

An Analysis of Cooperation between Preschool Education Institutions and Parents

Jugdernamjil Khurelkhoo & Narantsetseg Tsogt

School of Preschool Education, Mongolian National University of Education, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

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*Corresponding Author: Jugdernamjil Khurelkhoo

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Abstract

Original Research Article

Parental involvement is important for children's development and preschool education quality. This study examined parent-kindergarten collaboration in Mongolia, focusing on collaborative activities, communication channels, and parental engagement in Ulaanbaatar and rural areas. Data were collected from 364 kindergartens through document analysis and a researcher-developed questionnaire administered to teachers. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.781 for Ulaanbaatar and 0.702 for rural areas. Descriptive statistics were analyzed using SPSS 28.0. Findings showed that collaboration primarily focused on information provision and exchange. Parental engagement was rated as good in 48.4% (n = 176), moderate in 36.5% (n = 133), and poor in 15.1% (n = 55) of kindergartens. Poor engagement was more prevalent in rural areas (21.6%, n = 44) than in Ulaanbaatar (6.9%, n = 11). Information boards combined with Facebook groups were the most frequently reported communication channel combination (19.0%, n = 69). The study recommends strengthening reciprocal partnerships through joint planning, shared decision-making, and context-sensitive communication strategies.

Keywords: preschool education, parental involvement, kindergarten-family cooperation, urban and rural areas, evaluation.

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Introduction

At a time when the quality of and access to preschool education have become a priority of education policy internationally, there is an ever-increasing need for detailed research and analysis, at both the theoretical and the empirical level, of the factors that effectively support children's development. Numerous studies have established that parental involvement is a factor of strategic importance that comprehensively influences children's cognitive, socio-psychological, and behavioural development (Castro et al., 2015; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2012). Furthermore, there is a growing tendency

in research to regard parental involvement not as peripheral support to the educational process, but as an integral component of the child's developmental ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Seginer, 2006; Britto et al., 2017).

Regarding the theoretical foundations of cooperation between parents and educational institutions, researchers interpret this phenomenon as a multifaceted and interdependent system. While, through the model of partnership among the family, the school, and educational institutions, parental involvement can be defined as a systematic process linked to institutional organisation and

policy support (Epstein, 2011), on the other hand, the motivations, beliefs, and environmental factors that influence parental involvement have been explained in terms of psychological mechanisms (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). These theoretical approaches demonstrate that parental involvement is not merely an individual initiative but a dynamic process linked to the quality of relationships, the institutional environment, and socio-cultural conditions.

The results of empirical research confirm this theoretical understanding. Active parental involvement has been found not only to have a positive effect on foundational learning indicators such as children's school readiness, language, and letter recognition, but also to be significantly associated with social skills, behavioural regulation, and psychological stability (Sheridan et al., 2019; Yamamoto et al., 2022). The study by Jeynes (2012) showed that parental involvement is positively associated with children's academic achievement regardless of socio-economic differences. Nevertheless, researchers continue to emphasise that the effectiveness of parental involvement depends largely not on the level of involvement alone, but on the quality of the relationship between the family and the educational institution. Therefore, it has become a logical necessity to consider cooperation between parents and educational institutions at the theoretical level within a *conceptual framework that integrates active participation of both parties, mutual trust, institutional support, and access to resources*.

Literature Review

A review of international research shows that parental involvement is significantly and positively associated with children's school readiness, language development, cognitive abilities, and socio-psychological development (Castro et al., 2015; Hill & Tyson, 2009). According to ecological systems theory, child development is determined by the interaction of multiple interrelated systems, including the family, the educational institution, the broader social environment, and the policy level

(Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In contemporary research, there are increasing attempts to comprehensively measure and model variables such as the quality of cooperation, forms of communication, institutional support, and the structures and mechanisms of participation (Garbacz et al., 2017).

In recent research, there is a dominant trend toward emphasising the qualitative dimensions of parental involvement rather than its frequency. Studies show that factors such as trust, mutual understanding, joint decision-making, and cultural sensitivity that develop in the parent–teacher relationship are key mediating variables determining the effectiveness of involvement (Sheridan et al., 2019; Powell et al., 2020). Studies examining the influence of socio-economic factors have established that parents' educational level, income, employment characteristics, and access to resources have a significant effect on the forms and sustainability of involvement (Lara & Saracostti, 2019).

In Mongolia, research that systematically examines parental involvement using a multidimensional framework remains relatively limited. Existing domestic studies have primarily examined parental involvement in terms of participation in meetings and information exchange (Ministry of Education and Science, 2019; UNICEF, 2020). A study conducted among families living in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar found that parental involvement in children's education was associated with families' material, human, and social capital, as well as parents' educational aspirations for their children (Nakamura, 2020). In rural areas, Nakamura (2025) further examined parental involvement in family-based learning among nomadic households and highlighted the importance of the conditions of nomadic life, the family environment, and access to educational opportunities in facilitating such involvement. Therefore, further research is needed to examine the mechanisms underlying parental involvement and family–educational institution collaboration in Mongolia through theoretically grounded quantitative studies based on larger and more diverse samples.

Methodology

The study involved a total of 364 kindergartens from urban and rural areas of Mongolia. The sample consisted of kindergartens that expressed their willingness and interest in participating after being informed about the purpose and objectives of the study. Data were collected through document analysis and a questionnaire administered to kindergarten teachers. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on relevant theoretical perspectives and previous research on parental involvement and kindergarten–parent collaboration.

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The

coefficients were $\alpha = 0.781$ for the Ulaanbaatar sample and $\alpha = 0.702$ for the rural sample, indicating acceptable internal consistency of the instrument. Data were processed and statistically analyzed using SPSS version 28.0. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the participating kindergartens and the distribution of parental engagement and participation.

Results

According to the reliability analysis, Cronbach's alpha values were between 0.7 and 0.8, that is, at a "good" level; therefore, the study can be considered reliable.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis (Reliability Statistics)

Factor	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Ulaanbaatar city	0.781	16
Rural areas	0.702	16

The length of operation of the kindergartens included in the study varied. Urban kindergartens had been in operation for 1–60 years (mean = 26.47, standard deviation = 21.55) and had 2–18 groups (mean = 9.25, standard deviation = 4.40). Rural kindergartens, on the other hand, had been in operation for 1–58 years (mean = 37.63, standard deviation = 25.8) and

had 1–10 groups (mean = 6.34, standard deviation = 2.6). This indicates that urban and rural kindergartens differ structurally.

The results of the analysis of the forms of activities directed at parents are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Forms of Activities Organised by Kindergartens for Parents

Form of activity	Ulaanbaatar (%)	Rural areas (%)
Training sessions	10.9	7.3
Notice board and counselling	34.4	15.4
Sports days	10.9	8.4

Form of activity	Ulaanbaatar (%)	Rural areas (%)
Individual meetings	21.9	28.0

An analysis of the forms of activities directed at parents shows that training sessions, notice-board counselling, and sports days predominate in urban kindergartens, whereas individual meetings are more commonly organised in rural kindergartens. Urban kindergartens use forms of

information delivery based on digital platforms, whereas direct, face-to-face meetings predominate in rural areas. In terms of frequency, activities are organised monthly in urban kindergartens and quarterly in rural areas.

Table 3. Kindergarten Affiliation and Level of Parental Engagement and Participation

Affiliation	Moderate	Poor	Good	Total
Ulaanbaatar city	68 (42.5%)	11 (6.9%)	81 (50.6%)	160 (100%)
Rural Area	65 (31.9%)	44 (21.6%)	95 (46.6%)	204 (100%)
Total	133 (36.5%)	55 (15.1%)	176 (48.4%)	364 (100%)

Table 3 presents the distribution of parental engagement and participation levels by kindergarten affiliation. Overall, among the 364 kindergartens included in the study, parental engagement and participation was rated as good in 48.4% (n = 176), moderate in 36.5% (n = 133), and poor in 15.1% (n = 55) of cases.

When examined by location, 50.6% (n = 81) of kindergartens in Ulaanbaatar City were rated as having a good level of parental engagement and participation, compared with 46.6% (n = 95) of kindergartens in rural areas. A moderate level was reported in 42.5% (n = 68) of Ulaanbaatar City kindergartens and 31.9% (n = 65) of rural kindergartens. In contrast, the proportion of kindergartens with a poor level of parental

engagement and participation was considerably higher in rural areas (21.6%, n = 44) than in Ulaanbaatar City (6.9%, n = 11).

These findings indicate that although the proportion of kindergartens rated as having a good level of parental engagement and participation was relatively similar in Ulaanbaatar City and rural areas, the distribution of moderate and poor levels differed between the two settings. In particular, the substantially higher proportion of poor parental engagement and participation in rural areas suggests the need for context-sensitive approaches to strengthening parent-kindergarten collaboration.

Table 4. Forms of Delivering Information about Activities to Parents

Communication channel	Number	Percentage (%)
Notice board	14	3.8
Notice board, Facebook group	69	19.0
Notice board, Facebook group, individual meetings	49	13.5
Facebook group	55	15.1
Facebook group, individual meetings	31	8.5
Email	15	4.1
Email, notice board, Facebook group	38	10.4
Email, notice board, Facebook group, individual meetings	49	13.5
Email, Facebook group	25	6.9
Email, Facebook group, individual meetings	19	5.2
Total	364	100.0

As shown in Table 4, kindergartens predominantly use **multiple communication channels in combination** to provide parents with information about kindergarten activities. Among the 364 kindergartens surveyed, **19.0% (n = 69)** reported using both an information board and a Facebook group, representing the highest proportion. In addition, **13.5% (n = 49)** of kindergartens reported combining an information board, a Facebook group, and individual meetings, while an equal proportion (**13.5%, n = 49**) reported using email, an information board, a Facebook group, and individual meetings. These findings indicate that kindergartens tend to **combine digital and traditional forms of communication**, rather than relying on a single channel to exchange information with parents. In contrast, relatively small proportions of kindergartens relied exclusively on an information board (**3.8%**) or email (**4.1%**).

Discussion

The findings of this study provide insights into the current state of parent–kindergarten collaboration in Mongolia and highlight several areas for improvement. Although kindergartens employ various activities and communication channels to engage parents, the findings suggest that collaboration remains largely focused on information provision and exchange rather than reciprocal partnership. This pattern is consistent with the need to move beyond the frequency of parental involvement toward greater attention to the quality of relationships, mutual trust, and shared responsibility, as emphasised by Epstein (2011) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005). Meaningful collaboration requires not only informing parents about children’s educational experiences but also creating opportunities for them to contribute to planning, decision-making, and developmental support.

A notable finding is the difference in reported parental engagement between Ulaanbaatar and rural areas. Although the proportions of kindergartens reporting good engagement were relatively similar in Ulaanbaatar (50.6%) and rural areas (46.6%), poor engagement was reported more frequently in rural areas (21.6%) than in Ulaanbaatar (6.9%). This difference warrants further investigation into the contextual factors that may influence parental participation. Previous research in Mongolia has highlighted the relevance of family resources, social capital, educational aspirations, and the conditions of nomadic life in shaping opportunities for children's learning and parental involvement (Nakamura, 2020, 2025). Accordingly, approaches to strengthening collaboration should be sensitive to local circumstances rather than applied uniformly across different settings.

The study also found that kindergartens frequently combine traditional and digital communication channels, particularly information boards and Facebook groups. This combination may provide multiple opportunities to communicate with families. However, the use of several channels does not necessarily indicate meaningful parental participation or two-way communication. In line with Sheridan et al. (2019) and Powell et al. (2020), the quality of relationships and opportunities for reciprocal interaction should be considered alongside the communication methods used. Kindergartens could therefore strengthen existing practices by using these channels not only to distribute information but also to encourage parental feedback, consultation, and joint planning.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The study relied on questionnaires completed by kindergarten teachers and a voluntary sample of 364 kindergartens; therefore, the findings may not fully represent all kindergartens in Mongolia or reflect parents' own experiences. Furthermore, the descriptive analysis identifies differences in reported engagement but does not establish their statistical significance or explain their underlying causes. Future research should incorporate parents' perspectives, examine contextual factors in greater depth, and

investigate how different forms of collaboration relate to children's developmental outcomes.

Overall, strengthening parent-kindergarten collaboration in Mongolia requires a shift from information-centred communication toward more reciprocal, inclusive, and participatory partnerships. Such efforts should take account of differences between urban and rural contexts and prioritise mutual trust, shared decision-making, and meaningful family participation.

Conclusion

This study examined the current state of collaboration between kindergartens and parents in Mongolia, with particular attention to the forms of collaborative activities, communication channels, and levels of parental engagement and participation in Ulaanbaatar and rural areas. The findings indicate that kindergartens use a variety of approaches to communicate with and involve parents; however, collaboration remains largely focused on information provision and exchange rather than sustained reciprocal partnership.

Overall, parental engagement and participation was rated as good in 48.4% ($n = 176$) of kindergartens, moderate in 36.5% ($n = 133$), and poor in 15.1% ($n = 55$). Although the proportion of kindergartens reporting good parental engagement was relatively similar in Ulaanbaatar (50.6%) and rural areas (46.6%), the proportion reporting poor engagement was higher in rural areas (21.6%) than in Ulaanbaatar (6.9%). This finding suggests the need for greater attention to contextual factors that may influence parental participation in rural settings.

The findings also show that kindergartens commonly use a combination of traditional and digital communication channels. The most frequently reported combination was the use of information boards and Facebook groups (19.0%, $n = 69$), while the use of information boards or email alone was relatively uncommon. This indicates that kindergartens are increasingly combining face-to-face and digital approaches to maintain communication with parents.

Overall, the findings suggest that parent-kindergarten collaboration in Mongolia needs to

move beyond one-way information sharing toward more reciprocal and participatory forms of partnership. Strengthening opportunities for joint planning, shared decision-making, mutual communication, and trust between parents and kindergarten professionals may contribute to more meaningful parental engagement. In particular, context-sensitive approaches should be considered for rural kindergartens, while traditional and digital communication channels should be strategically combined according to parents' needs and local conditions.

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