

The relationship between family involvement and academic variables: A systematic review

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Abstract

Family involvement refers to the different activities and actions that families can do to provide support to their offspring in education. In recent years, studies that evaluate the influence of family involvement on education have increased. Therefore, a review of the literature was carried out to examine the scientific evidence on this subject. Specifically, the review focused on adolescence because this is a possibly conflictive time in schooling, in which family-adolescent relationships usually go through large changes. The study results suggest that family participation is a variable that protects against academic failure. This relationship is stronger in vulnerable populations and ethnic minorities.

Keywords: Family involvement, school family relationship, academic success, adolescence

Introduction

Different studies have shown the importance of the family in formal and informal educational processes for students (Brake & Buchner, 2013; Culyba et al., 2016; Park, Schepp, Jang, & Koo, 2006). These studies focus directly on socio-personal academic variables and variables that influence educational processes or human and social development. First, previous studies show that family variables such as family emotional and financial support, parental educational expectations, parental self-efficacy, and early home learning are related to academic results, academic self-efficacy, and academic skills in children and adolescents (e.g., Cross, Marchand, Medina, Villafuerte, & Rivas-Drake, 2019; Roksa & Kinsley, 2019; Tamis-LeMonda, Luo, McFadden, Bandel, & Vallotton, 2019; Tazouti & Jarlégan, 2016). Second, some family variables such as parenting skills and family connectedness are related to good emotional development

in childhood and emotional variables in adolescence (e.g., Dutra-Thomé, DeSousa, & Koller, 2019; Jenkins & Handa, 2019).

One of the variables to consider in student education is parental or family involvement. This refers to a series of activities carried out by families, mainly by parents, to support and supervise educational processes (formal and informal) in adolescents and are based on social communication processes (Epstein, 2010). Family involvement is an important factor in teaching and student learning. In fact, adequate family involvement can ensure an efficient and coherent educational environment with common educational projects. In addition, schools with participatory families are able to define and achieve ambitious educational objectives (Freires, Pereira, & Santos, 2016).

Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2000) stated that family involvement is a multifactorial construct that encompasses three factors: involvement in school, involvement at home, and involvement in the school-family relationship. Involvement in school refers to parental activities and behaviors focused on active involvement in the school where their children study, including volunteering at the school and meeting other parents inside and outside the educational context to organize events, fundraising, or for discussing educational issues affecting their children. Involvement at home refers to behaviors that promote learning environments at home, such as providing a suitable place for home study and implementing learning experiences. Finally, the school-family relationship describes the interactions between these two social entities, focusing on communication regarding educational experiences, behaviors, progress, and student difficulties. It refers to conversations between teachers and parents about the social and educational aspects of the students, in which they can agree on dual monitoring of educational interventions or processes.

There may be different obstacles in the family and school context that arise from the interaction between these two cores that can lead to difficulties in family involvement in educational issues. Kocyigit (2015) examined the views of teachers, parents, and faculty managers about problems arising during family involvement in educational activities. The data revealed that parents who did not attend all the activities scheduled by the school expressed the following reasons: not enough time, transport, need to receive the information earlier and a limited description of activities, they didn't want to, negative attitudes, problems with spouses (distribution of involvement), families unable to express themselves, selfishness, illiteracy, constant complaints and reproaches.

Moreover, families tend to have expectations, both positive and negative, about their children, which can affect their participation and involvement in educational processes. More specifically, the positive expectations of families about academic achievement and communication with the school tend to have greater impact on the perceived effectiveness of their sons and daughters (Cross et al., 2019; Gerard & Booth, 2015; Hall & Quinn, 2014).

Family involvement can have different effects on academic variables in adolescence. However, this effect can change with adolescent sociodemographic and personal variables. In this systematic review, taking the aforementioned into account, the following research questions are presented: How does family involvement influence academic variables in adolescence? What sociodemographic and personal variables are involved in the relationship between family involvement and academic variables? The objective of this systematic review is to describe the influence of family involvement on the academic success of adolescent students, as well as identify and summarize the different strategies of family involvement in secondary education. We describe the research on the subject, the participants and methods used for research, and the findings and impact of the most relevant studies.

Method

Search strategy

Searches were limited between January, 2008, and October, 2019; they were made in the digital databases Scopus and Web of Science. We chose these two databases because they are the most prestigious and accepted by the scientific community in Europe.

The search was conducted by combining keywords. The words used were: “Family Involvement*”; “High School*” or “* Secondary Education”; “Adolescence*”; “Academic Success*”. The articles were not filtered by country, subject area, source of funding, journal title, or publisher name. We filtered by the document type “article”, excluding reviews, books, book chapters, opinion pieces, and book reviews. The language filter was also used, and only articles written in Spanish and English were included.

Selection criteria

To narrow our search, items had to meet the following characteristics to be selected in the first phase of the review: 1) the article was published in a peer review journal; 2) the full article could be accessed; 3) the document was written in English or Spanish; 4) a minimum sample size of 55 participants was specified to reduce the probability of including studies with a Type II error, probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is false, that is equal $1-\beta$ (Field, 2013); 5) studies could be quantitative or qualitative, but must have a rigorous data analysis; 6) the study specifically evaluated family involvement either at home and/or school, or the school-family relationship, and evaluated at least one adolescent academic variable (academic achievement / school / average grades / performance / truancy); 7) the article did not develop or adapt instruments; and 8) the article focused on adolescence directly or indirectly, i.e., included teenager assessment or evaluation with families of adolescents. We did not include studies where only the teacher’s perception about family involvement was assessed.

The systematic review was conducted taking into account the guidelines and recommendations for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group, 2009). The selection was made by the researchers separately; however, in the case of disagreement on the inclusion of a study, we reviewed the articles together to reach a consensus. More specifically, we took the following steps: In the first search, 140 articles were obtained. Duplicated items in the two databases were eliminated. Once 21 duplicates had been removed, the remaining articles were analyzed considering the title and summary to determine whether they met the criteria. When the full text could not be accessed, the article was discarded; 24 studies were eliminated at this stage. Eleven articles were excluded from the review because they did not meet the criteria of the sample. Finally, a total of 13 items were included in the review. Each of these 13 articles discusses family involvement and its relationship with academic variables in adolescents, assessed directly or indirectly. Figure 1 shows the procedure applying the PRISMA criteria.

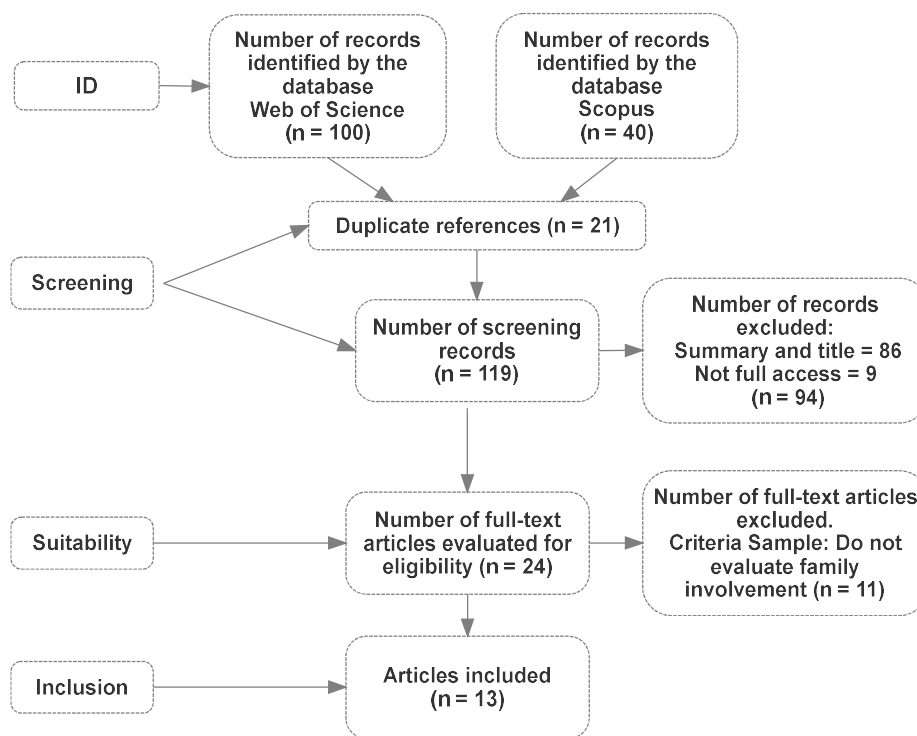


Figure 1. PRISMA protocol

Results and Discussion

We included a total of 13 items after we made a search with keywords and applied the specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The research sample consists of 59,207 adolescents and 3,024 families. A total of 76.9% of the studies' samples are of teenagers, 15.4% are of families, and 7.7% represent both teenagers and families. Of the studies, 77% are cross studies and 23% are longitudinal studies. All of the selected studies were written in English. Eight of the 13 articles

are from the United States, two from Taiwan, one from Canada, one from China, and one from Portugal; none of the studies had a transcultural sample.

Two of the articles included in the review delved into family involvement in minority groups, specifically Latin American immigrants in the United States (Bhargava, Bámaca-Colbert, Witherspoon, Pomerantz, & Robins, 2017; Kuperminc, Darnell, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008). Moreover, four of the studies included in the review focus on family involvement with adolescents at risk of social exclusion or poverty (Benner, Boyle, & Sadler, 2016; Bhargava et al., 2017; Kuperminc et al., 2008; Patton, Woolley, & Hong, 2012). All the studies agree that family involvement acts as a protective factor against socioeconomic adversity in academic variables, promoting permanence in the education system and academic success.

The results of the systematic review show that the Grade Point Average (GPA) is the variable most related to academic family involvement (Benner et al., 2016; Degol, Wang, & Zhang, 2017; Hogan et al., 2010; Kuperminc et al., 2008; Moreira, Dias, Vaz, & Vaz, 2013; Patton et al., 2012; Wang, Hill, & Hofkens, 2014). In addition, parental involvement is a factor to consider in predicting average student grades. Specifically, studies show a positive relationship between these two variables. Benner et al. (2016) reported that students with parents with high academic involvement tended to have a greater level of academic achievement and access to university study (George, Cabrera, & Kurban, 2018). This relationship remained significant after controlling for other variables traditionally associated with academic achievement such as household income, gender, intelligence, and ethnicity. The effect of family involvement on GPA could be more beneficial to young people at risk of social exclusion and socioeconomic adversity. Benner et al. (2016) studied the long-term effects of family involvement on children's academic success and suggested that family involvement is most effective when it focuses on objectives and takes into account contextual issues. In addition, the authors report that excessive family involvement at home in academic tasks and projects may have less influence on academic success because they tend to be intrusive. However, counselling and academic support showed a positive effect on the academic success of students. Therefore, there needs to be a balance between providing the necessary support and empowering children, which relates to constructive theories. Specifically, the constructivist approach indicates that instrumental support must be centered on the area of near development and not on the area of real or potential development so that the help is proportional to the needs of the person (Smagorinsky, 2018).

Tan (2018) defines family involvement at home and at school as multifaceted. In their study, they show that there is not a clear relationship between socioeconomic status and family involvement. That is, the socioeconomic status of the family does not determine family involvement.

The studies analyzed suggest that family involvement promotes the academic success of children, in the present and in the academic future. For example, Degol et al. (2017) studied parental involvement for predicting the probability of enrolment in university. Their data

suggest that there are implication patterns and other family variables related to parenting and home structure that promote the future academic success of adolescents. George, Cabrera, and Kurban (2018) argue that family involvement has a positive impact on teens' access to college.

There are also studies reporting the relationship between family involvement and other aspects of education. As an example, Bhargava et al. (2017) suggest that strategies of school involvement of Latino immigrant families in the United States prevent high dropout rates and poor academic performance in adolescents and young people. Moreover, socioeconomic status, acculturation, and neighborhood context relate to the family involvement at home and school (the higher the level of socioeconomic status, the more strategies). Kuperminc et al. (2008) suggest that the involvement of fathers/mothers is an important strategy for promoting academic success and also relates to resident immigrant Latino students staying in the education system in the United States. According to the authors, the involvement of fathers/mothers can function as a protective factor of permanence in the educational system, governed by a sense of social connection. These data are consistent with those reported by Stormshak et al. (2009), who found that family training in relation to school involvement reduces the risk of children dropping out. The family-centered interventions can have an impact on problem behaviors at home and school and improve class attendance, educational support, and academic achievement. Chen (2018) emphasizes the importance of the family-school relationship for better social-emotional and academic development in adolescence. Good communication requires that families have a cultural level that facilitates interaction between home and school.

Table 1 shows the articles included in the review, together with the authors, publication year, country, and type of study population sample. The most relevant results of each study are presented and described.

Table 1. List of articles included in the systematic review

Authors, (year), country, and type of study	Other variables evaluated (sample)	Results
George, Cabrera, and Kurban (2018), U.S., Longitudinal	Socioeconomic status and college choice (19,000 adolescents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Family involvement has a positive impact on teenage children being able to go to college. – The school environment also influences the process with families to facilitate their children entering college. – There is a relationship between the families' expectations and participation in school and academic activities.
Chen (2018), Taiwan, Longitudinal	Family/school relationship, cultural context and academic performance (13,290 adolescents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Home-school communication and interaction are identified as tools for academic improvement and optimization of the socio-emotional development of adolescents. – They conclude that cultural assimilation of families is necessary for good communication between the home and school. These relationships have academic effects and influence the socialization behavior of adolescents.
Tan (2018) China, Cross	Home involvement, school participation, socioeconomic status, student achievement (5,353 adolescents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Family involvement in the home and school is multifaceted. – The authors found no association between socioeconomic status and patterns of family involvement. The results challenge the paradigm that families with higher economic status tend to be more involved in the education of their children compared to families of lower status.
Bhargava et al. (2017), U.S.,	Academic aspirations, socioeconomic status, economic income level,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The results suggest that strategies of school involvement of immigrant Latino families living in the U.S. prevent dropout and educational failure in youth.

Longitudinal	acculturation, and informal social control (674 families)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Involvement at home is correlated with academic aspirations and a search for resources. These correlations are stronger with young teenagers. – Aspirations are no longer significant with older youth, but the ratio for resources remains significant. – Socioeconomic status, acculturation, and neighborhood context showed negative relationships with school-family involvement.
Degol et al. (2017), U.S., Cross	Academic value behaviors that promote academic success and household structure (3,166 adolescents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Parental involvement in school decreases as sons and daughters increase in school level. – School involvement, household structure, compartments that promote academic success, and values are associated with an increased likelihood of admission to college.
Benner et al. (2016), U.S., Cross	Families' academic expectations (15,420 adolescents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There is a significant relationship between educational involvement and families' academic expectations and young people's grades and academic achievement. – School involvement is more beneficial for disadvantaged young people (e.g., low family socioeconomic status). – Academic socialization of parents (e.g., acculturation) promotes academic success of young people who have a high family socioeconomic status.
Wang, Hill, and Hofkens (2014), U.S., Cross	Involvement in the school, academic success, adolescents' self-esteem, socioeconomic status (1,452 families)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – They evaluated family involvement with three factors: 1) preventive communication, 2) communication quality regardless of the support structure at home, and 3) educational links to success in the future. Data revealed that these factors of family involvement are related to the academic level of students. However, these relationships were mediated by the variable "parental warmth."

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – According to the authors' data, the variable "parental warmth" moderates the relationship between the support structure at home and the average academic grades and problem behaviors in school.
Moreira et al. (2013), Portugal, Cross	Academic performance, socioeconomic level, family occupations, family support (384 adolescents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The involvement of parents in school (behavior involvement and subjective relationship between parents and teachers) explains 6.4% of the variance of academic achievement. Therefore, it is a variable to consider in predicting the academic success of teenage high school students. – According to the data reported by the authors, persistent educational indicators (such as the involvement of parents) and motivational variables (such as academic goals) are the strongest predictors of academic performance among adolescent students in secondary education.
Chen and Ho (2012), Taiwan, Cross	Educational success and parent-child relations (468 adolescents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The data suggest that the relationship between perceived parental involvement and academic achievement is mediated by the variable students' academic beliefs. Specifically, the authors report two mediation models based on the parental relationship. In one model, adolescents with a reciprocal relationship perceived parental involvement as having a positive direct and indirect effect on academic achievement. In the other model, for adolescents with an authoritarian relationship, the family involvement variable has an indirect positive effect and a negative direct effect on academic achievement.
Patton, Woolley, and Hong (2012), U.S., Cross	School violence, community violence, family support, student self-esteem, socioeconomic status (612 adolescents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – According to the reported data, exposure to violence occurring in the neighborhood and at school is related to poor academic achievement. However, the results suggest that parental support and involvement in school reduces the negative influence on academic performance.

Hogan et al. (2010), Canada, Cross	Emotional intelligence, grade point average, social and family support, socioeconomic status and academic success (192 adolescents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The study measured family involvement with a family social support questionnaire. The results show that the only subscale that was a predictor of grade point average (GPA) was practical social support, which includes activities such as support in academic tasks and providing transportation.
Stormshak et al. (2009), U.S., Cross	Parenting style, family management, behavior problems, school dropout, academic and cultural level (998 adolescents and 898 families)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Family training in relation to school involvement reduces the risk of children dropping out. – The results suggest that family-centered interventions can have an impact not only on problem behavior but also on household behavior, and improve school attendance and academic achievement.
Kuperminc et al. (2008), U.S., Cross	Work situations, fluency in English, academic expectations (324 adolescents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – For Latino students, family involvement motivates them to achieve academic success because they see education as a means of paying back their families for all their efforts. – Parental involvement is an important strategy for promoting academic success and is related to permanence in the educational system. – Family involvement is related more significantly to academic success in early secondary education than in middle school students.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

We conducted a systematic review of recent studies into family involvement and its relationship with academic outcomes in adolescents. We used strategic combinations of formal search sources and exhaustive searches with replicable equations. A total of 13 articles were selected for review after we searched two prestigious databases, Scopus and Web of Science.

From the literature presented, its analysis results and discussion can conclude the following: a) Family involvement has a relevant role in academic variables in adolescence, specifically in academic performance; b) Family involvement decreases in adolescence because adolescents tend to be more autonomous than children, but the literature shows that it is necessary at this age, and families must be involved in the education of their children; c) Apparently, family involvement acts as a protective factor against adverse situations in adolescence. The pedagogical implications of the literature review are presented below.

Academic success: This review summarizes studies on family involvement in adolescent students. The most relevant data focuses on the effect of family involvement on educational variables, especially on academic success. In fact, all studies analyzed reported that there is a relationship between parental involvement and adolescents' academic success. This is because the family is the first social nucleus and, therefore, greater social support is beneficial. Studies report different relationship aspects between family and educational processes. Schools must design tools that allow family participation in the educational processes of students. For example, the review articles advise a) informative talks, b) digital newspapers, and c) parent schools. These actions should be increased in adolescence because the literature shows family participation decreases at this age. In effect, the results of the various studies show that parental involvement is a protective factor against academic failure. This relationship is maintained after other variables such as self-esteem and hostile environments are controlled.

Minorities: In specific situations such as immigration, risk of social exclusion, and poverty, adequate family involvement in educational activities and consistent communication is very beneficial for these teens. Family involvement acts as a protective factor for adolescents with adverse social characteristics. This should be taken into account in teaching and academic counselling interventions and future research into the impact of family involvement in minority groups (for example, LGBTQ+ students). However, studies also report some aspects that hinder the involvement of some families, especially immigrant families. Acculturation and low language proficiency are the biggest barriers. Schools should take these variables into account when they manage relationships with families and implement programs to ensure their involvement (for example, considering adult schools for language acquisition or making urgent interventions).

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