

Parents' involvement in children's education from geographical perspectives

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Abstract

Parental involvement has been recognized as a crucial factor in children's academic achievement. Due to more challenges in the education system nowadays, parents have most responsibility for their children's education. Parents need to demonstrate a strong commitment and support by assisting with home learning, interacting with teachers, and attending programmes organised by the school. However, the extent and nature of parental involvement are significantly influenced by parents' demographic and geographical contexts. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between parental involvement in children's education and seven geographical factors: housing size, population density, sub-district size, residential location, school location, land use, and distance between home and school. The study involved 400 parents of primary school children in Kuala Langat district using the chi-squared test. Data is collected quantitatively and analysed using SPSS version 26 software. Result indicates that there was a relationship between parents' involvement and geographical factors. Therefore, the study is expected to guide parents, teachers, and schools to help with children's education based on geographical factors. Future works may focus on parental involvement and socio-economic factors to gain a deeper insight into parental involvement in children's educational development. A more nuanced understanding of this relationship would offer a more comprehensive perspective on parental involvement in children's educational development.

Keywords: Children's development, educational outcome, geographical factors, home, parental involvement, primary school

Introduction

Geography is often associated with the earth and people or the world and its inhabitants (Wijayanti et al., 2022; Khafid, 2020). In the realm of geographical research, the study of geography has broadened to the geographical relationship with human life on this earth (Operma et al., 2024). According to Marshall and Scarlett (2015), the earth has shaped human life and caused wars, power struggles, politics, and social development. The quality of human life on earth has a relationship with the environment and the surrounding nature (Saini et al., 2019), the effect of climate change on human behaviour (Celik, 2020), and the effect of human and nature factors on ecosystem

services (Wang et al., 2021). Thus, modern geography focuses on the relationship between the environment on earth and human attitudes and behaviour.

To address the various educational challenges of the 21st century, various efforts have been made to implement various educational policies and programmes as outlined in the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM 2013-2025). Modern teaching methods and learning strategies have been introduced to improve students' achievement (Alwayi et al., 2021). However, roles and responsibilities should not fall solely on teachers (Chear et al., 2022); parents should play their roles (Lo & Yasin, 2022). For instance, robust parental engagement in providing necessary learning resources, such as technology and internet access to ensure the student follows the learning schedule and task completion (Mesman et al., 2022).

Human life differs in terms of geography, society, and interaction with the environment (Pallathadka & Pallathadka, 2021). Therefore, parents face challenges supporting their children's education as the methods and approaches need to be adapted to their social settings (Abd Aziz & Tayeb, 2023). Despite these challenges, parents' involvement remains crucial in supporting their children's education and establishing relationships with the school, regardless of their socioeconomic and geographical circumstances (Alinsunurin, 2020).

According to Zamri and Anita's study (2020), parents play a major role in shaping a positive attitude among students toward education. The lack of parental motivation and emphasis on works correlates to diminished student motivation towards their educational pursuits. Thus, this study investigates parental involvement in supporting their children's education through geographical perspectives.

Literature review

In scholarly debate about the intersection of geography and education, studies often focus on geography as one of the subjects within high schools and institutions of higher learning (Maude, 2020; Lee, 2021), effective teaching and learning strategies and methods assessment to determine the level of student proficiency (Mahat et al., 2022; Fritzsche, 2022) and student perception, attitude, knowledge, and interest in geography at school and institution (Marissa, 2022; Utami et al., 2023). The studies primarily concentrate on geography within the realms of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment framework. However, the geographical inquiry extends beyond these dimensions, encompassing the fundamental role of geography in shaping human understanding of life on earth (Cresswell, 2024). This has created a gap in investigating the relationship between geography and human attitudes and behaviour, especially parental engagement in children's education.

Numerous recent studies have been conducted on the influence of parental involvement in children's academic performance (Ali-Rweidi, 2023; Yang et al., 2023). These studies also cover parents' roles in assisting their children with task completion (Wan & Kutty, 2023), providing for children's educational needs (Kinzer, 2021), communicating with children (Putro et al., 2020), acting as intermediaries between school and children (Goodal & Montgomery, 2023), and monitoring and controlling their children while at home (Affuso et al., 2023). However, these studies focus more on aspects of parental involvement and do not address in depth the geographical point of view, such as environment, location, land use, and distance. Despite that, it is undeniable that certain studies on parental involvement include geographical elements involving regions and national boundaries. For example, the study by Lyu et al. (2019) compares parental involvement

between three countries: The United States, Germany, and China. The findings of the study focus more on economic status and only provide superficial information on the relationship between parental involvement and geographical factors in those countries.

Studies indicate a significant impact of school environment on learning outcomes, with noisy and disruptive surroundings hindering student engagement (Chukwuemeka, 2013) while calm and peaceful environments foster positive learning experiences (Mutiu et al., 2015). Jovinius (2015) found that the distance of house from school affects the education of children. However, those studies focus on student achievement in academics and isolated the involvement of parents in children's education.

Past study delineated that the formation of human attitudes and behaviour is closely related to the geographical conditions of a place (Marshall & Scarlett, 2015), for instance, the disparities between rural and urban communities regarding infrastructure, economic activities, and social relations (Ma et al., 2020) and variations in physical characteristics like housing and population density, which in turn affect parental attitudes towards education. Therefore, this study holds significant importance in examining the potential correlation between geographical factors and parents' involvement in their children's education.

Study area

This study was conducted in Kuala Langat district, Selangor, encompassing an area of 857.65 square km (equivalent to 85,775 hectares) [Portal Majlis Perbandaran Kuala Langat, 2023]. Kuala Langat is one of the nine districts in Selangor State. Geographically, it is situated in the southwestern region, sharing a border with the Sepang District, Klang District, and the Malacca Straits. It's located strategically, which has a well-developed road network connecting Kuala Langat District to major urban centres such as Kuala Lumpur City Centre, Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam, Klang Royal City, Port Klang, Putrajaya, and KLIA. There are three highways in the Kuala Langat district, namely Elite Highway (15.59 km), SKVE Highway (31.28 km), and MEX2 (1.4 km). The location of Kuala Langat district is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. The location of the Kuala Langat district within the state of Selangor

Based on the Portal Pejabat Daerah & Tanah Kuala Langat (2023), there are 7 subdistricts, namely Mukim Bandar, Mukim Jugra, Mukim Kelanang, Mukim Morib, Mukim Batu, Mukim Tanjung Dua Belas 1 & 2, and Mukim Telok Panglima Garang, as shown in Figure 2.

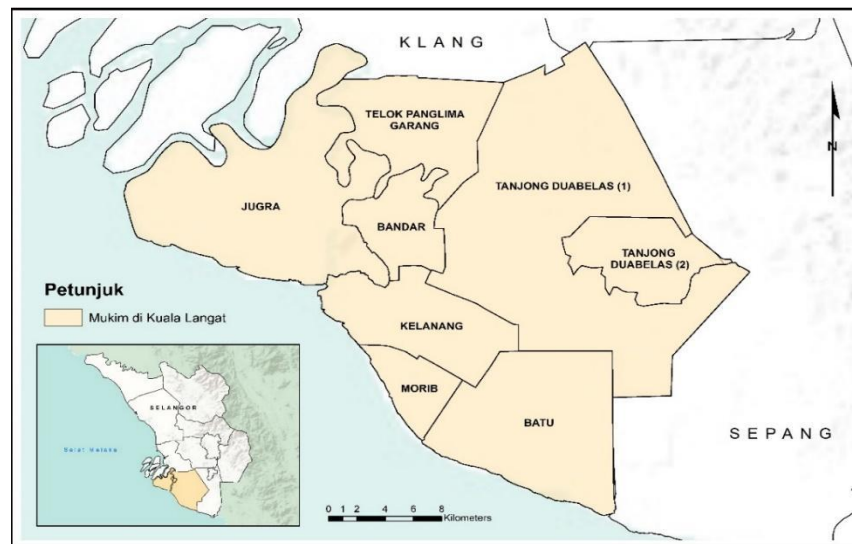


Figure 2. The location of seven sub-districts within the district of Kuala Langat

The population density of Kuala Langat is 307,787 individuals (Majlis Perbandaran Kuala Langat, 2020), with Malays constituting the majority, followed by Chinese, and Indians. A small population of Orang Asli also resides in the district. This population density aligns with the development of land use in the Kuala Langat District, encompassing diverse enterprises, industries, residential areas, and commercial activities. Notably, the district features clustered industrial areas in Telok Panglima Garang, Bandar Mahkota, and Olak Lempit. The geographical attributes of Kuala Langat district, which is encircled by diverse land uses with a dense population setting, the district align with the objectives of the study.

Methodology

Study sample

This quantitative study involves 400 parents with children enrolled in Year 1 to Year 6 across 56 primary schools in the Kuala Langat district. The selection of respondents is randomly stratified to ensure participant selection reflects the district's demographic diversity, includes variations in ages, races, socio-economic status, and represents seven sub-districts in the Kuala Langat district.

Research instrument

This study employs a comprehensive questionnaire developed based on the established research objectives and questions. The questionnaire is structured into different sections, namely, General Information (Demographic), Geographical Factors, Parental Involvement in Children's Education, which is further divided into two subsections which i,s Parental Involvement at Home and Parental

Involvement at school. The research instruments were formulated by an extensive review of relevant past studies and carefully adapted to align with the aims of the study. The research tool comprises statements and answer choices on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) Very Low, (2) Low, (3) Medium, (4) High, and (5) Very High. This study employed frequency and percentage distributions for description, while the Chi Square Test was used for inference to assess the objective because the data is not normally distributed.

Research findings

Demographic descriptive analysis

The result of the analysis is shown in the form of frequencies and percentages as follows:

a. Gender

Table 1 illustrates the demographic breakdown of questionnaire respondents. As shown in the table, mother comprises a larger portion of the sample with 287 respondents (71.8%); conversely, fathers accounted for 113 respondents (28.2%). The total number of study samples was 400 people. This distribution indicates a prevalence of maternal participation in questionnaire responses, suggesting a higher level of maternal involvement in children's education compared to paternal.

Table 1. Number of samples based on gender

	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulated percentage (%)
Men	113	28.2	28.2
Female	287	71.8	100
Total (N)	400	100	

b. Age

Table 2 reveals that fathers aged between 40 to 50 years represent the largest portion of the demographic group, comprising 49.5% of the sample. Conversely, fathers aged 30 and under constitute the smallest proportion, accounting for only 3.3% of the sample. The table also shows that the number of mothers aged between 30 to 40 years is the most, with a percentage of 59.5%. While mothers aged over 50 years and above are the least, with a percentage of 4.5%. This demonstrates that maternal age is within the phases of adulthood. This could highlight the necessity of the varies responsibilities to nurturing the family dynamics and child development alongside the nuances of balancing their time for work, household responsibilities, and children's education.

Table 2. Parents' age

	Father		Mother	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
30 years and below	13	3.3	18	4.5
> 30 years – 40 years	169	42.3	238	59.5
> 40 years – 50 years	198	49.5	135	33.8
> 50 years and above	20	5.0	9	2.3
Total (N)	400	100	400	100

c. Race

Table 3 shows the racial distribution of parents in the study, categorized by father and mother. The majority of both fathers and mothers are Malay, with 71% of fathers and 73% of mothers belonging to this group. Chinese parents represent the second largest group, comprising 15.3% of fathers and 13.8% of mothers. Indian parents make up 8.5% of fathers and 8.3% of mothers. The "Others" category, which includes unspecified ethnicities, accounts for 5.3% of fathers and 5% of mothers.

Table 3. Parents' race

	Father		Mother	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Malay	284	71.0	292	73.0
Chinese	61	15.3	55	13.8
Indian	34	8.5	33	8.3
Others	21	5.3	20	5.0
Total (N)	400	100	400	100

d. Occupation

Table 4 shows a distribution of paternal employment across various sectors. The private sector holds the largest proportion with 197 fathers (49.3%), followed by government employment (99 fathers; 24.8%), self-employment (57 fathers; 14.2%), business ownership (23 fathers; 5.8%), and 24 unemployed fathers (6.0%). The findings indicate that most of the paternal works in private sector, known for its profit-driven nature, which potentially demands commitments. Consequently, this working nature might pose challenges for work-life balance, especially related to children's education. This affected the paternal time availability to be involved in their children's education process.

The table also shows the distribution of maternal employment, with unemployment category being the most predominant category, comprising 186 mothers (46.5%), followed by government employment (126 mothers; 31.5%), private sector comprises 73 mothers (18.3%), and 10 mothers with business ownership, constituting 2.5%. The findings suggest that maternal unemployment has significant proportion engaged in children's education alongside domestic responsibilities. Hence, the pivotal role played by mother in ensuring enhanced learning outcomes for their children.

Table 4. Parents' occupation

Occupation	Father		Mother	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Unemployed	24	6.0	186	46.5
Self-Employed	57	14.2	5	1.3
Business	23	5.8	10	2.5
Private staff	197	49.3	73	18.3
Government staff	99	24.8	126	31.5
Total (N)	400	100	400	100

e. Income

Table 5 presents the income distribution of parents, separated by fathers and mothers. A significant majority of fathers, 70%, earn between RM 1,001 and RM 5,000, while 16.8% earn between RM 5,001 and RM 10,000. Only 5% of fathers report no income, and a small fraction, 1.5%, earn above RM 10,000. In contrast, mothers' income distribution is more varied. A substantial 45.5% of mothers report no income, while 36% earn between RM 1,001 and RM 5,000. 12.3% of mothers earn between RM 5,001 and RM 10,000, and only 0.5% earn above RM 10,000. These figures highlight a clear difference in income levels between fathers and mothers, with fathers generally reporting higher incomes and a large proportion of mothers reporting no income.

Table 5. Parents' income

Income	Father		Mother	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No Income	20	5.0	182	45.5
RM 1,000 and below	27	6.8	23	5.8
Over RM1,000 to RM5,000	280	70.0	144	36.0
Over RM5,000 to RM10,000	67	16.8	49	12.3
Over RM10,000 and above	6	1.5	2	0.5
Total (N)	400	100	400	100

f. Education background

Table 6 presents the educational attainment of parents, based on a sample of 400 fathers and 400 mothers. The data reveals that 2.5% of fathers and 1.8% of mothers reported having no formal education. Regarding primary education, 6.0% of fathers and 4.0% of mothers completed this level. Secondary education was the most prevalent level attained, with 46.8% of fathers and 47.0% of mothers completing this stage. A similar proportion of fathers and mothers pursued pre-university or college education, with 20.8% and 19.0% respectively. University education was attained by 24.0% of fathers and 28.2% of mothers.

The data indicates that the predominant proportion of mothers lack university-level education. However, this scenario does not diminish the importance of their role as a source of inspiration for their children's academic success. Mothers are being addressed with their children's educational concerns within the home settings. Mothers also play an important role an important role to motivate their children toward attaining excellence in their studies.

Table 6. Parents' educational background

	Father		Mother	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No approval	10	2.5	7	1.8
Primary school education	24	6.0	16	4.0
Secondary school education	187	46.8	188	47.0
Pre-university / College	83	20.8	76	19.0
University	96	24.0	113	28.2
Total (N)	400	100	400	100

Chi-Square analysis to determine the relationship of geographical factors with parental involvement

A Chi-Square analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between geographic factors and parental involvement. There are seven main indicators that has been examined which is house size, population size, subdistrict size, house location, school location, land use, and house distance to school.

Table 7. Location-based indicators and Chi-Square results

Indicator		N	%	Chi-Square test		
				Value	df	Sig.
House size	Wide	193	48.3	68.251	8	0.000
	Medium wide	200	50.0			
	Less wide	7	1.8			
Population size	Dense	122	30.5	57.950	8	0.000
	Medium	127	31.8			
	Less dense	151	37.8			
Subdistrict size	Wide	122	30.5	68.260	8	0.000
	Medium wide	76	19.0			
	Less wide	202	50.5			
House location	Town	195	48.8	54.353	12	0.000
	Village	192	48.0			
	Beachside area	7	1.8			
	Plantation area	6	1.5			
School location	Urban	237	59.3	45.316	4	0.000
	Rural	163	40.8			
Land use	Residential	187	46.8	138.422	12	0.000
	Agriculture	136	34.0			
	Industry	20	5.0			
	Mixed development	57	14.2			
House distance to school	Close to school	53	13.3	82.176	12	0.000
	Neighbourhood	245	61.3			
	In the subdistrict	77	19.3			
	Outside the subdistrict	25	6.3			

Table 7 above shows a location-based indicator that influenced parental involvement in children's education. The number of samples involved was 400 for each indicator. Specifically, the Chi-square tests revealed statistically significant associations for house size ($\chi^2(8) = 68.251$, $p < .001$), population size ($\chi^2(8) = 57.950$, $p < .001$), subdistrict size ($\chi^2(8) = 68.260$, $p < .001$), house location ($\chi^2(12) = 54.353$, $p < .001$), school location ($\chi^2(4) = 45.316$, $p < .001$), land use ($\chi^2(12) = 138.422$, $p < .001$), and house distance to school ($\chi^2(12) = 82.176$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, parental involvement in children's education needs to be seen from a geographical perspective. Four geographical factors need to be paid attention to when debating about parental involvement, namely size, location, land use, and distance. This is in line with the findings of a study by Liu et al. (2022), which states that spatial patterns, land use, population growth, townships, and social systems are interrelated and have relationships and interact with each other in solving socio-economic problems and the well-being of human life. The findings of this study found that size is closely related to parental involvement. Home size affect the behaviour and attitude of the occupants of the house (Said et al., 2018). In the context of this study, home serves as the foundational environment for a child's learning process. Thus, a suitable and conducive house size are important to stimulate a child's interest in learning and foster their educational development.

Similarly, the change in population density in an area also has a connection with the role of parents. The house and its environment are one of the basic needs, and it affects the well-being of the residents (Saleh et al., 2022). When the size of the population in an area becomes too dense due to an increase in the number of people, resulting in the emergence of various environmental problems, unmanaged infrastructure facilities, and social issues (Hayati, 2023). The resultant impact extends to parents in who may experience a decline in their ability to support their children's education needs due to the disruption of daily activities within the community (Idrus et al., 2004).

In scholarly discourse, the focus often falls on urban and rural areas. There are significant differences between urban and rural areas in terms of infrastructure facilities, population density, and community attitudes (Wood, 2023). According to a study by Samian and Awang (2017), the suitability of the environment and the challenges faced in living life, whether in the city or the countryside, have an impact on the education system. There are environmental differences between urban and rural homes. Learning environment in the city requires conducive learning due to the relatively limited environmental area, as well as noise problems from vehicles and construction. Newman et al. (2019) suggest that despite their exposure to various pollution, these areas often offer a range of amenities and resources. It makes it easier for parents to get involved in their child's education process.

As for rural areas, it is often associated with all sorts of deficiencies either in terms of infrastructure and community's perception on education (Xiang & Stillwell, 2023). Yi (2020) indicates a disparity in parental educational awareness across rural locales affected by the availability of resources and infrastructure. Andin et al. (2019) suggest that through targeted interventions and a responsiveness to the specific needs of rural communities, parents can actively engage in their children's education, particularly in school-related activities.

Land use change is a process that occurs continuously to meet the needs of the population that is increasing over time in a place to carry out physical, social, and economic activities (Hasan et al., 2020). It covers various developments on the surface of the land, such as housing, agriculture, commercial, industrial, and municipal (Ahmad & Mustaffa, 2019). The occurrence of environmental changes, whether gradual or rapid, needs to be understood in depth because it is related to the interaction of nature with human activities (Fasdarsyah et al., 2024). Therefore, the issue of land use is very important because it involves changes to the environment, weather, social activities, and education (Seman & Aiyub, 2023). For this study, the land uses involved are residential, agricultural, mixed development, and industrial areas. Parental involvement is posited as a critical factor across all land use categories, with a particular emphasis on the need for its strengthening within residential areas. According to Ghani et al. (2014), comfortable housing is very important for the well-being of its residents. This statement is supported by Saleh et al. (2020), who concluded that housing satisfaction is the main indicator of quality of life. This explains that the residential area is related to the involvement of parents in their children's education.

Agricultural land use is typically associated with rural environments (Azam & Eboy, 2023). In the context of this study in the Kuala Langat district, most of the parents who work in the agricultural sector, especially in oil palm plantations, have lower levels of education and income. Although parents are aware of the importance of education for their child's future, financial constraints have limited parental involvement in providing better learning facilities for their children, besides a lack the knowledge to help with school assignments (Yulianti et al., 2019). Meanwhile, most of the parents who live in industrial areas work in the manufacturing sector in the area. Two factors often influence parental involvement. Firstly, jobs in the manufacturing sector require a high commitment of time and energy from workers to produce sufficient production on time to meet customer demand (Ismail & Ahmad, 2020).

Another factor is the environment of the industrial area, which is exposed to air pollution and noise from factories and vehicles, also disturbs the well-being and quality of life of the residents in the surrounding areas (Shahlan & Mahmud, 2021). The various infrastructure facilities and services provided in the mixed-use development encourage parents to engage and support their children's learning. In addition, the factors that drive residents to live in mixed development areas are due to environmental, physical, economic, and social factors (Gao et al., 2022). The development environment is vibrantly mixed with a variety of activities and transportation facilities that make it easier for parents to assist with their children's education at home and school (Shaikh et al., 2022).

Land use change provides a different environment and results in differences in social norms that affect parents' attitudes towards their children's educational achievements. Therefore, the aspect of land use needs to be taken into account when it comes to parents' involvement in children's education, particularly in providing incentives and encouragement as well as creating a positive environment in shaping their educational development to improve academic achievement (Lehr, 2020).

The distance from home to school has a significant relationship with children's education (Wangoywa et al., 2024). This has an impact on parents' perception of the method of transporting their children to school (Arandra-Balboa et al., 2021). While the study of Chica-Olmo and Lizárraga (2022) states that distance and time affect the method of parents sending their children to school either by car or on foot.

In addition, the closer home is to school, the easier it is for parents to get information about their child's education. It is easy for parents to meet teachers and discuss their child's education. It

is easy for parents to participate in any activity organized by the school. This fosters stronger collaboration between parents and schools, a mutually unified effort for maximizing children's academic development. The findings show that distance emerges as a driving force influencing parental engagement in sending children to school and attending programs organized by the school.

Conclusion

Educational landscape presents numerous challenges, particularly regarding the involvement of parents in children's education. Without the support of parents, the implementation of the planned education policy will not be fully successful and will put pressure on teachers and the school to help students achieve excellent performance in education. The results of the study show that geographical factors play an important role in shaping the nuances of parents' involvement in their children's education in primary school. This study posits that geographical factors are significantly related to parental involvement in children's education, encompassing both home- and school-based activities. Specifically, size, land use, location, and distance are identified as key geographical elements influencing the extent of parental engagement in supporting their children's learning. Therefore, it is essential to account for the influence of these geographical factors in developing and implementing initiatives to foster parental engagement in primary education.

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