



Discovering School Memories Positive Relationship with Parents'

Engagement

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Abstract

The best and worst of experiences can dominate the human memory and influence future behavior (Mitsokapas & Harris, 2022). As the primary sources of information, parents influence their children's decisions about education and future college and career plans. Research found that memories can become distorted over time and manipulated by new information (Luna, 2018). It also found that a lack of parent engagement can contribute to children that have negative school transitions and experiences (Harwood, 2021). The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to discover if a relationship exists between school memories and parents' engagement in their children's education and future plans.

Participants in this online survey included 288 mothers, fathers, and legal guardians. Spearman Rho measured a 0.996 correlation coefficient indicating a strong positive relationship between the variables School Memories and Participants' Engagement. Methodological triangulation was conducted to ensure that the result was not based on a single method's bias and limitations. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and ordinal regression analyzed the survey data for a comprehensive understanding of the Spearman result. PCA found that the variable contributed significantly to the extracted factors and the ordinal regression predicted school memories are associated with changes in moving from one engagement level to another.

The survey also revealed that participants' (44.52%) parents provided the most motivation when they made decisions about their past education and future plans; participants (78.47%) engaged weekly or more in their children's education, exceeding parents' (35.42%) weekly or more engagement in their school activities and; almost 52% of participants indicated that school memories influence engagement A Lot in their children's education and future plans, more than participants' (35.7%) parents influence on their past school activities.

With the U.S. Department of Education's mission to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness and the increased accountability on parents' engagement, this study contributes a foundational understanding of the relationship with school memories. It also supports that parent's educational histories should be considered as insight into engagement in their children's educational planning (Kyle, 2015; Miller, 2015; Veitch, 2017).

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Introduction

As children transition from middle school to high school experiences can be marked by social, emotional, and behavioral changes (Harwood, 2021). As they grow into parent roles, distorted school memories may affect how they engage in their children's education and future plans. The best and worst of experiences can dominate the human memory and influence future behavior (Mitsokapas & Harris, 2022).

Background

School Memories

How parents remember school experiences may trigger reliving past events, but if meaning is found in the experiences it may alter how they feel (Speer et. al., 2021). Parents' school experience can influence their children's academic and postsecondary choices (Amaro-Jiménez et. al., 2020). Understanding the relationship between parents' school experience and parenting behaviors may expose the nuanced ways in which these beliefs relate to their children's educational achievement (Boyle & Benner, 2020).

Research indicates that memories can be manipulated by new information, new ideas, new thoughts, suggestive information, and misinformation (Luna, 2018). Manipulation can occur during conversations with others and listening to media misinformation. People's memories are selective, and they remember things with personal meaning, worth remembering culturally, and that are thought to be of interest to others (Soo & Katsar, 2022). Rather than remembering a whole event from the past, people subconsciously recall a selection of snapshots from the past (Mitsokapas & Harris, 2022).

The idea that social variables can have a significant impact on adults' memories of their early lives is supported (Peterson et al. 2008). Some meaningful memories of school include 1)

grade level promotions, (2) the social side of schooling and (3) special education and other labels (Miller, 2015). Research has focused on school memories from a distinct perspective and saw them as a historical object giving attention to the social perception of education, schooling, and teaching. Sources suggest that the way school memories are recalled may reveal effective social and cultural dimensions and help define the reasons behind some of the clichés that still describe the classic school model (Meda & Viñao, 2017).

A recent study found that people have more memories from their preschool years than are widely believed and can recall events from earlier in their lives than historically documented (Peterson, 2021). Although the findings were not focused on school memories, they provide insight into the recall of past events. As other research encourages, parent's educational histories should be considered as insight into engagement in their children's educational planning (Kyle, 2015; Miller, 2015; Veitch, 2017).

Why Parent Engagement?

Engagement in children's education is found to make a significant contribution in their educational achievement (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Ateş, 2021; Utami, 2022). Past and present, parent engagement involves volunteering at school, communicating with teachers and other support staff, assisting with homework, and attending school events, parent-teacher associations (PTAs) meetings, and parent-teacher conferences to support their children's education (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Coşkun and Katıtaş, 2021; Utami, 2022). Joyce Epstein's engagement model suggests that parenting, communication, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community are important for parents' engagement (Khumalo, 2023).

Parents are the primary source of influence and information in a child's life and schools are a secondary source where students learn to formally acquire information (Ceka & Murati,

2016; Smith et. al, 2021; Okello, 2023). Education outcomes are associated with the amount of information a parent has about academic opportunities for their children and can have a positive or negative influence on their academic and postsecondary choices (Amaro-Jiménez, 2020).

Parents also influence their children's decisions about future college and career plans and use their knowledge to help with career development. However, parents and children need to be aware of each other's perspectives and intentions as they negotiate career options (Suryadi et al., 2020). Career decisions are among the most important that individuals make in their lifetime and deciding a career is a result of learning experiences (Bimrose & Mulvey, 2015; Gati & Tal, 2008; Kulcsár et al., 2020).

As the parent role continues to demand greater accountability, it is a reminder that parents remain the primary source of information and decision-making for children. A lack of engagement can contribute to their children having negative school transitions and experiences (Harwood, 2021). Memories can reinforce personal errors and lead to greater certainty that false beliefs are true (Stohr, 2020). The purpose of the research was to discover if there is a relationship between school memories and parent's engagement in their children's education and future plans.

Methodology

The process required permissions for recruiting parents and conducting this quantitative correlational study. A non-probability or convenience sampling method was used because it left up to parents to self-select their participation in the survey. Parents that consented to participate gained access to the SurveyMonkey online survey. Participants could withdraw at any time by contacting the researcher with the provided contact information.

Participants

Participants included mothers, fathers, and legal guardians 18 years old and older with children in grades K-12 in a school district in the southeast region of the United States. Although the survey was extended to all parent roles, 98.26% of respondents identified as mothers. There was little difference between the number of White (38.93%) and Black or African American (38.21%) participants in the study and the primary language spoken at home is English (87.50%). Participants were educated with 33.57% graduated from college and 25.71% completed graduate school. More than half of participants hold professional licenses and certification (53.57%) in healthcare, education, and business.

Instrument

The researcher developed an original survey instrument to collect data in SurveyMonkey. Participants were able to respond to the survey online by computer, table, or cell phone. The survey was made up of closed-ended questions with predefined lists of answers that used three-to-five-point rating scales and check boxes. More than one answer could be selected for some questions.

The survey focused on factors in the questions and represented different in- and outside of school experiences and engagement in children's education and future planning. Included in the study were:

School Experience

- Cafeteria
- Classes
- Extracurricular activities
- Library/media center
- Proms
- School location
- Workshops
- Educational Achievement

Educational Support

- Family
- Friends
- Mentor
- Parents
- Spiritual figure
- Work Supervisor
- Therapist/counsel
- Tutor
- Deans
- Principals
- School counselors
- Special education staff
- Sports Coach
- Teachers

Engagement In Children's Education and Future Planning

- Monitoring children's education with school staff
- Monitoring children's education with school technology
- Participating in school activities
- Participating in college and career school events
- Researching media center/library online college and career resources
- Using parent resources
- Volunteering

The identified factors provided context but were not the variables studied. The analysis focused solely on *School Memories* and *Participants' Engagement* as variables.

Instrument Test

Before collecting data with the instrument, a test of the online survey was conducted with volunteer parents.

Data Collection

Data was collected in SurveyMonkey from March 2024-April 2024. Two hundred and eighty-eight (288) parents participated.

Data Analysis

Spearman Rho was used to measure the correlation coefficient. Table 1 shows that a perfect positive Spearman correlation is a value of 1 and the study value was 0.996 indicating a strong positive relationship between the variables *School Memories* and *Participants' Engagement*. Movement in the same direction indicates that the two variables are closely related. The study hypothesis was supported, and the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 1

Correlation between the Variables

			School Memories	Participants' Engagement
Spearman's rho	School Memories	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.996**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
		N	288	288
	Participants' Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.996**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
		N	288	288

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Since limited research exists on school memories and parent's engagement, the researcher wanted to cross-check the high positive correlation. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and ordinal regression analyzed the survey data for a comprehensive understanding of the Spearman result. The PCA examined what aspects of school memories contribute to participants' engagement and any meaningful patterns in the data. The analysis simplified the dataset and measured factors and confounding variables that could include parents and their different roles, type of school children attend, number of children, parents' educational level, and cultural background. The variables were found to contribute significantly to the PCA extracted factors. Appendix A shows the complete PCA analysis. The ordinal regression analysis examined how school memories are associated with the movement of participants' engagement. The model analysis predicted that school memories are associated with changes in moving from one engagement level to another. See Appendices B and C for the complete analysis. The methodological triangulation was conducted to ensure that the strong positive result was not based on a single method's bias and limitations.

Discussion

In addition to a strong positive correlation, the survey provided additional insight into participants' school memories.

- To understand who provided the *most motivation* when participants made decisions about their past education and future plans, participants (44.52%) revealed that parents provided the most. Family (18.73%) followed with the next highest response.

- Participants' (78.47%) engage *Weekly or more* in their children's education and future plans. The finding was significant compared to participants' parents (35.42%) engagement in their past school activities.
- Almost 52% of participants indicated that school memories influence engagement *A Lot* in their children's education and future plans (See Table 3). Participants' parents (35.7%) had less influence on their past education and future plans (See Table 4).

Table 3*School Memories Engagement Influence*

How much do your school memories influence engagement in your children's education and future plans?							
None at all		A little		A moderate amount		A lot	
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
8	2.78%	35	12.15%	96	33.33%	149	51.74%

Table 4*Parents influence on Participants' Education*

How much did your parents influence your education and future plans?							
None at all		A little		A moderate amount		A lot	
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
50	17.36%	69	23.96%	68	23.61%	101	35.7%

Although parents provided more motivation than other individuals like family, friends, teachers, schools counselors, and mentors, there was no significant finding on how much they influenced participants' education and future plans. The finding supports Keith et al. (1986), Swain (1988), and Bodovski et al. (2022) studies that found no significant influence or relationship with parental engagement and student achievement. Different factors may have

affected findings like parents' education, school setting, grade level, and socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

Harwood (2021) asserts that limited parental engagement can affect children's school experience. On the contrary, Jelena Obradović et al. (2021) argues that excessive direct engagement with children can be counterproductive to their self-regulation. An outcome of the study was that while parental over-engagement can affect a child's self-regulation, their support and *quality* of engagement remains important during transitions to different grades. The current study found that participants engage more often than their parents' did in activities like monitoring children's education with staff or schools technology, participating in school activities, and/or using school resources to research colleges and careers. It did not study the impact of how often parents engaged in participants' education and future plans or establish its cause and effect.

Research reinforces that parents are a major influence on their children's learning as they transition throughout school and beyond (Ceka & Murati, 2016; Okello, 2023). They also have a significant effect on the career orientation of their children (Suryadi et al., 2020). The strong positive relationship and participants' direct responses that school memories influence their engagement supports the research of Kyle (2015), Miller (2015), and Veitch (2017) and cemented the importance of parents' school memories.

In the study, participants indicated the ways schools and districts can improve services to increase parent engagement. These areas received the greatest number of responses and suggest ways that parents can access information to improve their engagement:

- Consideration of working parents' schedules when planning school activities and events (61.11%).

- Sending timely communications and alerts (49.65%)
- Using technology for parent/teacher conferences and other kinds of meetings (45.83%).
- Conducting surveys to understand parents' needs (41.67%).
- Increasing productive face-face meetings and providing realistic solutions (41.67%).

Districts and schools should offer a variety of activities to intentionally engage parents (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025). Appendix D shows ways in which schools and districts can improve their services and contribute to increased parent engagement.

Implications

The mission of the U.S. Department of Education is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access (U.S. Department of Education, 2025). Since the authorization of Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, state education agencies have been redesigning their school and district accountability systems to include indicators of college and career readiness.

Indicators include identification of a career pathway, intentions to pursue a postsecondary degree or professional certification, or possession of a variety of 21st century skills (Brodersen, 2020).

Acknowledging that school reforms and career standards change when parents leave school, they may not have the capacity to find information that improves their children's educational experience. Like parents navigated the school system, their children are doing the same. The ideal situation is one where parents are perceived as active partners in educating their children (Okeke, 2014, p. 1; Khumalo, 2023). Epstein's engagement model reinforces that planned partnerships and collaboration should be built among parents, schools, and

communities; however, parents and schools are ultimately responsible for children's education (Barr and Saltmarsh, 2014; Epstein, 2018; Yulianti et al., 2022).

Limitations

It was up to parents to self-select for participation in the study. Their self-selection may have been biased. With participants self-reporting, school memories may be distorted over time, which could impact the study results. The study used the legal definition of parents. By expanding the parent role and including relatives and other adults, it could broaden an understanding of caregivers past school experience and engagement with children. Socio-economic characteristics, generational age, and cross-cultural diversity were not investigated and may have revealed differences in the groups. Finally, geographical locations where participants' attended school may have provided insight about environmental settings.

Future Research

The study contributes to the limited research about school memories and parents' engagement. The researcher intentionally limited the scope of the study to understand parent's perceptions of their school memories and engagement in their children's education and future plans. Further research should consider the varied caregiver roles, gender, culture, and socio-economic status of participants.

Quantitative research could expand descriptions, and qualitative studies could provide rich data and give voices to parents as they tell stories of their memories and current engagement practices. Researchers should consider investigating the influence of school memories on how often parents engage, the social-emotional aspects of parents' school experience, and how past motivation influences parents' beliefs about their children's education.

Conclusion

Parents want their children to be successful, but they may not always be prepared to meet their needs. Wise school leaders understand that to improve student achievement both parents and schools need to work together (Jeynes 2018; Yulianti et al., 2022). Emphasis should be placed on the nature of parents' school memories and used to intentionally increase engagement. Schools and districts are encouraged to improve their parent practices and to reimagine their partnerships. Children of empowered parents are better prepared to be successful in school (Ball, 2014, p. 98; Steyn, 2023).

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Appendix A

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) Total Variance, Communalities and Component Matrix Tables

Total Variance Explained

	Component	Total	Initial Eigenvalues ^a		Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
			% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Raw	1	21.606	95.588	95.588	21.606	95.588	95.588
	2	.997	4.412	100.000			
Rescaled	1	21.606	95.588	95.588	1.907	95.350	95.350
	2	.997	4.412	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. When analyzing a covariance matrix, the initial eigenvalues are the same across the raw and rescaled solution.

Communalities

	Raw		Rescaled	
	Initial	Extraction	Initial	Extraction
School Memories	9.514	8.929	1.000	.938
Participants' Engagement	13.090	12.678	1.000	.969

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a

	Raw Component 1	Rescaled Component 1
School Memories	2.988	.969
Participants' Engagement	3.561	.984

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Appendix B

Ordinal Regression Analysis Parameter Estimates Table

Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	1492.168			
Final	.000	1492.168	1	<.001

Link function: Logit.

Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	.994
Nagelkerke	.996
McFadden	.819

Link function: Logit.

Appendix C

Ordinal Regression Parameter Estimates

		Parameter Estimates						
		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
Threshold							Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold	[ParticipantsEngagement = 1.0]	4.434	1.159	14.643	1	<.001	2.163	6.705
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 1.5]	7.579	.873	75.287	1	<.001	5.867	9.291
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 2.0]	10.114	.852	140.848	1	<.001	8.444	11.785
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 2.5]	13.083	.921	201.714	1	<.001	11.277	14.888
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 3.0]	21.515	1.479	211.727	1	<.001	18.617	24.413
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 3.5]	32.018	2.045	245.145	1	<.001	28.010	36.027
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 4.0]	37.812	2.293	271.884	1	<.001	33.317	42.307
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 4.5]	39.134	2.349	277.481	1	<.001	34.530	43.739
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 5.0]	40.584	2.425	280.065	1	<.001	35.831	45.337
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 5.5]	41.545	2.477	281.339	1	<.001	36.690	46.400
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 6.0]	41.864	2.493	281.926	1	<.001	36.978	46.751
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 6.5]	42.975	2.557	282.470	1	<.001	37.963	47.987
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 7.0]	43.818	2.611	281.691	1	<.001	38.701	48.934
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 7.5]	44.557	2.658	281.092	1	<.001	39.348	49.765
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 8.0]	47.077	2.821	278.532	1	<.001	41.549	52.606
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 8.5]	48.336	2.887	280.327	1	<.001	42.678	53.994
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 9.0]	49.883	2.970	282.184	1	<.001	44.063	55.703
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 9.5]	50.851	3.025	282.517	1	<.001	44.921	56.781
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 10.0]	51.391	3.056	282.845	1	<.001	45.402	57.380
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 10.5]	52.508	3.121	283.012	1	<.001	46.391	58.626
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 11.0]	54.113	3.210	284.217	1	<.001	47.822	60.404
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 11.5]	55.342	3.279	284.869	1	<.001	48.916	61.769
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 12.0]	56.141	3.322	285.685	1	<.001	49.631	62.651
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 12.5]	56.868	3.359	286.565	1	<.001	50.284	63.453
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 13.0]	58.906	3.464	289.214	1	<.001	52.117	65.695
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 13.5]	59.842	3.513	290.151	1	<.001	52.956	66.727
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 14.0]	61.653	3.647	285.818	1	<.001	54.505	68.800
	[ParticipantsEngagement = 14.5]	64.242	3.834	280.826	1	<.001	56.728	71.755
Location	SchoolMemories	4.659	.276	284.485	1	<.001	4.118	5.201

Link function: Logit.

Appendix D

School Activities to Improve Parent Engagement

School Activities	n	%
Sending timely school communications and alerts.	143	49.65%
Using social media to communicate school activities and events.	106	36.81%
Using technology for parent/teacher conferences and other kinds of meetings.	132	45.83%
Considering working parents' schedules when planning school activities and events.	176	61.11%
Conducting surveys to understand parents' needs.	120	41.67%
Using home visits as an alternative to build relationships with parents and children.	29	10.07%
Making volunteer opportunities obvious.	104	36.11%
Increasing productive face-face meetings and providing realistic solutions.	120	41.67%
Showing an interest in less popular and average students.	111	38.54%
Considering cultural differences when planning school activities and events.	83	28.82%
Considering the economic assets of the family.	99	34.38%
Preparing for diversity and inclusion of parents (i.e., language, religion, gender, race).	89	30.90%
Focus athletes on educational achievements.	53	18.40%