

Parental involvement in Algerian exam classes: a tale of two middle schools

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Abstract

Parental involvement is a critical issue across societies, mainly in the educational setting. This study endeavours to investigate the level of the involvement of parents in their children's education in exam classes, particularly in order to obtain the Certificate of Middle School Education in rural and urban spheres. This study seeks to examine the extent to which parental engagement and commitment can make a difference in the academic life of children who undertake official exams. Two classes of fourth year middle school took part in the research by filling in an attitudinal questionnaire, and two head teachers took part via a semi-structured interview. The obtained results indicate that parents are involved to some extent in their children's education in rural areas in contrast with parents in urban ones, who are more involved. These findings are attributed to the geographical variable and the availability of resources and the socioeconomic status in both settings. There is no disparity at the level of homework assistance, time management at home and parental aspirations for children's future education.

Keywords: *learning, exam preparation, exam classes, middle school, parental involvement*

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The first author designed the study, interpreted the data and wrote the article. The second and third authors obtained the schools' consensus, met the participants and obtained the data. All the authors participated in the questionnaire design.

Introduction

The ultimate goal of educational systems has always been the preparation of the pupils for the requirements of the twenty-first century; therefore, it is of paramount importance to guarantee that all the components and entities of societies from different backgrounds and walks of life engage in such a noble endeavour to support all the students across levels, contexts and with various needs. This mission should start in the early years of childhood and accompany the pupils throughout the years of childhood, high school and post-secondary education as well. Nowadays, the perspective towards the traditional roles of parents with regard to educating their children has changed. Previously, fathers and mothers were responsible for raising their children at home, and teachers were in charge of their pupils' education; however, it is no longer optional for parents or guardians of whether to actively participate in their children's education and build constructive channels of communication with their schools or not.

In the Algerian context, children spend four years at middle school (from age 11 until age 15 years old). This life stage of schooling represents a milestone period in the formative years of the children's academic development and social transitions. At this very phase, the pupils start to navigate the complexities of adolescence; consequently, they are constantly facing growing academic pressures that are incarnated in official exams that will inevitably have major impact on their future educational trajectories, predominantly in secondary school and university. While school and teachers are landmarks of mental and academic support at this delicate stage, several longitudinal studies underscore the pivotal role of parental involvement with regard to the pupils' success in middle school (Dumont and Trautwein, 2022; Wang and Sheikh Khalil, 2019). Despite the fact that parental involvement has been recognized in several contexts around the world especially in Europe and North America, it remains under researched in the Algerian context; moreover, understanding the mechanisms of the degree of parental involvement at this challenging stage of the pupils' life, who are at the outset of navigating increasing independence, is crucial since they still need guidance, assistance and support from family, school, and society. This study will provide insights into increasing partnerships

between the above mentioned parties to better address the mental, social and academic requirements of pupils in exam classes to support them towards meeting their objectives.

This study, thus, intends to bridge the gap between the fundamental roles of the heads of the family in the education of their children, and understanding the nature and aspects of such involvement that are actually practised in the Algerian context. By examining the versatile character of parental involvement in exam classes during the developmental years of their children, this study seeks to unveil the status quo of parental involvement in the daily learning of their children with special emphasis on the role of parents in assisting these pupils at home, and how they maintain their engagement with the school in terms of addressing the children's challenges and collaborating with the school to empower the pupils to better prepare for their official exams by the end of the school year. The following research questions were formulated:

1/To what extent are parents involved in their children's education in exam classes?

2/What are the patterns of parental involvement in rural and urban spheres?

1.Parental involvement: Genesis and definition

Parenting is a lifetime process that is primarily about assuming the responsibility towards children by supporting them at miscellaneous levels including the physical, emotional, social and intellectual throughout the period from infancy until adulthood (Oer, 2024). From a sociological perspective, Suwanda (2021) refers to a substantial distinction between parenting and parenthood. In this prospect, parenting is merely defined as the lived experiences of mothering and fathering; however, parenthood is regarded from a broader societal framework in which how mothers and fathers should do in the establishment of parenthood. In a nutshell, the parenthood models are responsible for the categorization of parents' roles, types, preferences, and responsibilities towards their children. Parenting, as a unique experience across societies, is influenced by societal norms, culture, religion, gender roles, historical eras, social class, economic status and educational background respectively, which essentially define their parenting style.

The concept of parental involvement can be seen from different angles since it incorporates several active agents (parents, guardians, teachers, school administration, and policy-makers in the entire process of raising future citizens in modern societies). Parental involvement is the intentional endeavour by parents for the sake of advancing their children's active learning and a gateway to their academic achievement in school (Avvisati et al, 2010). Abdul Adil and Farmer (2006, p. 2) provides a multifaceted definition to parental involvement by stating that it is "any parental attitudes, behaviors, style, or activities that occur within or outside the school setting to support the children's academic and/or behavioural success in their currently enrolled school." Fundamentally, family involvement brings together two dimensions of the core of such a practice in which the level of parental devotion is inextricably associated with the parents' perception of their parenting type and commitment towards a shared responsibility between the parents and the school staff, and how these attitudes will be translated into actions of home schooling to promote their children's learning towards achieving their learning goals, helping with their homework, communicating with their teachers about their in-class learning, attending school gatherings, conferences and workshops, and extracurricular activities such as sport.

1.2.The correlation between parental involvement and school achievement

Several researchers point out the crucial role of the strong positive correlation between the parental involvement that is initiated at home and advanced through regular communication with the school and about the school with the children (Sheldon, 2009; Wilder, 2014; Joyce, 2017). For Epstein (2018), children success can be mostly associated with the partnership approach in which the core element is to bring together teachers, families and community members together for the sake of activating short term goal namely the children's learning, and a long-term objective, which is the development of responsible citizens with aspiring educational and professional careers. In this prospect, having a strong commitment from the three involved parties, home, school, and community, at the level of sharing responsibility of sharing information and support to promote the children's education can result in the accomplishment of not only the

success of an individual child, but the entire society; furthermore, these partnerships should be held in order to support all families from different backgrounds, social classes and walks of life in developing their parental and leadership skills, and helping them connect with other families, educators and the school administration as well. Equally important, these partnerships also aim for the equipment of educators with the appropriate skills and assets in order to join efforts with the children's families, who come from different backgrounds (eg., race, culture, geographical area, religion, educational background, and language...etc.,) so that they can maintain fruitful communication and adequate understanding of how parents can be positively helping their children and school in the learning and achievement process.

Previous literature indicated that there exist a positive association between the degree of the children's educational achievement and their parental involvement. A study by Johnston (1998) has evidenced that the outcomes of family involvement in their children's school lives resulted in the students' elevated endeavours towards setting clear educational and career goals; moreover, these high school students showed a great extent of enrolment in advanced courses and commitment to lifelong education in comparison with students who did not receive any support from their parents throughout their educational career. It is believed that increased parental commitments to work with the school led to low levels of anti-social behaviours such as criminal acts and delinquent behaviours since these students were engaged by the school and their parents in extra-curricular activities to boost their cognitive abilities, artistic taste, and mental health such as artistic exhibitions, academic conferences, and sport respectively (Johnston, 1998).

Despite the fact that there exist different degrees of parents' involvement in their children's education, there also exists well-grounded support over 40 years of empirical research from several researchers across a variety of educational levels who attribute children's readiness to school, academic achievement, graduation rates (Henderson and Mapp. 2002), regular attendance to school, high performance in official exams, tests and accomplished homework, positive attitudes towards learning, school and future educational careers, and high rates of pursuing post-secondary educational levels

to the degree of parents' participation and full engagement in their children's daily lives (Wherry, 2003). According to Weiss, Lopez and Rosenberg (2010), it is fundamental to reframe the involvement of family in the school matters of their children; thus, the role of the family members should shift from being a marginal element in promoting the students' education to an essential strategy that chiefly contributes to developing the children together from birth until young adulthood. Decades of research, for instance, in the USA demonstrated that the alignment of parents' ability and efforts in transforming education can ensure meaningful, fruitful cooperation relationships between school, parents and community.

School-parent partnership allows for the advancement of a student-centered atmosphere in which all the efforts are aligned in favour of quality learning. Specifically, the Harvard Family Research Project (2010) brought teachers and parents together in order to set differentiated individualised instruction for primary school pupils through the use of assessment. The pupils undertook regular assessment tasks, and the obtained data served as indicators for goal setting to improve learning. Parents were also active participants when they attended the workshops, received assessment sources, which were also available at the school website. Particularly, the parents also supported their children by designing family goals that assist the children's learning through checking the assessment data of their children, tailoring appropriate timetables for learning, playing and reading at home. Developing these habits in the kindergarten and primary school can have everlasting effects on the educational career and life in general.

Gestwicki (1996) concluded that the main findings from previous research highlighted the utmost significance of parents in the formative years of their children. Children, who were raised in an environment that set clear goals and habits throughout childhood, were destined to exhibit strong abilities at the cognitive level such as the endeavour to explore the world around them, being curious and able to develop problem-solving skills, to show early signs of language and communication mastery, and being emotionally and socially secure.

1.3. Empirical studies about parental involvement: Pitfalls and opportunities

Although it seems that the topic of parental involvement and its impact on the students' educational achievement and success is the only parameter of previous studies, parental involvement has also been the spotlight of empirical studies through shedding the light on decisive variables with regard to understanding parental involvement as an effective daily practice whose quality and rigour can inevitably be influenced by several factors.

Lemesa, Senbeto, Alemayehu and Gemechu (2023) examined the involvement of parents in home-schooling as well as participating in their children's school activities with regard to four Ethiopian schools and grades from five to eight. The findings suggested that there was a medium parental involvement across levels and schools; furthermore, the quality of parental involvement on a scale of three (not involved at all, medium, and well-involved) is particularly attributed to the gender of the house responsible, the educational backgrounds of the father, and the economic status of the family respectively. As for Lara and Saracostti (2019), their study investigated the profiles of 498 parents or guardians in Chile across sixteen public schools in order to identify the levels of parental involvement, and how they affect their children's achievements. The obtained data revealed that there existed three major types of parental involvement namely (high, medium and low) with respect to the type of this involvement (Eg., at home, at school, and meetings at school); moreover, the students with increased academic achievement enjoyed high levels of parental involvement in their studies (Eg., help with learning at home, attending school meetings...etc.,) and vice versa.

Menheere and Hooge (2010) explored parental involvement from the perspective of the challenges that illiterate parents encountered when attempting to intervene in their children's education. The main challenges are the fear of intergenerational illiteracy and its impact on the individual child in particular and society in general in which children of illiterate parents may fall into problems such as school dropout, delinquency and economic issues. In this prospect, the proposed strategies were the involvement of parents in reading workshops in order to train them in using the suitable skills to support their children's learning at home. Similarly, Rosow (1991) concluded

that illiterate parents could develop the assets of creating a safe, healthy environments through workshops about the characteristics of a rich linguistic landscape, reading instruction, developing the parents' skills of book selection, communication with children about books, visiting libraries and helping parents enroll in literacy programmes to elevate their linguistic and intellectual levels.

In the Algerian context, Belaid and Sarnou (2019) scrutinised the impact of parents' involvement and their literacy backgrounds on their children's linguistic abilities and mastery of foreign languages namely French, English and Spanish in two secondary education schools. The major results showed the absence of parental involvement in their children's studies since the parents did not participate in the school activities or attend the school meetings. Reasons such as gender responsibilities towards the children's education, the educational background of parents, parents' attitudes towards teachers as fully responsible for their children's learning, and parents' previous school experiences- these were the major attributes of the absence of parental involvement in both schools. Since the majority of parents do not master foreign languages, the children were demotivated to approach them or to make any efforts to learn them; besides, the low coefficients of foreign languages compelled the students to focus on fundamental subjects such as math, physics and biology (Scientific Stream), and Arabic, philosophy, and history and geography (Letters and Philosophy Stream) at the expense of foreign languages.

In the same line of thought, Latreche and Hoadjli (2021) examined parental involvement in Algerian middle schools from the perspective of school principles, and whether parents-school relations were promoted as part of supporting and advancing an inclusive environment for the pupils. The results of the interviews pointed out the lack of parental willingness to take parts in the parental associations across the middle schools; similarly, their roles were limited to placing their children in given classes, providing information about their children or visiting the school on open days that are regularly held at the end of every trimester to discuss their educational achievements in official exams.

The majority of the studies and reviews of literature on parental involvement in education have been undertaken in the Anglophone countries or the developed countries (Yulianti et al, 2019; Garbacz et

al, 2017); however, in the Algerian context, research about parental involvement remains scarce, and it is still an underdeveloped area in need of further consideration and meticulous scrutiny.

2. Research methodology

To address the research questions, a cross-sectional study was utilized. Data was gathered at a single point in time during the school year 2023/2024. Participants included fourth-year pupils in middle school and two head teachers from two schools once the pupils finished the official examinations of the second trimester.

2.1. Research design, participants and sampling technique

The study was conducted in two selected middle schools in the city of Tiaret, one in the rural region of Ain D'hab and the other in the city centre of Tiaret. The sample (both pupils and head teachers in middle school) was selected using purposive sampling. The sampling method was selected because the pupils were in the 4th grade, the final year in this phase, and were preparing for the national BEM (Brevet d'enseignement moyen: Certificate of Middle School Education). This examination determines their eligibility for secondary education.

Typically, there is a higher level of family involvement during this stage, often starting at the beginning of the year. Before undertaking the study, the researchers formulated ethical guidelines based on the BERA guidelines (2018). Initial consensus was obtained from the directorate of education, the school administration and the parents approved the voluntary and anonymous participation of teachers and pupils. The participants were informed about fundamental ethical guidelines related to transparency and information confidentiality. They were also notified about the right of withdrawal from the study at any stage.

The study included 83 pupils from two middle schools (40 pupils from Abbes Ali Middle School in Ain D'hab and 43 students from Hamdani Malika Middle School in the city centre of Tiaret). The pupils were aged between 14 and 16 years old. The majority of the pupils from both schools lived with both parents (89.1%) while 10.8% lived with one parent. Moreover, the head teachers were selected to obtain relevant information about each student in their classes (family

situation, academic performance, exams scores, and behaviour), and they are entitled to meet the parents of the students. Both head teachers agreed to participate in the interview. The first, a male teacher from the rural school, had ten years of experience. The second, a female teacher from the urban school, had thirty years of experience.

2.2.Data collection instruments and procedures

The study was undertaken in the first week of March 2024 during the second trimester of the school year, allowing pupils and teachers to reflect on parental involvement and share their experiences. Parental involvement was assessed using an attitudinal questionnaire. The questionnaire consisting of 10 questions. These questions explored family involvement profiles, parental support patterns, and measures used to help the pupils prepare for their BEM exam. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers and was piloted before administering it to the participants.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow the researchers control over the interaction flow and provide opportunities for participants to offer detailed explanations. Before the interview, the head teachers received a cover letter that outlined a brief introduction about the theme of the research study, the importance of the teachers' participation with regard to understanding and exploring the theme of parental involvement in the Algerian context, and finally they were ensured that the information would be confidential and anonymous. The semi-structured interview included four questions only due to limited availability outside their teaching schedules or parental visits' special day. The interviews were conducted with the head teachers in the staff rooms of the schools and lasted for thirty five minutes per session.

3.Analysis and interpretation of the research data

3.1.Results of the questionnaire

This section presents the obtained data from the pupils' questionnaire.

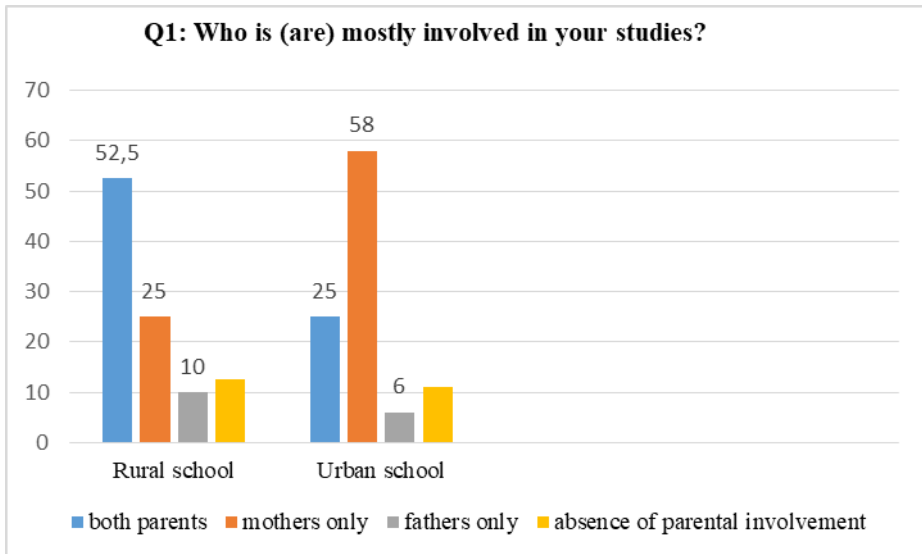


Figure 1: Family members' involvement in children's education

In Abbes Ali School (Rural school), both parents are involved in their children education (52.5%), mothers are involved (25%), and fathers are involved (10%), and there is an absence of parental involvement in (12.5%) of the cases; however, in Malika Hamdani School (Urban school), the situation is different since mothers are primarily involved in their children education (58%), both parents are involved (25%), fathers are only involved in their children's education (6%), and (11%) of cases show an absence of involvement.

It is evident that high rate of both parents' involvement indicates the dominance of traditional family structures in rural areas where both parents share educational responsibilities; in addition, there is a clear discrepancy in gender roles related to mothers' and fathers' involvement. This result may suggest that traditional roles are still prevalent in the division of childcare and educational responsibilities, with mothers assuming a larger share, mainly in urban areas.

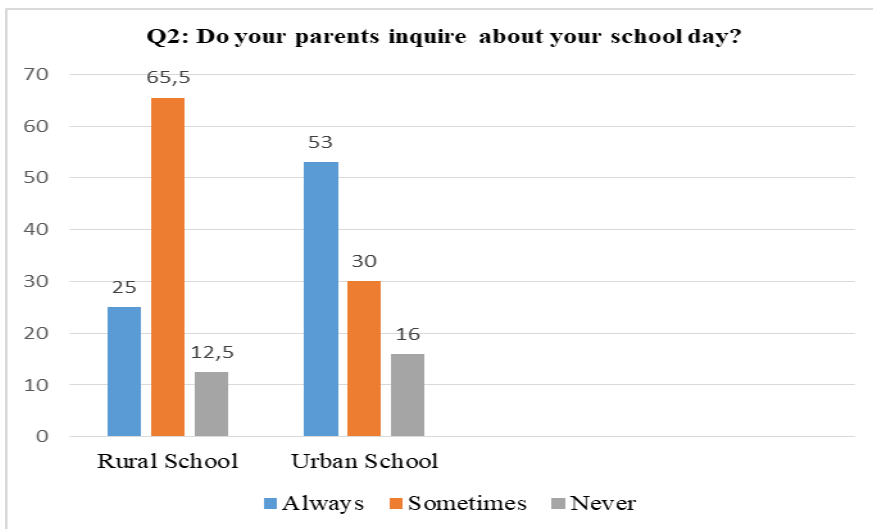


Figure 2: school day discussions

In both settings, there is a high tendency for parents to inquire about their children's day at school. Parents always chat with their children about school day (Rural 25%/ Urban 53%), sometimes (Rural 65.5 %/ Urban 30%), and in some cases, parents do not discuss the school day is the least represented (Rural 12,5%/ Urban 16%). It is noteworthy that the participants reported that these discussions were chiefly brief and superficial, with the pupils not sharing any information about learning with their parents.

Figure 3 shows the results of question three. In both settings, the participants report that their parents are well-aware of their learning difficulties in class (Urban 97,6%/ Rural 75,5%) while some parents are unaware of their children's issues in specific subjects (Rural 27,5%/ Urban 2,32%).

It is noted that the majority of parents, in both schools, are familiar with the challenge their children encountered in their studies. This high level of familiarity may be attributed to the participants' awareness of seeking parental support as the results of the three trimesters are a decisive factor in determining the BEM average and overall success in this stage.

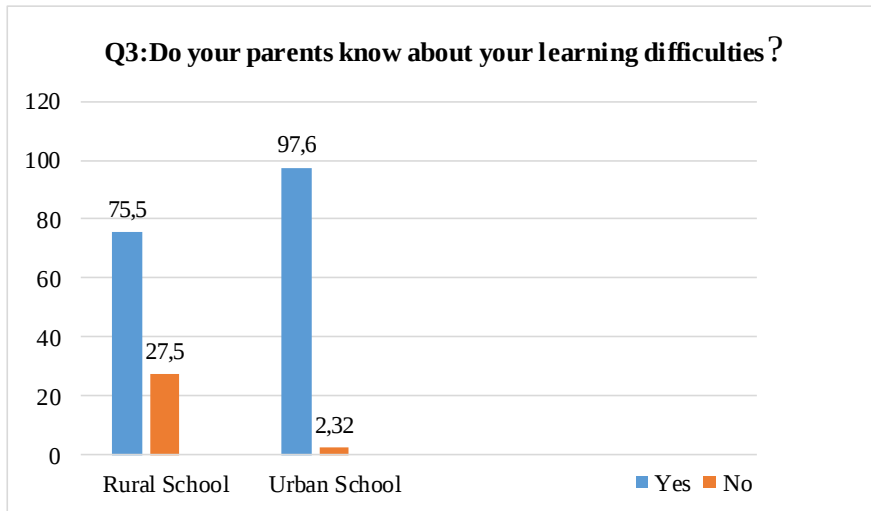


Figure 3: Discussion about learning difficulties

In the rural school, the majority of parents (75%) opt for regular internet access at home to enable their children to consult YouTube educational channels. These channels cover the Algerian Middle School subjects' syllabi, especially in math, physics and biology, and they suggest intensive range of BEM exam models; in addition, some parents (15%) enroll their children in shadow education lessons to address their children's weaknesses and to improve their level in fundamental subjects. Essentially, these subjects have high coefficients and are decisive in allowing the pupils to pursue adequate speciality in secondary school. Finally, 7.5% of the parents suggest that the participants should attend the consolidation session that the schools' boards provide during winter and spring breaks.

In the urban school, 44.1% of the parents opt for private courses as a supportive measure while 11.6% of the parents assume the responsibility of teaching their children at home; however, 44.2% of the pupils are encouraged by their parents to attend the consolidation sessions at school.

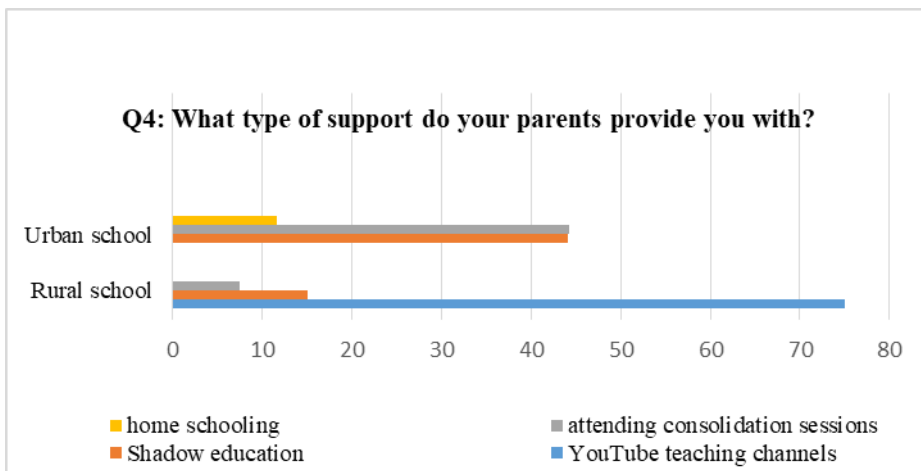


Figure 4: Types of parental support in exam classes

Figure 5 indicates that in the rural school, 15% of the parents always help with homework, and 47,5% of parents occasionally assist their children; nevertheless, 15% of the pupils admit that they do their homework independently. In the urban school, 39.2% of the parents actively assist with their homework while 41.4% of parents sometimes help their children, and 19.5% of parents never participate in assisting their childrens' in their activities.

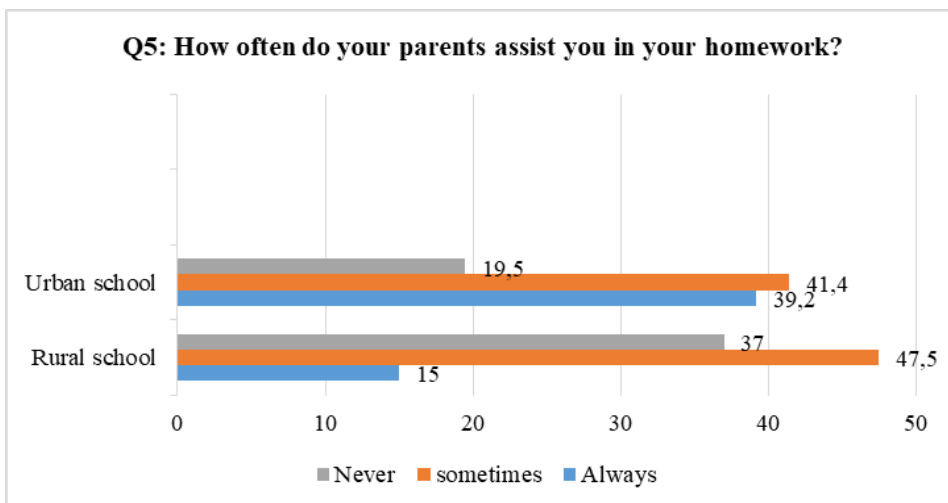


Figure 5: Frequency of homework assistance

Question six explored further parental involvement in timetable planning, time management skills and home supervision while they study for their BEM exam. In the rural school, 17% of parents were fully engaged in planning and supervising their children's study time at home while the majority of parents 83% did not interfere their children's study habits.

In the urban school, 34.8% of the parents were involved while 66.2% of the parents left their children to organise their study schedules at home.

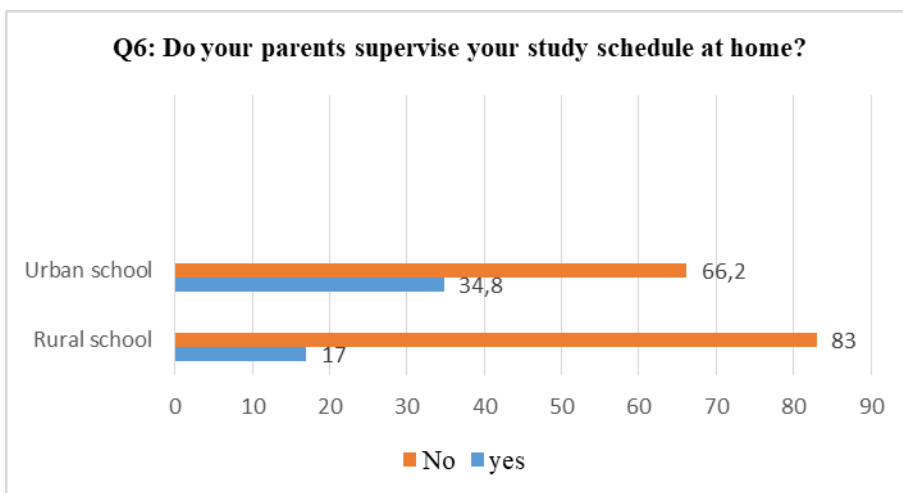


Figure 6: Paretal supervision at home

Question seven probes parents' deliberate and regular visits to school to inquire about their children's behaviour and learning. Surprisingly, in the rural school, the majority of parents (82.5%) do not make any school visits during the school year of their children even when their children are in exam classes, yet only 17.5% of the parents make regular visits to the school to meet teachers; however, the same question yields interesting results in the urban school where 60% of parents make regular visits to their children's schools, and 40% of the parents did not.

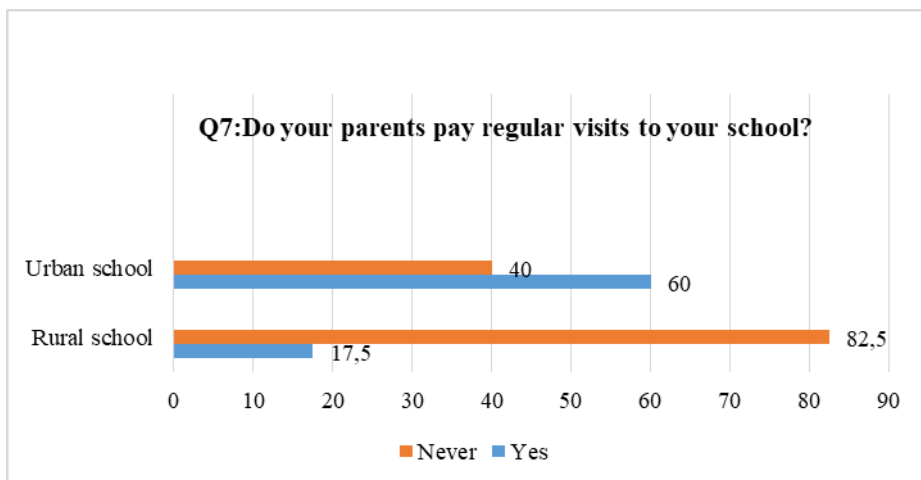


Figure 7: Parents' school visits

The results regarding the pupils' attendance at consolidations sessions at school show that 62.5% of pupils in the rural school attend all the consolidation sessions, and 37.5% do not attend. In the urban school, 52.3% of the pupils attend the sessions, and 47.6% do not. The pupils choose to attend school sessions because their teachers effectively them revise their lessons and reinforce these intensive revisions via training them in answering previous exam papers regarding content, language and format.

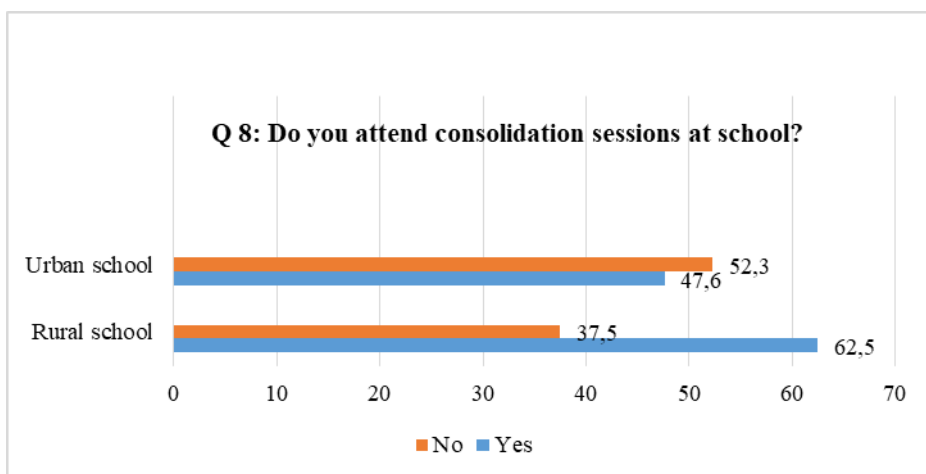


Figure 8: Pupils' attendance of consolidation sessions

question nine aims to identify the parents' preferences with regard to secondary education specialities. In the rural school, 55% of the parents prefer experimental sciences speciality because they expect their children to pursue medicine, pharmacy or engineering careers in life, 37.5 % of parent prefer the field of letters and philosophy, and 2.5% of the parents ask their children to join the army forces. In the urban school, 74.6% expect their children to select the experimental sciences speciality, 13.9% of the parents ask their children to choose the letters and philosophy stream, and 11.6% do not have any expectations, leaving the final decision to their children.

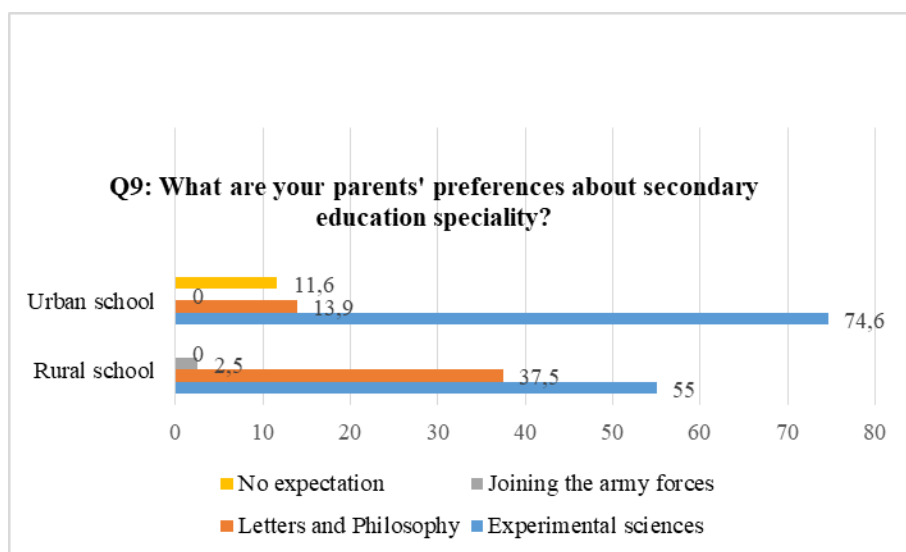


Figure 9: Parents' preferences about secondary school specialities

Important decisions about children's education in middle school reflect the degree of parental involvement in their children's education and life in general. Results of question ten show that 47.5% of the pupils in the rural school made their own decision with regard to high school specialities while 52.5% of the pupils made decisions after family discussions. In the urban school, 37.5% of the pupils made their own decisions, and 58.5% made the decision after family discussion; meanwhile, 4.65% admitted that their parents made the final decision about their education.

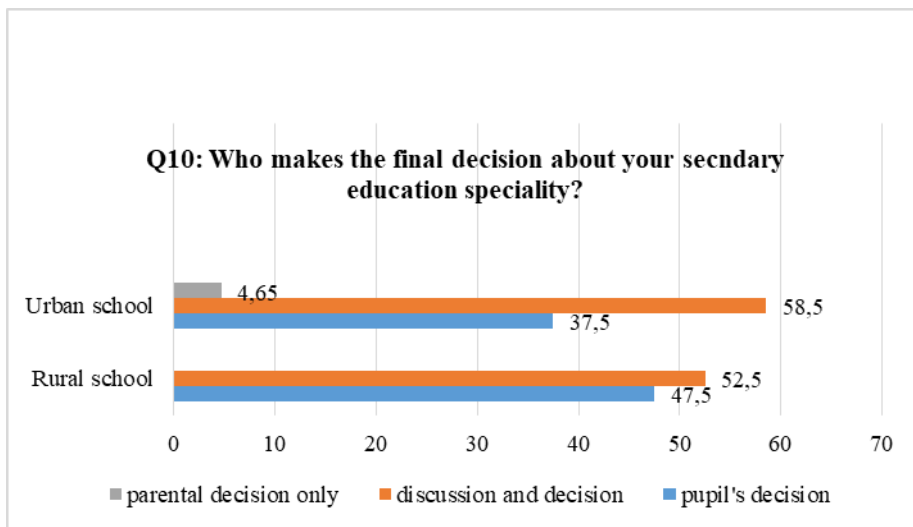


Figure 10: Pupils' decision-making process

3.2.Results of the interviews

The first question sought the teachers' evaluation of parental involvement via regular visits to the schools. The frequency of parental visits was measured against three criteria: high involvement, medium involvement and no involvement at all. In the rural area, the teacher admitted that parental visits are rare, with educated parents making these regular visits to the school. In the urban area, the teachers reported that the parents were highly involved. The parents made regular visits during the week to meet the teachers of different subjects on Tuesdays; furthermore, each trimester's open day was busy for the teachers and the administration since the parents were interested in two-ways communication with teachers about their children's behaviours, academic performance and schoolwork.

The second question aimed to highlight if the parents took the initiative to assist their children in their studies at home or not. The first appreciated parental involvement and help at home and classified it into three categories: joining the children in preparing some notes and questions before coming to class, offering the children learning materials to revise for their exams such as activity books, and explaining difficult lessons and assisting them in their homework. He stated, "[Parental involvement] is very helpful, for instance the pupils

whose parents took an active part in their studies are always participating, curious, engaged and passionate about learning in the classroom.” The second teacher from the urban school emphasized that many parents were involved in helping their children at home. She stated, “Involved parents always ask me for suggestions to work with their children at home. They always want to find solutions to boost their children's learning”; also, the parents sought teachers’ suggestions and recommendations to cater for their children’s needs since the teachers spend much time with the pupils at school (8 hours per day), so they were able to identify the children’s strengths and weaknesses.

The third question explored parental responses to instances where their children underperform on tests. The first teacher described the situation as alarming because the parents never intervened when their children had learning weaknesses or challenges; however, the administration invited them to find solutions to assist slow learners. The second teacher underlined the fact that once the students were facing difficulties, especially in fundamental subjects, the parents visited the school immediately to inquire about the situation and discuss potential measures for improvement because the school administration was committed to assist weak and brilliant pupils alike.

Finally, the teachers were asked if the parents were involved throughout the academic year. The first teacher admitted that there were two types of involvement: some parents showed interest from the first trimester in September, and the second group became involved when the official BEM examinations approached; however, the second teacher stated that some parents were involved throughout the four years of middle school while others were only interested at the beginning of the school year to support their children.

3.3. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis according to the six-stage approach of Braun & Clarke (2006) underpinned the data analysis section. First of all, the researchers familiarized themselves with reading the participants’ answers in Arabic and paid attention to noteworthy sentences and expressions. The second stage included the generation of initial and broader codes. During the third stage, the authors searched for the themes in light of Epstein’s model of parental involvement (2017), and they went beyond what the participants said to focus on

explaining and interpreting their answers. In the fourth and fifth stage, the authors reviewed and defined the themes; i.e. the data patterns that help address the research question. In essence, the extracted themes represent contextual accounts that reflected the reality of the participants' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.3.1. Absence of social and psychological support

The most prominent theme regarding the parents' roles was the absence of actual support to encourage the pupils. While the pupils had daily discussions with their parents after school, these discussions were superficial and lacked essential details about their learning experiences. Furthermore, it seems that the pupils always initiated conversations to voice their concerns about their learning difficulties as they were in an exam classes, and needed to feel supported and appreciated in this stage of their lives.

3.3.2. Homework and schoolwork supervision

The direct involvement of parents in their children's homework is a major issue in this study since it is not an omnipresent practice across households. In both schools, this involvement is somehow irregular, and in many cases, the pupils are left to work independently without direct assistance from parents. Unfortunately, the majority of parents do not supervise their children's study time and have no idea about the importance of creating a safe and secure home environment, designing study routine and encouraging learning at home.

3.3.3. Moderate practical support

The participants in the urban school enjoyed more support concerning private tuition and home schooling opportunities compared to their counterparts in the rural school. The majority of the students, in the rural area, relied on YouTube channels for explanations, or they regularly attend consolidation sessions at school due to financial inadequacy. Besides, the majority of parents failed to communicate with the school and the educators via regular, deliberate visits; nevertheless, a two-way communication between parents and school was prevalent in the urban sphere. As far as decision-making is concerned, it is a superficial practice that is maintained with regard to future aspirations about the pupils' selection of secondary education speciality, rather than helping the children make daily decisions about

their learning at home. In rare cases, the pupils had no say in their future aspirations as the matter is entirely in the parents' hands.

3.4. Discussion

The results reveal a nuanced picture of parental involvement in their children's education in a rural and an urban school. Both groups of parents showed a decent level of engagement and participation in their children's schooling. Based on Epstein's model (2017), parenting, learning at home, and decision-making were moderately represented themes throughout the study; however, communicating, volunteering and collaborating with community fell short of expectations.

It is evident that research highlights a positive association between geographical variables and the degree of parental involvement in the children's education (e.g. Brody et al, 1995; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020; Morowane et al, 2024). In this study, the geographical variable reflects disparities in the quality and profiles of parental involvement; thus, the results demonstrate the existence of three profiles of parental involvement: High, moderate, superficial depth, and lack of interest and awareness). For instance, parents in urban area exhibited higher engagement compared to their counterparts in the rural area. The obtained data may be attributed to a series of factors such as the socioeconomic factors. Urban areas generally provide parents with opportunities to support their children's education. In essence, they have greater access to resources, public and private libraries, and private schools. Private schools in urban areas offer courses, ranging from primary to secondary school covering fundamental subjects in the Algerian school. This finding may chime with previous studies (Prater *et al*, 1997; Zhang, 2023) indicating that urban parents enroll their children in tutoring classes, maintain two-way communications with school, and interact with teachers more frequently than rural parents.

The pupils in this study experienced various forms of practical support from their parents. The major resource in both schools was the digital support via online resources and educational channels such as YouTube. This platform is more accessible than other forms of support, especially for families with limited financial abilities. Parents also supported their children through shadow education or private

tutoring to boost their children's performance in the official exam, particularly in fundamental subject since they may aspire for individualized focused instruction and intensive practice. This contradicts research showing that some rural parents do not consider tutoring classes to be efficient in advancing children's achievement (Zhang, 2023). As observed in this study, school consolidation sessions are viewed by pupils and parents as a trustworthy supportive measure that reflects partnership between schools and parents in favour of effective learning, especially for low income families.

Concerning parental involvement in home-related activities such as homework and time management, there was a low consistent level of parental involvement. The majority of parents in both schools left their children to manage their time at home, indicating a lack of structure and support at home and may result in potentially inconsistent study habits. This result echoes the research by Mbhiza and Nkambule (2022), who pointed out that parental participation outside school is limited because the parents overlooked the important role they can play in attending to their children's schoolwork. The parents, thus, continue to believe that teachers are solely qualified to educate their children. Furthermore, Ndebele (2015) conclusively demonstrated that the degree of parental participation in homework activities is primarily influenced by the socioeconomic status of parents.

This study also suggests that the teachers value parental involvement and highlight the parents' significant role in consolidating learning outside the classroom. They consider school-parent communication and collaboration as valuable asset. Though both groups of parents in rural and urban areas actively seek guidance and suggestions from the teachers, the urban context indicates a particularly high level of reliance on and trust in teachers' experience and expertise.

A disparity exists between the first and the second school regarding parental regular visits to school. In the first school, there is a lack of collaboration between parents and teachers while school visits in the second school are significantly high. Prater *et al.* (1997) and Zhang (2023) supported the notion that urban parents are more open and engaged in their children's education, both in school and at home. Similarly, both interviews confirmed the disparity between urban and

rural areas. urban parents' frequent visits indicate dedicated engagement and commitment to their children's schooling. Essentially, they showed a great extent of engagement through a stronger sense of urgency and responsibility to intervene when invited by the school; however, in the rural school, a minority of parents visited the school regularly. These results are consistent with those of Hasnat & Kabir (2024), who found out that it is a rare practice for rural parents to visit schools and seek teachers' guidance with regard to their children's learning, and they do not respond to schools' invitations. Jordan (2016) and Lin *et al.* (2014) also backed this fact by confirming that rural schools constantly struggle to initiate collaborative and constructive relationship with families.

The majority of parents in both schools, in our study, expressed a traditional Algerian viewpoint towards the supremacy of experimental sciences and expected their children to pursue careers in medicine and engineering. Moreover, the parents seemed to encourage the children to pursue professional careers such as joining the army and teaching due to the family's financial situations or as a guarantee for recruitment after graduation. The parents also actively participated in the pupils' decision-making regarding the selection of a secondary education speciality, and a minority of parents decided on behalf of their children. This finding correlates with a study by Hegne and Smette (2017), which highlighted that a minority of students reported that their parents strongly participated in their decision-making process concerning the choice of the upper secondary school enrolment. Our finding also contradicts a study by Schmid & Garrels (2021), whose participants acknowledged that their parents encouraged them to have their own educational career path. In a nutshell, the findings of this study confirm the conclusions made in previous research in the Algerian context (Belaid and Sarnou, 2019; Latreche and Hoadjli, 2021). The significance of parental involvement and its potential TO make a difference in the pupils' education and achievement is still on the periphery of parents' attitudes and actual childcare, particularly in rural areas in compared to urban spheres.

Conclusions

This study investigated the profiles of parental involvement in their children's education in exam classes in a rural and an urban

Algerian middle schools. The study explored how parents exhibited their active participation in their children's education at home and in school, It also highlighted parents' support systems (discussion, various resources, and making decisions) and collaboration with the school.

The study was conducted using an attitudinal questionnaire administered to the pupils in both middle schools to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of parental involvement in rural and urban Tiaret, Algeria. Parental involvement is moderate in both settings; however, the geographical variable is decisive regarding resources, shadow education opportunities, and parental regular school visits.

To highlight the significance of parental involvement in their children's education, the Algerian Ministry of Education should implement specific policies and programmes that encourage and recognize parental involvement, especially in rural areas; besides, the parents can undertake tailored training to be equipped with the appropriate strategies to assume a more engaged role at home. These strategies can include initiating deep conversations with the children about school, assisting the children in doing their homework through effective study skills, accompanying the children in extra-curricular activities and strengthening the bond with the teachers and the school administration respectively.

While we are fully aware of the limitations of this study, it provides rich insights into the dynamics of parental involvement in the Algerian exam classes in two different backgrounds and settings. It clearly shows the current understanding of the roles of parents in their children's education with its pitfalls, opportunities and challenges. Further research about parental involvement and participation could focus on the cultural and the socioeconomic reasons behind the low level of parental engagement in rural areas; also, the variable of gender can be of a paramount importance in providing the fullest picture of whether gender roles have changed in relation to assuming responsibility for children in the household or not. Parental involvement can be investigated through the lens of the correlation between the level of this engagement and the children's performance in class and achievement in official examinations.

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