Parent's Involvement and Challenges in Students Learning During **Pandemic**

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has shifted the pattern of society's existences to a new normative scenario, including the educational environment. Schools and educational institutions were forced to close until the Restricted Movement Order (RMO), or Movement Control Order (MCO) was promulgated. Many students and educators are unable to attend school on a regular basis owing to social contact constraints. As a result, parents must take on the responsibility of teaching and assisting their children's online learning at home, which necessitates mastery of numerous topics, provision of internet connection and provision of suitable learning spaces and resources. This necessitates parents playing a critical part in ensuring students' education continuity throughout the Covid-19 pandemic so that their children are not left behind in learning. The purpose of this research study is to find out how parents get involved in their children's online learning. This study employed the survey and telephone interview data collection approach. Random sampling was utilized in this research study, with the sample criteria being parents with at least one school-aged child. The results indicated that every parent had different ways of getting involved in their children's learning, each parent had to adapt with different types of challenges and each parenthad different conceptions about digital tools. Future research is needed to identify the effects of online learning on the mental health of parents and children due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which might create more awareness towards society.

Article History

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic, which is now spreading, is causing concern in a variety of areas. One of them has made inroads into the field of education. Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, online learning has become a routine for the students and the parents. Malaysia, under the direction of the Minister of Education has chosen to imply home learning or virtual learning system. Officially, as cited from https://www.reuters.com, in Malaysia, in the middle of March 2020, after the number of coronavirus infections increased to the greatest in Southeast Asia, nearly all borders are closed to travelers, internal mobility is restricted, schools and colleges are closed, and most companies are ordered to close by (Joseph, 2020). Workplace, schools, universities, and religious space must close as a result, and individuals must adapt to online distance learning and working from home.

Many nations are implementing a home-based learning program to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. It was adopted in a number of nations, including Malaysia, since last year. Instead of being a success, the learning from home program ran into several challenges in terms of the education system's long-term viability. With the most drastic shift in the educational system, not only teachers but parents also have some challenges that they had to face due to the student's online learning process. Things are different now as the parents have a more vital role

in the student's learning as they need to guide their children to learn at home while the teacher's role is to guide and teach the students virtually via an online platform. One of the challenges would be the difficulty in managing the time with working from home and guiding the student's learning from home. It is important for one of the parents to be there with the student as the student needs an adult who is eager to educate and believes in the student's abilities.

Due to the closing of schools, face-to-face classroom learning has given way to remote and online learning. This has led virtually all teachers to abandon the use of whiteboards and markers in favor of online digital tools and platforms that may be used for educational purposes. Not only being there for their children, but parents also need to adapt and learn the new learning system which uses a variety of digital tools and platforms. According to Mahiri (2011), digital tools, by short definition, are any type of software or hardware that can be used for education. Digital tools are interactive text, image, audio, and video channels for teaching and learning that may be utilized on computers or mobile devices. Nonetheless, most digital tools designed for other types of learning are very beneficial during this Covid-19 pandemic. Nearpod, Edmodo, Class Dojo and Google Classroom are examples of digital tools that may be used to design a course, share materials resources, and create an evaluation. Not only that, but digital video conferencing platforms are also available for the teachers and students to interact in real time. Parents need to adapt with the digital tools and platforms as it will ease the student's learning process at home.

The primary goal of this study is to examine and provide the findings on the ways of how parents involve in the student's learning during this Covid-19 pandemic, the challenges that they faced and the effectiveness of digital tools in the parents' perspective. Center for Child Well-Being in Sapungan & Sapungan (2014) stated parents' involvement in education cannot be avoided. Parent's involvement becomes one of the most essential factors in enhancing a student's performance. It has a unique support system that should not be overlooked when it comes to a sense of confidence.

Problem Statement

With the emergence of Covid-19, nations developed emergency strategies to restrict and to slow the spread of the illness, schools across the country are being closed, regionally or on a case-by-case basis. According to Viner et al (2020), during the Covid-19 pandemic, most of the world's registered children were subjected to temporary school closures to induce social distance and therefore slow the virus's spread. School learning disruptions may have contributed to severe academic losses among learners, particularly among those who were already at a disadvantage.

In conventional educational systems, parental involvement is a significant influence on student performance. Businesses and organizations were compelled to employ work from home when schools closed, requiring families to adapt to new routines and engagement patterns. According to Liu et al (2010), as their children participate in online education, parents must take on new and unexpected roles and obligations, while also having increased instructional responsibility for their child's learning.

This new way of life has had a significant influence on work-family balance, parental involvement and school-family partnership mechanisms. Parents have varied feelings about distance learning. According to Selwyn et al (2011), some parents feel more attached to their child's schooling than others.

The main problem with parents' involvement in students learning during this pandemic is the challenges that the parents must face in order to adapt with the distance learning situation. Parents have to be aware of the digital tools that teachers use for online classes as they need to guide and support their child during online distance learning. Economic conditions, all the problems or impediments that may restrict the parent's engagement include a lack of internet access, a lack of excitement for using technology and lack of digital literacy in the online distance learning environments. This research study will explore on how parents in Malaysia get involved with the students learning during this Covid-19 pandemic, what are the challenges that they had to faced. This research will help the teachers and the society out there to understand more about the parent's involvement during this pandemic and have an idea on how to help the parents who are really in need during this Covid-19 pandemic.

Research Objective and Questions

The researcher will address the following research questions:

- i. How do parents support the student's learning during pandemic?
- ii. What are the challenges faced by parents during the student's virtual learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Families' living situations have altered dramatically because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Previous research has revealed that students are passive in their studying at home when compared to their performance in their educational institutions. Furthermore, different forms of parental involvement may have an impact on the children's capacity to achieve in school either a bad or a good way. Parents had an essential role in the growth of their children since they were the ones who exposed them to the world. According to Erlendsdottir (2010), parental involvement refers to the degree of engagement a parent has in their child's education and life.

Children's who have an active parental involvement in their learning during this pandemic are more likely to be motivated and successful. Making learning more exciting and rewarding for the children in the near term, such as via hands on projects and activities, may be more helpful. Parent's involvement in children's learning has been shown to improve the student's academic abilities. As a result, it advised that parents' ideas about their children's academic ability, as well as their method of behavioural support for the child, should be addressed.

Likewise, the current study investigates the relationship between parental involvement and student learning, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic and Malaysia's new standard education system.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is a broad concept that has been defined in a variety of contexts. The involvement of parents in any situation results in proven gains in children's achievement. As a result, parental involvement with children and the school is essential and may yield results for all parties involved. Antipkina and Ludlow (2020), presented a holistic view of parental involvement: a "continuum of parenting behaviours ranging from lower degrees of involvement to greater levels of involvement".

Many variables, ranging from parental or household characteristics to student and school factors, are important in mediating parental involvement. Parental or family factors associated with parental involvement include parents' perceptions regarding their child's academic aptitude and need for their assistance, as well as parents' time and support. Others also indicate that moms exhibit higher levels of involvement. In terms of student character traits, their age is one variable that is influences parental involvement, primarily because if begins to decrease from primary to middle school and even more during secondary school, owing to parents' perceptions that their involvement is less necessary or welcomed by their adolescents and poor parental conscience on learning topics during high school; parental perceptions of their child's requirement in different subjects initiate parental involvement.

Hamlin (2018), parents across settings perceive relatively comparable demands for allowing parental involvement, emphasizing parenting techniques for promoting prosperity and abilities for locally established learning. Jhang and Lee (2018), parental involvement, on the other hand, is associated with school achievement.

Parental Involvement during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Parental home-based engagement was especially crucial during the Covid-19 epidemic and the interruptions it created in children's schooling. Non-natural or health-related catastrophes such as Covid-19 now impact every country on the planet. The virus was discovered in Wuhan, China, and spread swiftly around the world, killing a huge number of people. The impact of this virus jeopardizes not only public health, but also the economy and education of the people. The pandemic issue has brought to light the need for family education, which had previously been overlooked by some families. Family education, also known as parental engagement, refers to parents' involvement in their children's development, which includes parenting, volunteering, socializing, online delivery learning, and goal setting.

Parents have identified various challenges to distance and home-learning, including human obstacles, technological hurdles, logistical difficulties, and financial barriers are all examples. Parents' lack of technological knowledge to support their children in accessing online learning and resources provided for online learning were personal obstacles. The major technical hurdles were a lack of a sufficient internet connection or using technology to track educational activities. The notion that online learning did not satisfy the precise needs created logistical challenges or learning cycles of students, and parents believed it was ineffective as a substitute for face-to-face instruction. Financial and logistical constraints are intimately connected. According to Spinelli and colleagues (2020), since more concerned parents were less involved

in their children's learning activities during the pandemic. During online learning activities, most parents felt the need to be present with their children at least once a day (Dong and colleagues, 2020)

Research Methodology

In the pursuit to achieve the goal of this research study, the researcher has chosen to do both quantitative and qualitative research methods. In other terms, the combination and quantitative and qualitative research method is also called as the mixed methods. Mixed methods refer to a new research approach that promotes the mixing of quantitative and qualitative data withing a single study or long-term programme of research study.

FINDINGS

Parental Involvement in Students Learning During Pandemic

In conducting this research study, the key informants were given a total of ten opinion statements regarding the parental involvement in the students learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. 87% of parents strongly agreed that parental involvement is essential for their child's education. From the result gained from the first opinion statement, the researcher gets to explore how the parents get involved in their child's learning during the pandemic. The first way on how the parents get involved is by having regular contact with their child's teacher. From the data collected, 88% of the parents agreed with having regular contact with the teachers.

The researcher also found that making sure that the child has a comfortable learning space is also one of the ways to get involved in the students learning. This is supported by the data showing 97% of the parents agreed with the statement. Some parents also tend to organize their child's schedule or even create new routines for them. The researcher found that 83% of the parents agreed with organizing their child's schedule and creating new routines. 95% of parents strongly agreed that parents should prepare complete digital technology for their child. This shows that most parents are aware of the technology that is being used every day for students to attend their online classes during this pandemic.

Prior to that, 95% of the parents strongly agreed that it is important to provide sufficient internet access at home. This data proves that the parents understand that it is crucial to have sufficient internet access at home for their children to learn virtually. The researcher had found that 85% of parents strongly agreed that helping their child with homework is one of the ways to get involved in their child's learning during the pandemic.

Almost all parents strongly agreed that it is essential for the parents to get involved in their child's learning during this pandemic and the parents support this belief through 93% of the parents that always reward their child for good grades. This shows that most parents support their child by rewarding them for good grades where it shows that the parents appreciate their child's effort in learning especially during this pandemic. Other than that, 93% of the parents put extra effort into hiring a tutor for their child when their child needed extra help. Finally, 90% of the parents attend the parent-teacher conferences which proves that the parents get

involved in their child's learning during this pandemic by getting more information about the virtual learning process through the conferences and regular contact with the teachers.

Based on the interview session, it was found that parents are involved with helping the children with their homework and self-preparation before the online session. All these efforts were linked with improvement in academic performances, social skills, and self-confidence.

"I will help them in doing their art and crafts homework and I will teach them the topic that they do not understand while I work from home" (Interviewee one)

"I will make sure that they sit and study. They will sit according to the Google timetable which was scheduled by the school and the teachers according to their subjects and timetable. So I make sure they get into the online classes and do all the homework to submit it on time" (Interviewee three and four)

Some parents tend to prepare their child for online classes and let the child focus on the lessons on their own. Then, the parents will get involved when their child needs their guidance in anything that they do not understand from the lessons. Interviewee number one mentioned that

"I helped set up the study space for virtual classroom, I helped her with her work most of the time and I have to be by her side to attend the online classes with her. She is slightly different from other school kids, and she cannot sit for more than 10 minutes so that is why I need to be there for here most of the time".

"I am always on standby mode while working from home. Whenever my son needs me, I will be there to assist and to my surprise some of the tasks given by teachers in PDPR are quite challenging'(Interviewee two)

Parents' roles during the Covid-19 pandemic are to become the teachers, mentors and supervisors, as well as sources of security and comfort when their children are at home. According to Lilawati (2020), the role of parents in promoting learning at home during the pandemic claim that during remote learning, parents assist and monitor the students in the completion of assignments assigned by the teachers, and that learning facilities at home are not more lucrative for students when compared to facilities.

Challenges Faced by Parents During Online Learning

Based on the survey, it was found that the primary challenge in online learning during the pandemic is the children's learning attitude including making sure they stay focused during the sessions. The secondary challenge is that the parents who worked from home found it difficult to maintain the balance between work and commitment towards children's education. The lack of technological skills and knowledge was the next challenge faced by most parents, followed by internet accessibility and having to share devices among the family members.

It was then supported with the interview session where all the interviewees have one common challenge which is the lack of internet or internet failure. Due to the pandemic, all of the classes had to be held online and students need to submit their work via the Google Classroom. Parents had to find a better internet or network provided only because of the new norm that they had

to adapt with. Interviewee number five has mentioned that "internet connections were not always stable which makes it hard for my child to join the classes on time".

Distance learning via networks undoubtedly necessitates the use of learning-supporting media, digital devices and resources. The lack of digital devices is one of the challenges that the parents had to go through during the pandemic.

Teaching their children to learn at home will be an impediment and a problem as the availability of media resources and digital devices are quite restricted. Parents had to collaborate with the teacher in order to make sure that their child do not miss out any lessons. As mentioned by interviewee number three, "I had to face a challenge where we lack gadgets. They have to share with the siblings. I'm as the mother, I make sure that they will never miss out and so I will call out the teacher to send some recording source. I will communicate with the teacher and read any messages given by the teacher in the WhatsApp and Telegram group".

Another challenge that is related with technology is the variety of digital tools used by the teachers. This is also one of the common challenges where each parents have to be in different types of chatting groups via the WhatsApp or Telegram communicating platform. Almost each teacher of different subjects created a group, and this has caused the parents to have a confusion about the information received from different types of resources. Interviewee number four has stated that "The school has so many groups. We have classroom group, Sejarah group, English group in Telegram and also in WhatsApp platform. I just think that teachers should just use one platform which is the Google Classroom or the Microsoft Team". This shows that teachers need to find the best way to share information to the parents so that the parents will not have any difficulties in assisting their child's virtual learning sessions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is shown that throughout the study, most parents agreed that they must be involved in their children's learning during the pandemic even if they were working from home. This is clearly proved by the fact that parents having regular contact with the teachers to attain more information about virtual learning and how they can help both teachers and their children while working from home. Parents had to make sure that the learning space during online class is comfortable to achieve lesson objectives and it is undeniable that they too need to provide sufficient and stable internet connectivity for any virtual classes to happen and run smoothly. In addition, most parents would reward their children when they have done well in virtual classes, and some would even hire tutors for their children who needed extra help in virtual learning. As much as parents were involved in their children's learning during the pandemic, they faced challenges too. The primary obstacle parents endured was the learning attitude of their children themselves. A sudden change from physical to virtual learning had a great impact on the children's perception and learning attitude. Another common challenge found in this study was the lack of internet connection for virtual learning. Parents found it frustrated that it was difficult for their children to be focused during virtual classes if the internet is not stable. Lastly, due to limited resources, some parents stated that their children will have to share devices during virtual learning, and they had to make sure learning is accessible to all children.

As a result, while these findings may serve as a foundation for supporting parents and teachers involved in children's education to improve the home-based learning system quality, additional research may be required to measure other changes in succeeding areas of social isolation and the present situation created by the spread of the Covid-19. It is also recommended for the future researchers to use an alternative way of data collecting such as observations or focus groups to obtain more data. Finally, future researchers should explore the effects of online learning on the mental health of the parents and children due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which might create more awareness towards the societies.

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