

School Climate and Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Involvement in Jewish and Arab Primary Schools in Israel

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This study examines educators' views of parental involvement in the two diverse cultural and national educational systems in Israel. Respondents include 799 teachers from 52 Jewish and Arab primary schools. Our assumption - that Jewish teachers encourage parental involvement more than the Arab teachers, because of the progressive, Western liberal orientation of Jewish schools as opposed to the authoritarian and closed school climate of the Arab schools - was refuted. The findings indicate that in both educational systems, teachers are less inclined to engage in parental involvement. Parents are generally more involved in their children's education at home, while teachers rarely encourage parents' involvement in decision-making processes or voluntary activities in the schools. The teachers' main obstacles with regard to encouraging parental involvement are that they feel disrespected and underappreciated by parents, and they believe they lack the necessary skills to successfully negotiate with parents during crises.

Keywords: parental involvement, Jewish and Arab teachers, school climate, teachers' obstacles, teacher-parent communication

Introduction

Almost four decades of research have demonstrated that parent involvement (PI) in education significantly contributes to students' improved academic achievement and their social and emotional developmental growth (Coleman and McNeese, 2009; Epstein and Dauber, 1991; Fan, 2001; Galindo and Sheldon, 2012; Kim, 2002; Martin et al., 2013). However, in many schools teachers and parents are not congruent in their expectations and functions of each other's roles. Many studies have shown that there are numerous barriers to attaining ideal PI and teacher-parent interaction (Chavkin, 1993). In fact, the problem of teacher-parent interaction

ranks at - or near - the top of many teacher stress surveys (Sakharov & Farber, 1983).

The main purpose of this study was to explore the significant factors that lay the foundation for successful teacher-parent collaboration from the teachers' point of view. We explored the extent to which the school climate and the quality of teacher-parent interactions hinder or motivate teachers to involve parents in Jewish and Arab primary schools in Israel.

Literature Review

PI and Its Contribution

According to Bouffard and Weiss (2008), parental involvement is perceived as the sum of activities parents perform with their children in the context of learning.

Epstein (1995, 2001) distinguished between PI activities at home and in school. Her

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comprehensive model encompasses six components, each of which expands the foundations and deepens the partnerships between school, family, and community. *PI at home* involves *studying at home*, and the family participates in the child's learning by helping with homework assignments. *PI at school* involves *parenting* - the activities initiated by teachers in the school in order to help families with the child's upbringing. *Communication*, two-way communication is an important measure developed by teachers to inform parents about the school's policies and ongoing activities, as well as to communicate with the family about the child's progress. Teachers also request that *parents volunteer* and participate in academic and social activities, and in *decision-making processes*, parents are asked to take part in shaping the school's policy and in decision-making processes.

Researchers such as Deslandes and Bertrand (2004), Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, and Hoover-Dampsey (2005), and Schaedel, and Eshet (2009) examined parents' motivation to participate and guide their children at home, particularly in homework assignments. Other researchers, such as Epstein (2001), analyzed PI in school and the activities initiated by the school together with parents, such as school meetings, ongoing communication with teachers, PTA meetings, school events, and various volunteer projects.

The positive outcome of PI on students, parents, teachers, and the community is emphasized in the literature. Epstein (1995), Hill and Craft (2003), and Vassallo (2000), found PI is an important educational variable that affects students' achievements; Sheldon and Epstein (2002) found PI reduced violent behavior at school; and Connell, Dishion, Yasui, and Kavanagh (2007) found PI improved students' social adaptation to the school environment. Parents may also benefit from their involvement, because, according to Wherry (2002), their growing familiarity with the educational system will make them feel capable of helping their children. PI carries implications for the community as well. Friedman (2011) found that PI improves the school's reputation among the educational staff and the entire community.

Teachers Involving Parents

The studies conducted from the 1970s until the 1990s by Coleman (1987), Gorolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, and Apostoleris (1997), and

Marjoribanks (1978) and others highlighted the participation of parents of dominant groups and their contributions to their children's education in comparison to the limited participation of the marginalized groups. In these studies, the socio-demographic background variables of families such as: economic level, education, family status (single parent), race, ethnicity or being an immigrant played an important role as to parents' motivational beliefs to become involved in the education of their children.

In the 21st century, many researchers turned their attention to schools' and teachers' key roles in enhancing parents' motivation to become involved in their children's education. Christenson (2000), Hill & Taylor (2004), Fulton, Yoon, and Lee (2005), Berger (2008) and Hindeman et al. (2012) emphasized the staff-initiated activities, which encourage parents to help their children's development. These studies underline the crucial impact of a positive school climate, and the quality of teacher-parent interactions as important contributors to improved parental involvement in education regardless of their social economic status or their ethnicity, race or being a minority.

Quality Relationships Between Parent-Teacher

Quality educational systems maintain warm relationships among the staff members and they encourage high-quality communication between parents and teachers (Mapp, 2002; Payne & Kaba, 2001). Teacher-parent cooperation is especially essential when issues related to the child are involved. The teacher must be sensitive, understand the parents' difficulties, and guide parents through the process of receiving information, processing it, and finding solutions, while maintaining collaboration throughout the dialogue and the decision-making process Oplata, (2002). Education scholars often recommend that teachers implement a two-way communication pattern, appreciate and respect parents, and utilize the parents' intimate knowledge of their child (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2001).

Lewis, Kim, and Ashby Bey (2011) found good outcomes when teachers implemented PI-supportive strategies, such as establishing official relationships with parents, creating a positive climate in classrooms, offering parenting workshops, and communicating with the school community.

According to Adams and Christenson (2000) and Freidman (2010), the foundations of teacher-parents relationships are trust. Larocque, Kleinman, and Darling (2011) emphasize the need for teachers to gain essential skills to interact with heterogeneous parent populations because they lacked sufficient knowledge or training to work with different types of parents.

The School's Organizational Climate and PI.

Sammons (1995) identified the home-school partnership as one of the key components of school effectiveness research (SER) and students' achievements. Hence, a positive organizational climate in schools cultivates positive internal relationships that augment students' success. This school environment cultivates a warm collaborative relationship between the home and the school, the involvement of key adults, and the relations between adults as well as between adults and youth. Teachers and parents have important roles to play (Berger, 2008). According to Fulton et al. (2005), the parents' and teachers' roles do not replace but instead reinforce each other, thus providing the student with a consistent message regarding his or her education.

In Israel, Bauch and Goldring (2000), Seginer (2006) and Oplata (2002) found that the school's organizational climate affects the quantity and quality of teacher-parent interactions.

The school principals' commitment to the partnership is crucial. Goldring (1992), found in Israel that "efficient" schools are often led by principals who are interpersonal relations oriented, and who create a considerate policy and open communication between themselves and the staff. The principals at such schools are deeply committed to supporting the partnership program. They support families that experience financial and cultural difficulties, in an attempt to improve their communication with their children, the school, and other organizations within the community (Friedman 2011).

Obstacles and Barriers that Prevent Teachers from Including Parents

Shimoni and Baxter (1996) found that PI is often hampered by various difficulties and parent-teacher tensions, particularly parents' disagreement with the teachers' reports about the child's academic progress. Goldring and Shapira (1996) found that many homeroom teachers develop negative feelings of disrespect and lack of appreciation toward parents. Teachers sometimes

perceive themselves as experts but see parents as lacking educational knowledge. Some teachers accept involved parents and cooperate with them, as long as the parents do not threaten the teachers' activities and professional image. However, when teachers face disputes or disagreements, and when teachers feel that the parents' involvement threatens their professional authority, the relationships become difficult, and teachers tend to discourage PI (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2011; Sanders & Epstein, 2005).

Parent-teacher communication is usually unidirectional, from the teacher to the parent, and parents are often required to accept this as a fact. This kind of communication may lead to frustration, criticism, and hostility between the two parties. Christenson & Buerkle (1999), and Christenson (2005) indicates that the barriers hindering teacher-parent relationships include teachers' lack of skills and knowledge in developing communication with the parents, disagreements regarding parents' roles, teachers' lack of consideration regarding family situations and students' learning conditions, as well as the fact that teachers, for the most part, communicate with parents only in extreme situations.

According to Ziv-Gur & Levi-Zalmanson, (2005), most models that describe school-parent relationships preserve the school's power over that of the parents. The term "parents" often disregards parents' different identities, stripping them of their social position and their cultural and symbolic capital. Their identity as parents puts them in a weaker position, robbing them of the social achievements they have accumulated throughout their life.

Schaedel, Deslandes, and Eshet (2013) found that in Israel and Canada the parents maintain that few teachers invite parents to be involved in their children's education at school. In Israel, parents are motivated to become involved because of the invitation initiated by their child.

The teachers maintained that their lack of adequate training in this area in their interactions with parents. Only a few schools in Israel provide teachers with practical ongoing training workshops dealing with the issue of school PI (Greenbaum & Fried, 2011).

School-parent Relationship in Jewish and Arab Schools in Israel

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Jewish and Arab schools have functioned as two separate educational systems under the

administration of the Ministry of Education (MOE). Jewish schools educate the majority of Jewish children - 80% of the total K-12 children population; the main language of instruction in these schools is Hebrew. The Arab minorities: Moslems, Druze and Christians and Bedouin (20%) study in a separate Arab K-12 school system, and their language of instruction is Arabic.

PI in Jewish schools. The school-parent relationship has gone through a number of distinguishable phases. During the first phase, from 1948 until the 1970s, the dominant approach to teacher-parent relationships was one of *separation* (Friedman, 2011; Sever, 1999). During this phase, the school was perceived as the main socialization agent, instilling the Hebrew language and Israeli-Jewish culture among the many new immigrants that arrived from Europe and the Arab countries (Pasternak, 2003).

The government's educational policy was one of equality, providing uniform education for all. According to Raichel (2008), the state policy was based on the "melting pot" concept, and it completely ignored the diverse cultural backgrounds of students and their families. Teachers commonly believed that the student's parents (particularly from North Africa and eastern countries), could not support their children's studies due to cultural and spiritual poverty and low education levels. Friedman (2011) observed that many newcomer parents felt the patronizing attitudes of native Israeli teachers, and in response, distanced themselves from the school, developing hostility towards the schools and government institutions in general.

During the 1970s and 80's, the relationships between the schools and families have expanded and intensified, as well as the relationships between schools and communities (Noy, 1995). In the 1980s, due to educational reforms and a pluralistic policy adopted by the MOE, schools were given managerial autonomy. This neo-liberal ideology focused on the students' achievements rather than their socio-economic background. These processes took away teachers' power, and the school became a service-provider for its "customers" - the parents. Resnick (2009) observed that the declining status of teachers further discouraged parent-teacher collaboration.

At the beginning of the 21st century, parents with high socio-economic status began to gain leverage over the educational system (Swirsky & Dagan-Buzaglo, 2009). In some ways, the policy

that allows active participation and free choice for parents has been beneficial. For example, parents fought to integrate students with special needs into the public education system (Pasternak, 2003). Parents' status was enhanced, and they demanded better education for their children. Specially designed schools, such as democratic, entrepreneurship, technological, and arts schools, were established due to parents' growing involvement in education. Parental involvement created greater awareness within the educational system, and among schools, teachers, and parents, about the importance of including parents in the educational process.

According to Swirsky and Dagan-Buzaglo (2009), the MOE's neoliberal reforms have increased the participation of affluent and educated parents in the educational system.

Nonetheless, according to Lott (2003), many teachers still perceive their role in children's education as superior to that of parents, particularly regarding low socioeconomic status and minority groups.

Eden, (2001), maintains that parents have indeed become active clients yet, they inspect and scrutinize school attainments and activities. So much so that in recent years teachers have argued that excessive PI is one reason for the declining standard of teaching, since it undermines their work. Yet, parents are not participating in decision taking processes in the schools and particularly from choices related to pedagogic issues.

PI in Arab schools. The growing participation of the Arab parents in their children's education in recent years exemplifies the evolution in the cultural and economic ambiance of the Arabs as a minority group in the state of Israel. During this process, Arab parents who were exclusively excluded from the schools during the early years became more motivated to participate in the educational development of their children in recent years.

In the early years, from 1948-1966, the Arab population mainly resided in small villages in the center of the country and the north and, for the most part, they were mainly small farmers uneducated and poor (Al-Haj, 2005; Hofman, 1988). The schools were mutually supervised by the MOE and the Israeli army. Thus, educational and administrative policies were made and approved by school supervisors and army officers. According to Pasternak (2003) and Raichel (2008), the organization of the Arab schools was

hierarchical and authoritative in nature. The various stake holders in the school complied with the authoritative chain of command of the school supervisors and the school principals who complied to the directives issued by the MOE to the teachers and the students, while parents were distanced from the schools. In addition, the educational staff avoided parents' participation since they perceived the parents' involvement in their children's education as insignificant because of their low educational attainments.

In the last few decades, the Arabs in Israel turn ambivalent toward their own traditions and the modern culture of the Western world of, as well as to their national identity. They enjoy the democratic Western way of life in Israel, and as such, they regard education, both their own and of their children, as a means for social and economic advancement (Smootha, 2005, 2011). Their belief in education as a means for upwards social transformation has caused growing numbers of Arabs adults and particularly Arab women to attend institutes of higher education (teacher training colleges and universities) and join the job market (Smootha, 2005). During the last two decades, the growing proportion of educated parents among the Arab residents, coupled with the neo-liberal educational reforms of the MOE that introduced changes in the organizational school climate in the Arab schools, have motivated Arab parents to become more involved and demand more quality education for their children. (Rinnawi, 1996; Al-Haj, 2005).

Drawing on the literature review, we predicted that the school's organizational climate, as well as relationships between the educational staff and students' families, based on mutual trust, respect, and tolerance, would have a positive impact on school-parent collaboration and the way in which the teachers perceived parental involvement. We assumed that schools will encourage PI as a mean to improve the students' achievement and cultivate an organizational climate that supports teacher-parent collaboration. Thus, positive school policies of PI and a positive school climate would inspire teachers to cooperate and involve parent. Conversely, barriers and obstacles in parent-teacher relationships would have a negative impact on teachers' perceptions to encourage PI, and this would be reflected in reduced PI in the schools.

Accordingly, the following research questions will be examined:

1. A positive school climate that facilitates parental involvement will have a positive impact on PI in Jewish and Arab schools.
2. Barriers and conflicts hindering teacher-parent interactions will have a negative impact on PI in Jewish and Arab schools.
3. Teachers' perceptions in the Jewish schools will differ from the perceptions of the Arab teachers regarding PI because of the cultural and educational differences that characterize the Jewish dominant population as opposed to the Israeli Arab minority group.

Method

Participants

The study was conducted in 52 Jewish and Arab elementary schools located in urban and rural communities, representing the broad social and national mosaic of the society in northern Israel. It included 799 Jewish and Arab teachers (in the 1st-6th grade). Participants comprised 396 (49.5%) Jewish teachers from 29 schools and 403 (50.4%) Arab teachers from 23 schools.

Most of the participants, 644 (83%), were women, 340 (90%) from Jewish schools and 304 (77%) from the Arab schools. Teaching seniority in the Jewish schools ranged between 1 and 40 years, with a mean of 14.3 and a median of 12. A t-test indicates that Jewish teachers have more teaching seniority ($M=15.0$ years) than Arab teachers ($M=13.7$ years), $t_{(758, 0.95)} = 1.97$, $P<0.05$. Teaching seniority in the teacher's current school ranged between 1 and 37 years, with a mean of 10.3 and a median of 8. No differences were found. The majority of the teachers (68%) had a B.Ed. degree (obtained from teacher training colleges), 23% had a bachelor's degree in education (a university degree), and 5% of the teachers had an M.A. degree. There were no differences between Jewish and Arab teachers' level of education.

Procedure

The study was authorized by the Chief Scientist Office of the MOE, and by the Northern District directors of the MOE. During 2012, the schools' principals were asked to distribute the questionnaires among the teachers and to return the questionnaires within a week. The rate of return was about 35%. There were no differences between the rate of return of the teachers in the Jewish and Arab schools. The research

questionnaire was a closed questionnaire, exploring Jewish and Arab teachers' attitudes regarding PI in their schools. The various scales of the questionnaire were translated from English to Hebrew, and back translated to English to ensure the questionnaires' validity.

The participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*). In addition, the questionnaire included questions about the teachers' demographic background: Ethnicity, gender, professional role at school, teaching experience at the current school, and in general.

The following measures were used to record teachers' perceptions of the control variables and dependent variables: Means and standard deviation and Hierarchical Regression Coefficient analyses were conducted accordingly for Jewish and Arab teachers' perceptions of parents' involvement at home and in school, first introducing the teachers' individual characteristics as control variables, followed by the other variables (*Stepwise*).

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire defines teachers' beliefs about how the school construes its relationship with parents, and whether the teachers and school administration support parental involvement at home and in school. It includes the following control and dependent variables:

Control Variables

The school's organizational climate. This scale was inspired by Zeitz, Johansson, and Rotchie, Jr.'s (1997) questionnaire ($\alpha = .73$). The scale included six items, such as: "We are encouraged to present suggestions for improving parent-teacher relations".

Difficulties faced by teachers in their relationships with parents. The scale was inspired by the work of Shimoni and Baxter (1996) ($\alpha = .85$). Twelve items about the teacher-parent relationship were included, such as: "I think I can't act in areas related to parental involvement".

Dependent Variables

Epstein's (1995, 2001) typologies as presented in Christenson and Sheridan (2001, pp.12-13) were used in order to assess parents' activities at home and in the school, since this study was conducted from the perspective of teachers, who appear to

encounter difficulties in defining the wide scope of PI in the community we used the five typologies that the teachers encouraged at home and in school (excluding one: the *community partnership component*, which teachers could not assess). (Lewis, Kim, & Ashby, 2011).

PI at home – learning at home. Five items under the title ($\alpha = .84$.) "How often do you encourage home-learning activities?", including "Do you educate parents on the importance of developing a rich learning environment at home, through reading, watching TV with their children, visiting local libraries, museums, science institutions, etc.?"

PI at school. We used four scales.

Parenting. This scale included seven items ($\alpha = .80$), such as "To what extent do you keep parents updated by: Informing them about the introduction of new curricula in school, in subjects like writing, reading, and mathematics?"

Parent-teacher communication. The scale included four items ($\alpha = .78$), for example: "I give a number of options for communicating with parents, in the meeting at the beginning of the year and throughout the year".

Volunteering: Four items ($\alpha = .76$) were included, such as "How often do you encourage parents to volunteer? Do you use parents' skills for volunteering in class and in school?"

Joint decision-making processes. Six items ($\alpha = .76$) were included, such as "How often do the school and the teachers include parents in fundraising decisions?"

Findings

Means, standard deviations, t-tests and separate regression analyses were conducted for Jewish and Arab teachers' to evaluate their perceptions at home and in the school.

The calculated means of the scales indicate that Jewish and Arab teachers had higher scores for the school climate ($M=3.58$), and they scored lower the obstacles and barriers they face in their relationships with parents ($M=2.09$). Yet, the Jewish teachers scored their obstacles with parents significantly higher than the Arab teachers, $t_{(0.99, 795)} = 6.03$, $P < 0.01$.

Parents are more involved at home ($M=3.53$) than in school ($M=3.37$), according to teachers' perspectives. Arab parents are significantly more involved with their children at home ($M=3.63$) than Jewish parents ($M=3.43$), $t_{(0.99, 790)} = 3.73$,

P<0.001, whose main involvement with their children is in assisting them with homework.

Among the dependent variables, the respondents had higher scores for communication (M=3.92). Jewish teachers communicate more often with parents (M=4.05) than Arab teachers (M=3.81), $t_{(0.95,788)} = 4.68$, P<0.001. Lower scores were given to parenting (M=3.61). Arab teachers (M=3.73) maintain that they conduct more activities that allow parents to improve parental proficiencies in assisting their children in their

studies at home than Jewish teachers (M=3.49), $t_{(0.95,787)} = 5.23$, P<0.001. The lowest scores were for parents' participation in decision-making processes (M= 3.01) and voluntary activities at school (M= 2.96). No differences were found between Jewish and Arab teachers' scores for these activities, thus indicating that Jewish and Arab teachers only rarely encourage parents to participate in decision-making and volunteering in school.

Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations, and Independent t-test: Teachers' perceptions of Parental Involvement at Home and in School in Israel

Variables		N	Range	Mean	S.D.	Reliability	t
Parental Involvement at Home	Jews	389	1.00 - 5.00	3.43	0.82	0.84	3.73***
	Arabs	403	1.00 - 5.00	3.63	0.74	0.83	
	Total	792	1.00 - 5.00	3.53	0.79	0.84	
Parental Involvement in School	Jews	394	1.00 - 4.95	3.35	0.56	0.86	1.01
	Arabs	403	1.57 - 4.85	3.39	0.54	0.88	
	Total	797	1.00 - 4.95	3.37	0.55	0.87	
Parenting	Jews	386	1.00 - 5.00	3.49	0.71	0.80	5.23***
	Arabs	403	1.43 - 5.00	3.73	0.59	0.78	
	Total	789	1.00 - 5.00	3.61	0.66	0.80	
Communication	Jews	387	1.00 - 5.00	4.05	0.78	0.82	4.68***
	Arabs	403	1.25 - 5.00	3.81	0.66	0.72	
	Total	790	1.00 - 5.00	3.92	0.73	0.78	
Volunteering	Jews	382	1.00 - 5.00	2.91	0.83	0.74	1.62
	Arabs	402	1.00 - 5.00	3.01	0.83	0.78	
	Total	784	1.00 - 5.00	2.96	0.83	0.76	
Participating in Decision-making	Jews	385	1.00 - 5.00	3.03	0.67	0.69	0.76
	Arabs	403	1.00 - 5.00	2.99	0.79	0.82	
	Total	788	1.00 - 5.00	3.01	0.73	0.76	
Obstacles to PI	Jews	394	1.00 - 5.00	2.25	0.83	0.83	6.03***
	Arabs	403	1.00 - 3.92	1.93	0.67	0.88	
	Total	797	1.00 - 5.00	2.09	0.77	0.85	
School Climate	Jews	393	1.00 - 5.00	3.57	0.66	0.69	0.51
	Arabs	402	1.00 - 5.00	3.59	0.69	0.78	
	Total	795	1.00 - 5.00	3.58	0.69	0.73	

*P<0.05, **P<0.01, ***P<0.001

The calculated mean value for the individual items on the obstacle scale in Table 2 shows that Jewish teachers scored their difficulties in involving parents higher (M= 2.74) than the Arab teachers (M=2.00), and they regarded their efforts to involve parents more complex than the Arab teachers "a person like me can't understand what's going on", $t_{(0.99,799)} = 7.97$, P<0.001.

Jewish teachers perceived greater difficulties (M=2.66) than Arab teachers (M=2.00) in acting in areas related to PI, $t_{(0.99,790)} = 6.78$, P<0.001 (Table 2).

Hierarchical regression coefficient analysis of the Jewish and Arab teachers' opinions and practices regarding PI at home and in the school

were examined. As shown in Table 3, this model explains 11.1% of the variance; it indicates that Jewish female teachers encourage parents to work with their children at home [$F_{(3,352)} = 4.29$, p<0.001] and that the school climate has the most dominant and positive effect, particularly on female teachers' inclinations to involve parents. The model of teachers' perception of PI at the school explains 17.2% of the variance; it indicates that female Jewish teachers that parents with children are involved at school [$F_{(356)} = 8.39$, p<0.001] and that school climate has the most dominant effect on teacher's motivation to involve parents in school.

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Independent t-test of the control variables

<i>Variables and items</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>School Climate</i>					
<i>Creativity is something that is actively encouraged in the organization.</i>	Jews	3.95	0.91	3.06*	0.20
	Arabs	3.75	0.94		
<i>The administration does a good job in regard to teacher-parent communication.</i>	Jews	4.06	0.88	3.17*	0.18
	Arabs	3.85	1.01		
<i>Obstacles</i>					
<i>I think I can't act in areas related to parental involvement.</i>	Jews	2.66	1.56	6.78***	0.66
	Arabs	2.00	1.12		
<i>Sometimes the processes of involving parents are so complex, a person like me can't understand what's going on.</i>	Jews	2.74	1.49	7.97***	0.74
	Arabs	2.00	1.05		
	Arabs	1.37	0.80		

*P<0.05, **P<0.01, ***P<0.001

Table 3.
Hierarchical regression coefficients analysis for teachers' perceptions of Jewish Parental Involvement

<i>Model Block</i>	<i>Involvement at home</i>		<i>Involvement in school</i>	
	<i>Step 1</i>	<i>Step 2</i>	<i>Step 1</i>	<i>Step 2</i>
<i>Participants' gender</i>	-.147**	-.140**	-.166**	-.157**
<i>Mathematics</i>	-.020	-.017	-.096	-.092
<i>Language</i>	.001	.006	-.091	-.085
<i>Science Learning</i>	-.079	-.053	-.109*	-.073
<i>Participants' seniority</i>	-.020	-.003	-.010	.015
<i>Participants' educational level</i>	-.080	-.052	.051	.089
<i>Homeroom teacher</i>	.014	.006	.092	.080
<i>Obstacles to PI</i>		-.030		-.044
<i>School Climate</i>		.277***		.383***
<i>R2</i>	3.3%	11.1	4.7%	17.2%
<i>F</i>	1.71	4.29***	2.45*	8.39***

* P<0.05, **P<0.01, ***P<0.001, n= 355

The Hierarchical regression coefficient analysis of the Arab teachers' opinions regarding PI at home and in the school was examined. As shown in Table 4, the model of teachers' perception of PI at home explains 22.1% of the variance. It indicates that female Arab teachers have obstacles

in involving parents at home ($F_{(3,378)} = 10.49, P<0.001$), and that the school climate has the most dominant and positive effect, particularly on Arab female teachers' inclination for parents' involvement with their children's education at home. As shown in Table 4, this model explains

Table 4.
Hierarchical regression coefficients analysis of teachers' perceptions of Arab Parental Involvement

<i>Model Block</i>	<i>Involvement at home</i>		<i>Involvement in school</i>	
	<i>Step 1</i>	<i>Step 2</i>	<i>Step 1</i>	<i>Step 2</i>
<i>Participants' gender</i>	-.189***	-.162	-.102~	-.077
<i>Mathematics</i>	-.012	-.026	-.041	-.076
<i>Language</i>	-.032	-.041	-.049	-.062
<i>Science Learning</i>	-.067	-.087	-.047	-.064
<i>Participants' seniority</i>	.038	.056	-.052	-.045
<i>Participants' educational level</i>	-.020	-.049	.055	.042
<i>Homeroom teacher</i>	-.029	-.013	.063	.074
<i>Obstacles to PI</i>		-.150**		-.032
<i>School Climate</i>		.298***		.492***
<i>R2</i>	3.9%	22.1%	2.2%	28.8%
<i>F</i>	2.16*	10.49***	1.22	14.95***

~ P<0.06, * P<0.05, **P<0.01, ***P<0.001, n= 381

28.8% of the variance; it indicates that the school climate has the most dominant effect on teachers' motivation to involve parents in the school [$F_{(3,378)} = 14.95, p < 0.001$].

There are no significant effects of Jewish and Arab teachers' demographic attributes such as gender, education, and teachers' experience as to their motivation to increase PI.

All in all, the Jewish and the Arab teachers find that their school policies and their school climate encourage PI and has a dominant positive impact on their motivation to involve parents. Nonetheless, the results indicate that Jewish and Arab teachers perceive that the parents are more involved with their children at home than in the school, and that the Jewish and the Arab teachers only involve parents at school on rare occasions.

The Jewish and Arab teachers declare that they encounter difficulties in their interpersonal interactions with parents. Jewish teachers state that they have greater difficulties with their interactions with parents than the Arab parents. However, Jewish and Arab teachers moderately involve parents in decision-taking processes and volunteering in the schools.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to get a clearer perspective on Jewish and Arab teachers' attitudes towards PI at home and in schools. Teachers' opinions about their collaboration with parents were analyzed from the teachers' points of view regarding the schools' policies and the school climate that facilitates PI. We assumed that the nature of interaction between teachers and parents in Jewish and Arab schools would vary because of the liberal egalitarian administrative policies and democratic school climate that value autonomy and assign flexible roles that enable negotiation as a means of motivating members (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000) in the Jewish schools versus the school climate in the Arab schools that assigned high importance to values of hierarchical organizations and the chain of command in the interrelationships between the teachers and parents (Pasternak, 2003; Raichel, 2008; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000). Furthermore, we anticipated to find fewer barriers in teacher-parent interactions in the Jewish schools than in the Arab schools because of the higher socio-economic levels and high education of the parents, compared to teachers-parent interactions in the Arab schools,

whose parents are of lower socio-economic levels and often less educated. However, these assumptions were not confirmed.

Contrary to our assumptions, we found great similarities in the way Jewish and Arab teachers perceived their school's policies and their organizational climate as motivating teachers to work in partnership with parents and the centrality of the school principal in initiating policies that encourage PI. The Jewish and Arab teachers assigned high ranking to rigorous school policies that promote PI (Addi-Raccah & Ainhoren, 2009; Bauch & Goldring, 2000; Seginer, 2006). These findings were particularly surprising in the Arab schools.

Our findings indicate that although the Jewish and Arab teachers perceived their school policies as constructive for cultivating PI, their testimonies regarding the rates of parents' participation in their schools demonstrates that practices entail a limited range of PI. The teachers emphasized several attitudes that produce barriers to their relationships with parents. These attitudes focus on problems that have a negative influence on their subsequent interactions with families, since they increase the potential for conflicts with parents in their schools. Yet contrary to our assumption, the Jewish teachers reported greater difficulties with the parents than the Arab teachers. This may reflect the liberal and outgoing attitudes of the Jewish teachers who voice their frustrations and complications with the parents openly. Whereas the Arab teachers are less outspoken about their difficulties with parents because they feel that the parents still regard them in a respectful manner. However, the Arab teachers direct their open criticism towards the Israeli authorities who discriminate against the Arabic educational system.

Accordingly, the main barriers obstructing this partnership, according to the perceptions of the Jewish and Arab teachers, relate to their insufficient proficiency in negotiating with parents, primarily during crises. Teachers feel that parents pay little attention to teachers' opinions or to what they say. Since the teachers consider the confrontations between teachers and parents related to the child's performance and behavior as difficult to resolve, this causes them to perceive their interactions with parents as too complex to deal with. The Jewish and Arab teachers declared that parents underestimate their professional skills. This relates to the fact that teachers inform the parents about their child's insufficient progress

too late to support his progress at the expected norms of his class, as well as inappropriately handling the child's conduct. The majority of the teachers in the Jewish and Arab schools feel that PI threatens their professional authority and their supremacy as pedagogical specialists, and they are not interested in the parents' involvement in their pedagogical region (Eden, 2001) and they are not motivated to involve parents (Unn-Doris Baeck, 2010; Goldring & Shapira, 1996; Mapp, 2002; Hughes & McNaughton, 2011; Sanders & Epstein, 2005; Shimoni & Baxter, 1996). They regard the parents' involvement in their professional autonomy as a treat. Furthermore, they defined their relationships with parents as distrustful (Adams & Christenson, 2000; Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008).

Although the teachers in the Jewish and Arab schools indicated that they communicated frequently with parents, this may have an inverse effect on parents' involvement, since teachers-parent meetings are customarily held twice a year and parents get a general summary of their child's academic and social conduct. Teachers often invite parents to come to school mainly when their child demonstrates disruptive behavior or when the child experiences difficulties in learning. Teachers also initiate meetings with parents who have a low sense of responsibility for the child's academic or social behavior or those who fail to fulfill the school's administrative directives. This one-way type of communication from the teacher to the parent may lead to parents' frustration with, criticism of, and resentment toward teachers (Christenson, 2004). Often, these interactions do not resolve the child's problems in a satisfactory manner for the parent, nor do the teachers gain any helpful information on the child's situation at home, and the teachers feel frustrated with their inability to resolve the parents' anguish. Similar types of teachers' invitations to parents were also found in Lavenda's (2011) study of Jewish and Arab parents in Israeli middle and high schools.

Contrary to Ziv-Gur and Levi-Zalmanson's (2005) dichotomy of teacher-parent confrontations, where parents feel helpless compared to the teachers' superiority, in this study, the Jewish and Arab teachers did not feel powerful. The self-perception of the Jewish and Arab teachers in their confrontation with parents is one of apprehension, as well as high levels of stress and anxiety (Sakhavor & Farber, 1983).

In both educational systems, Jewish and Arab teachers feel they are either not skilled enough or

do not have the necessary training needed to break down these barriers in their personal negotiations with parents. Jewish and Arab teachers profess that their teacher training programs and academic studies did not include courses that would prepare them to negotiate with parents, and particularly with high-variance populations (Friedman, 2010; Greenbaum & Fried, 2011).

According to the teachers, parents were more involved at home with their children's education than in school, and Arab parents were more involved at home with homework assignments than the Jewish parents. The intensive involvement of the Arab parents with their children at home reflects their self-insights of their parental role. As a minority group, they are more highly motivated to facilitate the advancement of their children's education as a means of encouraging their future social and economic advancement, while Jewish parents assume that the child is responsible for his homework (Schaedel & Eshet 2009).

The higher rate of participation of Arab parents at home follows the previous results of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) and Walker et al. (2005), who underlined in the US the increased PI of minority groups at home, versus other dominant groups of parents who are more educated and of higher social economic status who were more involved in school activities. However, unlike the minority groups in the US, who vary in their culture and race and experience at times difficulties in communicating in English with the teachers, Israeli-Arab parents have no cultural or language barriers at the Arab schools with the Arab teachers. Their barriers in teacher-parent interactions in the Arab schools resemble the barriers that characterize the teacher-parent interactions in the Jewish schools. Yet, unlike the more affluent and higher educated parents in the US who are involved in the schools, in this study the Jewish parents of the upper classes are not robustly involved in the schools but are more involved with their children in learning activities at home and with the after school activities of their children (sports, enrichment activities).

Jewish and Arab teachers maintained that they infrequently invite parents to participate in school activities. This is noticeable in the small number of invitations extended to parents to participate in decision-making processes in the schools, which is considered highly important in PI (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Suizzo & Soon, 2006) and few

invitations to volunteer in the schools, although parents are capable of contributing significantly in the school context. Teachers' exclusion of parents in the school marginalizes parents who could otherwise play a crucial role in supporting their children's education and amplifies the obstacles in teachers' and parents' relationships.

The testimonies of the Jewish and Arab teachers illustrate a gap between the schools' anticipated role for teachers regarding extended PI and their actual narrow range of practices to encourage PI. Teachers' low motivation to increase parents' participation in decision making and to grant them a greater role in the schools' activities and projects may indicate that they are reluctant to encourage PI in their schools. According to Bourdieu's (1993) theory, the teachers maintain superior power over the parents' control in the school. Yet, it seems that the Jewish and Arab teachers regard the partnership with parents as a hinderance to their superior power by controlling their one way communication and excluding parents from decision making to reinforce their supremacy. However, in this power struggle the teachers feel that they are not being appreciated and that the parents have little gratitude and trust towards them in the Jewish schools and Arab schools.

Ben-Peretz (2009) and Resnik (2009) maintain that teachers' status in Israeli Jewish society has declined in recent years. Equally, Rinnawi (1996), underlines the deteriorating status of the Arab teachers in Arab society compared with their appreciated and respected position in the past. Ben-Peretz (2009) adds that Israeli society does not appreciate the teaching profession because of the low threshold of intellectual skills required to be admitted to teacher training programs in universities and colleges. Teachers are also underappreciated due to the declining achievements of students on national and global testing.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We suggest that the administrations of both Jewish and Arab schools should apply practical measures to facilitate an egalitarian school climate that will be more flexible and responsive to the parents' concerns, interests, and affinities. This presupposes an administration, headed by the school principal, which maintains open communications and parent-teacher dialogue, in

which the parents and teachers view each other as partners who, through healthy mutual cooperation and mutual respect, shape the school's objectives and organization. Such a partnership between parents and teachers refers to increased mutual teacher-parent involvement in educational decision-making processes and voluntary participation. Parents and teachers should express their expertise at the school level, and be involved in ministerial commissions leading structural, pedagogical, or curricula reforms. At the same time, parents must also be included in the decision-making process at school, and be invited to volunteer as partners. Furthermore, schools will have to try to gain more insight into the interests and wishes of parents, particularly regarding the involvement of immigrants, minorities, and other marginalized groups.

It is equally important to articulate the boundaries of parental involvement, so that parents do not become too involved in teachers' daily work. In order to ensure this balance, teachers should be open towards parents from different socio-cultural backgrounds with whom they should communicate openly, and try to develop useful, positive, and cooperative relationships with them. In addition, PTA member workshops should also be organized to increase parents' contribution and create an active partnership.

The majority of school staff needs to undergo complementary training so as to enhance the quality of their interaction with families.

In-service students, who are training to become future teachers, should be required to take courses that develop their skills and knowledge about how to communicate with parents.

At the same time, mutual trust between teachers and parents must be nurtured at schools. Parents who feel that teachers make every effort to advance their children's academic, emotional, and social development will be more satisfied with their school.

All in all, parents, teachers, school principals, and other key players must show their willingness to promote PI and realize that achieving a healthy measure of parental involvement is part of their professional responsibility. Reciprocity, shared responsibility, trust, social bonding, and social control should characterize the relations of teachers and parents in Jewish and Arab schools.

Limitations

We suggest that future studies related to teacher-parents relations in Israel and other countries should be based on both qualitative and quantitative data.

We further recommend that future research examine the mutual relations between teachers

and parents in Jewish and Arab middle and high schools in Israel. These future studies may require employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

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