

Secondary School Students' Perceptions about Parent-School Partnership in District Swabi, Pakistan

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Abstract

The study investigates secondary school students' perceptions about parent school partnership in District Swabi. Convenient sampling technique was utilized to obtain information from 90 secondary schools students of class 8th, 9th and 10th. Data was analyzed through univariate analysis by frequencies and percentages distributions. The findings indicate that the parent-school partnership is largely reactive rather than proactive. Specifically, two primary patterns emerged: 1) Reactive measures are prevalent. A majority (66.60%) of respondents agreed that teachers send home folders of students' weekly or monthly work for parental review and comments, and 55.50% responded that teachers contact families of students having academic or behavior problems. 2) Proactive measures are lacking: A majority of students reported schools do not provide sufficient information for parents on child development (54.40% No), arrange workshops for parents (52.20% No), or produce information linked to children's success (55.50% No). Furthermore, an overwhelming majority (77.70% No) reported the school does not have an active Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or similar formal council. The major recommendations focus on the revival and establishment of formal parent-teacher councils, arranging capacity-building programs for parents, and involving parents in school planning and decisions. This study fills a gap by providing context-specific, student-voice evidence from a developing region where parent-school partnership practices often lag global "family engagement" paradigms. It also pinpoints that work review and problem-triggered contact are present, while parent learning opportunities and structured councils are missing, offering a practical baseline for upgrading partnership frameworks.

Keywords: Students' perception, Parent-School partnership, Secondary schools, Parent teacher counsels, Swabi pakistan

Introduction

The study stands from a concept that parent-teacher partnership, or in other term collaboration, refers to the method of teacher and parent's working together for the learning of student so as that students can achieve better outcomes (Davies, 1987). The foundation of the parent-school collaboration is two-way communication between the home and the school. The purpose of parent- school partnerships is to increase parental involvement in educational initiatives and information sharing concerning kids' development. Parent-teacher partnerships are a crucial element of the learning and teaching process, boosting students' learning capacities and teachers' interests, which has a significant impact on educational outcomes, according to a number of studies (Mann & Gilmore, 2021).

Parents are widely recognized as the most important factors in the development and socialization of children, and the home is the primary context that has a significant impact on a child's development. Schools should assist parents in fulfilling their responsibility for the healthy socialization and development of their children. There are several ways to provide information, including parent- teacher conferences, phone calls to parents, social media platforms, and mailing report cards to students' homes. Students who have had good home-school contact are more motivated to attend class, have a better understanding of the rules and regulations, and go regularly. These elements all help children perform better academically (Epstein, 1995; Castro et al. , 2020). Students, who are assisted by their parents in selecting school programme that best match the student's interests and parental involvement in education are highly motivated toward school, complete their homework promptly, have a positive attitude toward school, and receive better grades. These students also learn how to set career goals for children and how to enable children to achieve the educational goals (Jiang et al. , 2023). One research that evaluated instructors discovered that parent outreach by teachers accelerated students' acquisition of reading and math skills by 40–50 percent. In addition to teacher outreach techniques like face-to-face meetings with parents, sending educational materials to parents to increase their ability to support the education of their children at home, and telephonically contacting parents as needed in the event of any academic or behavioural issues with children at school (Boruah, Phogat & Singh et al., 1995). Existing literature showed that school-home communication, such as face-to-face meetings with parents and sending learning materials to parents to increase their capacity to assist the children in education at home, contributed to a 40% increase in the academic performance of students compared to schools that did not practice this (Al-Obaydi et al., 2022; Chen, 2024). Children's performance is greatly influenced by parents reading to them, as this fosters a better knowledge of language and enhances communication skills, both of which have a beneficial impact on the children's reading success (Gest et al, 2004). Similar to this, reading to kids improves their enthusiasm in reading and their focus in class, which has a positive impact on their academic achievement (Rowe, 1991).

It was further said that it is important to ensure parents' engagement in decision-making at school through PTAs and school management committees (SMCs). Favorably correlated with improved student achievement in school (Ullah & Kiazai, 2022). Studies have also demonstrated a beneficial relationship between parental involvement in school decisions like course curriculum planning and other extracurricular activities and children's academic achievement (Naz et al. , 2024; Stojanovska, 2024). However, Batool et al. (2023) found no strong correlation between parental involvement in school decisions, such as attendance at PTA meetings, participation in lesson design, and course finalization, and students' academic success.

Parents and teachers as the primary agents of children's socialization and development. Parent school partnership is one of the most influencing factor of children's academic growth. Effective parent school partnership resulted in positive academic growth and therefore, for the first time in the history of Pakistan the government has emphasis over the home environment along with the school environment to gets fruitful results. There are numerous indicators of parent school partnership such as involving parents in decisions making, capacity building of parents, sharing students' progress reports and informing parents about children's problems.

There are current research gaps in Pakistan, including 1) The need for a culturally tailored Family–School Partnership framework that reflects the country's diverse linguistic and social contexts. For example, the Pedagogical Partnership Program at Lahore University of Management Sciences demonstrated how context-sensitive collaboration between students and educators can strengthen engagement and learning, yet similar culturally grounded frameworks are still absent at the school level (Tamim et al., 2023). 2) There is also a lack of integration of parent–school collaboration into teacher preparation and professional development programs. A study from Islamabad highlighted that pre-service teacher programs rarely emphasize collaborative skills or parent engagement, underscoring the need for a formal university–school partnership model to better equip future teachers with the competencies to work effectively with families (Batool, Malik, & Jumani, 2023). Similarly, teachers in Sindh reported that professional development often neglects collaboration and communication training, weakening connections between educators and parents (Ahmed, 2024). 3) There is insufficient rural–urban comparative research linking partnership practices to student outcomes. For instance, a recent study on rural secondary schools in Sindh found that teachers in low-resource areas face significant disparities in support and parental engagement compared to their urban counterparts, revealing how contextual differences directly affect learning outcomes (Muslim et al., 2025). The current study was designed to examine the level and aspects of parent–school partnership in the study area and to put forward policy recommendations for policymakers to create realistic policies for effective parents' school partnership to capacitate students in better academic growth using a mixed-methods approach.

Objectives

1. To critically examine students' perceptions of the mechanisms, strengths, and limitations of parent–school partnerships in District Swabi, Pakistan.
2. To analyze impact of socioeconomic factors such as parental education, family type, gender, and grade on students' perceptions of communication, capacity building, and shared decision making.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design. According to Earl Babbie(1989), taking a cross section of the population is the most appropriate to know the existing phenomenon, problem, attitude, perception, or issue. A structured questionnaire was administered. It included dichotomous Yes/No items on parent–school partnership practices and closed- ended demographic questions. Questionnaire items were drawn from a comprehensive interview schedule developed for this study, which was pretested prior to data collection; based on the pretest, several questions were modified to ensure clarity and to align with the respondents' cultural and perceptual context.

Sampling and Sample Size

Data were collected from 90 secondary school students through simple random selection within a convenience sampling framework.

Validity and Reliability

Questionnaire sheet was pretested for clarity and cultural fit. Item were pretested to refine wording and cultural appropriateness. Lastly, respondent feedback and expert review supported content validity (Haynes et al., 1995). This validation approach ensured the interview items comprehensively represented the construct domain and were relevant to the research objectives.

Internal consistency was assessed for composites built from the dichotomous items using the Kuder–Richardson 20 coefficient (KR-20), which is appropriate for 0/1 indicators and equivalent to α under τ -equivalence; all subscales showed acceptable reliability (KR-20 = .72–.83), exceeding the .70 benchmark for research use (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data Collection

For the study purpose a comprehensive interview schedule was developed covering all aspects of the study. The before data collection the interview schedule was pretested to remove any ambiguity and make it relevant to the study objectives. Based on the pretesting of the interview some questions in the interview schedule were modified according to the cultural and perceptual requirements of the respondents

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using univariate analysis. Percentages and frequency distributions were applied to examine students' perceptions of parent–school partnership.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, the research protocol, including the use of the questionnaire, was formally reviewed and approved by the equivalent ethical office at the researcher's affiliating institution, Government Degree College. To secure participation, informed consent was obtained from all respondents.

Results

Table 1 represents socio-economic characteristics of respondents. Table 2 illustrates analysis through frequency and percentage distributions regarding respondent's perceptions about parent school partnership.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Class	Frequency	Percentage(%)
8 th	30	33.30
9 th	40	44.40
10 th	20	22.20
Age		
10-15 years	46	51.10
above 15 years	44	48.90
Gender		
Boy	51	56.70
Girl	39	43.30
Family type		
Nuclear Family	50	55.50
Joint Family	40	44.50
Is your father educated		
Yes	52	57.80
No	38	42.20
Is your mother educated		
Yes	54	60.00
No	36	40.00

Table 1 shows that out of 90 respondents, 30 (33.30%) were in 8th grade, 40 (44.40%) in 9th grade, and 20 (22.20%) in 10th grade. A total of 46 respondents (51.10%) were aged 10–15 years, while 44 (48.90%) were above 15 years. Moreover, 51 (56.70%) were male and 39 (43.30%) were female. Regarding family type, 50 respondents (55.50%) belonged to nuclear families, whereas 40 (44.50%) came from joint families. In addition, the fathers of 52 respondents (57.80%) were educated, while those of 38 (42.20%) were not. Similarly, the mothers of 54 respondents (60.00%) were educated, while those of 36 (40.00%) were not.

Table 2 School Provide Information for Parents on Child Development

(n=90)

Statement	Yes (Frequency & Percent)	No (Frequency & Percent)	Key Finding
Your schools provide information for parents on child development	41 (45.60%)	49 (54.40%)	Majority (54.40%) do not provide this information.
Your school conduct workshops for parents on child development	43 (47.80%)	47 (52.20%)	Slight majority (52.20%) do not conduct these workshops.
Your school produces information for families that are linked to children's success in school	40 (44.50%)	50 (55.50%)	Majority (55.50%) do not produce this specific information.
Your schools seek information about children talent	38 (42.30%)	52 (57.70%)	Majority (57.70%) do not seek information about children's talents.
Teachers Sends home folders of student (weekly/ monthly works) for parent review and comment	60 (66.60%)	30 (33.40%)	Significant majority (66.60%) do send home student work folders.
Teachers contacts families of students having academic or behavior problems	50 (55.50%)	40 (44.40%)	Majority (55.50%) do contact families regarding problems.
Your school inform parents on how to assist students with skills they need to improve	38 (42.20%)	52 (57.80%)	Majority (57.80%) do not inform parents on how to assist with skill improvement.
Your school assists families in setting academic goals for students	40 (44.50%)	50 (55.50%)	Majority (55.50%) do not assist families in setting academic goals.
Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss school work at home	35 (38.80%)	55 (61.20%)	Largest majority (61.20%) do not provide this information.
Your school Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss with their parents	39 (43.40%)	51 (56.60%)	Majority (56.60%) do not schedule this type of interactive homework.
School has active PTA, PTO or other parent organizations	20 (22.30%)	70 (77.70%)	Overwhelming majority (77.70%) do not have an active parent organization.
School involve parents in school improvement programs	39 (43.30%)	51 (56.70%)	Majority (56.70%) do not involve parents in school improvement programs.
School incorporates inputs from parents in their school plans	44 (48.90%)	46 (51.10%)	Slight majority (51.10%) do not incorporate parent input.

Table 2 shows that out of 90 respondents, 41 (45.60%) reported that their schools provide information for parents on child development, while 49 (54.4%) disagreed. Similarly, 43 (47.80%) stated that workshops are conducted for parents, whereas 47 (52.20%) disagreed. Forty respondents (44.50%) noted that schools produce information linked to children's success, but 50 (55.50%) disagreed. Only 38 (42.30%) indicated that schools seek information about children's talents, compared to 52 (57.70%) who did not.

A majority, 60 (66.60%), agreed that teachers send home folders of students' weekly or monthly work for parental review, while 30 (33.40%) disagreed. More than half, 50 (55.50%), confirmed that teachers contact families regarding academic or behavioral problems, compared to 40 (44.40%) who disagreed. Conversely, only 38 (42.20%) agreed that schools inform parents on how to assist students with needed skills, with 52 (57.30%) disagreeing.

Forty respondents (44.50%) stated that schools assist families in setting academic goals, while 50 (55.50%) disagreed. Similarly, 35 (38.80%) reported that schools provide information on monitoring and discussing schoolwork at home, compared to 55 (61.20%) who disagreed. Thirty-nine (43.40%) indicated that schools schedule interactive homework requiring parental involvement, while 51 (56.60%) disagreed.

Only 20 (22.30%) reported the existence of active parent organizations (PTA/PTO), whereas 70 (77.70%) disagreed. Finally, 44 (48.90%) confirmed that schools incorporate parental input into school plans, and 39 (43.30%) agreed that parents are involved in school improvement programs; however, 46 (51.10%) and 51 (56.70%) disagreed with these statements, respectively.

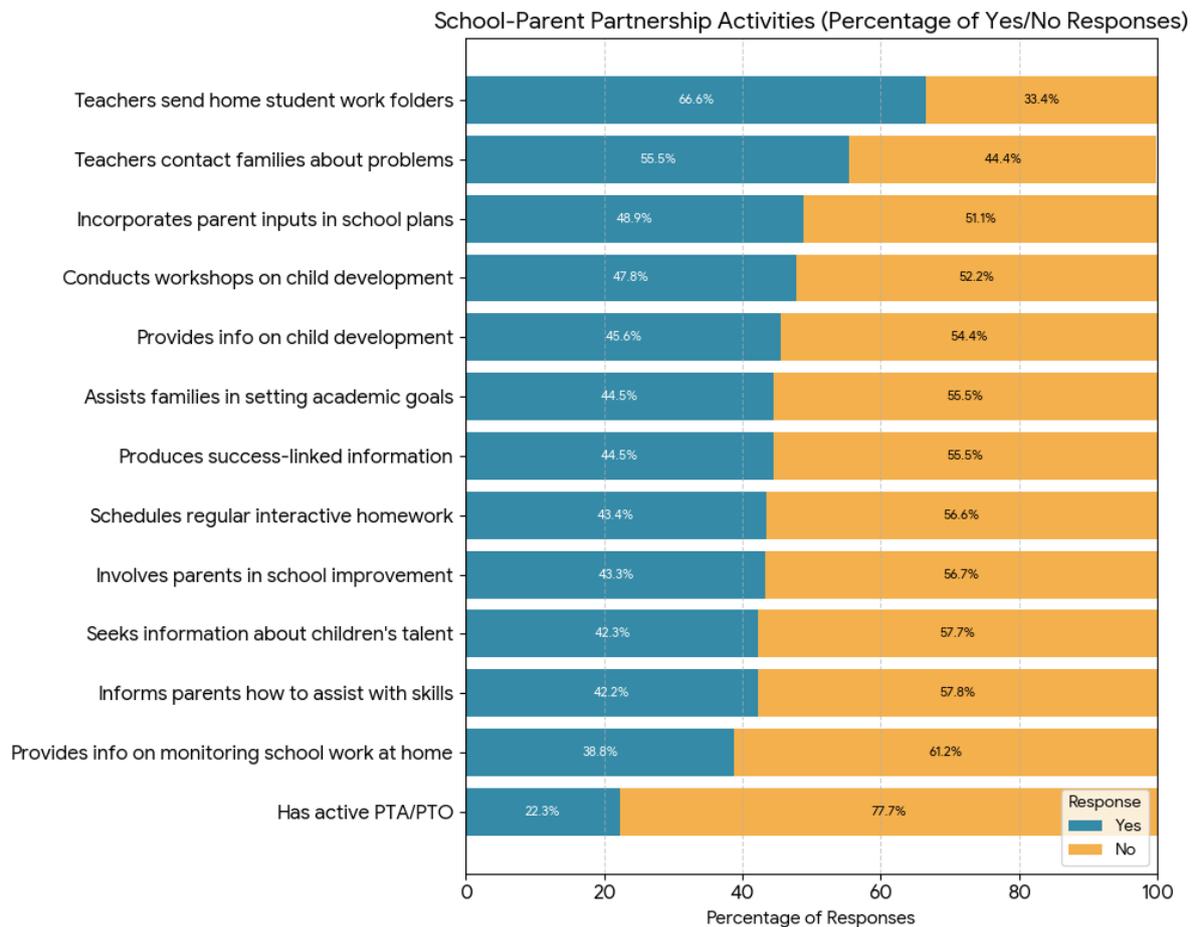


Figure 1 School-Parent Partnership Activities (n=90)

Source: (Author,2025)

Discussions

The results of this study reveal significant associations between socio-economic characteristics of respondents and their perceptions of parent–school partnerships. The findings reveal mixed outcomes: while schools demonstrate some initiatives to involve parents, consistent and structured efforts remain lacking. This discussion interprets the results in light of existing literature on parental involvement and student development.

The demographic profile highlights that most respondents were in the 9th grade, representing a crucial stage of adolescence where academic achievement begins to directly influence future educational opportunities. Approximately half of the respondents were between 10–15 years old, and the rest were above 15, suggesting that perceptions were shaped across different stages of adolescent development. Researches across the world have shown that as children transition through adolescence, parental support and school–family collaboration remain vital for maintaining motivation and performance (Çelik, 2024; Werang et al., 2024; Ngurah, 2024; Hwang, Kieffer & Cappella, 2024; Ashfaq, Malik & Ahmad, 2024; Candel & Escote, 2024).

Gender distribution revealed a slightly higher proportion of boys than girls. This imbalance reflects broader enrollment patterns in many South Asian contexts, where boys often have higher representation in schools (UNESCO, 2022). Family structure was also divided, with a slight majority belonging to nuclear families. Family type has been found to shape the extent of parental engagement: children in nuclear families often receive more direct parental attention, whereas joint families may rely on extended relatives for support, potentially diluting focused involvement in schooling. Parental education emerged as a key variable, with over half of fathers and mothers reported as educated. Educated parents are more likely to participate in school-related activities, monitor academic performance, and communicate with teachers effectively. For example, a 2020 Icelandic study found that more educated parents showed significantly stronger preferences for engaging in both academic and social school activities, compared to less educated parents (Jónsdóttir, 2020). Similarly, a more recent 2025 study in the Philippines showed that parental involvement—especially communication with teachers and monitoring homework—was positively correlated with better academic outcomes and classroom behavior, suggesting that more actively engaged (and likely more educated) parents offer critical support to their children's academic lives (Amerol-Basmayor, 2025). However, the substantial proportion of uneducated parents in this study highlights barriers to effective parent–school collaboration. Parents without formal education may lack the confidence or resources to engage in their child's schooling, which can weaken the overall partnership. Turning to perceptions of school practices, the results revealed inconsistencies. While nearly two-thirds of students reported that teachers sent home folders for parental review, other practices such as workshops, guidance on skill improvement, or interactive homework received much lower agreement rates. This finding reflects a reactive rather than proactive approach to parent engagement. Teachers were more likely to contact parents in cases of behavioral or academic problems, but fewer initiatives aimed to proactively build parents' capacity to support learning at home. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's (1997) model of parental involvement emphasizes that schools should create enabling conditions for parents, not only in crisis situations but as part of routine practice. The data here suggest that this principle is not yet fully realized. A 2022 study argued that systemic barriers and deficit-based assumptions often hinder the realization of authentic partnerships with families, especially those from marginalized backgrounds (Williams-Johnson & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2022).

The lack of structured parent organizations is particularly striking. Only 22.3% of respondents indicated that their schools had active parent–teacher associations (PTAs) or similar bodies. Parent organizations are crucial platforms for structured collaboration, enabling parents to voice concerns, contribute to decision-making, and participate in school improvement programs (Epstein, 2018). The absence of such organizations undermines the sustainability of parent–school partnerships, leaving communication fragmented and dependent on individual teacher initiatives. Similarly, fewer than half of respondents reported that schools incorporated parent input into planning or involved them in school improvement programs. This finding aligns with studies indicating that schools often treat parents as peripheral actors rather than key stakeholders in educational processes (Bentayao & Quibod, 2024; Marasigan-Pagkalinawan & Cordova, 2024; Mahrianti et al., 2022). For partnerships to be effective, schools must move beyond viewing parents as passive recipients of information and instead empower them as co-creators in shaping educational practices. The data also reveal that interactive homework tasks requiring students to engage with parents was inconsistently applied, with fewer than half of respondents reporting such experiences. Yet, researches show that interactive homework fosters stronger family–school connections and enhances student learning outcomes (Mbogo, 2021; Bailey et al., 2004; Wang, 2022). Its limited use suggests an underutilization of simple but powerful strategies for building parent–child learning relationships.

Taken together, the findings suggest that while schools recognize the importance of parental involvement, their practices remain fragmented. The stronger emphasis on reactive measures (e.g., contacting parents for behavioral problems) over proactive engagement strategies indicates a need for systemic change. Schools must institutionalize parental involvement by providing regular workshops, guidance for at-home learning, and inclusive platforms for parent participation in decision-making. Cultural and socio-economic factors must also be considered. Parents with lower education levels or those in joint families may face barriers to participation, requiring schools to adopt tailored approaches. For example, schools can design simple, accessible communication materials and create flexible opportunities for parents to contribute, recognizing the constraints many families face.

To sum up, the study highlights both progress and gaps in parent–school partnerships. Schools are engaging parents in limited ways but have yet to develop comprehensive strategies that fully harness parental potential in supporting children’s academic and personal growth. Strengthening these partnerships will require institutional support, teacher training, and cultural sensitivity to ensure that all families regardless of background can meaningfully contribute to their children’s education.

Conclusion and suggestions

Conclusion

Evidence shows a reactive pattern. Information for parents on child development was not provided by most schools (54.4%). Parent workshops were absent for over half (52.2%). Materials linked to children’s success were not produced by most schools (55.5%). Talent information was not sought (57.7%). In contrast, work folders were sent home (66.6%). Problem-triggered contact with families occurred (55.5%). Guidance to parents on how to assist skills was not provided (57.8%). Help with setting academic goals was not provided (55.5%). Advice on monitoring schoolwork at home was not provided (61.2%). Interactive homework was not scheduled (56.6%). Active parent organizations were rare (22.3% present). Parental input in plans (51.1% No) and involvement in improvement programs (56.7% No) were limited. Overall, the partnership was largely confined to sending student work home and

contacting parents only when problems arose; schools did not play a proactive role in building parents' capacity to support children's learning.

Suggestions

1. The government education department should make the school administration responsible to arrange periodic capacity building workshops and training for parents to make them capable for proper educational guidance of their children.

2. The government education department should establish and revive parent–teacher councils and committees to facilitate effective parent–teacher partnerships and produce quality educational outcomes.

3. The government education department should ensure the involvement of parents in schools' planning and management. For example, formal organizations in the form of parent–teacher councils, can help include parents in schools' management. Parents opinions an be incorporated into school operations, so as to address their grievances related to their children's education.

Limitation and Future Research

The use of convenience sampling and a limited sample size of 90 lead to the findings may show low external validity so they are not broadly generalizable to all secondary school students in District Swabi, Pakistan. For future research, we may conduct a longitudinal field study using a larger, stratified random sample to trace the long-term effects of specific parent–school partnership interventions on student outcomes.

New knowledge and the effects on society and communities

This study fills a gap by providing context-specific, student-voice evidence from District Swabi, Pakistan. Swabi is a largely rural region in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where education is heavily influenced by traditional cultural norms. The female literacy rates are low, and there is a strong emphasis on male education. In this developing region, parent–school partnership practices often lag global “family engagement” paradigms, particularly due to cultural barriers and a lack of formalized structure. The study pinpoints that traditional forms of accountability, such as work review and problem-triggered contact, while proactive structures like parent learning opportunities and structured PTA/PTO councils are missing. It aims to offer a practical baseline for upgrading partnership frameworks within this specific socio-cultural setting.

Author contributions

Noor Khan (NK) was responsible for conceptualizing the idea and collecting data; Rui Huang (HR) contributed to writing and proofreading the manuscript.

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