

---

## **Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education for Lifelong Learning**

**Okunlola, Oladiran Amidu & Yunusa, Shaima'u Aliyu (Ph.D)**

Department of Early Childhood Care and Education,  
Faculty of Specialized Education,  
Federal University of Education, Kontagora, Niger State  
[okunlolaamidu@gmail.com](mailto:okunlolaamidu@gmail.com); [yshaimau9@gmail.com](mailto:yshaimau9@gmail.com)  
08037286012; 08038945034

---

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18742962>

### **Abstract**

Parental involvement in Early Childhood Education (ECE) has been widely acknowledged as a critical determinant of children's holistic development and their preparedness for lifelong learning. This paper explores the various forms of parental involvement, strategies for encouraging active participation, and the impacts of such involvement on early learning outcomes. Drawing from recent studies, the article emphasizes that when parents engage in home-based and school-based activities such as reading with their children, attending school events, and maintaining regular communication with teachers, children demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement, social competence, and motivation. Moreover, parental involvement fosters stronger partnerships between families and schools, creating supportive learning environments that extend beyond the classroom. The article concludes that enhancing parental participation in ECE not only benefits children in their early years but establishes a foundation for lifelong learning. Recommendations highlight the need for parent education programs, flexible school structures, and collaborative initiatives that bridge the gap between home and school.

**Keywords:** parental involvement, early childhood education, lifelong learning, family-school partnerships

### **Introduction**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a crucial stage that lays the foundation for children's intellectual, emotional, and social development. Scholars and policymakers emphasize that the quality of experiences children receive during their formative years has profound implications for their lifelong learning trajectories (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022). While governments and schools play vital roles in ensuring access to early education, research such as that of Cordy and Wilson (2024) consistently show that parents are the first and most influential teachers of

children. Their involvement in ECE significantly enhances learning outcomes, fosters resilience, and supports the development of lifelong skills (Epstein, 2020; Hornby, 2022). Parental involvement goes beyond the child and the learning; it has a lasting effect on the sustainable growth of a nation. Yunusa and Isah (2025) assert that Parental involvement develops long-term skills and attitudes that lead to the child's holistic growth and contribution to sustainable future.

In Nigeria and many other developing countries, parental involvement remains inconsistent due to factors such as socio-economic problem, limited awareness, cultural practices, and weak parent-school communication structures. These factors often result in a missed opportunity to harness the full potential of collaborative learning environments (Okeke, 2021). Yet, studies highlight that when parents actively participate whether through reading to children at home, supporting homework, volunteering in school activities, or maintaining communication with teachers; children experience improved academic performance, better social adjustment, and stronger motivation for continuous learning (Goodall & Montgomery, 2021).

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is universally acknowledged as the cornerstone of human capital development, providing the foundation upon which lifelong learning and holistic growth are built. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2022), the early years are the most critical period in a child's development because of the rapid brain growth and the formation of foundational skills. Within this stage, the role of the family, particularly parents, cannot be overemphasized. Parents are the first educators of their children, shaping their attitudes, values, and early cognitive experiences long before they enter formal schooling. This paper therefore explores the types of parental involvement in ECE, strategies to encourage such involvement, its impacts, and long-term benefits for both children and society.

### **Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education**

Parental involvement in ECE refers to the various ways in which parents actively participate in their children's learning and development, both at home and in collaboration with schools. The model of parental involvement of Epstein (2020) highlights dimensions such as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with communities as models of parental involvement. This model underscores that effective parental engagement goes beyond occasional school visits. It requires consistent and meaningful participation in children's academic and socio-emotional growth.

Hornby, (2022); Goodall and Montgomery (2021) have consistently shown that children whose parents are actively engaged in their education perform better academically, exhibit higher levels of self-confidence, and develop

stronger social skills. Moreover, such involvement creates a culture of learning that extends beyond the classroom into the home and community, reinforcing the idea that learning is a lifelong endeavor. When parents engage in activities such as reading to children, discussing school experiences, monitoring homework, or attending parent-teacher meetings, they establish a strong foundation for children's future educational success and adaptability in an ever-changing global landscape (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021).

In many countries, parental involvement faces structural and socio-economic challenges. Poverty, illiteracy, cultural perceptions of education, and the demands of modern work life often limit the extent to which parents participate in their children's early education (Okeke, 2021). While some parents may view education as the sole responsibility of teachers and schools, others may lack the confidence or knowledge to engage meaningfully in their children's learning. Such gaps hinder the creation of robust parent-school partnerships that are essential for achieving equitable and inclusive education outcomes.

The significance of parental involvement is also tied to the broader agenda of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4), which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. By investing in parental participation, societies not only enhance immediate learning outcomes but also develop citizens who value education and contribute to national development (World Bank, 2021). For children, the presence of supportive and engaged parents provides stability, nurtures curiosity, and instills the resilience required to adapt to challenges in future academic and life pursuits.

### **Types of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education**

Parental involvement in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is multidimensional, extending beyond occasional interactions with teachers to include sustained participation in both home-based and school-based activities. Epstein (2020) and Hornby (2022) asserted that effective parental engagement encompasses diverse practices that collectively strengthen children's academic, social, and emotional development. For clarity, these different types of involvement can be categorized into home-based, school-based, and community-based involvement.

#### ***Home-Based Involvement***

Home-based parental involvement refers to the educational support children receive within the home environment. It includes practices such as reading to children regularly, which improves vocabulary, literacy, and imagination; supporting homework and assignments, reinforcing classroom learning and

instilling discipline; providing learning resources, such as storybooks, puzzles, toys, and educational digital tools; modeling positive attitudes toward learning, such as curiosity, persistence, and problem-solving. Research indicates that home-based involvement has a direct effect on children's academic readiness and overall enthusiasm for learning. For instance, the research of Liang and Zhang (2023) found that children whose parents consistently engaged in reading and home-learning activities developed stronger literacy skills and demonstrated higher levels of school readiness compared to their peers.

### ***School-Based Involvement***

School-based involvement entails parents' participation in activities that occur within the school setting. These include attending Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, volunteering in classroom activities or extracurricular programs, supporting school events such as cultural days, sports activities, and fundraising initiatives. Participating in decision-making processes related to school governance. Such involvement fosters collaboration between parents and teachers, ensuring alignment of goals and strategies for children's development. According to Adegbile and Ojo (2020), children whose parents participate actively in school events tend to feel more supported, which boosts their self-confidence and sense of belonging in the learning environment.

### ***Community-based Involvement***

Beyond home and school, parental involvement can extend to the community. Akanbi et al, (2025) propose that community-based solutions are necessary to overcome infrastructural and sociocultural obstacles, thus requiring a high level of collaborative involvement from parents and the community to break the cycle of illiteracy. This includes parents collaborating with community organizations that provide educational resources or after-school programs, engagement in community literacy initiatives, such as library visits or storytelling sessions. Building peer-support networks among parents to share experiences and strategies for child development. Such collaboration broadens children's learning environments and reinforces the idea that education is a shared responsibility. Okeke (2021) emphasizes that community-supported parental involvement strengthens inclusivity and ensures that children from disadvantaged backgrounds receive equal opportunities for growth.

### **Encouraging Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education**

The benefits of parental involvement in early childhood education are widely acknowledged however, encouraging consistent and meaningful participation remains a challenge in many contexts. To overcome these challenge, schools,

policymakers, and communities must adopt deliberate strategies that foster an enabling environment for parental participation. This may include:

**1. Parent Education and Awareness Programs**

One effective approach is to provide parents with training workshops and seminars on the importance of their role in children's early learning. These sessions can address topics such as effective parenting strategies, literacy development, child psychology, and positive discipline. When parents understand the long-term impact of their involvement, they are more likely to commit to active participation (Goodall & Montgomery, 2021).

**2. Flexible School Policies and Scheduling**

Schools can encourage parental involvement by adopting flexible policies that accommodate parents' work commitments. For instance, organizing parent-teacher meetings at different times of the day or providing opportunities for virtual participation via online platforms. Liang and Zhang (2023) emphasize that flexibility reduces barriers for working parents and increases inclusivity.

**3. Strengthening Teacher-Parent Partnerships**

Teachers play a pivotal role in creating welcoming environments for parents. When educators adopt an open-door policy, communicate respectfully, and show genuine interest in parents' input, families feel valued as co-partners in the learning process. Hornby (2022) noted that mutual respect and trust are key factors in sustaining parental engagement.

**4. Leveraging Technology for Communication**

In today's digital age, schools can utilize platforms such as WhatsApp, emails, school portals, and SMS to keep parents informed about their children's progress and upcoming activities. Digital communication makes it easier for parents to stay connected, particularly those who cannot always attend meetings in-person (Adegbile & Ojo, 2020).

**5. Building Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Practices**

Parental involvement must also be sensitive to cultural diversity. Schools should design programs that respect parents' cultural backgrounds, languages, and values. For example, inviting parents to share stories, songs, or traditions from their culture not only enriches the learning environment but also makes them feel respected and included (UNESCO, 2022).

### **6. Incentives and Recognition**

Acknowledging and celebrating parents' contributions, whether through appreciation events, certificates, or public recognition, can encourage continued participation. Recognition reinforces the message that parental involvement is essential and valued by the school community.

### **7. Community-Based Support Systems**

Collaboration with community organizations, faith-based institutions, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) can help provide additional resources and support structures for parents. For example, community libraries, literacy programs, or parent-support groups can create networks where families share strategies and strengthen their role in ECE (World Bank, 2021).

## **Impact of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education**

Parental involvement has been identified as one of the strongest predictors of children's success in Early Childhood Education (ECE). When parents are actively engaged, children benefit academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally (Hornby, 2022; Liang & Zhang, 2023). The following outlines the key areas of impact:

### **1. Academic Achievement and School Readiness**

Children whose parents are actively involved in their early education perform better in literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving tasks. They are more likely to enter primary school with strong foundational skills and adapt more quickly to structured learning environments. Goodall and Montgomery (2021) found that consistent home-based involvement, such as reading aloud and interactive play, significantly improves children's vocabulary and early mathematical skills.

### **2. Social and Emotional Development**

Parental involvement fosters positive self-esteem, resilience, and emotional regulation in young children. When parents provide emotional support and engage in their child's school life, children feel more secure and develop stronger peer relationships. According to Hornby (2022), children with supportive parents demonstrate greater confidence, empathy, and cooperation, all of which are crucial for lifelong learning.

### **3. Improved Attendance and Motivation**

Children whose parents participate in school activities tend to have better attendance records and higher levels of motivation. They view school as an extension of home, a place where both teachers and parents are invested in their success. Adegbile and Ojo (2020) asserted that active parental participation reduces absenteeism and increases enthusiasm for learning.

#### **4. Stronger Teacher-Parent Partnerships**

Parental involvement not only benefits children but also strengthens teacher-parent relationships. When parents and teachers work collaboratively, they share insights, address challenges promptly, and develop individualized strategies for children's learning. This partnership creates a consistent support system across home and school environments (Okeke, 2021).

#### **5. Bridging Educational Inequality**

Parental engagement plays a critical role in reducing disparities among children from different socio-economic backgrounds. Children from disadvantaged families often face barriers to learning, but when parents are supported and engaged, these gaps can be minimized. For instance, UNESCO (2022) reports that parental literacy programs combined with active school engagement improve learning outcomes for children in low-income communities.

#### **6. Long-Term Lifelong Learning Habits**

The impact of parental involvement is not limited to the early years. It also lays the foundation for lifelong learning. Children whose parents model positive learning behaviors such as curiosity, reading habits, and problem-solving are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation for continuous education. According to the OECD (2021), early parental engagement directly correlates with improved academic persistence and adaptability later in life.

### **Benefits of Parental Involvement in Early Years**

Parental involvement in the early years provides wide-ranging benefits that extend beyond immediate academic outcomes. These benefits impact the child, the family, the school system, and the wider society. Early childhood is a critical period of brain development, and when parents actively support learning, the positive effects are long-lasting (UNESCO, 2022). The benefits of parental involvement include:

#### **1. Enhanced Cognitive Development**

Children whose parents engage in home-based learning activities such as storytelling, singing, and playing educational games develop stronger cognitive and language skills. These children are more likely to enter formal schooling with advanced literacy and numeracy skills, providing them with a significant head start (Liang & Zhang, 2023).

#### **2. Development of Positive Learning Attitudes**

Parental involvement helps cultivate a love for learning at an early age. Children who see their parents reading, asking questions, and showing curiosity are more likely to imitate such behaviors. This nurtures positive attitudes such as

persistence, curiosity, and intrinsic motivation. These qualities are essential for lifelong learning (Goodall & Montgomery, 2021).

### ***3. Strengthened Parent-Child Bond***

Engagement in learning activities fosters stronger emotional bonds between parents and children. Such bonding enhances children's sense of security, trust, and self-worth, which in turn boosts their confidence in academic and social settings. Hornby (2022) stressed that secure attachment formed in early years contributes significantly to resilience and emotional stability.

### ***4. Greater School Success and Continuity***

Early parental involvement is strongly linked to long-term school success. Children with engaged parents are less likely to repeat class, drop out of school, or display behavioral challenges. Adegbile and Ojo (2020) found that early parental engagement sets a trajectory of consistent academic performance throughout primary and secondary education.

### ***5. Reduced Educational Inequality***

One of the greatest benefits of early parental involvement is its potential to reduce inequality. Children from disadvantaged or low-income families often face learning gaps before they even enter school. Active parental engagement, supported by community and school programmes, helps bridge these gaps and ensures more equitable outcomes (Okeke, 2021).

### ***6. Foundation for Lifelong Learning and Citizenship***

The habits and attitudes developed during the early years extend into adulthood. Children exposed to active parental support are more likely to value education, engage in continuous learning, and participate productively in society development. OECD (2021) emphasizes that early parental involvement equips children with adaptability, problem-solving skills, and civic responsibility needed for the 21st century.

### ***7. Strengthened Family-School Partnerships***

Parental involvement in early years' builds trust and cooperation between families and schools. This partnership creates a supportive educational ecosystem where both home and school environments reinforce one another, ultimately maximizing children's developmental outcomes (UNESCO, 2022).

## **Conclusion**

From discussion above, this paper critically examines the role of parental involvement in early childhood education as a pathway to lifelong learning. Specifically, it addresses the different types of parental involvement, explores

strategies to encourage meaningful participation, highlights the impacts of such involvement on early learning, and discusses the broader benefits for lifelong learning and national development.

Parental involvement in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is not merely a complementary activity to formal schooling but a central pillar in shaping the holistic development of children. The evidence presented in this paper demonstrates that when parents actively participate whether through home-based practices such as reading, school-based activities such as volunteering, or ongoing communication with teachers, children experience measurable improvements in academic performance, social-emotional development, motivation, and overall school readiness (Hornby, 2022; Liang & Zhang, 2023).

Parental involvement is an indispensable driver of quality early childhood education and lifelong learning. It bridges the gap between home and school, strengthens family-school partnerships, and prepares children for academic success and responsible citizenship. To ignore the role of parents is to neglect one of the most powerful resources available in early childhood education. Strengthening parental engagement, therefore, is not an optional practice but an essential strategy for building resilient learners, thriving families, and equitable societies.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are proposed to strengthen parental involvement in early childhood education as a pathway to lifelong learning:

1. Governments should invest in nationwide initiatives that train parents on effective ways to support their children's early education.
2. Teachers and schools should adopt inclusive and flexible engagement policies through organizing parent-teacher meetings at convenient times, offer virtual participation options, and provide translated materials where necessary to accommodate diverse families.
3. Government should formulate policies that promote collaboration between schools, NGOs, religious institutions, and community organizations and parents to expand parental support networks.
4. Parents should create a learning-friendly home environment by providing books, educational toys, and other resources that stimulate curiosity and learning.
5. Parent should also engage in daily learning activities through simple practices such as reading bedtime stories, discussing school experiences, and encouraging play-based learning to enhance children's cognitive and social skills.

### **References**

Adegbile, O. F., & Ojo, A. A. (2020). Parental involvement and pupils' academic performance in early childhood education in Nigeria. *Journal of Early*

- Childhood and Primary Education*, 11(2), 45–57.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/xxxx>
- Akanbi, J. D., Okunlola, O. A., & Yunusa, S.A.(2025). Early Childhood Education in Rural Communities: A panacea to illiteracy among the Dwellers in Nigeria. *Kontagora International Journal of Educational Research (KIJER)*, 2(3), Article 134. Retrieved from: <https://fuekjournals.org/index.php/kijer/article/view/134>
- Cordry, S. & Wilson, V. (2024). Parents as first Teacher. *The journal of Individual psychology*, 60(4),382-398
- Epstein, J. L. (2020). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429494673>
- Goodall, J., & Montgomery, C. (2021). Parental engagement and children’s learning: A review of evidence. *Educational Review*, 73(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1687394>
- Hornby, G. (2022). Parental involvement in early childhood education: A critical review. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 30(2), 123–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2021.1933912>
- Liang, X., & Zhang, Y. (2023). Home-based parental involvement and children’s school readiness: Evidence from early childhood education programs. *Early Child Development and Care*, 193(4), 567–582. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2022.2103541>
- Okeke, C. I. O. (2021). Barriers to parental involvement in early childhood education in Africa: Implications for educational equity. *South African Journal of Education*, 41(3), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v41n3a2034>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2021). *Starting strong VI: Supporting meaningful interactions in early childhood education and care*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b5d1c29c-en>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2022). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707>
- World Bank. (2021). *Improving Early Childhood Development: A global policy perspective*. World Bank Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1644-4>
- Yunusa, S. A. & Isah, H.(2025). Empowering tomorrow’s generation: integrating technology and environmental awareness for sustainable childhood care development. *Kontagora Journal of Intellectual Discourse (KJID)*, 3(2), 88-97 <http://fuekjournals.org/index.php/KJID/issue/view/181/172>