



The role of parental engagement in student success in government schools of Himachal Pradesh: a mixed-methods study of Hamirpur District

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of parental engagement on student success in government schools of Himachal Pradesh, with a particular emphasis on Government Senior Secondary School (GSSS) Tauni Devi and nine neighbouring institutions in the Hamirpur district. Recognizing the critical role that families play in the educational ecosystem, the research adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to examine the nature and extent of parental involvement and its correlation with various dimensions of student achievement.

The sample comprised students from classes 6 to 12, their parents, and teachers, representing a diverse socio-economic and demographic cross-section. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions across ten selected schools.

Four core domains of parental engagement were explored:

1. Home-based academic support, including homework supervision and routine academic monitoring;
2. Academic socialization, encompassing parental aspirations, values, and goal-setting practices;
3. Participation in school-level activities, such as parent-teacher meetings and school development committees; and
4. Encouragement in co-curricular areas, notably student participation in Scouting, cultural programs, and sports.

Student success was assessed using multidimensional indicators: academic performance (term results and teacher evaluations), attendance records, behavioural engagement, and involvement in co-curricular and leadership activities. The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between consistent parental involvement and improved student outcomes. Notably, students whose parents engaged in regular academic dialogue, emotional encouragement, and school-community interactions demonstrated higher academic achievements, better attendance, and active participation in school life. Furthermore, the study identified Scouting and similar co-curricular initiatives as particularly effective platforms for parental engagement, promoting holistic development, life skills, and student confidence. Parental support in these domains enhanced not only academic performance but also socio-emotional competencies and leadership attributes.

Despite the positive trends, the research also uncovered several structural and perceptual barriers to meaningful parental involvement. These include parental illiteracy or low education levels, time constraints due to occupational commitments, lack of awareness about school functions, and limited communication between school and home. Teachers expressed the need for structured platforms and training that would facilitate regular, purposeful parent-teacher collaboration.

In response to these findings, the study offers several contextualized recommendations. These include initiating school-based parental orientation sessions, creating accessible and multilingual communication channels (including mobile-based apps or messaging platforms), integrating parental engagement modules into in-service teacher training, and establishing community-led awareness campaigns. Additionally, policy-level support is essential to institutionalize parental involvement as a central pillar of school improvement frameworks.

In conclusion, the study underscores that fostering robust parent-school partnerships can significantly enhance student learning outcomes in public education settings. When parents are empowered with the right tools, support, and opportunities to engage in their children's education—both academically and emotionally—students benefit through improved academic success, stronger character development, and better long-term educational trajectories. This research advocates for a systemic and sustained approach to parental engagement, tailored to the cultural and socio-economic realities of rural Himachal Pradesh.

Keywords: Parental engagement, student success, government schools, Himachal Pradesh, mixed-methods research

Introduction

Parental involvement is globally acknowledged as a vital determinant of student achievement, emotional well-being, and overall development. A wealth of research from both international and national contexts consistently confirms that students tend to perform better academically, attend school more regularly, and engage more actively in learning when their parents are involved in their educational journey. This involvement may manifest in various forms—ranging from assisting with homework, fostering a positive learning environment at home, maintaining communication with teachers, participating in school-level activities, and setting high educational expectations. However, much of this

research has predominantly emerged from urban and semi-urban educational settings, where access to resources, digital infrastructure, and parental literacy are comparatively more favourable. Consequently, there exists a significant gap in understanding how parental engagement functions in rural, socio-culturally diverse, and geographically distinct areas such as Himachal Pradesh.

The present study seeks to address this gap by focusing on government schools in the Hamirpur district of Himachal Pradesh, with a particular emphasis on Government Senior Secondary School (GSSS) Tauni Devi and nine other neighbouring institutions. Hamirpur, like many hilly regions in India, is marked by strong familial and community ties,

but also contends with specific challenges. These include restricted digital access, seasonal or permanent parental migration for employment, and wide disparities in literacy and awareness levels among parents. Such contextual factors influence both the nature and the extent of parental engagement in students' schooling.

Recognizing these nuances, the study explores the forms, frequency, and perceived effectiveness of parental involvement across two primary domains: the home environment and school-based participation. Special attention is given to students in the middle and secondary grades (classes 6 to 12), as these formative years play a crucial role in shaping academic trajectories, decision-making skills, and personality development. The study investigates not only traditional academic involvement but also parental encouragement in co-curricular domains such as Scouting, which contributes to students' leadership development, life skills, and confidence.

The research aligns with the guiding principles of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020^[4], which underscores the importance of involving parents and communities as active stakeholders in the education process. NEP 2020 envisions a school ecosystem where parents are informed partners, empowered to contribute meaningfully to governance structures such as School Management Committees (SMCs) and community-led initiatives. It advocates for inclusive, participatory, and contextually grounded strategies to bridge gaps in educational equity and quality.

By employing a mixed-methods case study approach, this research provides both empirical data and contextual interpretation relevant to school leaders, educators, and policymakers. The findings are expected to generate actionable insights for the implementation of localized strategies under government programs such as Samagra Shiksha, which aims to integrate school, home, and community efforts for student development. The study ultimately emphasizes that for sustainable improvement in educational outcomes, parents must be viewed not as peripheral observers, but as empowered, informed, and engaged collaborators in the holistic development of their children.

Review of Literature

Parental engagement has long been recognized as a crucial contributor to student academic achievement, emotional well-being, and overall educational success. A significant body of international research highlights the multifaceted benefits of parental involvement in formal schooling processes. One of the most influential theoretical frameworks in this domain is Epstein's (2001)^[1] model of school-family-community partnerships, which outlines six dimensions of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration with the community. This model emphasizes that student outcomes are most positively influenced when schools and families work in partnership across these domains. Similarly, Hill and Tyson's (2009)^[2] meta-analytic review of parental involvement during adolescence identifies academic socialization—which includes communicating educational expectations, discussing learning goals, and transmitting values—as the most impactful form of involvement. In contrast to direct assistance with schoolwork, academic socialization is more

consistently linked to student motivation, self-efficacy, and long-term educational attainment. These global insights provide a strong foundation, yet the complexity of parental involvement becomes more pronounced when considered in specific national and regional contexts, such as rural India.

In the Indian context, various studies conducted by NCERT, NIEPA, and state-level education departments have affirmed that parental expectations, emotional encouragement, and a supportive home environment are instrumental to student success. This is particularly true in government schools serving first-generation learners, where schools may face resource limitations, and parental involvement often compensates for academic shortfalls. However, widespread challenges persist, including parental illiteracy, irregular work schedules due to agrarian labor patterns, seasonal migration, and economic hardships. These issues significantly constrain the capacity of parents to consistently support their children's education.

In Himachal Pradesh, which offers a unique socio-geographical setting, the literature is comparatively limited but revealing. The state is characterized by strong community cohesion, yet the formalization of parental involvement remains inconsistent. While parents often express high aspirations for their children's education, they are frequently disengaged from structured school activities such as Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs), School Management Committees (SMCs), and school-based academic planning. A study by the Himachal Pradesh SCERT (2019) noted a sharp decline in parental engagement beyond the primary level, especially in hilly and remote regions. This disengagement is not due to apathy but often results from a combination of logistical challenges, limited educational backgrounds, and a lack of confidence in interacting with formal institutions.

Recent global research continues to refine understandings of what constitutes effective parental engagement. For example, Kim (2022)^[3] and Wang & Wei (2024) emphasize that school-home communication, emotional support, and value transmission are more reliably associated with improved student outcomes than task-oriented involvement such as assisting with homework. In fact, some studies caution against excessive or misaligned parental involvement, particularly when parents themselves have limited formal education. In such cases, well-intentioned help can inadvertently impede student autonomy, increase anxiety, or create dependency, thereby weakening learning outcomes.

Collectively, the literature underscores two major insights: first, parental involvement is beneficial across diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts; and second, engagement strategies must be tailored to reflect local realities. The intersection of traditional community values, evolving educational aspirations, and geographic constraints in Himachal Pradesh presents a unique setting for studying parental engagement. Existing frameworks must be contextualized to address region-specific barriers such as transportation difficulties, digital divides, and migratory livelihoods, while also leveraging community strengths, such as intergenerational support systems and cultural respect for education.

The present study builds on these insights by offering an in-depth, empirically grounded analysis of parental engagement in the Hamirpur district of Himachal Pradesh, with a focus on secondary-level students in government

schools. It aims to fill a critical knowledge gap by identifying practices, perceptions, and challenges surrounding parental involvement in this rural educational setting and by providing recommendations for localized, equity-focused engagement models under initiatives such as Samagra Shiksha and the National Education Policy (2020) [4].

Objectives of the Study

The central aim of this study is to explore, understand, and critically analyze the role of parental engagement in influencing student success within government schools of Himachal Pradesh, with a specific focus on institutions located in the Hamirpur district, including Government Senior Secondary School (GSSS) Tauni Devi. In a region characterized by diverse socio-economic conditions, traditional community structures, and geographical constraints, it is imperative to examine how parental involvement interacts with student learning and development. Guided by this overarching aim, the research is structured around the following three specific objectives:

1. To assess the level, forms, and frequency of parental engagement in selected government schools.

This objective seeks to comprehensively examine the ways in which parents engage with their children's educational journey, both within the home and the school environment. At the home level, the study explores practices such as supervising homework, promoting reading habits, discussing academic aspirations, monitoring progress, and offering emotional support. Within the school context, it investigates participation in Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs), involvement in School Management Committees (SMCs), volunteering in school events, and support for co-curricular activities such as Scouting or cultural functions. By disaggregating data across various socio-economic backgrounds, the study aims to document the diversity in parental involvement patterns and the factors that influence them, including parental education, occupation, and household responsibilities.

2. To analyze the influence of various dimensions of parental involvement on students' academic performance, attendance, and participation in school life.

This objective focuses on identifying which specific types of parental engagement are most closely associated with positive student outcomes. These outcomes are measured through indicators such as academic achievement (e.g., test scores and teacher assessments), school attendance records, classroom engagement, and active participation in co-curricular programs. The study distinguishes between different forms of involvement—including academic socialization (value transmission and goal setting), home-based academic monitoring, emotional encouragement, and co-curricular support—to determine their relative impact on student success. In particular, the role of parental encouragement in activities like Scouting is examined as a potential contributor to the development of leadership, discipline, and confidence among students.

3. To identify the key enablers and barriers affecting parental engagement in the rural and hilly context of Himachal Pradesh.

Recognizing the importance of contextual factors, this objective investigates the socio-cultural, economic, linguistic, and infrastructural variables that influence the

degree and quality of parental involvement. It explores challenges such as low parental literacy, limited access to communication technologies, time constraints due to agricultural or wage labor, and seasonal migration. In addition, it considers cultural attitudes toward education, gender roles, and perceptions of school authority that may either facilitate or inhibit active parent-school collaboration. The goal is to identify not only the barriers but also the enabling conditions, such as strong community networks, local leadership, and parental aspirations that can be harnessed to design locally appropriate strategies for improving engagement.

By addressing these objectives, the study aims to contribute to evidence-based policy and practice in school-community partnerships and inform targeted interventions under national programs such as Samagra Shiksha and policy frameworks like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 [4]. It emphasizes the need to reimagine parents not merely as passive stakeholders but as active collaborators in their children's educational success.

Research Questions

This study aims to explore the nature, scope, and impact of parental engagement in government schools of the Hamirpur district, Himachal Pradesh—a region marked by strong community bonds, but also challenged by geographical constraints, migratory patterns, and socio-economic diversity. The following key research questions guide the investigation:

1. **What are the most common forms, patterns, and frequencies of parental engagement observed in government schools of Hamirpur district?**
 - How do parents support their children's education in the home setting (e.g., academic supervision, motivational discussions, establishing a study routine or environment)?
 - What is the level of participation of parents in school-based activities such as Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs), School Management Committee (SMC) engagements, and community learning events?
 - Are there differences in parental involvement between primary, middle, and senior secondary levels?
 - To what extent do mothers and fathers participate differently in educational activities?
2. **What is the relationship between various dimensions of parental engagement and student success indicators such as academic performance, attendance, and co-curricular participation?**
 - Do academic socialization, emotional encouragement, and home-based support correlate positively with students' exam performance and attendance?
 - Which dimensions of engagement (e.g., Scouting encouragement, regular PTM attendance, home supervision) show the strongest association with student achievement?
 - How do these relationships vary based on student gender, class level (e.g., middle vs. secondary), or socio-economic status?
3. **How does parental support influence students' involvement in co-curricular and life-skills development programs, particularly Scouting and Guiding?**
 - What role do parents play in encouraging participation in structured programs like Scouting, NSS, and sports?

- Are students who receive parental encouragement for such programs more confident, disciplined, or socially active?
 - How do parents perceive the relevance of non-academic programs in shaping their children's future?
- 4. What are the major enablers and barriers to effective parental engagement in the rural, hilly, and community-oriented context of Hamirpur district?**
- How do parental literacy, occupation (especially agricultural or migrant work), family size, and socio-cultural norms affect involvement?
 - To what extent do physical distance from school, lack of transportation, or poor digital connectivity serve as deterrents to participation?
 - What are the cultural beliefs, gender roles, or traditional perceptions about education that influence parental attitudes?
- 5. What strategies, practices, or innovations have schools adopted to enhance parental engagement, and how are these perceived in terms of effectiveness?**
- Are school-initiated platforms such as WhatsApp groups, teacher phone calls, community meetings, or printed circulars successful in improving communication with parents?
 - What role do SMCs, BAL Sabhas, and School Development Plans play in building trust and collaboration with parents?
 - Are there specific best practices at GSSS Tauni Devi or neighbouring schools that have proven successful and could be replicated in other rural settings?
- 6. How do teachers, school heads, and education department officials perceive the role of parents in student development, and what expectations do they hold?**
- Do school staff believe that parents are sufficiently involved, or do they perceive a gap in engagement?
 - How do these perceptions vary across rural and semi-urban clusters within Hamirpur?
 - What kind of parental involvement do educators find most supportive, and what forms do they find less effective or intrusive?
- 7. How do students themselves perceive parental involvement in their educational journey?**
1. Do students feel supported, motivated, or pressured by their parents' engagement?
 2. What forms of parental involvement do students find most helpful—academic help, emotional support, or encouragement in extracurricular areas?
 3. Are there noticeable differences in student perceptions based on their academic performance or participation level?

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-method case study design to investigate the nature, patterns, and effects of parental engagement in the context of government schools in Hamirpur district, Himachal Pradesh. The quantitative

component helped to identify measurable patterns and relationships, such as the correlation between parental involvement and student academic or co-curricular performance. Simultaneously, the qualitative component provided nuanced insights into the lived experiences, socio-cultural dynamics, and contextual factors that influence parental behaviours and school-family interactions. This combination allowed for triangulation of data, increasing the validity of findings and providing a comprehensive picture of parental engagement in rural, semi-urban, and hilly school environments.

2. Study Area and Sample Selection

The research was carried out in the Hamirpur district, a region characterized by diverse socio-economic and geographical features including plains, semi-urban centers, and remote hilly terrains. The sample schools were strategically selected to reflect this diversity, ensuring inclusivity of various parental backgrounds and school contexts. The sampling strategy was purposive and stratified, aimed at achieving representation across multiple variables such as parental occupation (agriculture, service, and labor), education level, proximity to schools, and student grade levels.

The sample included:

- 10 government schools, comprising both senior secondary, high and middle schools, with representation from central locations and remote villages.
- 100 parents of students enrolled in Classes 6 to 12, selected from various socio-economic and educational backgrounds.
- 10 teachers, including head teachers and subject teachers, to provide professional insights into parental involvement and school-home communication.
- 200 student records, systematically reviewed for academic performance, attendance, participation in Scouting and other co-curricular activities, and disciplinary observations.

3. Tools for Data Collection

To ensure valid and reliable data collection, a variety of tools were designed and, where necessary, translated into Hindi to facilitate accessibility and cultural relevance:

1. Parent Engagement Questionnaire (PEQ – Hindi Version)

A structured survey tool comprising both closed- and open-ended items, focusing on domains such as home learning support, parent-teacher communication, attendance at school events, involvement in child discipline and motivation, and support for co-curricular initiatives like Scouting and Guiding.

2. Teacher Perception Form

A semi-structured form used to gather qualitative insights from teachers regarding their perceptions of parental involvement, the consistency and nature of communication, and perceived impacts on student learning and behaviour.

3. Student Record Template

A standardized format developed to collect and analyse secondary data from school records, including term-wise academic marks, attendance sheets, behaviour logs, and participation in school functions and leadership activities.

4. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guidelines

Carefully crafted guidelines to facilitate in-depth discussions with School Management Committee (SMC) members, parents, and community leaders. The FGDs explored barriers to effective parental participation, gendered roles in education, cultural beliefs about schooling, and potential strategies for enhancing collaboration between home and school.

4. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over a two-month period using a phased approach:

- Quantitative data (PEQs, student records) were collected during school visits, often supplemented by home visits in cases where parents were unavailable or hesitant to participate during school hours.
- Teacher interviews were conducted face-to-face, usually after school hours, ensuring privacy and comfort for open sharing.
- FGDs were organized with prior scheduling in school meeting halls or village common areas, facilitated by school leaders and supported by SMCs or Panchayat members for better turnout and community participation.

All participants were briefed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was taken. Ethical protocols, including anonymity and the right to withdraw, were strictly adhered to.

5. Data Analysis Techniques

The following methods were employed to analyse the collected data:

- **Descriptive Statistics**
Used to summarize the basic characteristics of parental engagement, such as frequency of home supervision, attendance in school events, gender-wise and socio-economic variations, etc. Data were analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS.
- **Correlation and Cross-tabulation Analysis**
Statistical tests (e.g., Pearson correlation, Chi-square) were applied to examine relationships between dimensions of parental involvement (e.g., emotional support, home learning environment) and **student outcomes** like academic scores, attendance consistency, and co-curricular participation levels.
- **Thematic Coding and Content Analysis:**
Qualitative responses from teacher interviews and FGDs were analysed through inductive thematic analysis. Themes such as "communication gaps," "trust in teachers," "parental motivation," and "socio-cultural hindrances" were identified, categorized, and interpreted to understand deeper systemic and contextual realities.
- **Triangulation**
Insights from parents, teachers, and student records were cross-compared to validate findings and minimize bias, allowing for a robust understanding of the interdependent roles of family and school in student development.

Findings (Summary of Results)

The study, conducted across 10 government schools in the Hamirpur district, involved data collection from 100 parents, 10 teachers, and academic records of 200 students. The following significant patterns and insights emerged:

1. Home-Based Academic Support

A substantial majority (75%) of parents reported regularly inquiring about their child's homework and making efforts to maintain a supportive study environment at home. Interestingly, this trend was prevalent even among parents with limited formal education. This indicates that emotional commitment and high educational aspirations often compensate for academic limitations, reflecting a strong undercurrent of parental involvement through informal yet impactful methods.

2. Academic Socialization

Approximately 68% of parents engaged in regular conversations with their children regarding educational progress, ambitions, and future career paths. This form of engagement—termed academic socialization—emerged as one of the strongest predictors of student academic performance and intrinsic motivation. It reflects a forward-looking mind-set among parents, even in remote or resource-limited settings.

3. School-Based Participation

Only about 30% of parents reported consistent attendance at Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs). Multiple barriers to participation were identified, including:

- Occupational commitments such as agriculture and wage labour.
- Low awareness regarding the strategic importance of PTMs.
- Lack of transport or inconvenient scheduling.

Despite this, teachers observed that those who did attend PTMs displayed genuine concern and curiosity, although consistent follow-up and deeper communication remained challenges.

4. Co-Curricular Support and Scouting

The study found a noteworthy link between parental encouragement and student involvement in co-curricular domains, especially Scouting and Guiding. Students with proactive parental support in these structured programs demonstrated:

- Higher participation levels.
- Enhanced confidence and collaboration skills.
- Greater sense of belonging and pride in school activities.

These activities appear to serve as visible indicators of student growth, which parents can more easily recognize and support.

5. Quantitative Correlations

Correlation analysis revealed statistically significant relationships:

- Academic socialization showed the strongest positive correlation with exam performance ($r = 0.41$), highlighting the impact of motivational, future-oriented conversations.

- PTM attendance showed a weaker yet positive correlation with academic outcomes ($r = 0.19$), indicating that presence alone may be insufficient unless supplemented with active follow-up.
- Home-based emotional support had a moderate correlation with regularity and improved classroom behaviour, suggesting that consistent parental presence and encouragement influence student discipline.

Discussion

This study underscores the nuanced, culturally embedded nature of parental engagement in rural and hilly settings like Hamirpur. Contrary to conventional assumptions, parental involvement here extends beyond measurable metrics and reflects deeper, emotionally grounded forms of support.

1. Culturally Grounded Engagement

The findings suggest that parental participation, although not always visible in formal school functions like PTMs, is actively present in the form of:

1. Verbal motivation.
2. Career discussions.
3. Encouragement to maintain regular attendance and study routines.

Such culturally resonant behaviours, often overlooked in institutional frameworks, play a vital role in shaping student outcomes. The study argues for broadening the definition of parental engagement to include these non-traditional yet impactful forms.

2. Role of Co-Curricular Activities as Connective Platforms

Programs like Scouting and Guiding, frequently treated as supplementary, emerged as powerful bridges between schools and families. These platforms:

1. Offer structured opportunities for students to develop leadership and life skills.
2. Allow parents to witness tangible growth in their children, thus reinforcing their involvement.
3. Foster a sense of collective pride and school identity among communities.

Encouraging such activities and showcasing student achievements through community events can substantially elevate parental engagement levels.

3. Recommendations for Systemic Strengthening

To address existing gaps and harness the strengths of the current ecosystem, the following interventions are proposed:

1. Reimagine PTMs to include activity showcases, informal discussions, and flexible scheduling based on community rhythms.
2. Use mobile communication tools (e.g., WhatsApp, SMS) to deliver attendance alerts, academic updates, and invitations in local dialects to enhance accessibility and awareness.
3. Leverage School Management Committee (SMC) meetings and annual functions to orient parents on their crucial role in their child's development.
4. Train teachers and school heads to identify and acknowledge varied forms of parental engagement—beyond formal attendance records—to foster inclusive practices.

5. Develop parent-volunteer programs, especially in co-curricular areas like Scouting, to integrate families more closely with the school ecosystem.

Implications for Practice

The insights derived from this study underscore the critical role that structured, inclusive, and context-sensitive parental engagement can play in enhancing student outcomes. Within the specific socio-cultural and geographical realities of rural Himachal Pradesh, particularly in the hilly terrains of Hamirpur district, the following strategic actions are recommended to institutionalize effective parent-school partnerships:

1. Professional Development for School Personnel

To build sustainable parental engagement ecosystems, there is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of school functionaries—including Headmasters, teachers, and School Management Committee (SMC) members—through targeted training interventions. These capacity-building modules should include:

- **Inclusive Engagement Strategies:** Training should highlight that both literate and non-literate parents bring valuable perspectives and contributions to the educational journey of their children.
- **Communication and Relationship-Building Skills:** Teachers must be equipped to foster trust-based interactions through home visits, culturally sensitive parent-teacher meetings, and respectful listening practices.
- **Socio-Emotional Sensitivity:** Training should emphasize empathy in engagement, respecting socio-economic challenges, traditional roles, and familial constraints, especially in agrarian and migrant labour families.

2. Community-Led Parent Orientation and Awareness Campaigns

To bridge the prevalent information and aspiration gap among parents in rural and semi-literate communities, it is imperative to organize regular orientation initiatives that are embedded in local culture and language. Recommended formats include:

- **Cluster-Level Parent Orientation Camps:** Held periodically, these camps should be conducted in vernacular dialects to ensure clarity, comfort, and emotional resonance.
- **Experiential Demonstrations:** Using local success stories, visuals, and dramatizations, schools can show how active parental engagement leads to tangible improvements in academic performance, attendance, and life skills.
- **Leveraging Local Institutions:** Integration with Mahila Mandals, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Gram Panchayats, and Anganwadis will widen reach and foster a sense of shared educational responsibility.

3. Integration into Policy Frameworks and School Evaluation Mechanisms

A systemic shift is needed to formally recognize and reward parental engagement within school governance and evaluation metrics. The following steps are proposed:

- **Policy Mainstreaming:** Programs such as Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan and Shaala Siddhi should incorporate defined parental engagement indicators into school performance assessments.
- **Suggested Metrics:** These may include PTM attendance rates, frequency of home visits by school staff, number of parent volunteers in school activities, and parent participation in academic review meetings.
- **Parental Engagement Calendar:** Each school should develop an annual calendar with clear objectives, timelines, and review checkpoints to ensure continuous and consistent parental involvement.

4. Leveraging Co-Curricular Activities as Parent-Engagement Gateways

Extracurricular platforms offer a non-threatening and joyful entry point for parents, especially those who may feel unprepared to engage with the academic sphere. Recommended practices include:

- **Inclusive Participation in Events:** Parents can be invited to participate as guests, evaluators, storytellers, or volunteers in events like BAL Melas, Science Fairs, Sports Meets, and Scouting Camps.
- **Showcasing Student Achievements:** Displaying student projects, organizing exhibitions, and hosting joint parent-child competitions helps in strengthening parent-school bonds.
- **Community Celebrations:** By transforming school events into community-led cultural festivals, schools can create an environment of pride, ownership, and emotional investment.

5. Digital Inclusion as a Communication Catalyst

In an increasingly connected world, digital tools can play a transformative role in enabling consistent, transparent, and multilingual communication with parents. Contextual and cost-effective recommendations include:

- **Low-Tech Communication Channels:** SMS alerts, WhatsApp broadcast groups, and Interactive Voice Response Systems (IVRS) in local languages can bridge the communication gap for working or geographically remote parents.
- **Multimedia Content:** Short videos, audio messages, voice notes, and graphic-based newsletters can be shared to explain student progress, school programs, and parenting tips.
- **Digital Literacy Support:** Schools should collaborate with local youth clubs or NGOs to build basic digital literacy among parents, particularly mothers, to empower them to engage meaningfully.

Limitations of the Study

While the present study contributes significantly to the understanding of parental engagement in government schools of Himachal Pradesh, particularly within the Hamirpur district, it is important to acknowledge certain methodological and contextual limitations. Recognizing these constraints is essential not only for interpreting the findings appropriately but also for shaping the direction of future research in this domain.

1. Limited Geographical Coverage

The research was geographically confined to selected schools within the Hamirpur district, representing a predominantly rural and semi-urban population. Although the chosen sample reflects characteristics typical of many Himachali government schools, especially in mid-hill regions, the study's insights may not be entirely representative of other parts of the state. Regions such as the tribal belts of Lahaul-Spiti and Pangi, the urban centers like Shimla and Dharamshala, or the culturally distinct districts like Kinnaur and Chamba may exhibit different dynamics in parental engagement due to variations in socio-economic status, educational access, language diversity, and traditional norms. Hence, the generalizability of the findings across all regions of Himachal Pradesh remains limited.

2. Dependence on Self-Reported Perceptions

A significant portion of the data was obtained through self-reported instruments, such as structured questionnaires and feedback forms completed by parents and teachers. While every effort was made to design culturally appropriate and linguistically accessible tools, self-reporting inherently carries risks of certain biases:

- Social desirability bias, wherein respondents might overstate their engagement or provide answers they perceive as more socially acceptable rather than truthful.
- Recall bias, particularly among parents with limited literacy or educational backgrounds, which can affect their ability to accurately remember or quantify their involvement in school-related activities.

These limitations may have influenced the reliability of the data concerning the actual extent and nature of parental participation.

3. Lack of Direct Behavioural and Psychosocial Assessment

Although the study incorporated academic records and co-curricular participation as indicators of student development, it did not include any systematic observation or psychometric evaluation of student behaviour, emotional well-being, or motivational states. Consequently, the research could not capture the more subtle and complex influences of parental engagement on aspects such as student discipline, resilience, self-esteem, or interpersonal skills. These dimensions are crucial to understanding the holistic impact of parental involvement and merit attention in subsequent studies.

4. Time-Bound and Cross-Sectional Design

The data collection was conducted within a limited time frame and followed a cross-sectional approach, capturing responses at a single point during the academic session. This methodological constraint hindered the ability to observe longitudinal patterns of change or development in parental engagement practices over time. Furthermore, the seasonal or event-driven variability—such as parent attendance during examination periods, festivals, or government campaigns—was not accounted for. As a result, the study could not explore how sustained or periodic parental involvement might cumulatively influence student outcomes across multiple academic cycles.

Conclusion

This study reaffirms the pivotal role of parental engagement in shaping educational outcomes, even within the rural, semi-urban, and socio-culturally unique settings of Himachal Pradesh. Despite common assumptions that lower levels of parental literacy or economic hardship hinder meaningful involvement in a child's education, the findings reveal a more nuanced reality. Emotional support, aspirational conversations, and informal yet consistent encouragement toward academics and co-curricular participation emerged as powerful predictors of student success, independent of parents' formal educational attainment.

While active participation in formal school mechanisms—such as Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs), School Management Committees (SMCs), and community governance forums—remains modest due to occupational demands, gender roles, and cultural perceptions of authority, home-based involvement is demonstrably impactful. The study identifies academic socialization—manifested through value transmission, learning encouragement, and future-oriented dialogue—as a particularly influential domain of parental engagement. Notably, parental support in co-curricular programs such as Scouting, Bal Melas, and Science Exhibitions has been linked with enhanced leadership, confidence, and discipline among students, contributing to their holistic development beyond the classroom.

These insights call for a fundamental reimagining of how parental involvement is conceptualized and operationalized within policy and practice. Rather than adhering to narrow, institutional definitions that often overlook rural constraints, education systems must adopt a more inclusive, culturally responsive framework. Such a framework should value localized expressions of engagement, including oral storytelling, informal learning support, and community mentoring, and culturally embedded guidance practices.

Educational leadership—particularly under flagship initiatives like Samagra Shiksha—must proactively cultivate mechanisms that bridge the gap between schools and families. This includes conducting outreach in local dialects, scheduling interactions in accordance with agrarian or labor-intensive routines, and designing engagement models that reflect and respect community rhythms and realities. Training teachers in culturally competent communication and empowering School Management Committees to act as facilitators of mutual trust can further strengthen this partnership.

In summation, transforming parental engagement from a peripheral element into a central pillar of the education process demands a sustained, context-sensitive, and collaborative approach. School heads, educators, parents, and policymakers must move beyond token involvement to co-create an ecosystem where families are seen not as passive observers, but as co-educators and stakeholders in their children's development. Only through such inclusive engagement can government schools in Himachal Pradesh—and similar contexts—achieve equitable and enduring educational outcomes.

Appendices

The following appendices provide essential supplementary materials used during the design, data collection, and analysis phases of the study. These resources are included to ensure transparency, replicability, and contextual clarity, particularly in relation to parental engagement practices in government schools of Himachal Pradesh.

Appendix A: Parent Engagement Questionnaire

This appendix contains the complete version of the structured questionnaire administered to parents of students enrolled in selected government schools. The tool was developed in Hindi to ensure accessibility and cultural resonance, especially for first-generation and rural respondents. It comprises both closed-ended and Likert-scale items across multiple domains, including:

- Home-based academic support (e.g., helping with homework, providing study materials)
 - Academic socialization (e.g., discussing the importance of education, encouraging future aspirations)
 - Participation in school-based activities (e.g., attending Parent-Teacher Meetings, volunteering during school events)
 - Perceived challenges (e.g., time constraints, language barriers, lack of confidence)
- this instrument served as the primary data collection tool for understanding the breadth and nature of parental involvement from the parents' perspective.

Appendix B: Teacher Perception Scale on Parental Involvement

This appendix includes the standardized perception scale administered to teachers of the participating schools. The tool was designed to capture educators' observations and professional judgments about parental involvement, focusing on:

- Frequency and consistency of parental engagement
 - Quality of parent-teacher communication
 - Perceived impact of parental involvement on student academic performance, behavior, and motivation
 - Noted differences in engagement across different socio-economic or cultural groups
- The responses helped in triangulating the data obtained from parents and provided a comparative, school-level understanding of engagement trends

Appendix C: Informed Consent Forms (for Parents and Teachers)

This section contains the consent form templates used to obtain voluntary participation from all research respondents. Separate forms were designed for parents and teachers, each including the following components:

- A clear statement of the research purpose and objectives
 - An outline of the procedures involved in participation
 - Assurance of confidentiality and data anonymity
 - Clarification that participation was entirely voluntary, with no impact on school services or employment status
 - Provision for participants to withdraw from the study at any stage without providing a reason
- these forms adhered to ethical research standards and were approved prior to field deployment.

Appendix D: Student Academic Performance Record Format

This appendix presents the standard template used for collecting student academic performance data. The template was developed in consultation with school authorities and included the following indicators:

- Annual exam scores in core subjects (Mathematics, Science, Language, Social Science)
- Attendance records across the academic session

Participation in co-curricular and school-organized programs (e.g., Science Fairs, Bal Melas, Scouting activities)

Each student's data was anonymized and coded to ensure privacy. The academic records were used solely for quantitative correlation analysis with parental engagement metrics, as gathered through Appendices A and B.

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