin & Soutyrine, 2006).

### 3.2. Special education teachers

The education of children with special educational needs poses a great challenge to the education system. At the same time, it is important that schoolteachers be aware that by the time such children enter the educational institution, parents have already gone through a lot of difficulties, conflicts and challenges. It is increased difficulties that necessitate a very close contact between parents and schools (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001), in which, having the necessary qualifications, special education teachers play a key part. Nevertheless, this question is addressed by a relatively low number of studies (12), which are presented below.

#### 3.2.1. Publication and regional data

The present study aims to review studies conducted in an inclusive education setting related to effective special education teacher – parent collaboration. The selected studies were published between 2012 and 2021, which suggests that parental involvement in special education is quite a new phenomenon. The studies cover different geographical regions, most of them were published in the English-speaking world. Some of the countries, however, where research was done, belong to the global south (Miron, 2012; Blackman & Mahon, 2014; Dubis et al., 2015; Jigyl, 2020; Karisa, 2021).

#### 3.2.2. Conceptual – methodological framework and parents' role

Parental involvement is considered as an essential policy in special education, the fundamental objective of which is to increase the social and academic competencies of disabled pupils. Therefore, the most important problems discussed in the literature arise from the differences in the attitudes and norms of parents, their social and cultural capital along with economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), and their level of verbalization (Bernstein, 1975). One area of concern in the present systematic review is the term *effective parent-school relationship*. The key to successful partnership (Epstein et al., 2009) is based on mutual trust, and the main focus is on the special needs of students. Parental involvement is defined by the literature with terms such as collaboration, commitment, engagement, support, partnership, etc. The majority of prior research has applied two concepts: parental involvement and parental engagement (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Harris & Goodall, 2007). The first notion lays emphasis on parents' extrinsic motivation to become involved in their children's education, while the second one refers to an intrinsic, more meaningful commitment. Several authors have recognized that there is a continuum and a constant dialogue between the two terms (Table 2).

The concept of partnership is based on Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence, which focuses on a well-constructed typology of parental involvement (Epstein et al., 2002). Further research (Fan & Chen, 2001) established five dimensions of parental involvement, such as: academic expectations, communication, supervision, participation and general involvement. Parents of children with special education needs tend to confront much more difficulties in supporting the education of their children and have less time and energy because their children need intensive care and direct support in everyday routine as well as in learning (Karisa et al., 2021; Jigyl et al., 2020; Blackman & Mahon, 2014).

Discussions of working with parents in inclusive education are usually centred around three main categories: communication, involvement and support (SEN Code of Practice, 2015). One pillar of true partnership is communication with parents, which includes written information (Dubis & Bernadowski, 2015), oral communication, providing different opportunities and venues for discussions, forming support groups as well as providing information packages, training and workshops on various topics (Graff et al., 2020; Miron, 2012; Stanley, 2015). Parents' participation in their children's education is promoted by parental involvement, which includes activities such as meetings, school events, volunteering, field trips, membership in the school board, joint

**Table 2**

The characteristics of the studies involved in the review. (Target group: special education teachers).

| Author(s), year                               | Concepts used                                     | Research method                    | Target group, sample size                                                                       | Country      |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Dubis & Bernadowski (2015)                    | home-school involvement                           | survey                             | special education teachers, N = 157<br>parents, N = 104                                         | Saudi Arabia |
| Graff et al. (2020)                           | teacher-family collaboration, families as experts | intervention                       | pre-service special education teachers, N = 22                                                  | USA          |
| Casillas et al. (2017)                        | collaboration                                     | semi-structured interview          | parents, N = 11                                                                                 | USA          |
| Szumski and Karwowski (2017)                  | mechanical and reflective engagement of parents   | survey                             | first-year lower-secondary school students (with SEN, N = 346; without SEN, N = 1302), N = 1648 | Poland       |
| Apodaca et al. (2015)                         | parental involvement                              | survey                             | parents, N = 82                                                                                 | USA          |
| Stanley (2015)                                | parental involvement                              | semi-structured interview          | mothers, N = 12                                                                                 | USA          |
| Miron (2012)                                  | parental involvement                              | focus group interview              | parents, N = 11                                                                                 | USA          |
| Simó-Pinatella, Goei, Carvalho, & Nelen, 2022 | parental support, collaboration                   | focus group interview              | teachers, N = 22                                                                                | Spain        |
| Lendrum et al. (2012)                         | parental engagement                               | Survey<br>Case study (20 schools)  | parents, N = 307                                                                                | UK           |
| Karisa et al. (2021)                          | father involvement                                | individual interviews              | teachers, N = 9<br>fathers, n = 6                                                               | Africa       |
| Jigyel et al. (2020)                          | parental involvement                              | standardized open-ended interviews | parents, N = 26                                                                                 | Bhutan       |
| Blackman & Mahon, 2014                        | parental involvement                              | case study                         | teachers & parents<br>4 schools                                                                 | Barbados     |

class/therapy sessions etc. (Szumski & Karwowski, 2017; Blackman & Mahon, 2014; Jigyel et al., 2020; Lendrum et al., 2012).

Parental support is expected to overcome institutions' barriers to inclusion by offering updated information (Health and Social Services, Local Support Groups, Voluntary Organisations and NGO's) and support for parents (Apodaca et al., 2015; Casillas et al., 2017; Karisa et al., 2021).

Parental involvement is quite a new concept in the Middle East (Dubis & Bernadowski, 2015) and Africa (Karisa et al., 2021) as well as in Bhutan (Jigyel et al., 2020) and Barbados (Blackman & Mahon, 2014), while in the USA (Apodaca et al., 2015; Casillas et al., 2017; Graff et al., 2020; Miron, 2012; Stanley et al., 2015) and Europe (Szumski & Karwowski, 2017; Lendrum et al., 2012; Simó-Pinatella et al., 2022), parents are conscientiously involved in school activities. Dubis and Bernadowski's (2015) research shows that parents in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia transfer educational decision-making to schools and they think that an annual meeting with the school staff is sufficient. Regarding the importance of constant communication and improving

parental involvement, e-mail is one of the tools which can be used by SEN teachers in the KSA. Jigyel et al. (2020) highlighted the same problem in Bhutanese schools, where parental involvement was limited to formal communication and meetings. Their study calls on the Government of Bhutan to provide professionals, disability-related services and therapies as well as counselling services for students and their families. Blackman and Mahon's (2014) findings suggest that in Barbados parental involvement is minimal because of the hierarchical relationship between parents and teachers. This is a problematic issue in special education, because parents are the providers of key information about their children's health and development. The authors suggest that schools should give parents more volunteering opportunities to enhance home-school collaboration.

Over time, an extensive literature has developed on the concept of gender-neutral parental involvement. However, Stanley et al. (2015) emphasise that mothers are the primary caregivers of their disabled children. In their study, the interpersonal skills of teachers and school staff are identified as empowering factors for mothers, which help them to become involved in their children's education. Karisa et al.'s (2021) study focuses on father involvement and on how teachers' gender pre-conceptions affect parental involvement in a harmful way. In Africa, the concept of masculinity and the perception of disability mutually exclude each other as masculinity equals strength and perfection while disability is associated with weakness and imperfection. Social norms restrict fathers' educational involvement, and therefore fathers in Africa do not have a nurturing role in their disabled children's lives.

Miron (2012) revealed in his study that positive encounters between school and staff are vital for parental involvement. Parents raising children with apraxia of speech need positive attitudes from professionals and good intentions from medical and educational staff. Simó-Pinatella, Goei, Carvalho, and Nelen's (2022) research shows that ongoing dialogue and effective home-school relationship are crucial to parents of pupils with SEND for improving their engagement and confidence in schools. During Covid-19, providing strategies and well-structured daily routines for parents were essential. SEN teachers felt it urgent to better understand the needs of parents raising children with disabilities and they felt more efficient if families were involved directly in school activities.

Graff et al. (2020) present the results of the Family as Faculty (FAF) intervention programme conducted in the USA. The programme provides training and workshops on various topics and opportunities for face-to-face discussion with parents and families from different cultural backgrounds. The authors point out that children with colour and their parents are often misunderstood. Casillas et al. (2017) report the experiences of parents of Latino and non-Latino white families raising a child with ASD (autism spectrum disorder). They underline that cultural values such as *confianza* (trust) and *respeto* (respect) are essential for parental involvement. Their cross-cultural study highlights the importance of culturally comprehensive home-school collaboration.

As we stated before, parental engagement requires an active collaboration with parents and encourages families' decision-making or other community contributions to schools. Graff et al. (2020) highlight the idea of family members as co-educators, adding that FAF methodology was designed to involve family members as co-researchers. Szumski and Karwowski (2017) reflect upon classical theories of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, underlining the idea that children with developmental disorders need continuous support. Parental engagement related to special education includes a wide range of activities such as constant care, developing health, nutrition and safety strategies as well as providing special conditions to support learning and development. Apodaca et al.'s (2015) research suggests that inclusive education has recognized the importance of involving parents in their children's school activities. Special education focuses on building positive relationships with family members by increasing the quality of communication and working out strategies for helping parents to support their children. Lendrum et al. (2012) emphasise the importance of

effective home-school partnership, suggesting the potential utility of the SCPs (Structured Conversations with Parents) scheme, which was elaborated within the Achievement for All (AfA) pilot initiative. This project was developed in the UK to support schools in providing better opportunities for students with SEND by implementing its first three main strands: assessing, tracking and intervention. The second strand included the Structured Conversations with Parents (SCPs) protocol, which was designed to help schools to engage in an open dialogue with parents raising a child with SEND. This project is one of the most successful initiatives to change the dynamics of the school-parent relationship.

### 3.3. School counsellors

It is indispensable to preserve students' mental health, prevent any mental disorders and address any crises that arise in order to do proper education work at schools. Although it was not until the 21st century that these tasks were declared as responsibilities of public education, by now they have become so vital that schools have started to employ professionals who are specifically trained to prevent and handle these problems. The main goal of school counsellors, similarly to other school staff, is to enhance student achievement and the efficacy of education by developing prevention and intervention programmes, consulting students, teachers and families as well as communicating with other institutions, e.g. pedagogical counselling services or child welfare institutions. Thus, school counsellors can play a pivotal role in the involvement of parents by providing various services to them. Our literature review relies on 10 studies exploring school counsellors' role in involving parents and the effectiveness of their methodology.

#### 3.3.1. Publication and regional data

School counsellors' role in the involvement of parents came into the focus of research after the millennium. Nearly 90% of the studies reviewed has been published since 2010, which means that the role of professionals who work on students' mental wellbeing in establishing partnership between parents and schools is a current area of research.

Seven out of the 10 studies included in the systematic literature review were published in the journal *Professional School Counselling* issued by the American School Counsellor Association, one study was published in *Psychological Studies*, one in *Contemporary School Psychology*, and one in *Psychology in the Schools*. *Professional School Counselling*, *Psychology in the Schools*, and *Contemporary School Psychology* are a USA-based journals, whereas *Psychological Studies* is issued in India. The main reason for which studies published in the USA are overrepresented may be that in contrast to other countries where school counsellors' work is regulated by the state or, in a more decentralized way, locally, the United States is in a special position. Although education is generally decentralized there, school counsellors are supervised by the federal American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) (Popov & Spasenovic, 2020). As all American school counsellors are obliged to follow ASCA's guidelines, we can presume that professional communication in the USA, which has a global influence, primarily takes place in *Professional School Counselling*, a journal associated with ASCA. Since the journal regularly publishes professional recommendations, research findings and theoretical studies, it is not surprising that most of the articles about our subject of research originate from the United States rather than countries where professionals are regulated by the state or local authorities. In such countries, professional guidelines are formulated in state or local government regulations, and journals rarely provide a forum for professional dialogue.

#### 3.3.2. Conceptual and methodological framework

As a first step of our review, we examine how parental involvement is defined in the studies (Table 3), which forms of involvement supported by counsellors are the most widely discussed and to what extent the ecological perspective is present. Like other supporting professionals,

**Table 3**

The characteristics of the studies involved in the review. (Target group: school counsellors).

| Author(s), year                 | Concepts used                                                                                                                                                              | Research method                                                                                                                | Target group, sample size                                                                             | Country |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy (2014)    | school-family-community partnerships                                                                                                                                       | questionnaire                                                                                                                  | 72 school counsellors                                                                                 | USA     |
| Gruman et al. (2013)            | parental involvement (participation in school events and the planning of their children's tertiary education, reporting any problems with students to the school online)   | case study                                                                                                                     | 1 school                                                                                              | USA     |
| Vaishnavi and Kumar (2018)      | parental involvement (understood within the parent-child-school counsellor triad, focusing primarily on involvement in individual child counselling)                       | interview                                                                                                                      | 7 school counsellors from the schools of two metropolitan cities in India                             | India   |
| Holcomb-McCoy (2010)            | parental involvement: involving parents in the higher education application process                                                                                        | questionnaire                                                                                                                  | 22 school counsellors working with students living in poverty and belonging to ethnic minorities      | USA     |
| Harris et al. (2018)            | partnership with families; school-family-community partnerships                                                                                                            | questionnaire                                                                                                                  | 155 school counsellors                                                                                | USA     |
| Sheely-Moore and Bratton (2010) | parental involvement: participation in strength-based parent counselling and parent-child relationship training                                                            | case study: questionnaire completed before and after intervention aimed at improving parenting competencies with control group | 23 African American parents living in poverty (13 in the experimental group, 10 in the control group) | USA     |
| Bryan et al. (2017)             | partnership, school-family-community partnership                                                                                                                           | questionnaire                                                                                                                  | 546 school counsellors                                                                                | USA     |
| Griffin and Steen (2010)        | parental involvement: Epsteinian categories of parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, collaborating with the community, school-family- | online questionnaire                                                                                                           | 205 school counsellors                                                                                | USA     |

(continued on next page)

Table 3 (continued)

| Author(s), year          | Concepts used                                                                                                                                                       | Research method      | Target group, sample size | Country |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------|
| Hendricker et al. (2022) | community partnership<br>family engagement,<br>parent education,<br>parental involvement,<br>family/parent consultation,<br>family intervention,<br>parent training | online questionnaire | 232 school counsellors    | USA     |
| Hendricker et al. (2023) | family engagement,<br>parent education,<br>parent involvement,<br>problem-solving<br>family consultation                                                            | online questionnaire | 224 school counsellors    | USA     |

school counsellors can foster parental involvement by supporting school-family-community interaction. The literature generally covers the six forms of parental involvement specified by Epstein and Sanders (2002), each having two aspects related to parents and supporting professionals respectively, namely at-home parenting – helping parents with home intervention; communication – keeping in touch with families and members of the community; volunteering – the involvement of families in school events and volunteering; learning at home – supplying families with adequate tools for efficient learning at home; decision making – involving parents in decision-making at school; collaboration with the community – providing families with resources through local organisations. Very importantly for this review, most theories adopt an ecological perspective, which means that an individual's situation and difficulties can be fully understood only if the surrounding context is taken into account. This outlook may lead to the launch of such programmes that are aimed at specific student groups such as ethnic minorities or disadvantaged students (Harris, 2016).

Three of the eight studies use the concept of *school-family-community partnership*, the support of which they regard as one of school counsellors' main tasks. The concept may include programmes such as mentoring, involving students' families in school activities, parent volunteering, family visits, training for parents, company-school collaboration and promoting parents' participation in decision making at school (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2014; Harris et al., 2018; Bryan et al., 2017). Half of the studies use the term *parental involvement*, referring to training in good childrearing practices, informing parents about secondary or higher education opportunities, parents' participation in school events and parent-school communication (Gruman et al., 2013; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; Sheely-Moore & Bratton, 2010; Vaishnavi & Kumar, 2018). One of the studies covers all Epsteinian categories of parental involvement (Griffin & Steen, 2010). One paper also mentions *partnership with families*, which implies a closer, more personal collaboration (Harris et al., 2018). Three studies are centred around specific student groups and exhibit traits of the ecological perspective (Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; Harris et al., 2018; Sheely-Moore & Bratton, 2010). Each of them focuses on the involvement of the parents/families of students belonging to ethnic minorities or living in poverty and on the role of school counsellors in the process.

With respect to research methodology, five studies are based on questionnaires completed by school counsellors (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2014; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; Harris et al., 2018; Bryan et al., 2017; Griffin & Steen, 2010). The main subject areas are counsellors'

opinions about, attitudes to as well as competences and participation in involving parents. The researchers also explore the underlying influencing factors. There is one case study presenting the impact assessment of an intervention programme aimed at reducing high attrition rates (Gruman et al., 2013). Vaishnavi and Kumar (2018) conducted interviews with school counsellors to identify factors that hinder parental participation. One study applied longitudinal questionnaire-based research using a control group to evaluate the results of an intervention programme to improve parent-child relationships and support parenting competencies (Sheely-Moore & Bratton, 2010).

3.3.3. The role of school counsellors in communicating with parents

This question is considered from several angles in the present study. First, we examine whether the *leading role* specified in the ASCA model<sup>1</sup> manifests itself in the course of activities intended for the involvement of parents. Next, we explore the *methodology of parental involvement programmes* as well as *the actors involved* (students, families, friends, local community). We also mention the factors influencing or hindering the effectiveness of interventions and the participation of school counsellors in planning and implementing them.

The role of school counsellors in involving parents and strengthening school-family-community partnership is significantly influenced internationally by the guidelines of the ASCA model [1], which provides support and a framework for the work of school counsellors in the USA. This model assigns a *leading role* to school counsellors in developing and implementing new, institution-wide programmes within their competence. They are expected to act as leaders in communicating with authorities, establishing the organizational structures required by the programmes and supporting student achievement at school and community levels. The involvement of parents as a primary goal is most commonly related to indirect services to students such as informing parents about higher education opportunities, or organizing parental consultation, workshops and training.

We divided the 10 studies in our focus into three subgroups for analysis. First, we looked at the two studies, that gave reports of specific interventions, analysing their effectiveness and outcomes. In Gruman et al.'s (2013) investigation, school counsellors, who had to plan and implement an intervention for their entire schools, acted as leaders. In order to solve the problem of high attrition rates, they first reviewed the literature, previous research findings and good practices, asked school stakeholders, evaluated current practices of preventing attrition and put forward proposals for altering the curriculum to school heads. After that, emphasis was laid on involving parents. As a first step, they reformed the system of parent-teacher meetings, transforming them into a forum for students to give an account of their academic achievement and higher education plans to their parents and teachers. Following the meeting, students and their parents had a joint study scheduling session with the school counsellors. The intervention also included the development of a screening programme of high-risk students to indicate high attrition risk based on academic performance. The students at risk and their families were given targeted help and if necessary, they were advised to seek specialized assistance. Furthermore, an online platform was created so that parents could communicate their concerns about their children or inform counsellors of any change for the worse. The effectiveness of the programme was confirmed by the fact that the proportion of parents attending parent-teacher meetings rose from 35% to 90% and that students achieved 20% better at national assessment tests.

Sheely-Moore and Bratton (2010) present the outcomes of a 11-week parental competence development course organised and held by school counsellors. They served as facilitators and leaders during the training, which, through roleplay exercises and video supervision, helped improve parenting skills such as setting boundaries and barriers in

<sup>1</sup> American School Counselor Association (2019). The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counselling Programs, Fourth Edition. Alexandria, VA.

child-rearing or the development of verbal and non-verbal communication skills. As a result of the training, the behaviour of the children of participating parents improved and parental stress decreased to a significantly greater degree than in the control group.

In one of the two articles (Gruman et al., 2013), intervention affected the entire institution and involved collaboration with teachers, students and parents alike. In the other intervention programme (Sheely-Moore & Bratton, 2010), students were indirectly affected by school counsellors' support as the personal meetings and training sessions were attended only by parents. In both cases, counsellors functioned as leaders of the planning and implementation of the intervention, but in the second programme, this role was complemented by that of a facilitator, which is closer to the classic role of psychologists.

Subsequently, we analysed the studies which mainly discussed school counsellors' attitudes towards, and participation in, activities promoting parental involvement. The focus of analysis was counsellors' methodology and role in the involvement of parents. (This was where their leading role emerged). Four studies investigate counsellors' attitudes and participation (Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; Bryan et al., 2017; Griffin & Steen, 2010). Three papers point out school counsellors' leading role; one of them particularly discusses the effects of leadership practices on involvement in partnership with parents (Bryan et al., 2017). The findings, in line with in the literature, confirm that the presence and active use of certain leadership skills and practices (systemic collaboration, developing self-efficacy in partnerships, calling for school-level cooperation and principals' expectations that motivate involvement) can help school counsellors to establish partnership with parents. Griffin and Steen (2010) lay primary emphasis on partnership, examining which activities school counsellors participate in with the purpose of promoting involvement. As a novelty, their results also reveal that leadership is a factor that can help parental involvement; which, however, is typical of only an extremely low proportion of respondents (3.6%). The authors have found that school counsellors can contribute to a more intense involvement of parents mainly by collaborating with the community – and hence, by widening the range of services available to students – and giving assistance in good parenting practices at home. All these activities assume an approach favouring partnership. Holcomb-McCoy (2010) also regard supporting professionals as leaders, who contribute to parental involvement mostly by mobilizing parents to volunteer at school, informing them about the most important deadlines and events, as well as organizing parental conferences and update meetings. In contrast to the above, Hendricker et al. (2023) see psychologists in a collaborative rather than a leader role, carrying out prevention and intervention activities similar to those in the public health sector (universal prevention: Epstein & Sanders, 2002, 2019] six types of parental involvement; targeted prevention: problem-solving consultation with families; individualised prevention: improving parenting skills and strengthening the parent-child relationships through family interventions). Hendricker et al. (2023) found that most school psychologists' workplaces did not have a parent education programme, but almost 75% of them had a programme for parent involvement, and problem-solving consultation was a common practice in most schools (61.6%). Concerning the role of school psychologists in parent involvement, it was found that the majority of them are not involved in the implementation of parent education programmes (only 3.1% are involved), a small percentage of them are involved in implementing parent involvement activities (26.3%), but a significant proportion (58%) are involved in problem-solving consultation, which shows that a large proportion of the responding psychologists are not involved in general preventive parent involvement activities to support higher student achievement and school well-being, but these professionals mostly work with students and families when some type of problem or challenge has already occurred.

One of the 10 studies investigated the factors explaining school counsellors' partnership with parents. We treated this study separately as it does not focus on the frequency of engaging in each activity but on

the factors promoting engagement. Harris et al. (2018) have found that school counsellors are open to partnership with ethnic minority parents only if they are equipped with adequate multicultural knowledge and professional self-efficacy; in other words, they believe in their own ability to collaborate with minority parents.

Finally, we analysed studies that attempted to explore the barriers to co-operation with parents and the possibility of compensating for them. There are three studies discussing some of the hindering factors of the school counsellor-parent partnership (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Vaishnavi & Kumar, 2018). Two of them adopts the perspective of school counsellors, while the other takes parents' viewpoint. In Bryan and Holcomb-McCoy's (2004) paper, responding school counsellors attribute their low participation to their heavy workload, lack of time and excessive responsibility that goes with partnership. Leadership is offered as a possible solution, because the authors claim that these problems can be tackled if supporting professionals are prepared during their higher education to act as leaders and communicate efficiently and proactively. Similarly, Hendricker et al. (2022) found that school counsellors' heavy workload might be a significant reason why not enough programs supporting parental engagement are available at schools in the US. According to their results, 75% of respondents serve multiple schools, and the more schools they serve, the fewer parent education programs are available in the schools they work in. Vaishnavi and Kumar (2018), on the other hand, explored parental resistance, which is manifested in their unrealistic expectations regarding counselling, denial of the child's difficulties and their prejudices against counselling. As possible solutions, the authors propose giving parents insight into the counselling process, educating them, providing evidence of the children's problems and making parents interested to find a solution together.

#### 4. Conclusion, limitations, and implications

We have found that most of the studies aim to explore supporting professionals' role in promoting parental engagement. Samples usually include certain groups of supporting professionals, teachers and parents. With respect to methodology, the most common techniques are qualitative ones such as interviewing. Researchers unanimously regard supporting professionals as bridges connecting parents to schools as their work can contribute to collaboration between these two agents of education. School social workers and counsellors establish mutual trust between parents and teachers by working with families and community building (ecological systemic approach), whereas special education teachers do so by taking individual characteristics into account and representing the principles of social acceptance. Our systematic review gives a versatile picture of the methods used by supporting professionals to help parental involvement. The findings also underscore the importance of multi-professional teamwork in schools, as effective parental engagement is most successfully fostered through the coordinated efforts of different support professionals working collaboratively.

However, our study shows that most existing research on the role of school support professionals in family-school partnerships and parental involvement is predominantly qualitative and limited in scope. While these studies provide valuable insights, they lack the robust scientific evidence required for generalisation. The findings highlight the need for larger scale quantitative research to validate and support evidence-based policy decisions.

Across the reviewed studies, the concepts of parental involvement and parental engagement appear with varying levels of conceptual differentiation. While several papers use the two terms interchangeably or alongside related notions such as collaboration or partnership, other studies interpret them as functionally distinct but closely connected constructs. In these interpretations, parental involvement typically refers to school-initiated and institutionally structured forms of participation, whereas parental engagement reflects a deeper, internally motivated commitment of parents to their children's learning. Overall,

the literature suggests that the two concepts are best understood as points on a developmental continuum, where professional interventions often begin with facilitating parental involvement and aim to foster more sustained parental engagement.

This review has limitations. The body of evidence may be affected by publication bias, and the search strategy was confined to selected databases and languages (only English), which could influence coverage. The included studies differed in their populations and methodologies, leading to some heterogeneity, and the applicability of the findings is primarily related to the contexts represented in the available literature. The findings of this review have several implications for practice. First, they highlight the need for schools to make systematic use of support professionals as bridges between parents and teachers, particularly when working with disadvantaged families or those raising children with special educational needs. Building mutual trust and sustaining open channels of communication can strengthen parents' confidence in schools and promote more active engagement in their children's education. For practitioners, the review underlines the importance of adopting an ecological and inclusive approach that takes into account families' social and cultural backgrounds. At the policy level, our results suggest that decision-makers should acknowledge the contribution of support professionals by ensuring adequate resources, professional training and clear role definitions within schools. Strengthening the position of school social workers, counsellors and special education teachers may ultimately enhance parental engagement and foster more effective, equitable school-family partnerships.

Future research should therefore build on the valuable insights provided by existing qualitative studies while also prioritising larger-scale, quantitative and mixed-method designs. Such approaches could complement the in-depth perspectives already available and provide more robust, generalizable evidence to inform both educational policy and everyday school practice. Comparative research across different countries would also be particularly valuable, since the roles and specialisations of school support professionals differ widely between education systems. In addition, longitudinal approaches could shed light on how the contribution of school support staff influences parental engagement and the development of school-family partnerships over time.

#### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Cintia Csók:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Emese Alter:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Katinka Bacskai:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Beáta Andrea Dan:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Gabriella Pusztai:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

#### Informed consent statement

Informed consent was not required for the study.

#### Institutional Review Board statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of the School Ethics Committee of the Doctoral Program in Educational Sciences at the University of Debrecen (protocol code 5/2025, dated 30 September 2025).

#### Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work, the authors did not use generative AI or AI-assisted technologies for writing, editing, or data analysis. Only standard tools (e.g., reference managers, grammar checkers, and statistical software) were employed.

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The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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