The Home-School Partnership in Early Childhood Education: Understanding The Challenges and Obstacles

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Abstract
Parental participation and home-school partnerships have been crucial in Early Childhood Education (ECE). The attitudes and understanding of the stakeholders determine the learning experience and outcome. This study was conducted in Malaysia to gather the perspectives of preschool parents, teachers, and principals. The data is collected through self-completion interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and observations of preschool stakeholders. The findings suggest that parents are willing to participate in their children's education. The teachers and principals, too, prioritize the significance of developing relationships with parents. However, certain hindrances, such as time constraints and insufficient knowledge and resources, are present. The implication of this study shows that there is a need for the provision of parental support by the school is essential in augmenting parenting abilities and promoting cooperation. Also, there is a need for training programmes for parents and teachers to address competency gaps. The Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) centres and the national policy ought to devise a plan of action that aligns with pragmatic necessities and effectively communicates the advantages of collaborative endeavours.
Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Parental Involvement, Stakeholders' Perspectives, Early Childhood Development

Introduction
In early childhood education, cooperation between home and school is a critical factor affecting children's holistic development. The home-school partnership represents a dynamic interaction between parents, teachers, and school principals, where they collectively work towards creating an optimal learning environment for young children's minds. This research seeks to investigate the various dimensions of the home-school partnership, elucidating the different roles parents, teachers, and principals play in shaping children's early educational journey during their formative years.

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund UNICEF (2019), investing in ECE is regarded as a developmental, economic, and social necessity. It has a long-term positive impact on the country's development and educational progress. (UNICEF, 2019). The best time to begin efforts to end poverty, raise social awareness, and educate children is during their formative years when they are still forming their identities and learning to interact with the world (Bartolome et al., 2017).

Early childhood education lays the foundation for lifelong learning, and the importance of the home-school partnership cannot be overstated. The family unit, with parents as primary caregivers, plays an important role in fostering children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. At the same time, educators and school administrators contribute to this tapestry of development by providing a structured and enriching academic environment. Understanding the unique responsibilities and contributions of each stakeholder in the homeschool partnership is essential to fostering a collaborative and supportive educational ecosystem.

Problem Statement

Although the importance of home-school partnerships in early childhood education is acknowledged, there is a significant gap in the understanding and implementation of effective collaboration among parents, teachers, and principals. The success of a child's educational journey is closely related to the synergy between the home and school environment, but some challenges and obstacles prevent the realization of this symbiotic relationship. Issues such as limited communication, varying expectations, and lack of resources contribute to incomplete integration of effort, potentially hindering the optimal development of young children's minds.

Most private preschools in Malaysia have implemented policies and approaches that aim to engage parents in their children's educational development. The employment of applications such as Class Dojo, Little Lives, and similar ones is rising. These initiatives aim to ensure parents are informed about their children's educational progress and foster a strong partnership between the school and home. In addition, it is customary for private preschool institutions to involve parents in various activities, including but not limited to sports day, parent-teacher conferences, and cultural festivities, as a means of promoting parental engagement. Numerous educational initiatives extend beyond mere engagement in academic pursuits, with specific activities even incorporating parental involvement in coordinating school events and outreach efforts within the community. Typically, teachers assume primary responsibility for cultivating enduring parent-teacher relationships and initiating the pedagogical process for children. Parents are generally expected to assume a supportive role in collaborative efforts.

The sustainability of the Malaysian ECCE sector is contingent upon a lasting partnership among key stakeholders, including ECCE centres, governmental bodies, educators, and parents. Effective implementation of policies and strategies aimed at improving the homeschool partnership in ECCE relies upon the stakeholders' awareness of their respective roles and a shared perception and motivation to foster robust relationships for the benefit of the children. The involvement of all relevant stakeholders, in conjunction with governmental

initiatives, ought to enhance and elevate the quality of ECCE in Malaysia (Rahmatullah et al., 2021).

The Ministry envisions that the ECCE's future direction depends on long-term cooperation among stakeholders such as ECCE centres, the government, teachers, and parents. However, the parental attitude, motivation, and hindrance to parental involvement are unclear due to a lack of research on Malaysian parents' perspectives in Malaysia. To completely understand the viewpoints of stakeholders in Malaysia, research employing an inductive technique to analyse parental, teacher, and principal attitudes and roles in home-school relationships is required. This study supports Ramatulla et al.'s 2021 research report, which said that examining parental attitudes that promote children's well-being is critical and determining the consequences of parenting styles that form their children's distinctive educational trajectories in Malaysia.

Research Objective
1. To investigate the challenges to successful, home-school relationships in early childhood education.

Research Question
1. What obstacles do teachers, parents, and preschool principals face to home-school partnerships?

Conceptual Framework
The Children's Direct Environment
There are correlations between the sociocultural theory of Lev Vygotsky and Albert Bandura, which view the environment as a fundamental process in development, and Bronfenbrenner's (1974) perspective. Researchers can gain insight into the significance of the home-school relationship by looking at it through the lens of Ecological Systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). This theory describes the reasons for and benefits of a collaborative effort between the home and the school. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory proposes that a child's environment is comprised of a network of interrelated systems that are organised based on their influence on the child. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, which has five layers of structure, established the effect of development's social, community, and political environments (Yamauchi et al., 2017; Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Each system's relationship impacts the children's development, and the structure is according to the significance.

Secondly, the immediate environment can be differentiated from broader environmental levels. The next level is the mesosystem, which focuses on the children's interactions with all the stakeholders in the microsystems: the family and school. The interaction process and the relationship's well-being among the parents and teachers directly impact the child's development. In short, it is referred to the interconnection of the stakeholders that influence the children's development. Thirdly, interrelationships between the different levels are influential. The ecosystem is the next level, which considers the influence of the neighbourhood, parents' workplaces, and other indirect environments. These external experiences impact the children's closest adults (Shelton, 2019).

Five essential tenets served as the foundation for the ecological development concept. First, interactions between a person and their environment lead to growth. The microsystem, the first level of ecological systems theory, refers to the children's immediate and closest contacts, including family and school. Each stakeholder of this system impacts the views and actions of the others through system interactions, creating a multifaceted connection between the children and their immediate environment. Parental interactions can either positively or negatively affect a child's development. The interaction within the system is critical for promoting optimal early childhood development (Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022).

Then the fourth level, the macrosystem, focuses on the relationship of the community's local culture, beliefs, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity to the roles of education and the ways of doing things. The final level of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the chronosystem, the environmental shifts that transpire throughout an individual's life can significantly influence their life and development. It includes notable life transitions and past experiences that may alter the atmosphere of the environment and impact the lives of children (Shelton, 2019; Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). This research focuses on investigating the stakeholders' awareness of the micro and mesosystem while considering the other structure of the ecological model. The first two systems are the most closely related to children before anything else. If these two systems are well-maintained, the chances of children growing up in a positive environment are not bad (Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022).

Theoretical Framework
Theory of Predictors of Parental Engagement
Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler take a multifaceted and multidimensional approach to discuss the process of parental participation (Deslandes, 2019). This model provides a comprehensive and robust theoretical framework for the investigation of specific predictors of parental engagement. This model is all-encompassing regarding the process of parental engagement, written from the parent's point of view and based on research from psychology and education.

The willingness of families to participate is the first step in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework of parental involvement, which leads to positive outcomes for children. Aside from these considerations, parents' participation decisions are influenced by their perceptions of their child's general need for assistance and the school's expectations for parental participation. It all boils down to their attitude towards parenting and belief that they can be counted as a positive influence (self-efficacy) (first level) (Otto et al., 2020).

According to the hypothesis, teachers and staff will encourage parental engagement if they recognise it as part of their professional role, i.e., if it conforms to anticipated expectations. As a result, individuals must understand their duties (role understanding), what they are capable of (self-efficacy), and that their efforts will bear fruit (personal motivators). They will be more likely to advocate for parental participation if they believe that collaboration with parents is a school priority, is one of the criteria assessed in the school's performance evaluation policies, and is a school priority (contextual motivators). Their effort will continue if the school administration supports them and shows a solid commitment to this goal, and school-family engagement becomes an intrinsic part of the school's routines and culture (school responsiveness) (Deslandes, 2019; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

In the second level, parents decide on specific forms of involvement for their children based on the abilities and information they have at their disposal. The time a parent can spend being involved is another factor in the decision. Parents can affect children's developmental outcomes through a variety of techniques (third level). This concept hypothesizes that parental involvement in children's learning experiences can be classified into four distinct but interconnected types: encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and teaching. The methods parents use to accomplish this may or may not be suitable considering their children's developmental level and the school's requirements (fourth level). In conclusion, the process variables and their interactions will impact the children's development, knowledge, and sense of self-efficacy (fifth level) (Otto et al., 2020).

Children's self-efficacy depends on how they perform a specific task, and often for children, their self-efficacy is built upon positive relationships with the teachers. Their interactions with teachers reflect their perceptions of their capacity to establish robust connections with their teachers. Parents facilitate the cultivation of positive relationships between their children and their teachers by exemplifying healthy interactions thereby nurturing the children's ability to establish a positive connection with their teachers. (Whitaker, 2019).
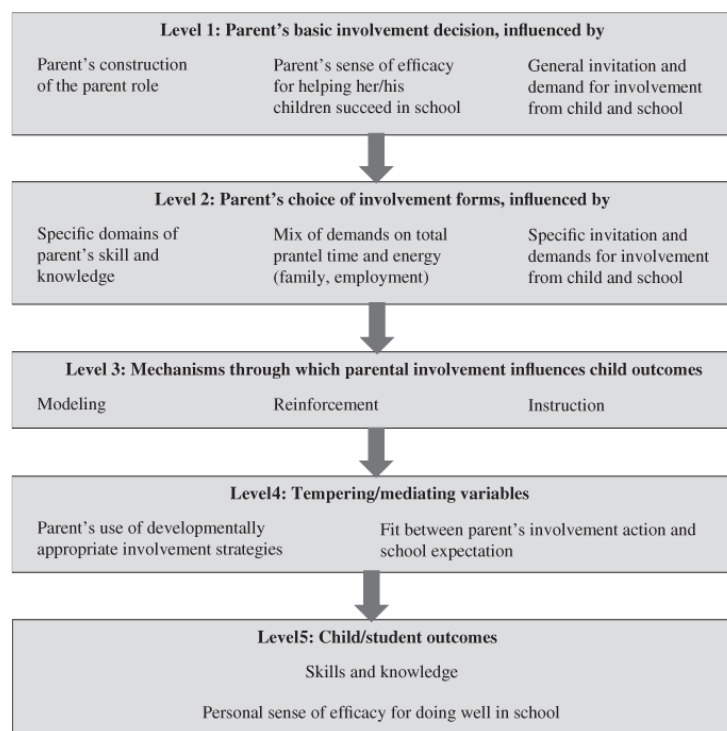

Figure 1: Model of Parental Involvement Process

Epstein's School Family -Partnership Theory

The ecological model facilitates comprehension and recognition of the crucial role that stakeholders and the community play in the lives of children. Epstein's model examined the collective commitment of stakeholders within the children's local environment, which was centered on the children. Several studies show a favourable relationship between interaction, policies, and other elements that link stakeholders (Newchurch, 2017; Epstein & Sheldon, 2016).

Newchurch (2017) cited that this theory helps to facilitate the growth and advancement of children in an environment where the partnerships of the adults in the life of children aim to engage, guide and enrich the children's experience in learning (Newchurch, 2017; Nayor, 2016). Parents, schools, and the community share mutual awareness and commitment to nurturing the children's development (Newchurch, 2017; Nayor, 2016). The school-family collaboration idea proposed by Epstein demonstrates and indicates that stakeholders collaborate to impact the development and education of children and are intertwined and influenced by overlapping spheres.
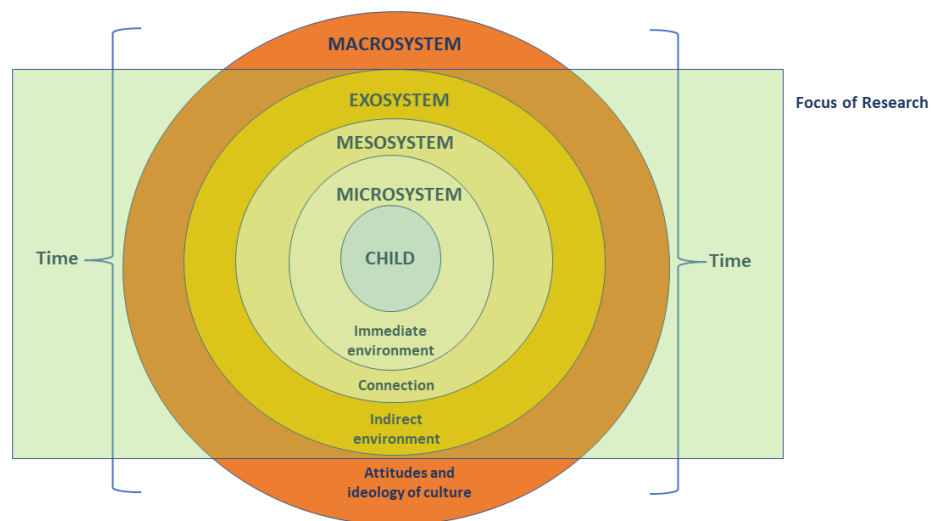
Source: (Epstein, et al., 2002)
Figure 2: Ecological System: Affecting the Children

Literature Review

Although much research supports the notion of the significance of parental engagement to the children's overall development, there is still significant variance in the expected and actual parental participation. The importance of parental involvement is now valuable in Western communities and globally. However, certain conditions are outside the control of schools or parents, and these impacts are critical to education policymakers. Parents cannot give their best in their involvement even though they know they should, as there are disruptions in their daily routines. A significant number of individuals encounter challenges in attending school-related events or engaging in their children's education owing to extended work schedules, the obligation to provide care for their siblings at home, financial constraints, and linguistic hindrances.

Parents' Socioeconomic Factors

Providing parents with information regarding their crucial role in their children's education can significantly enhance their self-confidence. Oranga and colleagues (2022) clarify that a positive correlation exists between parental income and education the participation in academic development. The study revealed that parental education significantly impacts both their child-rearing aspirations and their occupational opportunities, resulting in longer working hours and lower wages. Consequently, parents in such circumstances tend to bear

more offspring, requiring greater resources for their upbringing. Parents facing economic disadvantages may encounter difficulties in providing academic support to their children, owing to the strain induced by their financial circumstances. Therefore, it is recommended that educational institutions and policymakers implement an intervention program to provide support for families falling within this demographic.

As discussed by Belaic (2022), scientific literature identified a link between the family's socioeconomic position and the children's outcome. It placed at least two theories through which the benefits and drawbacks of the family's socioeconomic status are directly passed on to the children through parenting. Through the lens of the family stress model, we can see how material hardships harm the relationships between parents. It has direct implications for the development and overall welfare of children. Over time, evidence suggests that low income and other economic stresses affect parental mental health, leading to arguments and challenges in the home. Externalizing and internalizing issues, academic and physical health challenges, social and interpersonal relationship difficulties, and their subsequent adverse effects on child outcomes and future life prospects are all examples. If the interparental connection is not addressed, parenting treatments are unlikely to be successful in families with high levels of parental conflict. This method for linking family socioeconomic position to child outcomes is more likely to be related to family income rather than parental education, parenting education, or occupation. The family investment model is the other model that explains the connection between socioeconomic status and educational attainment. It implies that individuals with greater socioeconomic status will allocate their time and financial resources towards their children's education.

Existing studies investigated the effect of the economic structural variable on the various factors affecting the participation of the parents in the children's learning. For instance, in some nations, the family's financial status significantly impacts the decision regarding which school to attend. It may result in the child being enrolled in a school of lower quality, which, due to fewer resources and a more precarious financial situation, does not encourage children to advance as much as it should or involve their parents in their education. In addition, the parent's lack of financial stability leads to a lack of parental cultural capital, defined in the research as the ability to expose children to additional educational activities, such as visiting museums and zoos and providing other learning materials. This interpretation is based on the differences in socioeconomic factors that can directly influence and prevent parental involvement in children's education (Belaic, 2022).

Parents' Academic Background and Experience in School

Learning may be perceived negatively when viewed through the lens of the parent's failures, which can affect the child's ability to learn that assumed that many parents lack motivation because they have low self-esteem and struggled academically when they were younger. Therefore, they do not have adequate information to assist them in helping their children. Additionally, it was shown that parents' low educational attainment and social awkwardness were obstacles to their participation in their children's schools.

According to another study, parents with low levels of education are less inclined to engage in their children's education. The parental level of education would influence the degree and level of engagement. Parents with a greater degree of education are more active in their children's special education activities than parents with a lower level of education.

Parents with lower levels of education confront higher hindrances to their children's learning than educated middle-class parents. Consequently, there is a need to educate, inform, and assist parents with low educational levels to educate all children (Oranga et al., 2022).

In addition, the family investment model explains how the influence of the family income, which is an essential indicator of the economic resources, along with the parent's education level and the parental profession, affects the amount of money parents invest in the education of their children. The children's overall academic performance will rise as a direct consequence. For instance, parents who have completed a higher level of formal education are likely to give their children a greater variety of intellectually stimulating activities than parents who have completed a lower level of formal education.

According to Belaic (2020), both parents' education generally impacts the parenting styles utilized and the children's health and happiness. Parents who have more education are more likely to spend time reading aloud to their children and give other intellectually engaging activities for their children to do at home. They also have a lower propensity for employing methods of negative punishment, and on the contrary, parents with low education backgrounds have more hindrance to participation in the education development of the children.

Teachers and School Policy

Oranga et al (2022) as the other barrier to parental involvement related to the teachers and staff of the school's lack of training to involve parents in school activities. Other than this, the additional hindrance to parental participation is the implementation of limited and rigorous school programmes that do not support the different parental needs. Consequently, it increases the likelihood of low participation and lack of engagement with parents.

Oranga et al (2022), also pointed out that most teachers and school personnel are educated in an individual-centered model of service delivery that does not encourage parental involvement. In addition, school personnel adopt a restricted and rigorous educational plan that cannot accommodate the different demands of parents. Thus, parents frequently report feeling helpless, frustrated, and marginalised by instructors and the education process.

A good school policy of home-school partnership helps maintain a proper structure and support to encourage parents' participation. The research of Oranga et al (2022), shows that parents' deficiency of knowledge or comprehension of the school's structure and proper mediums of communication, as well as their feeling unwelcome by the school personnel, are one of the significant discouragements to parental engagement in their children's learning, particularly for those children with learning challenges. The other challenges for parental involvement are related to the teachers' unprofessional attitude towards parents. For instance, teachers feel threatened by the parents' involvement as they are not trained to value and work with parents as an advantage. When parents are not professionally trained in guiding children in their learning, they can be intimidated by the school's operational structure and not know how to involve them in school activities. From here, it is apparent that teachers are essential in maintaining a respectful relationship with parents.

Kuusisto and Lima (2019) expanded on teachers' challenges involving parents in their school programme and activities. The impediment to establishing consistent parental engagement strategies and initiatives is one of the teachers' most significant obstacles. The insufficient allocation of resources, including time and personnel, in schools impedes the ability of teachers to develop consistent approaches and initiatives for fostering parental engagement, given the already burdensome nature of their instructional obligations and responsibilities. Moreover, the situation can be more challenging for teachers if the school management lacks backing or does not prioritize home-school partnerships. Additionally, there is a challenge in maintaining or establishing productive home-school communication across different educational levels. Moreover, Kuusisto and Lima (2019) also highlighted a prevalent lack of representation of fathers in schools compared to mothers.

Kuusisto and Lima (2019) also analyzed the parental barriers connected to the institutional level. Fundamentally, the stakeholders should share a coherent interpretation and value of home-school partnerships. When the administration adopts a facilitator role to support the teachers and parents in the educational process, all the stakeholders can develop realistic and mutual expectations about the roles that each other plays. Only then will the engagement path be accessible. Hence, principals and head teachers are pivotal in creating a school environment that encourages parents' participation in their children's education (Kuusisto & Lima, 2019)

Methodology
Research Design
A case study technique is chosen as the research strategy to achieve the above aims. Research based on case studies has evolved into a practical, adaptable methodology that may shed light on a broad range of topics across several fields. Using case studies in theory-building and theory-testing is one of their many benefits (Pandey, 2019). The case study approach helps to examine individuals, groups, or events in detail. The process is to look for recurring tendencies and root causes of behaviour. The research aims to gain insight into information gathered through an open-ended questions survey to find out about parents', teachers', and principals' perspectives regarding their involvement, motivation, and barriers to the home-school partnership.

This research methodology is a systematic approach to data collection and flexibility in the presentation of the description. Qualitative research endeavours to attain an in-depth comprehension of a singular organisation or occurrence, as opposed to a superficial depiction of a wide-ranging population sample. One could posit that qualitative research provides a thorough and detailed understanding of a given phenomenon. This methodology offers non-quantitative data that lacks numerical values (Naderifar, et al., 2017).

Open-ended questions allow participants to respond to their own words, without being constrained by a preconceived set of answer options. Open-ended questions are commonly utilised in qualitative research methods and exploratory studies. The utilisation of open-ended questions in qualitative research allows for a more comprehensive and holistic examination of the topics under investigation by researchers. Open-ended survey questions enable respondents to offer a wider range of options and opinions, thereby increasing the diversity of data collected compared to closed-question or forced-choice survey measures.

Findings and Discussion
RQ: What obstacles do teachers, parents, and preschool principals face to home-school partnerships?

Parents' Opinions
Using QCA, one theme emerged in response to the four research questions emerged as the following:

Table 1
Summary of the parents' opinion

No of Participants	What are the challenges parents face in working with the school?
8	Time limitations and work schedule
6	Lack of experience, knowledge, skills and resources
3	Environment distraction and challenging to manage children's behaviour at home.

This question relates to the parents' opinions of the challenges in supporting learning at home. Three main themes were established from the survey and interview sessions regarding the parents' views of their parenting skills. The three main themes are (1) time and work imitation, (2) lack of experience, knowledge, and resources, and (3) environmental distraction and challenges to managing the children's behaviour at home.

The ***first theme*** that emerged occurred the most frequently as the barrier to supporting learning at home is time limitations and work schedule. The total reference for this theme is nine times. The participants that expressed the same barriers to support learning at home due to time and work are:

> (n3,7,8,9,13,16) "***Time and work-related***"
> (n4) "***For me, it is the mental capacity and physical strength. As I mentioned previously, juggling with housework and the child is an infinite loop***".
> (n15) "***After work too busy with housework, need to take care of other children and tired***".
> (n18) "***A factor that discourages me from supporting my child's learning at home is time management. I have busy schedules, and it is challenging to find the time to help my child with homework or engage in educational activities***".

The ***second theme*** related to the barrier to supporting learning at home is the lack of experience, knowledge, and resources. Three parents said they lack the experience, confidence, knowledge and resources to guide their children's education at home.

> (n6) "***Lacking experience and not sure how to guide my child***".
> (n16) "***Lack of knowledge or confidence***".
> (n20) "***Maybe do not know the way to guide them with academic learning***".
> (n16) "***Lack of resources.***"

The ***fourth theme*** related to the barrier in guiding the children, as it is challenging to manage their behaviour at home.

> (n1) "***Resources and kids behave differently at home***".
> (n14) "***When my child is frustrated and trying to be as patient as possible with my child***".
> (n11) "***parents' interference***"

Teachers' Opinions

Using QCA, one theme emerged in response to the four research questions emerged as the following:

Table 2
Summary of the Teachers' Opinion

The number of participants:	What are the obstacles faced by teachers in home-school partnerships?
6	Limitations due to job responsibilities and readiness.
9	Parents' attitudes
1	Language Barrier

This question is to discover teachers' obstacles in the home-school partnership effort. The first theme that emerged is the limitation due to their own readiness and job responsibilities. The complete reference of this theme is four times. The responses from the teachers for this theme are such:

> (n9) "***Firstly, is lack of time. I may have a busy schedule with teaching and administrative responsibilities, leaving little time for communication and collaboration with parents***".
> (n11) "***I am not sure how to talk to some parents. Afraid I will make mistakes***".

The next theme is "parents' attitude" as one factor that discourages teachers' involvement with parents. Some of the responses are such as:

> (n6)"***Hard to encourage parents to support learning at home as they claimed that they do not have the time***".
> (n8) "***I would say, the parent's attitude. It is because I have come across parents who are unwilling to go the extra mile for the children's development. As an educator, this discourages me as I have gone the extra mile for the children and when the parents do not do the same, it feels difficult***!"

The last theme that emerged from this research is the "language barrier" as a factor that challenges involvement with parents. One teacher responded, "Language barriers can limit effective communication between educators and parents who may not speak the same language".

Principals' Opinions

Using QCA, one theme emerged in response to the four research questions emerged as the following:

Table 3
Summary of Principals' Themes

The number of participants:	What are the obstacles faced by principals to home-school partnerships?
6	Higher requirement of resources and readiness for parental involvement in school.
9	Parents attitudes.
1	Cultural and language barriers.

This question is to discover the obstacles principals face in home-school partnership efforts. The first theme that emerged is the limitation due to their own readiness and job responsibilities. The full reference of this theme is four times. The responses from the teachers for this theme are such:

> (n8) "***Lack of resources to support the participation of the parents in activities, requires bigger space, better planning so that can maintain a good image. Teachers can be uncomfortable and hard to accommodate all parents' schedules***".
> (n9) "***Teachers need time to polish their skills in communication with parents***".

The following theme for this question is that parental attitudes are considered one of the obstacles the principals face in their effort to maintain the home-school partnership. The following are some of the responses:

> (n9) "***Many parents not so educated. Not comfortable to join activities***".
> (n4) "***Parents not confident and shy to participate or voice out opinions in the big group***".
> (n10) "***Parents' expectation on teachers too high***"

The final theme for this question is that the cultural and linguistic barrier is one of the challenges, as one of the principal's highlights in her effort to preserve the home-school partnership.

The results of the study suggest that despite the willingness of different parties involved in ECE and families to engage in collaborative efforts, several obstacles prevented them from effectively working collaboratively toward enhancing children's growth and development. Previous research has identified time limitations as a noteworthy worldwide barrier impeding parental engagement in home-school partnerships (Lau & Ng, 2019).

Furthermore, the similitude between the views among the teachers and principals on the barriers to home-school collaboration points to the parents' attitude and their readiness to involve the families. However, for the parents' group, the barriers to involvement in school are close to the empirical theories presented in the literature review. The parents' opinions of barriers to involvement are consistent with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of

parental involvement in children's learning related to the participation role creation and self-efficacy related to cognitive components in making decisions related to their involvement in school.

Parents' Opinions

The data illustrate that the key barriers for parents to their participation in school are mainly due to lack of time and low self-efficacy in doing what is needed to facilitate the children's development at home and participation in school. The teacher and principal groups, however, have differing opinions; the parents view that they have limited time and busy schedules as a hindrance to their participation. The teachers and principals believe that those are parents' excuses for not giving their best and avoiding their responsibility for their children's education (Gedik, 2021).

Based on the findings of this study and the discussion that followed, it can be summarized that the parents' primary involvement decisions are related to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's three psychological dimensions:

(a) role construction - parent knowledge of their responsibilities in their child's education.
(b) self-efficacy - parent competency in supporting their child's academic success; and
(c) invitations and chances for involvement - parents view that they are needed and welcome by the child and school.

In this research of the group Malaysian parents, lack of experience and knowledge in appropriate child guidance was cited as a hindrance to parental engagement in their children's education by the parents. Some also noted that they lack self-assurance and skills such as forbearance when guiding their children's education. The researchers also discovered three contextual factors that influence parents' choice of various forms of involvement: parents' knowledge and abilities, as well as their time and energy, as well as direct invites from the child, and the school (Schnekloth, 2021).

The other results, with only a few references, attribute the barriers to involvement to the environmental distraction and challenge of managing the children's learning behaviour at home. When the parents are willing to be involved, these barriers are efficiently resolved with communication and support from the school. These findings show that the families need support and guidance to maintain a good environment and strategies to improve the learning at home experience.

Teachers' Opinions

The data analysis revealed that the teachers' group opinions of barriers to parental involvement are directed to the parent's attitude to the home-school partnership. They highlighted that the parent's unwillingness to be involved and their attitude that school is not important enough to take time from work limited time are the common barriers for them to reaching out to parents. Some even pointed out that parents lack understanding of their roles in their children's education. The findings in this research of the parents' opinions regarding the barriers of involvement they perceived, which related to the limited time, heavy responsibilities at home, and not experienced in being involved, are in line with the teachers' opinions. From here can deduce that these are some of the challenging barriers to parental

involvement that need the teachers' and school management's continuous effort to educate the parents on the importance of home-school partnerships and ways to engage the parents in possible ways. Teachers must redirect their efforts when families participate in unfavourable ways or at unfavourable times. Family participation does not have to be action-oriented or time-consuming; it can be information-oriented. In other words, presenting knowledge regarding expectations for learning, methods of instruction, or even evaluation techniques can sometimes help to clarify attitudes by demonstrating when and how support from family may be beneficial. Sharing information (e.g., by providing sample lesson plans, assignments, or evaluation criteria) will enhance their knowledge and skills, likely improving overall self-efficacy and leading to more beneficial participation (Whitaker, 2019).

This research corroborates the findings of earlier studies, which found that the other main barriers for teachers in building partnerships with families, as pointed out in this research, are the job responsibilities and readiness of the teachers. The teachers' group of participants stated that they are preoccupied with their duties in class and after class; this is consistent with the literature review that many schools lack resources in terms of time and personnel, preventing teachers from maintaining consistent strategies and efforts for parental involvement because they are overburdened with duties and responsibilities. (Kuusisto & Lima, 2019). The point cited that is consistent with the literature review is the teachers' readiness. The teachers and staff of the school need the training to be ready to involve parents in school activities. They need to be equipped with the skills, knowledge, and platform for engagement with families. Finally, the language barrier is another barrier to the home-school connection mentioned by the teacher. When parents and teachers communicate in the same language, communication and connection improve. Language and effective communication are the detrimental factors affecting the success of any relationship. As a result, while communicating with parents, schools must consider the language element. Some parents may be hesitant to participate owing to a language issue.

Principals' Opinions

Consistency in results is observed in the teachers' and principals' findings related to the barriers to the home-school partnership. The principals cited parents' attitudes and limitation of time as one of the most common barriers to collaboration. The other factors that were slightly different from the teachers' point of view are the higher resources needed when the events involve the parents and the lack of resources to support the parents' activities in school, such as the space constraint, the need for proper planning, and planning quality control. The principals also highlighted the language and cultural differences as barriers to the partnership. We have been living in varied cultural and linguistic variances in our multicultural country. Although it appears to be a problem, if we are all working towards the same goals, we can undoubtedly overcome all obstacles if we work together. It all comes down to mutual respect and understanding of differences.

The participants viewed barriers to home-school partnership as related to time limitation, readiness, attitude, and limited resources barriers to collaboration. However, consistent with previous studies on home-school alliances, there are strategies to manage the barriers to improve the partnership if the stakeholders view this relationship as crucial for the children's development.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The primary goals of this research were to learn about the viewpoints of preschool stakeholders on the importance and functions of home-school partnerships. Parents, teachers, and principals within and across kindergartens in Malaysia held consistent positive views on the importance of home-school partnerships. Also discussed are the motivations for and impediments to home-school collaboration. As a result, this research confirmed that the point of view of parents in Malaysia is consistent with the previous studies conducted globally. Hence, this research can serve as a collection of opinions of a group of parents in Malaysia for us to indicate the local perspective on to home-school partnership scenario.

The study shows that the stakeholders of ECCE are working towards child-focused parental engagement, including communication, parenting, and extending learning at home. There are fewer findings related to the second type of parental and community engagement, which are more centre-oriented, focusing on volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating with the community in this research.

The decisions made by parents regarding their involvement in their children's education are associated with their perception of their role, their confidence in their ability to contribute, and the overall opportunities and invitations available for involvement. It is recommended that educational institutions prioritise the instruction of home-school partnerships and endeavour to cultivate more meaningful connections with parents through heightened authentic parental involvement in the daily operations of the school. An effective partnership between homeschooling families and educational institutions should be founded on authentic engagement, inclusivity, reliance, and a shared commitment to fostering optimal outcomes for all parties involved. The concept pertains to holistic individuals engaging in interactions that demonstrate sensitivity toward each other's beliefs, needs, and ideas. Rather than engaging in competition, these individuals combine their strengths for positive education outcomes.

The research methodologies and methodology employed to perform this research were a success. The qualitative technique utilised in this study effectively gathered the necessary data using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Following the interviews and data gathering, the respondents' perspectives were categorised into numerous main themes uncovered during the data analysis. All the respondents were fully aware of the study's objectives. This investigation has provided a greater understanding of the perspectives held by ECCE centre stakeholders in Malaysia about parental involvement as expressed through the interviews and surveys. Below are a few essential suggestions for schools and parents to improve home-school collaboration.

It is critical to make further efforts to ensure that all parents have an equal opportunity to participate in their child's education. Parents should feel welcome to be involved in schools, assist teachers in the classroom, and guide parents to enhance their involvement in their children's learning at home. Home-school partnerships " reflect the shared role and responsibility that schools, parents, and the community have in working together to educate children" (National Parent Forum of Scotland, 2017, p10). Hence, the school management and researchers must examine ways to improve collaboration and overcome the impediments to a home-school partnership based on the abovementioned three criteria.

School management can offer parents multiple parental involvement options through different platforms. Other ways of parental involvement other than in-person participation during school hours can be online activities, engagement through social media, and in-home activities to strengthen the home-school relationship (Newchurch, 2017). When parents are stressed by limited time, working parents usually prefer to be involved in activities that have practical value or are directly related to their children's learning, such as class observation or parent' conferences (Lau & Ng, 2019). Hence, providing precise details of the activities is essential when inviting parents to participate.

Additional strategies to address the hindrance of parent's participation due to limited time and heavy responsibilities, schools can inform parents about upcoming school activities. Hence, the parents have more time to plan. Also, to offer childcare services for participating parents so they would not need to arrange childcare to be available for those activities. The school management can also share information with parents who missed important events such as talks or seminars. Parents will feel valued, and when they learn about the critical information they missed, they might be keener to join future events.

It is advised that schools build successful community collaborations to continuously develop, implement, assess, and improve school-based parental engagement methods. These strategies should encourage practises that benefit the family and the community. The school administration should look for new ways to provide instructors with more opportunities to establish strong relationships with parents. Maintaining a smaller class size, allowing for more preparation time, and recognising teachers' efforts in parental contact are just a few examples. Another possible support from the management to support teachers in maintaining home-school partnerships is a good communication infrastructure and a platform for the teachers to reach out to families. In recent years, the application has been helpful for teachers to update the learning portfolio of their children and for parents to know their children's progress. Comprehending the duties and obligations of educators in classroom and home-school collaborations is imperative in devising tactics for fostering and maintaining a cooperative association between the household and educational institution.

The implementation of these strategies has the potential to enhance teachers' efforts in effectively communicating with and engaging parents. Improving the training of teachers has the potential to strengthen the relationship between schools and families, leading to a potentially positive impact on the educational experience of children. Lastly, it is critical to improve parents' self-efficacy through training and workshops to support parents with skills to support the children's learning at home, parenting skills, the importance of home-school partnerships, and other skills consistent with the school's ways of guiding the children. The education of home-school partnerships for the teachers and parents to provide continuous support for this partnership. These initiatives to increase parental involvement in school can improve interactions and relationships between educational stakeholders, including parents, children, and the community. When parents know precisely what they can do and are supported by the school, chances are they will be more willing to plan time to work with the school. Moreover, training, and educational programmes for teachers to improve communication and collaboration with parents from varied backgrounds, improve their readiness to work with parents, and motivation for a positive attitude when working with parents are critical to maintaining a positive long-term relationship with families.

Research on home-school partnerships in early childhood education provides valuable theoretical and contextual insights into the challenges and barriers faced in fostering effective partnerships between families and schools. Home-school partnerships are complex endeavours that go beyond mere family involvement or participation. It involves genuine collaboration and coordination between families and schools on key issues relevant to both settings. Effective partnerships require a two-way sphere of influence where schools recognize and celebrate the individuality of each child and welcome all families while helping families reinforce the importance of homework and activities. Home-school partnerships have significant benefits for students, including increased feelings of competence, positive engagement with learning, motivation, persistence, and mastery goal orientation. To address these challenges, research suggests using a child-centered approach, supporting increased funding, creating supportive community networks, developing relationships of mutual trust and confidence, and focusing on common goals, information sharing, and decision-making. By proactively acknowledging and addressing these barriers, early childhood education can maintain its commitment to providing a strong foundation for future generations.

This research can contribute significantly to existing knowledge by emphasizing the importance of collaborative relationships between families and schools. It highlights complementary learning, and practice based on empirical evidence, and offers policy and practice recommendations to improve family involvement. In the context of early childhood education, this research plays an important role by supporting foundational learning, promoting the characteristics of effective partnerships, and emphasizing mutual influence and collaboration between families and schools. Overall, this research underscores the important role of home-school partnerships in laying the foundation for children's lifelong growth, academic success, and positive socio-emotional development.

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