

# An Exploration of the Determinants of Parental Involvement in Supporting Play Based Learning (PBL) in Early Childhood Education in Selected Schools in Kitwe

Mr. Muyangali Muyangali, Dr. Bibian Kalinde

University of Zambia

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.906000119>

Received: 21 April 2025; Accepted: 28 April 2025; Published: 03 July 2025

## ABSTRACT

Parental involvement is positively associated with greater wellbeing of children in their earlier ages for the sake of educational success. The aim of this study was to explore the determinants to parental involvement in supporting Play Based Learning (PBL) in Early Childhood Education. Data for the study was collected through interviews with 12 parents whose children are in ECE and three focus group discussions with teachers teaching at ECE in Kitwe District. Through the interviews and focus group discussions with parents and ECE educators respectively, the study identified key determinants such as socioeconomic status, educational background, cultural beliefs, and access to resources affect parental participation. Additionally, the study revealed parents' perceptions of their involvement, highlighting a growing recognition of the importance of play in child development, alongside concerns about balancing time and resources. The study further brings out possible measures to enhance parental engagement to support PBL, including increasing awareness about the value of play, offering flexible involvement opportunities, and providing targeted support for parents to strengthen the home-school connection. The study underscores the importance of parental understanding, aspirations, and self-efficacy in supporting play-based learning. It highlights the need for greater awareness, collaboration with educators, and parent-friendly school environments to enhance engagement and improve learning outcomes for young children.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education, Play based learning, Parental involvement, Learning environment, Child development, Zambia

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Parental involvement refers to the active participation of parents in their children's education and development, both at home and within school, in this case the Early Childhood Education (ECE) setting (Bartz and Karnes, 2018; Munsaka & Kalinde, 2017). It includes a range of activities, behaviours, and interactions that support children's learning, growth, and well-being. Parental involvement can take many forms, from engaging with children in academic activities to supporting their emotional and social development (Gross, Bettencourt, Finch, Plesko, Paulson & Singleton, 2022; Hornby & Witte, 2010).

Play-based learning is an effective, child-centred approach that uses play as the foundation for development and learning (Pyle & DeLuca 2017). It recognizes that children learn best when they are actively engaged in activities that they find enjoyable and meaningful. It promotes not only academic skills but also social, emotional, and physical growth (Cutter-Mackenzie et al 2014). By creating an environment where play is encouraged, children are empowered to explore, discover, and learn in a way that is both enjoyable and educational (Kalinde et al., 2024; Kaluba et al., 2024; Mambwe, et al., 2024; Danniels & Pyle, 2018).

The Government of Zambia acknowledges the pivotal role of parents in their children's education, as evidenced by the Education Act of 2011, which establishes parent-teacher committees as governance structures in public schools. However, the Act primarily focuses on the structural aspects of quality education provision. The desire to involve parents in their children's education can be traced back to the Education Reforms of 1977, which recognized the importance of ECE and emphasized that early childhood learning primarily occurs

through play. The reforms also underscored the significance of establishing Pre-school committees to effectively coordinate and manage ECE centres. Furthermore, the Focus on Learning policy of 1992 emphasizes strengthening the partnership between schools and families. Similarly, the education policy, Educating Our Future (1996) emphasizes that the initial responsibility for a child's education lies with the family and the surrounding community, with families being made aware of their children's learning.

The Zambia Education Curriculum Framework (2013) underscores the active role parents should play in the teaching and learning process. It highlights that parents can contribute to their children's education by telling stories, singing, playing games, and participating in literacy programmes. The Ministry of General Education (2016) further reinforces the idea that families bear the primary responsibility for providing care and education to children. Consequently, parents' awareness of their child's education is of utmost importance, extending beyond educational provision to encompass school improvement. Given the significance of parental involvement in a child's education, The Emergency Literacy Manual (2020) provides guidelines on how parents can engage in ECE, ensuring children's development and well-being align with the expected trajectory of learning.

This study underscores the significance of understanding the determinants of parental involvement as this would provide firm position on how to ensure parents are effectively involved in ECE to support play- based learning.

### **Statement of the problem**

While numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact of parental involvement on children's behaviour, academic success, and other achievements, engaging parents in play-based learning remains a significant challenge (Reynolds, Lee, Eales, Varshney, Smerillo, 2022). In fact, the lack of parental involvement is widely considered by teachers, administrators, and even parents to be the most significant issue facing schools today (Almalki, Alqabbani, & Alnahdi, 2021). Little attention has been given to parental involvement in ECE and its connection to play-based pedagogy in the Zambian context. For example, Chansa-Kabali (2016) examined how low-income parents' involvement relates to early reading skill acquisition; Singogo (2017) studied parental involvement with primary school learners in urban areas; and Simweleba and Serpell, (2020) investigated its effects on literacy and numeracy skill acquisition among fourth graders. Many educators struggle with how to effectively communicate with parents and often feel anxious or reluctant about engaging with them (Mann, & Gilmore, 2023).

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the determinants to parental involvement in supporting Play Based Learning (PBL) in ECE context in Kitwe district.

### **Research questions**

What are the determinants of parental involvement in the play-based learning in ECE?

In what ways do parents perceive their role in enhancing play-based learning in ECE?

What measures can be put in place to improve parental involvement in play-based learning in ECE?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study draws on Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership Model (2010) and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to explore parental involvement in play-based learning. Epstein's model highlights six types of parental involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Grant & Ray, 2018). The model emphasizes the importance of school-family collaboration to support a child's development, with a focus on creating an inclusive, supportive learning environment (Winthrop et al., 2021). Schools should help families create a supportive home environment and involve them in decision-making processes (Mapp & Bergman, 2021). Research shows that

when parents engage in play-based learning, children's language, problem-solving, and social skills improve (Sheridan et al., 2009; Pyle et al., 2017).

Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in child development, with play seen as a primary learning space. Vygotsky suggests that parents act as scaffolds, supporting children's play to extend their abilities and foster cognitive, emotional, and social growth (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2022). Parents can create a safe, stimulating environment where children feel free to explore and learn through play (Mermelshtine, 2017). Vygotsky's theory also underscores the importance of peer interactions during play to foster social skills (Tucker, 2014), research shows that parental involvement in imaginative and outdoor play promotes creativity, well-being, and social development (Hedges & Cooper, 2018; Tandon et al., 2012).

These theories suggest that when parents and schools collaborate, play-based learning can be a holistic and enriching experience for children. Applying Epstein's and Vygotsky's theories underscores the crucial role parents play in enhancing play-based learning for optimal child development.

### **Delimitation of the study**

The study focused on the 11 Zonal schools offering ECE in Kitwe District, as these schools are typically the first to adopt new teaching methods, approach or any activity

### **Limitation of the study**

The study focused on 11 Zonal schools offering ECE in Kitwe District, so the findings cannot be broadly generalized beyond the study sites and population. However, the results can serve as a reference for similar studies.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Educators and parents both play crucial roles in ensuring children's educational success. A positive learning experience is fundamental for children to thrive in school, as it provides necessary support, motivation, and high-quality instruction (Sichula et al., 2021). Parental involvement extends beyond the school environment, yet many families struggle to balance responsibilities such as work, education, extracurricular activities, and household commitments, leaving limited time to engage in children's play, learning, and development (Babuc, 2015). While both educators and parents bear significant responsibilities, it is ultimately the collaboration between home and school that shapes a child's educational trajectory. When parents actively participate in their child's learning, developmental and learning outcomes tend to improve. Therefore, schools should adopt strategies that promote accessible and flexible parental involvement, acknowledging the diverse realities of modern family life.

Parental involvement in play is essential for strengthening the parent-child bond, supporting emotional well-being, and fostering cognitive and social development (Anderson-McNamee & Bailey, 2010; Keung & Cheung, 2019). Playing with children enhances their problem-solving skills, social competencies, and learning through adult interaction (Hiniker et al., 2018). Research links parent-child play to improved cognitive and behavioural outcomes, fewer problem behaviours, and stronger emotional attachment (Gertler et al., 2014; Kaehler et al., 2016). The quality and consistency of such involvement, including active and engaged participation, contribute significantly to language development and critical thinking skills (Adamson, Rouse, & Emmett, 2021). Given these benefits, early childhood programs and public policies should actively encourage parental engagement in play through accessible resources and community-based initiatives that empower families.

Providing appropriate toys, materials, and space for play promotes creativity and cognitive growth; even simple objects like building blocks can enhance social and intellectual development (Olsen & Smith, 2020). Guided play, as supported by Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, encourages children to practice social roles, manage emotions, and develop cognitive skills. Independent and outdoor play further supports self-regulation and decision-making (Olsen & Smith, 2020). However, the effectiveness of these tools is amplified when combined with intentional adult guidance and consistent collaboration among stakeholders. Parental

involvement begins at home, where a nurturing environment, encouragement, and a positive attitude toward education are critical (Babuc, 2015). Collaborative partnerships between educators and parents enhance children's learning outcomes (Munsaka & Kalinde, 2017). However, differing perspectives among parents, educators, and professionals about the most effective involvement practices can lead to inconsistent messaging and hinder children's development.

Parents' beliefs about play vary across cultures and are shaped by personal caregiving roles and early play experiences (Xunyi & Hui, 2018; Roopnarine, 2011). Many parents recognize that play fosters creativity, emotional regulation, empathy, and social competence (Babuc, 2015; Basnyat, 2023). They also view play-based learning as enjoyable and motivating, often more so than traditional academic tasks (Pyle, DeLuca, & Daniels, 2017). However, societal pressures may lead some parents to prioritize academics over play (Bipath et al., 2022). While some support play-based learning, others prefer structured educational play like games with specific learning goals (Xunyi & Hui, 2018; Arnott & Yelland, 2020). This variation highlights the need for early childhood programs to adopt culturally sensitive outreach efforts that educate parents on the academic and developmental value of play, challenging misconceptions and promoting inclusive engagement.

Parental involvement in early childhood education (ECE) plays a foundational role in children's cognitive, social, and emotional development (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018). Active participation in learning activities, especially playful ones, creates rich developmental environments (Parker & Thomsen, 2019). However, the extent of involvement is influenced by parents' understanding of their roles, socioeconomic status, and perceptions of schools (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Holloway et al., 2008). These factors significantly shape both the quality and frequency of engagement.

Research consistently links parental involvement in ECE to better academic performance, self-regulation, and self-efficacy (Yasmin et al., 2020; Munsaka & Kalinde, 2017). This involvement must be sustained over time through continuous collaboration between parents and educators (Lareau, 1996). Strong family-school partnerships enhance school readiness, improve parent-teacher communication, and reduce conflicts in child-rearing. Moreover, such involvement is a cost-effective strategy that yields long-term educational benefits (Bierman et al., 2017; Jeynes, 2012; Reynolds et al., 2018). Despite the strong evidence, the lack of standardized definitions and measurement frameworks for parental involvement remains a barrier to maximizing its potential impact.

Parental engagement is associated with higher school attendance, graduation rates, and overall satisfaction among students and parents (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). It improves school climate, fosters stronger parent-teacher relationships, and smooths transitions from home to school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jung & Sheldon, 2020). It also leads to better behaviour, mental health, and attitudes among children, while boosting parental confidence (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). However, many schools limit their assessment of parental involvement to attendance at events (Gross et al., 2022). To achieve more meaningful engagement, schools must adopt inclusive and comprehensive approaches that acknowledge diverse forms of participation, including home-based learning, cultural practices, and two-way communication.

Despite its importance, many parents face challenges participating in play-based learning due to demanding schedules, work obligations, and competing priorities (Cooper-Kahn & Dietzel, 2024). Those working long hours or lacking connection to school life often find it difficult to communicate with teachers, which may negatively impact their children's performance (Budhrani et al., 2021; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). A weak relationship with educators, combined with uncertainty about how to contribute, further discourages participation (Yulianti et al., 2022). Additionally, socioeconomic barriers may limit access to resources, reducing the quality of play experiences for children in under-resourced households (Duncan et al., 2023). Schools must respond with flexible, culturally appropriate strategies that accommodate the varied contexts in which families live and support meaningful engagement at all levels.

The growing emphasis on academic achievement, digital media consumption, and fast-paced lifestyles has significantly reduced opportunities for free play (Bipath et al., 2022). This shift undermines children's development and restricts the use of play-based approaches. Many parents lack awareness of the benefits of play-based learning or the skills to implement it effectively, often favouring more traditional, academic



approaches (Singh & Ngadni, 2023). To combat this, public awareness campaigns and professional development for educators should highlight the foundational role of play in academic and lifelong success.

Parental preference for academically focused early learning centres, particularly those prioritizing language skills can be a barrier to adopting play-based methods (Okitsu et al., 2023; Kalinde, 2016, 2017, 2023). Educators frequently face resistance when parents see play as unrelated to learning (O'Gorman & Ailwood, 2012; UNICEF, 2018). This disconnect, often exacerbated by poor communication from schools, hampers the effective implementation of play-based learning (Singh & Ngadni, 2023). Successful integration of play-based pedagogy requires not only educator commitment but also parental buy-in. Early childhood centres must engage families through transparent, consistent communication that emphasizes the cognitive, social, and emotional benefits of play.

Finally, lack of parental involvement in both home and school learning can significantly hinder children's development. A key challenge for ECEC services is recognizing and supporting parents' roles as co-educators (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018). The National Education Association (2008) notes that many still view education solely as the responsibility of teachers. However, educators acknowledge that meaningful outcomes are only possible through strong home-school partnerships (Yulianti et al., 2022). Bridging this gap requires aligned expectations and cooperative relationships that prioritize the holistic development of each child.

## METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the systematic approach adopted in conducting the study, detailing the research design, data collection methods, sampling strategies, and analytical procedures. It also provides the rationale for the methodological choices made in order to address the research questions effectively.

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the determinants of parental involvement in supporting play-based learning (PBL) in Early Childhood Education (ECE). The case study approach enabled an in-depth examination of participants' lived experiences within a specific educational context.

### Study Site and Participants

The study was conducted in selected Early Childhood Education (ECE) centres within zonal schools in Kitwe, Zambia. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select 20 schools representing diverse educational settings. Participants included ECE teachers and parents of children enrolled at these centres. A total of 26 female teachers participated in three separate focus group discussion sessions. Additionally, 20 parents were recruited through convenience sampling, with 12 parents (3 male and 9 female) ultimately participating in semi-structured interviews.

### Data Collection

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with parents and focus group discussions with teachers. These methods facilitated open-ended exploration of beliefs, practices, and perceptions surrounding parental involvement in PBL. The interviews allowed parents to reflect on their roles in their children's play-based learning, while the group discussions encouraged teachers to collectively discuss their experiences and observations.

### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to examine data from interviews and focus group discussions. Transcripts were systematically transcribed, coded, and categorized to identify key themes related to parental involvement in play-based learning. This process allowed for the recognition of recurring patterns that informed the interpretation and discussion of findings (Roseveare, 2023; Valsiner & Branco, 2006). The analysis ensured that themes remained grounded in participants' experiences, offering meaningful insights into the research questions.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Zambia Research Ethics Committee for Humanities and Social Sciences. Permission was sought from the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS-Kitwe), head teachers from schools that were involved. Informed consent was secured from all participants, who were briefed on the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Anonymity was maintained through the use of pseudonyms for instance P1 for Parent 1 and F1T1 for teacher 1 in the focus group 1, and data were securely stored.

## **Trustworthiness of the Data.**

To enhance the credibility of the study, triangulation was employed through the use of multiple data sources and methods. Data were collected from parents of varied socioeconomic backgrounds and teachers from diverse school settings, strengthening the study's reliability and depth. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions provided rich, detailed accounts of participants' perspectives on parental involvement in play-based learning. A comprehensive audit trail was maintained, and thick descriptions of the context and methodology were provided to support transparency, replicability, and transferability. Findings were also compared with existing literature to highlight both commonalities and contextual differences.

## **STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The study's findings are structured around the research questions to provide context, along with themes and subthemes derived from the collected data supported by verbatim excerpts as evidence. These findings are analysed in relation to existing literature and the study's theoretical framework.

### **Determinants that influence parental involvement in the playful learning in ECE**

The findings hinge on the two themes identified and these include; parental understanding of PBL and parental perception of PI in PBL.

#### **Parental understanding of PBL**

This theme is discussed on three subthemes which include awareness and knowledge gap by parents, parental aspirations and parental efficacy.

##### **Awareness and knowledge gap by parents.**

Parents were asked to explain what they understood about PBL, most parents expressed limited understanding of the concept, but after a brief review some related to what they do at home with their children. For example;

Not aware about PBL, but from your explanation I am able to relate with the kind of activities children do at home (Parent 2).

Most of the parents expressed their understanding by giving examples of what children do at home as well as the kind of tasks given by their teachers as explained by Parent 7 who shared that;

...after school my child informs me about the activities done at school such as painting/shading /colouring mentioning the objects coloured.

The findings from the study reveal that parents have a mixed understanding of what play-based learning entails and can be noted from their responses when asked what they understood about the concept. Initially, many parents expressed limited knowledge about PBL, with several indicating that they had never heard of the term before. However, upon further explanation, many parents were able to connect the concept with activities they already engage in at home with their children. This highlights a gap in knowledge that could be addressed through increased awareness and education about the benefits and importance of PBL in early childhood development (Singh & Ngadni, 2023). Similarly, Parent 8 discussed songs and activities related to identifying shapes and objects, which they now realize align with PBL practices (Nardo, 2021).

The parents' responses suggest that they were engaging in some form of play-based activities without fully recognizing them as part of a formal educational framework. This indicates that parents are instinctively playing an important role in their children's early learning experiences, but greater clarity on what constitutes PBL could help them be more intentional and effective in supporting their children's development (Kalinde, Mambwe, Sichula, & Kaluba, 2024).

### Parental aspirations

Parental aspirations look at the idealistic hopes or goals that parents may form regarding future attainment (Gutman, & Akerman, 2008). Parents who hold high aspirations and esteem for their children's future are likely to be more willing to exert efforts to ensure that those aspirations are realized (Buchmann, Grütter, & Zuffianò, 2022). Indeed, evidence from research suggests that educational and occupational aspirations are associated with the ways in which parents shape children's activities, time, and learning environment (Babuc, 2015). For example, P6 said;

Whenever I have free time, my child engages me in pretend play, setting up scenarios like a shopping mall or a doctor's office. She assigns roles, sets prices for items, and exchanges pretend money. Sometimes, she plays the doctor, diagnosing and treating me with imaginary injections. These playful interactions are a regular part of our home.

To confirm the aspersion that parental aspiration influences parental involvement P6 had this to say;

It's difficult to mention any because we have not known this idea until this discussion and I think from now that we have learnt about PBL we will try to see what we can do to support the children's learning.

It follows that, since this parent had limited understanding about PBL, his engagement was also limited and as such disadvantaged the child.

The study has shown that aspirational parents are often proactive in ensuring that their children have opportunities for play-based learning. These parents often prioritize spaces for play, whether it's a safe outdoor area or an indoor setting conducive to hands-on activities like building blocks or art projects. This category of parent goes further to actively engage in play themselves. As Parent 5 shared;

at home we are able to play with the children we may play football...netball and singing.

The study indicate that involvement allows parents to guide the child's learning experience through play, while also offering a chance to bond and reinforce educational values in a fun and natural way. Parent 2 observed that;

It is actually very important for child development because it will also give you a chance to teach and study the child on how smart the kid is and which direction you think she is going and how you can help to develop or change that.

The study also revealed that parents who believe in the value of education often foster curiosity through open-ended play activities, such as pretend play, building, or art. For example, P6 shared that;

I get toys and games that can challenge the child and in education context as well as creating time for children whenever at home. I insist on cocomelon ... those were they sing songs about numbers, about shape, how to greet.

The research highlights that parents who hold high aspirations for their children are more inclined to engage in behaviours that promote their children's development, including involvement in play-based learning. Parents with high aspirations would further encourage exploration and curiosity from a young age, and play-based learning encourages children to be curious and discover the world around them (Durning, Baker, & Ramchandani, 2024). Parents who view education as a critical component of their child's future success are more likely to create opportunities for meaningful learning experiences at home. Parents with aspirations for

their child's success may encourage child-led play, which allows children to pursue their interests and curiosity (Parker & Thomsen, 2019). For instance, Parent 6 shared how they engage in pretend play activities, such as role-playing as doctors or shopkeepers, with the child. This type of interaction not only reinforces learning but also reflects an understanding of the importance of educational play in children's development. Similarly, other parents, like Parent 4, expressed their active participation in acquiring toys and supporting their child's play experiences, regardless of whether the school provided such resources. This helps children build confidence and a love for learning, contributing to long-term development and personal growth (Kaluba, Kalinde, Mambwe, Sichula, & Njobvu, 2021).

The research also pointed to an interesting observation from Parent 6, who acknowledged limited knowledge about play-based learning before the study but now felt motivated to engage more proactively. This finding suggests that parental aspirations can evolve when parents gain new knowledge, thereby increasing their involvement. Additionally, parents who aspire to their children's success tend to foster environments that encourage exploration (Kaluba, et al. 2021) and learning through play, such as providing building blocks, letters, or engaging in various physical activities like sports, as noted by Parent 5. For example, in the home environment they may dedicate time to creating a stimulating home environment filled with appropriate toys, books, and materials that encourage exploration and imagination. It is important to note that aspirational parents' guide children and don't want to overcontrol the children (Gutman, & Akerman, 2008).

### **Parental self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is a belief about one's capabilities to perform a specific task, and these beliefs determine how a person thinks, acts, and feels (Bojczyk, Haverback & Pae, 2018). It refers to a parent's belief in their ability to effectively support their child's learning and development. Parental self-efficacy is a belief that one can successfully parent a child, which affects one's readiness to take on the role of their child's first teacher (Dixon-Elliott, 2019). Studies have shown direct links between self-efficacy and parent involvement at school and in educational activities at home (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992; Seefeldt et al., 1998).

When parents feel confident in their ability to help their child succeed, they are more likely to engage in behaviours that positively influence their child's developmental and learning outcomes. For instance, parent 5 indicated that;

When parents are aware of the play-based learning then they can fully contribute to the play for children, schools need to invite parents and share what is involved in play-based learning.

Parent 3 shared that;

Some parents feel uncomfortable to play with their children because they are not certain on how to play with them, that is we don't have much knowledge on how to conduct playful learning.

This shows that individuals with high self-efficacy are likely to persist longer on a task and challenge themselves more than those with lower self-efficacy. Most parents shared that when a parent feels confident, they would be willing to communicate with teachers (Sha et al.2016), they will be able to initiate communication with teachers because they feel comfortable asking questions, seeking advice, and discussing their child's play and development with educators. Parent 3 hinted that;

I discuss with the teacher, attend sensitization meetings and follow what the guidelines shared by the school.

Parental self-efficacy plays a critical role in influencing how confident and capable parents feel about their ability to support their children's learning (Graham-Clay, 2024). The study indicates that parents who feel more confident in their parenting skills are more likely to engage in activities that promote their children's educational development, including play-based learning. For example, Parent 5 suggested that when parents are knowledgeable about the benefits of play-based learning, they are more likely to contribute to their child's educational experiences. Similarly, Parent 3 observed that some parents feel uncomfortable with play-based learning due to a lack of understanding of how to facilitate such activities. This highlights the importance of providing parents with sufficient information and training to boost their confidence and self-efficacy (Graham-Clay, 2024).



In order to become involved in their children's education, parents must perceive that they have the necessary skills to help their child adequately (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1997). In fact, parents who feel competent in their parenting roles are more likely to engage in teaching behaviours and more likely to create a home environment that develops children's emotional, social, and academic development (Mambwe, Phiri, Kalinde, Sichula, and Kaluba, 2021). Further, when parents feel confident in their ability to engage in their child's learning, they are more likely to seek out resources, consult with teachers, and discuss their child's progress, as noted by Parent 4 and Parent 3. This aligns with research by Sha et al., (2016), which suggests that confident parents are more likely to initiate communication with teachers, fostering a collaborative approach to supporting their child's development.

The study revealed that parental self-efficacy plays a critical role in shaping parental involvement in ECE, it is a crucial factor in encouraging active parental involvement in ECE. Parenting self-efficacy has shown to be an extraordinarily powerful determinant of effective parenting behaviour in most societies. Parents with high self-efficacy are generally more optimistic, authoritative, and consistent in their interactions with their children than those with lower parenting self-efficacy (Sha, et al., 2016). It is also shown that parents with high self-efficacy are more likely to monitor their children's schoolwork and to participate actively at the school (Williams et al., 2017).

Considering that they are confident parents with an impetus to create a more structured, supportive, and enriched environment, that encourages their child to play and learn. Besides, these parents set high expectations on their children, they tend to set ambitious but attainable goals for their children's play and learning (Douglas, 2023). Parents with self-efficacy are more likely to read with their children, assist with homework, and provide learning resources at home, such parents will create a positive learning environment (Kalinde, Mambwe, Sichula, and Kaluba, 2021).

Note that when parents believe in their ability to contribute to their child's development, they work alongside teachers to set goals and support the child's academic progress (Sha, et al., 2016). This will lead to increased parental involvement in school/class activities, for example, they are more likely to volunteer in classrooms, participate in school events, or become part of parent-teacher organisations, feeling confident that their presence and involvement can make a difference (Williams et al., 2017), such confident parents often encourage their children to engage in extracurricular activities, further enriching their educational experience and promoting well-rounded development (Kalinde, Sichula, Mambwe, & Kaluba, 2021).

When parents believe in their ability to positively influence their child's learning, they are more likely to engage in supportive, enriching behaviours that foster success in all the domains of the child development (Sha, et al., 2016). Teachers and schools can support and enhance this self-efficacy, creating a positive feedback loop that benefits both parents and children. Hoover-Dempsey et al., (1992) in their study show that parents with higher self-efficacy spent more time engaging in activities with their children at home and volunteered in their child's class for more times comparatively to parents with low self-efficacy.

The study shows that parents naturally engage in play-based learning, such as pretend play, building blocks, and art activities. Epstein's model highlights the vital role parents play in supporting learning at home (Nardo, 2021). For example, Parent 5's role-playing with their child as doctors or shopkeepers helps foster cognitive and social development. Vygotsky's theory aligns with this, emphasizing how parents can scaffold their child's learning within the zone of proximal development (ZPD) through play-based activities, promoting cognitive growth through cultural tools and social interaction (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2022).

### **Parental perception of PI in PBL**

Parents' perceptions of their involvement in supporting play-based learning in ECE reflect a range of beliefs, practices, and expectations. This theme is discussed based on the subtheme parent perception of the school.

### **Parent perception of the school**

Of interest is parental perceptions about the school, particularly concerning the extent to which teachers appeared to care about individual children and the willingness of teachers to encourage communication and

interaction with parents. For example, P4 shared that;

When I visited my child's class, I was happy with the physical environment being very clean and the teacher relationship with the children was good.

The perceptions that parents have of a school can play a significant role in shaping their degree of involvement in their child's development and learning. For example, it's a general observation that in most public-school parents rarely speak out on what they would need for their children, whilst in private school's parents are able to go outside the boundary and speak out for their child. For instance, some teachers shared that;

Some parents have come to school to find out about appropriate material that children can use for play, we have shared with some parents on how to use some of the education apps such as the jolly phonics app (F3T2).

The research also emphasizes the significant impact of parental perceptions about the school on their involvement in their children's education. Parents who view the school environment positively are more likely to participate in their child's learning, particularly when they feel welcomed and supported by the educators (Duman, Aydin & Ozfidan, 2018). A key finding from this study is that parents' perceptions of the physical environment, teacher-student relationships, and availability of resources influence their level of involvement in school-related activities.

For example, Parent 4 appreciated the cleanliness and positive teacher relationships in the classroom, while Parent 2 highlighted the importance of having adequate toys and materials for play-based learning. It is argued that the parents' level of involvement is likely to be affected by the school itself (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). If teachers appear to care about the welfare of the child, communicate respect for parents, and develop effective means of communicating with families, parents are more willing and able to become involved in their children's development and learning (Graham-Clay, 2024). Research and theory suggest that parents' involvement is not solely influenced by their own motivations or capabilities but is also closely tied to how they perceive the school environment, its culture, and the attitudes of staff members (Day, Sammons, & Gorgen, 2020). The level of parental involvement in a child's development and learning is much influenced by the perceptions of the school environment, including its culture, policies, and practices (Holloway, et al., 2008). A school that is supportive, communicative, inclusive, and responsive to families will likely see higher levels of parental involvement (Gross, Bettencourt, Taylor, Francis, Bower, & Singleton, 2020)

On the other hand, schools that are perceived as unwelcoming, exclusive, or unresponsive to parents' needs may discourage engagement (Siegel, Esqueda, Berkowitz, Sullivan, Astor & Benbenishty, 2019). Therefore, schools should actively work to create an environment that fosters a sense of partnership with parents to ensure the best educational outcomes for students. It is argued that schools that create a warm, welcoming, and inclusive atmosphere are more likely to encourage parents to get involved (Siegel et al., 2019). When parents feel comfortable and valued, they are more likely to engage in school events, meetings, and support their child's learning and development including play (Gross et al., 2020). This is consistent with previous findings suggesting that parental satisfaction with the school environment can lead to greater parental involvement in educational activities. This difference may be attributed to varying levels of communication and perceived responsiveness from school staff (Graham-Clay, 2024).

Schools that provide clear, regular communication whether through newsletters, emails, or parent-teacher conferences even through WhatsApp, can help parents feel more connected and informed (Graham-Clay, 2024). This transparency creates an environment where parents feel confident in their understanding of their child's progress and the school's goals and the parents will easily be immersed in such kind of involvement (O'Toole, Kiely, & McGillicuddy, 2019). Teachers also play a pivotal role in encouraging parental involvement by initiating communication and offering activities that would engage both parents and children. For instance, F3T3 observed that some parents actively sought advice on appropriate materials for play and even requested suggestions on educational apps, reflecting their willingness to engage more deeply in their children's learning.

Schools that make efforts to include all types of parents, regardless of socioeconomic background, cultural differences, or language barriers, can foster broader parent engagement (Vermeulen, & Kalinde, 2016). When parents feel that their participation is welcomed and that their voices are heard, they are more likely to get

involved (Kamenarac, 2021).

Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence highlights how school, family, and community interact to shape a child's development (Grant & Ray, 2018). In this case, parents' perceptions of the school environment such as teacher-student relationships, available resources, and the school's overall atmosphere play a critical role in motivating their involvement in their child's learning (Winthrop et al., 2021). Vygotsky's theory, particularly the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), further reinforces the importance of a supportive environment. According to Vygotsky, learning occurs through social interactions (Tucker, 2014), and children's cognitive development is enhanced when they are scaffolded by more knowledgeable others (Nardo, 2021), such as parents and teachers.

### **Ways parents perceive as their role in enhancing play-based learning in ECE**

This section is discussed using the following themes; parental involvement in PBL, creating a supportive learning environment for PI in PBL and role of parents in PBL in ECE.

#### **Parental involvement in PBL**

Parental involvement in play-based learning is essential for fostering a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Parents were asked to share their view on the role they are supposed to play in supporting their children's play-based learning at the centre as well as at home, most parents indicated that their role is to ensure children interact and play with other children in the neighbourhood, this is from the background that parents want to choose who their child would play with. Most of the parent asked, mentioned that they are supposed to ensure availability of material and resources for play such as toys, building blocks, dolls, books and other things that could be of help for the child to learn. Other parents emphasised for the;

...need to create an enabling environment for children and providing certain toys that would help to create a rich learning environment (Parent 6).

Parental engagement is crucial for the success of play-based learning (PBL) in ECE. The study found that parents primarily engage in PBL activities at home, ranging from structured activities with educational toys to unstructured play that promotes creativity and social interaction. However, parents reported limited opportunities for engagement at school, agreeing with Sichula et al., (2021) that there is insufficient evidence of parental involvement in PBL at school. Roksa and Kinsley (2019) note that the value placed on parent engagement by teachers and schools significantly influences parental involvement. School-based involvement also offers opportunities for parents to interact with teachers and staff (Sheldon, 2002).

Epstein highlights the role of parents in creating a supportive home environment that nurtures children's development (Roksa and Kinsley, 2019). In the context of play-based learning, parents can create a home environment that encourages play and exploration. This aligns with play-based learning principles, where children learn best when they are free to explore and engage with their surroundings (Sheldon, 2002).

#### **Creating a supportive learning environment for PI in PBL.**

Creating a supportive learning environment for PI in PBL is essential to fostering a collaborative approach between parents, teachers, and children. Parents were of the view that if workshops can be organised occasionally to share with parents about play based learning and how the parents can play their part. Parent 5 mentioned that;

Workshops and information sessions, organise such activities to explain the benefits of PBL activities. Offer parents guides with activities that they can easily do at home.

Teachers encourage parents to create play-friendly environments at home by allowing children to engage in safe, meaningful play. Additionally, they propose lending play resources to parents to help create supportive home environments. This aligns with Lungu and Matafwali (2020), who found that parents believed providing resources for home use would help bridge the gap between home and school learning. Vygotsky's theory

suggests that parents should not only observe but actively engage with their children during play (Mermelshtine, 2017). Scaffolding strategies during play might include guiding a child through the steps of a task, introducing challenges to extend their thinking, or providing encouragement to try new things (Tandon et al., 2012).

### **The role of parents in play- based learning in ECE**

This section looks at the perception of parents regarding their role in enhancing play-based learning in ECE. This theme will address the findings on the role of parents in PBL as perceived by the parents.

Asked about how they are engaged in PBL Parent 8 had this to share;

Parents should provide a conducive environment for children to do the play based learning even at home... we need to support them in play-based way of doing things.

Parent 3 stated that;

I am involved in play with the child at home, I have got the child the building blocks, and letters. We play hide and seek with the letters in the home... the child is made to identify the letters- this helps the learner stay focused and learn with easy.

As noted from the responses, most parents shared that they have a responsibility in ensuring that the child is provided with opportunities to play through provision of necessary play material as well as having an environment that is safe for play.

Parents were asked to find out how they felt their involvement impacted their child's play-based learning experience. Parents shared similar sentiments that when they engage themselves with their children, they tend to understand the children more and, become very close to them and as such one tends to take responsibility in any form of the child's behaviour. Some parents shared that their involvement has impacted their children in that they have built self-confidence, the children tend to learn things faster and have become independent and free with the parents that is they are able to ask the parents whenever they needed clarity (Olsen & Smith, 2020).

... my kid has become so free with me that she expresses herself with confidence, it has helped my daughter to be open and wanting to learn (Parent4).

The parents shared that they are beginning to learn and understand PBL, went further to suggest that if they are to involve themselves, children will learn more and will further enhance the relationship with their children.

It will mean a lot and it will be helpful to the child and encourage her to do more than she is doing right now, I think she will do a lot (Parent 3).

The study explored parents' perceptions of their roles in supporting play-based learning. The findings reveal that parents understand their role as vital in creating a conducive environment for PBL both at home and in the broader learning context. This environment includes not only physical space but also emotional and social support (Rahman, et al. 2019), such as encouraging children to interact with peers and participate in playful activities that stimulate their development.

Parent 8 stressed that providing a conducive environment for play-based learning is essential. This includes ensuring that there is enough space and suitable materials for children to engage in play, both at home and in school (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Likewise, Parent 1 highlighted the importance of encouraging children to socialize with others and take an active interest in what the children are doing. This approach fosters social development and collaborative learning, which are integral components of PBL (Rahman, et al., 2019).

Parent 3 shared specific examples of how they actively engage in play with their child at home, such as using building blocks and letters to play games like hide-and-seek. This not only aids the child's focus but also helps the child identify letters, reinforcing learning in a playful, hands-on manner (Bipath, et al., 2022). This type of



interaction showcases the active involvement that parents can have in guiding their children's learning through play (Bipath, et al., 2022), helping them develop foundational skills in a relaxed, enjoyable context (Mambwe, Phiri, Kalinde, Sichula, & Kaluba, 2024).

Parent 5 emphasized the importance of ensuring that children have a variety of play materials. Providing diverse materials allows children to explore different aspects of their environment, sparking creativity and helping them develop new skills (Buchmann, et al., 2022). This variety, as suggested by Parent 5, also ensures that the child is not limited in their learning experiences and can engage in a wide range of activities that promote cognitive, motor, and social development (Buchmann, et al., 2022).

Parent 9 articulated that their involvement includes reviewing schoolwork, finding materials for play, and encouraging children to play with their friends (Yulianti, et al., 2022). This suggests that parents see themselves as partners in their children's learning (Holloway et al. 2008), reinforcing the idea that learning is not confined to the classroom but extends to the home environment (Bipath et al., 2022). The emphasis on social play and the provision of appropriate materials highlights the role of parents in ensuring that their children have the resources and opportunities they need to engage in meaningful play-based learning (Taylor & Boyer, 2020).

Moreover, parents acknowledged the positive impact of their involvement in their children's play. Several parents, such as Parent 4, reported that their active engagement in play has helped their children build self-confidence, become more independent, and express themselves more freely (Olsen & Smith, 2020). Parent 3 emphasized that when parents are involved, children tend to learn faster and are more motivated to engage in learning activities. This underscores the value of parental involvement in fostering an enriching and supportive environment for play-based learning (Gross et al., 2020).

Overall, the findings underscore that parents play a crucial role in facilitating play-based learning by creating a supportive home environment (Bunijevac, 2017), engaging in play activities, and ensuring that their children have the materials and resources necessary for effective learning. Parental involvement is not only about providing physical resources but also about nurturing a positive attitude toward learning, encouraging social interaction, and being actively engaged in the child's development (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018).

Parental involvement is crucial here because parents, through scaffolding, can support their child's learning within the ZPD (Yulianti, et al., 2022). In a play-based learning context, parents can guide children's play by providing just the right level of assistance to help the child reach the next developmental stage. For example, parents can engage in pretend play with their child, provide suggestions, or help solve problems that arise during play activities (Olsen & Smith, 2020).

### **Measures to improve PI to enhance PBL in ECE**

Improving parental involvement in ECE is crucial to supporting play-based learning, as it helps create a cohesive learning environment at home and school. This question will be discussed using the following themes; consistent communication, interaction beyond open days and collaborative relationship between teachers and parents.

#### **Consistent communication between parents and teachers.**

Consistent communication between parents and teachers is key to supporting a child's development and ensuring the success of play-based learning. Asked how parental involvement can be enhanced, the parents overwhelmingly mentioned the need for regular communication, for instance;

Parent 2 mentioned that;

having good communication with the teachers is necessary so that there can be sharing of information about the child.

Parent-teacher communication is crucial for reinforcing the effectiveness of play-based learning (PBL). Consistent and structured communication helps align expectations, share learning goals, and create a unified

approach to supporting children's development. According to Gibson et al., (2015) in Keung and Cheung (2023), frequent communication enhances parents' understanding of PBL, fostering stronger connections between parents and children during activities.

### **Interaction between parents and teachers beyond open days**

Interaction beyond open days is essential for building strong, ongoing partnerships between parents and educators, ensuring continuous support for a child's development. To ensure continuous engagement, parents suggested need for more time of engagement with teachers. For instance, parent 8 shared that;

If schools could have been inviting us so that they share with us parents about PBL.

Teachers need to encourage parents to stay engaged throughout the year by regularly consulting with them about their children's development. Research shows that parents value the chance to attend and observe lessons, learning how Play-Based Learning (PBL) supports their child's growth. Additionally, parents believe that participating in the planning and reflection of PBL activities helps them better understand the approach, empowering them to support similar activities at home (Bipath et al., 2022).

### **Collaborative relationship between teachers and parents**

A collaborative relationship between teachers and parents is essential for supporting student growth. When teachers and parents work together, they can share insights about the child's progress, challenges, and strengths. This theme will be discussed using the following subheadings; shared responsibility, volunteering and creating parent friendly schools.

#### **Shared responsibility**

Shared responsibility refers to the collective role that both teachers and parents play in a child's education and development (Boit, 2020). In a collaborative relationship, both parties are accountable for supporting the child's learning and well-being.

Teachers shared that to enhance shared responsibility parents need to be given room to decide on certain matters, and were possible allow parents demonstrate some activities through play at school as guest teachers. Collaboration in planning play-based learning activities, joint responsibility between parents and teachers to support both ends of the child's education Parent 6 put it that;

Children only spend part of their time at school during the day, the other half is at home, so if what was happening in play time at school is beneficial to them, then even at home it can be beneficial.

This shared responsibility would help create a consistent and supportive foundation for the child, promoting their academic success and personal growth (Theoharis, 2024).

#### **Volunteering in school activities to support PBL**

Volunteering in school activities is a valuable way for parents to actively engage in a child's development and learning (Gross, et al., 2020). Parents expressed readiness to volunteer for play activities in the child's class and to observe the learning of the child whilst at school. Parent 4 voiced out that;

I would, if that would help the kids, I would volunteer to go and give a lesson to teach them.

When parents volunteer, whether by helping with events, assisting in the classroom, or supporting extracurricular programs, they contribute to creating a positive and inclusive school environment (Weinstein, 2021). Volunteering also strengthens the connection between home and school, allowing parents to better understand the learning process and foster a greater sense of community. Moreover, it sets a positive example for children, showing them the importance of giving back and being involved in their educational journey (Theoharis, 2024).

## Creating parent friendly schools

Creating parent-friendly schools involves fostering an inclusive, welcoming environment where parents feel valued and encouraged to participate in their child's education.

Parent 7 shared that;

Teachers need to engage parents, welcoming us, as a result parents will feel free in getting engaged in what children are doing.

Creating a welcoming school environment that fosters informal interactions is crucial for building strong parent-teacher partnerships. Gross et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of a community where both parents and teachers feel valued, respected, and empowered to collaborate in supporting children's learning and development. Epstein's fifth type of involvement, parent participation in decision-making can be further strengthened by providing more opportunities for parents to discuss and contribute to PBL planning and activities (Goodall, 2022).

Epstein's theory of family involvement is relevant to studies on parental involvement in play-based learning because it underscores how various forms of parental engagement can support and enhance children's development through play (Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2009) and suggests that family engagement is crucial for children's academic success and development. By involving parents in creating a supportive environment for play, maintaining open communication, volunteering, reinforcing learning at home, contributing to decision-making, and collaborating with the community, families can provide a strong foundation for effective play-based learning experiences (Hornby & Witte, 2010). This comprehensive involvement helps to ensure that children receive consistent, meaningful support both at home and in school, leading to richer, more effective play-based learning outcomes (Parker & Thomsen, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical role of parental understanding, aspirations, and self-efficacy in shaping their involvement in play-based learning (PBL) in ECE (Đurišić, & Bunijevac, 2017). The findings indicate that while many parents initially lacked awareness of PBL, they were able to relate it to familiar activities they engage in at home, highlighting a significant knowledge gap. This gap suggests the need for increased education and resources to help parents recognize and support play-based learning more intentionally (Duman, et al. 2018).

Parental aspirations emerged as a key motivator for involvement, with parents who held high aspirations for their children's future being more proactive in creating play-rich environments that foster learning (Babuc, 2015). Furthermore, the study revealed that when parents felt confident in their abilities to support their children's development, their involvement in PBL increased, demonstrating the importance of self-efficacy in fostering a positive learning environment (Singh & Ngadni, 2023). Parents with high self-efficacy were more likely to engage in educational activities and seek collaboration with educators, creating a supportive network for their child's growth (Dixon-Elliott, 2019).

The study also emphasizes that parents see themselves as essential partners in their children's PBL journey, both at home and in school. Parents who perceive schools as welcoming and responsive are more likely to engage actively in their children's learning experiences, particularly in play-based settings (Sha et al. 2016). They recognize the importance of providing an enriching and safe environment for play, offering appropriate materials (O'Toole, et al. 2019), and encouraging social interactions with peers. Furthermore, parents who actively engage in play with their children not only enhance their children's cognitive, social, and emotional development but also build stronger, more supportive relationships with them (Gross, Bettencourt, Finch, Plesko, Paulson & Singleton, 2022; Hornby & Witte, 2010; Mambwe, et al., 2021). Moreover, effective communication between parents and teachers, as well as a collaborative approach to education, are crucial for ensuring the success of PBL (Graham-Clay, 2024). The research suggests that consistent communication, ongoing teacher-parent interactions beyond open days, and shared responsibility between parents and

educators are vital components for enhancing parental involvement (Graham-Clay, 2024) in ECE. Volunteering in school activities and creating parent-friendly school environments also play significant roles in strengthening the partnership between home and school (Day, et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2017).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the Ministry of Education and the school administrators for according us the opportunity to collect data in the ECE centres. We would like to extend our gratitude to the teachers and parents for their willingness to participate in the study.

## Disclaimer

The authors wish to declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Muyangali Muyangali is a Master of Education student in Early Childhood, Care, Development and Education (ECCDE) at the University of Zambia

Bibian Kalinde (PhD) is a Lecturer of music at the University of Zambia.

## REFERENCES

1. Adamson, G. S., Rouse, E., & Emmett, S. (2021). Recalling childhood: transformative learning about the value of play through active participation. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 42(4), 362-380. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2020.1754309>.
2. Almalki, S., Alqabbani, A., & Alnahdi, G. (2021). Challenges to parental involvement in transition planning for children with intellectual disabilities: The perspective of special education teachers in Saudi Arabia. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 111, 103872. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2021.103872>
3. Anderson-McNamee, J. K., & Bailey, S. J. (2010). The importance of play in early childhood development. *Montana State University Extension*, 4(10), 1-4.
4. Arnott, L., & Yelland, N. J. (2020). Multimodal lifeworlds: Pedagogies for play inquiries and explorations. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, 9(1), 124-146.
5. Babuc, Z. T. (2015). Exploring parental perceptions and preferences about play: A case study in Erzurum. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 197, 2417-2424. [doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.304](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.304).
6. Barratt-Pugh, C., Barblett, L., Knaus, M., Cahill, R., Hill, S., & Cooper, T. (2022). Supporting parents as their child's first teacher: Aboriginal parents' perceptions of KindiLink. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 50(6), 903-912. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01221-1>
7. Bartz, D. E., & Karnes, C. (2018, January). Effective Parent Involvement/Family Engagement Programs. In *National Forum of Teacher Education Journal* (Vol. 28, No. 3).
8. Basnyat, S. (2023). Parental Involvement on Home Schooling of Basic Level Children in Nepal. *Educational Journal*, 2(2), 111-122. <https://doi.org/10.3126/ej.v2i2.61701>
9. Bierman, K. L., Morris, P. A., & Abenavoli, R. M. (2017). Parent engagement practices improve outcomes for preschool children. Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Centre, Pennsylvania State University. [https://www.peopleservingpeople.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Parent\\_Engagement\\_Preschool\\_Outcomes.pdf](https://www.peopleservingpeople.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Parent_Engagement_Preschool_Outcomes.pdf).
10. Bipath, K., Muthivhi, A. E., & Bhoola, S. (2022). Parents' understandings and practices regarding play and learning. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 30(4), 515-528. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2022.2070648>
11. Boit, R. (2020). Navigating the process of building parent-teacher partnerships: Experiences of early childhood pre-service teachers. *Journal of Childhood, Education & Society*, 1(2), 167-181. DOI: 10.37291/2717638X.20201238
12. Bojczyk, K. E., Haverback, H. R., & Pae, H. K. (2018). Investigating maternal self-efficacy and home learning environment of families enrolled in Head Start. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 46, 169-178. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-017-0853-y>



13. Buchmann, M., Grütter, J., & Zuffianò, A. (2022). Parental educational aspirations and children's academic self-concept: disentangling state and trait components on their dynamic interplay. *Child Development*, 93(1), 7-24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13645>
14. Budhrani, K., Martin, F., Malabanan, O., & Espiritu, J. L. (2021). How did parents balance it all? Work-from-home parents' engagement in academic and support roles during remote learning. *Journal of Online Learning Research*, 7(2), 153-184.
15. Bunijevac, M. (2017). Parental involvement as a important factor for successful education. *Centre for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 7(3), 137-153. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.291>.
16. Chansa-Kabali, T. (2016). Parental Involvement in Early Schooling: Exploring Parent and Teacher Views in a Low-income African Context. *British Journal of Education, Society and Behavioural Science*, 14(4), 1-9. OI: 10.9734/BJESBS/2016/23599
17. Cooper-Kahn, J., & Dietzel, L. (2024). Late, lost, and unprepared: A parents' guide to helping children with executive functioning. London; Taylor & Francis.
18. Cutter-Mackenzie, A., Edwards, S., Moore, D., Boyd, W., Moore, D., Edwards, S., ... & Boyd, W. (2014). Play-based learning in Early Childhood Education. *Young children's play and environmental education in Early Childhood Education*, 9-24. DOI [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03740-0\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03740-0_2)
19. Day, C., Sammons, P., & Gorgen, K. (2020). Successful School Leadership. Education development trust. (ED614324). ERIC. Reading: Education Development Trust
20. Dixon-Elliott, B. (2019). The exploration of parent self-efficacy and parent involvement in early education. Pepperdine University. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2019. 10843522
21. Douglas, J. W. B. (2023). The home and the school. In *Studies in British Society* (pp. 178-200). London; Routledge.
22. Duman, J., Aydin, H., & Ozfidan, B. (2018). Parents' involvement in their children's education: The value of parental perceptions in public education. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(8), 1836-1860. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol23/iss8/4>.
23. Duncan, G., Kalil, A., Mogstad, M., & Rege, M. (2023). Investing in early childhood development in preschool and at home. *Handbook of the Economics of Education*, 6, 1-91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.hesedu.2022.11.005>
24. Đurišić, M., & Bunijevac, M. (2017). Parental involvement as an important factor for successful education. *Centre for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 7(3), 137-153. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.291>.
25. Durning, A., Baker, S., & Ramchandani, P. (Eds.). (2024). *Empowering Play in Primary Education*. London: Routledge.
26. Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S. B., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2009). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
27. Gertler, P., Heckman, J., Pinto, R., Zanolini, A., Vermeersch, C., Walker, S., ... & Grantham-McGregor, S. (2014). Labor market returns to an early childhood stimulation intervention in Jamaica. *Science*, 344(6187), 998-1001. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1251178>
28. Goldberg, A. E., McCormick, N., Frost, R., & Moyer, A. (2021). Reconciling realities, adapting expectations, and reframing "success": Adoptive parents respond to their children's academic interests, challenges, and achievement. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 120, 105790. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105790>.
29. Goodall, J. (2022). A framework for family engagement: Going beyond the Epstein framework. *Wales Journal of Education*, 24(2). doi: <https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.24.2.5>
30. Graham-Clay, S. (2024). Communicating with Parents 2.0: Strategies for Teachers. *School Community Journal*, 34(1), 9-60. <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/>
31. Grant, K. B., & Ray, J. A. (Eds.). (2018). *Home, school, and community collaboration: Culturally responsive family engagement*. New York; Sage Publications.
32. Gross, D., Bettencourt, A. F., Taylor, K., Francis, L., Bower, K., & Singleton, D. L. (2020). What is parent engagement in early learning? Depends who you ask. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29, 747-760. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-019-01680-6>
33. Gutman, L., & Akerman, R. (2008). Determinants of aspirations [wider benefits of learning research report no. 27]. Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, Institute of Education,

- University of London. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/154161>
34. Hart, C. S. (2016). How Do Aspirations Matter? *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 17(3), 324–341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2016.1199540>.
35. Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Annual Synthesis, 2002. <http://www.sedl.org/connections/>
36. Hedges, H., & Cooper, M. (2018). Relational play-based pedagogy: Theorising a core practice in Early Childhood Education. *Teachers and Teaching*, 24(4), 369-383. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2018.1430564>
37. Hiniker, A., Lee, B., Kientz, J., & Radesky, J. (2018). Let's Play!: Digital and Analog Play between Preschoolers and Parents. Paper presented at the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, Montreal Convention Centre, Montreal. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3174233>.
38. Holloway, S. D., Yamamoto, Y., Suzuki, S., & Mindnich, J. D. (2008). Determinants of Parental Involvement in Early Schooling: Evidence from Japan. *Early Childhood Research & Practice*, 10(1), n1. <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu>.
39. Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Bassler, O. C., & Brissie, J. S. (1992). Explorations in parent-school relations. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 85(5), 287-294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1992.9941128>
40. Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education?. *Review of educational research*, 67(1), 3-42. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543067001003>
41. Hornby, G., & Witte, C. (2010). Parent involvement in rural elementary schools in New Zealand: A survey. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 19, 771-777. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-010-9368-5>
42. Janssen, J., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2018). (De) constructing parental involvement in early childhood curricular frameworks. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 26(6), 813-832. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2018.1533703>.
43. Jeynes, W. (2012). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental involvement programs for urban students. *Urban Education*, 47(4), 706–742. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085912445643>.
44. Jung, S. B., & Sheldon, S. (2020). Connecting Dimensions of School Leadership for Partnerships with School and Teacher Practices of Family Engagement. *School Community Journal*, 30(1), 9-32. <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/>
45. Kalinde, B., Mambwe, R., Sichula, N., & Kaluba, C. (2021). A Systematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Primary School Readiness for Transition Through Play-Based Pedagogies. *Journal of Law and Social Sciences*, 5(4), 63-88. <https://doi.org/10.53974/unza.jlss.5.4.1165>
46. Kalinde, B., Sichula, N., Mambwe, R., & Kaluba, C. (2021). Cross-Country Document Analysis of Play-Based Learning in Early Childhood Education in Zambia and Beyond. *Journal of Law and Social Sciences*, 5(4), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.53974/unza.jlss.5.4.1162>
47. Kaluba, C., Kalinde, B., Mambwe, R., Sichula, N., & Njobvu, N. (2021). Exploring Early Childhood Education Teachers' Play-Based Learning Pedagogical Practices in Zambia. *Journal of Law and Social Sciences*, 5(4), 21-42. <https://doi.org/10.53974/unza.jlss.5.4.1163>.
48. Kamenarac, O. (2021). Problematising constructions of 'expert teachers' and 'vulnerable children' in New Zealand Early Childhood. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2021.1892602>
49. Kelty, N. E., & Wakabayashi, T. (2020). Family engagement in schools: Parent, educator, and community perspectives. *Sage Open*, 10(4), 2158244020973024. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020973024>
50. Keung, C. P. C., & Cheung, A. C. K. (2019). Towards holistic supporting of play-based learning implementation in kindergartens: A mixed method study. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 47(5), 627-640. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-00956-2>
51. Lareau, A. (1996). Assessing parent involvement in schooling: A critical analysis. In Booth & J. F. Dunn (Eds.), *Family-school links: How do they affect educational outcomes?* (pp. 57–64). New York, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
52. Lin, X., & Li, H. (2018). Parents' play beliefs and engagement in young children's play at home. In *Working with Parents and Families in Early Childhood Education* (pp. 5-20). New York; Routledge.
53. Mambwe, R., Phiri, D., Kalinde, B., Sichula, N., & Kaluba, C. (2021). Exploring School Readiness and

- Transition Dynamics: Enablers and Disablers in Early Childhood Education Programmes of Zambia. *Journal of Law and Social Sciences*, 5(4), 43-62. <https://doi.org/10.53974/unza.jlss.5.4.1164>.
54. Mann, G., & Gilmore, L. (2023). Barriers to positive parent-teacher partnerships: The views of parents and teachers in an inclusive education context. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 27(14), 1503-1515. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1900426>
55. Mapp, K. L., & Bergman, E. (2021). Embracing a new normal: Toward a more liberatory approach to family engagement. New York: Carnegie Corporation.
56. Mermelshtine, R. (2017). Parent-child learning interactions: A review of the literature on scaffolding. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 87(2), 241-254. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12147>
57. Munsaka, E., & Kalinde, B. (2017). Laying the foundation for optimal outcomes in Early Childhood Education. Lusaka: UNZA Press.
58. Nardo, A. (2021). Exploring a Vygotskian theory of education and its evolutionary foundations. *Educational Theory*, 71(3), 331-352. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12485>
59. Olsen, H., & Smith, B. (2020). Sandboxes, loose parts, and playground equipment: A descriptive exploration of outdoor play environments. In *Reconsidering The Role of Play in Early Childhood* (pp. 186-199). New York; Routledge.
60. O'Gorman, L., & Ailwood, J. (2012). 'They get fed up with playing': Parents' views on play-based learning in the preparatory year. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 13(4), 266-275. <https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2012.13.4.266>
61. O'Toole, L., Kiely, J., & McGillicuddy, D. (2019). Parental involvement, engagement and partnership in their children's education during the primary school years. National Parents Council. <http://hdl.handle.net/10197/9823>
62. Okitsu, T., Edwards Jr, D. B., Mwanza, P., & Miller, S. (2023). Low-fee private preschools as the symbol of imagined 'modernity'? – Parental perspectives on early childhood care and education (ECCE) in an urban informal settlement in Zambia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 97, 102723. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.102723>
63. Parker, R., & Thomsen, B. S. (2019). Learning through play at school: A study of playful integrated pedagogies that foster children's holistic skills development in the primary school classroom. [https://research.acer.edu.au/learning\\_processes/22](https://research.acer.edu.au/learning_processes/22)
64. Posey-Maddox, L., & Haley-Lock, A. (2020). One size does not fit all: Understanding parent engagement in the contexts of work, family, and public schooling. *Urban education*, 55(5), 671-698. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916660348>
65. Pyle, A., & Danniels, E. (2017). A continuum of play-based learning: The role of the teacher in play-based pedagogy and the fear of hijacking play. *Early education and development*, 28(3), 274-289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2016.1220771>
66. Pyle, A., & DeLuca, C. (2017). Assessment in play-based kindergarten classrooms: An empirical study of teacher perspectives and practices. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 110(5), 457-466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2015.1118005>
67. Pyle, A., DeLuca, C., & Danniels, E. (2017). A scoping review of research on play-based pedagogies in kindergarten education. *Review of Education*, 5(3), 311-351. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3097>
68. Rahman, S. M., Chowdhury, K. Q., & Obaydullah, A. K. M. (2019). Perception of parents of their Involvement in children's learning activities in preschool. Retrieved January, 30, 2023.
69. Reynolds, A. J., Ou, S. R., & Temple, J. A. (2018). A multicomponent, preschool to third grade preventive intervention and educational attainment at 35 years of age. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 172(3), 247-256. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2017.4673>
70. Roksa J and Kinsley P. (2019) The Role of Family Support in Facilitating Academic Success of Low-Income Students. Springer. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45180388>.
71. Roopnarine (2012) Cultural Variations in Beliefs about Play, Parent-Child Play, and Children's Play: Meaning for Childhood Development. New York: Routledge.
72. Roseveare, C. (2023). Review of Thematic analysis: A practical guide by V. Braun & V. Clarke. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, Volume 38.1, 143-145. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.76737>
73. Seefeldt, C., Denton, K., Galper, A., & Younoszai, T. (1998). Former Head Start parents' characteristics, perceptions of school climate, and involvement in their children's education. *The*

- Elementary School Journal, 98(4), 339-349.  
<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/461900>
74. Sha, L., Schunn, C., Bathgate, M., & Ben-Eliyahu, A. (2016). Families support their children's success in science learning by influencing interest and self-efficacy. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 53(3), 450-472. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.21251>.
  75. Sheridan, S. M., Edwards, C. P., Marvin, C. A., & Knoche, L. L. (2009). Professional development in early childhood programs: Process issues and research needs. *Early education and development*, 20(3), 377-401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409280802582795>
  76. Sichula, N., Kalinde, B., Mambwe, R., Kaluba, C., & Phiri, D. (2021). Stakeholder perspectives of PBL and their involvement in the implementation of play pedagogy in selected Schools offering Early Childhood Education in Southern and Central Zambia. *Journal of Law and Social Sciences*, 5(4), 89-107. <https://doi.org/10.53974/unza.jlss.5.4.1166>.
  77. Siegel, A., Esqueda, M., Berkowitz, R., Sullivan, K., Astor, R. A., & Benbenishty, R. (2019). Welcoming parents to their child's school: Practices supporting students with diverse needs and backgrounds. *Education and Urban Society*, 51(6), 756-784.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517747682>.
  78. Singogo, D (2017) Parental involvement in children's education in selected urban primary schools in Chipata District, Zambia ( Master's thesis)
  79. Simweleba, N. H., & Serpell, R. (2020). Parental involvement and learners' performance in rural basic schools of Zambia. *South African journal of childhood education*, 10(1), 1-13.  
<https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-1fa2001324>
  80. Singh, G. K. S., & Ngadni, I. (2023). Exploring Preschool Parents' Understanding of Play-based Learning and its Importance in Early Childhood Education. *Human Resource Management Academic Research Society*, Selanga.; <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i2/17546>
  81. Tandon, P. S., Zhou, C., & Christakis, D. A. (2012). Frequency of parent-supervised outdoor play of US preschool-aged children. *Archives of pediatrics & adolescent medicine*, 166(8), 707-712.  
doi:10.1001/archpediatrics.2011.183
  82. Taylor, M. E., & Boyer, W. (2020). Play-based learning: Evidence-based research to improve children's learning experiences in the kindergarten classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 48(2), 127-133. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-00989-7>
  83. Tucker, K. (2014). *Mathematics through play in the early years*. Los Angeles; Sage Publications Limited.
  84. Theoharis, G. (2024). *The school leaders our children deserve: Seven keys to equity, social justice, and school reform*. New York; Teachers College Press.
  85. Valsiner, J., & Branco, A. U. (2006). *Communication and metacommunication in human development*. Greenwich: IAP.
  86. Vermeulen, D., & Kalinde, B. (2016). Fostering children's music in the mother tongue in Early Childhood Education: A case study in Zambia. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 6(1), 1-9. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-4c170b0bd>.
  87. Williams, K., Swift, J., Williams, H., & Van Daal, V. (2017). Raising children's self-efficacy through parental involvement in homework. *Educational Research*, 59(3), 316-334.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2017.1344558>
  88. Weinstein, M. L. (2021). *Why Do They Not Volunteer? Investigating the Reasons Parents Choose to Not Volunteer: Examining The Factors at a High School Athletic Booster Club* (Doctoral dissertation).
  89. Winthrop, R., Barton, A., Ershadi, M., & Ziegler, L. (2021). *Collaborating to transform and improve education systems*. Center for Universal Education at Brookings. [https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2021/10/Family\\_School\\_Engagement\\_Playbook\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2021/10/Family_School_Engagement_Playbook_FINAL.pdf).
  90. Yulianti, K., Denessen, E., Droop, M., & Veerman, G. J. (2022). School efforts to promote parental involvement: the contributions of school leaders and teachers. *Educational Studies*, 48(1), 98-113.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2020.1740978>