



Redesigning School-Family Partnerships in The Digital Era: A Study of Parental Preferences in Primary Education in Indonesia

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Abstract

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This study examines the transformation of school-family partnerships amid digitization and the changing role of parents, especially millennial parents, in education. This study investigates the preferences of parents of primary school pupils in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, about effective methods of school-family collaboration in the digital age. Data were collected from 334 parents across five districts/cities in Yogyakarta utilizing a quantitatively descriptive survey approach, employing a structured questionnaire evaluated by experts and based on Epstein's framework and parental involvement theory. The study identified five primary dimensions of parental preferences: participation, communication, digital engagement, parenting demands, and relationship quality. The results indicate that 98.8% of parents encountered rigid school timetables, whereas 94.3% favored asynchronous digital communication methods, including message platforms and learning management systems. Furthermore, 87.5% appreciated polite, reciprocal engagement with educators, while 89.1% endorsed the incorporation of digital tools to enhance accessibility and facilitate real-time cooperation. Despite a robust desire to engage in their children's education, parents faced considerable obstacles, especially concerning professional obligations and inflexible school policies. This research advances the field by introducing a responsive, participatory blended approach designed for millennial parents' specific traits. The concept prioritizes adaptability, inclusiveness, and the strategic utilization of existing ICT infrastructure to facilitate significant engagement. The findings provide essential insights for policymakers and school leaders in formulating adaptive family involvement strategies that align with the contemporary reality and digital proficiency of today's families.

Keywords: parental involvement, school-family partnership, digital, primary education, parental preferences

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INTRODUCTION

The family serves as the primary educational environment for children, where foundational values, behaviors, and early knowledge are developed. Parental involvement plays a crucial role in shaping children's academic and emotional development. According to Ormrod (2008), parents represent the first layer of influence on a child's growth. More recently, studies by Wilder (2014) and Castro et al. (2015) have emphasized that effective family engagement has a significantly positive impact on students' academic outcomes, behavior, and emotional well-being. Abie Ntekane (2018) asserts that parents must be actively involved in



encouraging, guiding, leading, and sincerely inspiring their children's overall development.

In the Indonesian context, the Ministry of Education has developed guidelines categorizing parental involvement into four key roles: supporting learning at school, supporting learning at home, monitoring children's progress in coordination with the school, and providing input on educational decisions (Kemendikbud, 2016). These roles require schools to establish responsive communication and mutually respectful relationships with parents. Gao et al. (2025) coined the term “homework war” to describe the emotional tension that often arises during parent-child interactions, highlighting the need for emotionally sensitive partnership models. As emotional dynamics increasingly shape parenting styles, schools must design empathetic engagement practices that nurture child development. Goodall (2018) underscores the importance of participatory engagement active parental involvement in decision-making and in designing school programs. Engagement should not be merely symbolic but also substantive, involving parents in meaningful dialogue and co-creation.

Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System supports this perspective. Article 54, Paragraph 1 emphasizes that community participation including that of families plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality of education. Additionally, the framework proposed by Epstein et al. (2019) has served as a foundation for understanding the multidimensional nature of school-family collaboration, which includes parenting, communication, volunteering, home-based learning, decision-making, and community partnership. Gerrard and Soriano (2020) advocate for equity-oriented school-family partnerships that take socioeconomic barriers into account and promote shared decision-making. The school-family counseling model offers a consultative approach to addressing family needs while simultaneously reinforcing the school's role in child development.

Parental involvement in education refers to meaningful participation in a child's learning process, both at home and at school. Kristiyani (2013) notes that such involvement not only supports academic success but also contributes to social-emotional development. Similarly, Hornby and Blackwell (2018) emphasize that schools must empower parents as co-educators through inclusive and culturally sensitive engagement strategies. Parents generally express a strong desire and willingness to actively participate in school-family partnership programs, with the expectation of fostering a more communicative and transparent model that builds mutual trust between schools and families. Furthermore, Anggaraini (2023) highlights that strong school-family partnerships significantly impact students' character development and emotional recovery.

Beyond structural frameworks, the emotional and participatory dimensions of parental involvement are gaining increasing attention. Goodall and Montgomery (2014) proposed a continuum of parental engagement in schools, emphasizing the importance of co-design and reciprocal relationships between schools and families. Including students' voices is another vital component, as student involvement in parent-teacher interactions significantly enhance parental confidence and improves student learning outcomes.

Despite existing policies, parental participation in educational programs remains limited. Initial observations indicate that only 25% of parents regularly attend school parenting sessions, while 54% attend infrequently. This gap underscores the need to explore the underlying factors contributing to low participation and parental preferences regarding school involvement. Baxter (2022) highlights that family engagement practices may be negatively affected by constraints and ambiguities in policy provisions governing school-family partnerships. Therefore, appropriate strategies are needed to enhance the effectiveness of school-family collaboration.

In the context of rapid digitalization and social transformation, the nature of school-family partnerships has shifted, necessitating more inclusive, flexible, and responsive models of collaboration. Recent studies highlight that effective parental engagement requires mutual trust, transparency, and adaptability to the evolving roles of parents (Declan Qualter & Farrell, 2024; Laranjeiro et al., 2023).

Digital technologies have transformed the way parents and schools communicate. Smith (2023) observed that applications such as Seesaw and ClassDojo enhance real-time communication and increase parental visibility into classroom activities. Similarly, various studies indicate that digital platforms facilitate deeper teacher-parent collaboration and promote a child-centered culture (MDPI, 2023). However, disparities in access and digital literacy must be addressed to avoid reinforcing existing inequalities.

Equity-driven models emphasize the importance of inclusive engagement strategies. Gerrard and Soriano (2020) stress the need for justice-oriented school-family partnerships that account for socioeconomic barriers and support shared decision-making. The school-family consultation model offers a collaborative approach to meeting family needs while simultaneously strengthening the school's role in children's development.

Therefore, this study aims to explore parental preferences in shaping collaborative school-family partnership models in the digital era. Specifically, it seeks to understand how parents engage with their children's learning progress, the various forms of parental involvement, and the potential of digital tools to support flexible and inclusive partnership practices. This research also responds to recent calls in the literature to contextualize school-family collaboration within contemporary cultural, social, and technological frameworks (Goodall, 2021; LaRocque et al., 2011).

Although numerous studies have highlighted the significance of parental engagement in education, there is a paucity of empirical research examining the particular preferences of millennial parents in the digital age, particularly in developing nations such as Indonesia. This study offers a unique addition by integrating quantitative data on parental choices with the theoretical frameworks of Epstein's typology, participatory engagement, and digital inclusion. This research specifically examines the intersection of digital tools, emotional dynamics, and generational shifts in shaping school-family communication. This study utilizes a regionally tailored instrument aimed at parents of primary school students in urban and semi-urban Yogyakarta, addressing deficiencies in current partnership models and proposing a responsive blended approach grounded on actual family experiences

and requirements. The report provides policy-relevant insights on aligning digital infrastructure and flexible engagement techniques with national educational objectives.

Parental involvement in primary education programs remains inconsistent and low, despite policy that encourage school-family partnerships. Parents' lived realities, including emotional labor, digital communication patterns, time constraints, and generational expectations, are frequently disregarded by existing models. There is a dearth of empirical data regarding the preferred methods of parental engagement in the education of their children among millennial parents in Indonesia, particularly in the context of digital tools, communication patterns, and co-decision-making mechanisms. Additionally, there are few models that have effectively incorporated digital engagement and emotional sensitivity into family-school partnerships.

METHOD

This research utilized a quantitative descriptive methodology through a survey technique, suitable for discerning trends, attitudes, and preferences within a large community (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method aimed to investigate and delineate the preferences of parents of primary school pupils about models of school-family partnerships in the digital age.

The research was carried out in five districts/cities inside the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The demographic comprised parents of children attending public and private primary schools. A total of 334 parents served as responders. The sample was obtained by proportional stratified random sampling, guaranteeing representation from both urban and rural school demographics. Stratification was determined by the geographical location and classification of the school (public/private).

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed based on theoretical frameworks on parental involvement and school-family partnerships (Epstein et al., 2019; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended items categorized into five main dimensions: (1) parental participation in school programs, (2) preferences for school-family partnership models, (3) parenting knowledge needs, (4) barriers to school-family partnerships, and (5) preferences for the use of digital tools. All items were assessed utilizing rank scale. Elevated ratings signified greater concurrence or increased prevalence of the corresponding attitudes, wants, or preferences. All data use descriptive percentage analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The demographic data of the respondents (N=334) indicate that 58% were female and 42% male, with 80% of parents aged over 36 years. The educational level was relatively high, with 83.8% holding at least a diploma or higher, reflecting a

population with strong academic awareness and potential for digital tool adoption in education.

Parental involvement in school-based education processes was generally high. All parents reported actively seeking information about school programs and supporting their children's learning both at home and in coordination with the school. As shown in Table 1, 96.8% of parents aligned school programs with home activities, and 87.1% provided feedback and suggestions to the school. Furthermore, 98.2% expressed willingness and initiative to engage in future partnerships with schools.

Table 1. Parental Participation in the School-Based Educational Process

Parental Participation in the School	$\Sigma\%$
Parents seek information about educational programs at school	100%
Parents align school programs with home activities	96,8%
Parents provide input, suggestions, or criticism to the school	87,1%
Parents monitor and support their children's learning progress	100%
Parents assist in addressing challenges faced by the school	83,9%
Parents expect clear and transparent information from the school regarding their child's development	100%

Forms of collaboration between schools and families can be observed through various activities and forms of parental involvement at school. Several types of parental engagement practices have been identified in schools, as presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Forms of Parental Involvement in Primary Schools

Forms of School-Parent Partnerships	$\Sigma\%$
Attendance at teacher meetings on the first day of school	93,4%
Participation in teacher meetings at least twice per semester	96,8%
Attendance in parent education classes at least twice per semester	28,4%
Personally collecting student report cards	96,8%
Serving as a guest speaker in inspirational classroom sessions	10,1%
Active participation in end-of-year classroom performance events	54,8%
Engagement in parent associations or school committees	37,7%
Attendance at school-based social activities	57,7%
Assisting in managing the school library	9,7%
Expressed willingness to be involved in school programs	98,2%

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that parents are actively involved in school activities. Attendance at meetings with teachers on the first day of school and during semester meetings was reported by over 93% of parents. Similarly, participation in parenting classes and involvement in parent associations (committees) reached 37.7%, while over 57% of parents attended various social activities at school. In contrast, participation in serving as guest speakers in inspirational classes and assisting in managing the school library was much lower—below 11%. Based on these data, it is evident that parents express a desire to participate and take an active role in school-based activities.

Parenting classes are widely implemented by schools as a platform to facilitate communication with parents and enhance their knowledge in child-rearing practices. These classes are often initiated both by schools and external institutions

or organizations. The following section presents data on parental involvement in parenting class activities.

Table 3. Parenting Class Activities

Parental Participation in Parenting Class Activities	$\Sigma\%$
Always participates in school-based parenting programs	28,4%
Occasionally participates in school-based parenting programs	46,2%
Has never participated in school-based parenting programs	25,2%
Participates in parenting programs outside of school	28,8%

Based on the data in Table 3, 28.4% of parents consistently participated in school-based parenting class activities, while 25.2% reported never attending such sessions. Meanwhile, 46% indicated occasional attendance. For parenting programs conducted outside of school, only 28.8% of parents reported active participation. The findings suggest that while many parents make an effort to engage in parenting activities, several barriers hinder their involvement. Among these, 77.4% cited work-related commitments, and 64.5% identified inflexible or inconvenient scheduling as key obstacles.

Table 4. Barriers to Parental Attendance in Parenting Class Activities

Barriers to Parental Attendance in Parenting Class	$\Sigma\%$
Work-related time constraints	77,4%
Inconvenient and inflexible scheduling	98,8%
Irrelevant or less meaningful content	9,7%
Parenting sessions perceived as monotonous or unengaging	2,0%
Lack of qualified or competent facilitators	3,3%

In general, parents express a strong desire to participate in partnership programs with schools. However, they face certain challenges, primarily due to work commitments and inflexible scheduling of school activities. These obstacles to attending parenting classes could potentially be addressed by leveraging digital tools. Preliminary data show that 100% of parents own a smartphone, 83% possess a laptop or tablet, 41.9% have internet access at home, and 76.3% are active on social media platforms.

Table 5. Access to Digital Devices Among Parents

Access to Digital Devices	$\Sigma\%$
Has a smartphone	100%
Has a laptop/tab	83,8%
Has a home internet connection	41,9%
Has and actively uses social media	86,3%

The demographic profile of 334 respondents—mostly millennial parents—reveals strong educational backgrounds (83.8% diploma or above) and substantial digital access (100% smartphone ownership, 83.8% laptop/tablet, and 86.3% active social media use). These findings suggest high potential for digital-based school-family engagement (Addi, 2024).

Parents reported high engagement in monitoring student learning (100%) and aligning school-home activities (96.8%). However, engagement declined in less structured activities like serving as guest speakers (10.1%) or assisting in the library (9.7%). Similarly, only 28.4% regularly attended parenting classes, hindered by time

constraints (77.4%) and inflexible school schedules (98.8%). These findings indicate a mismatch between traditional school practices and parents' modern lifestyles and work commitments (Hill & Torres, 2010; Nurfajriyah, 2025).

Given the respondents' digital readiness, schools have a critical opportunity to redesign engagement models using blended and flexible strategies. This includes asynchronous communication, co-designed parenting content, and inclusive planning processes (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Camacho & Legare, 2021). The data support a shift toward relational engagement rather than event attendance (Goodall, 2021). Hardianto (2022) recommends a participatory blended partnership model that is flexible, participatory, takes place synchronously, and asynchronously can be an alternative to be developed.

These findings affirm that, although parents hold a generally positive attitude toward school partnerships, structural barriers and the limited implementation of digital tools continue to impede parental involvement in schools. This outcome aligns with Goodall (2021), who argues that engagement should be understood not merely as physical presence but as the quality of interaction and the relevance of school activities to parents' realities. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) similarly emphasize that successful family-school partnerships depend on the development of capacity on both sides—schools and families. The results of this study suggest that parents possess significant potential for engagement; however, schools must provide structural support, including digital literacy training, two-way communication, and flexible scheduling.

Epstein et al. (2019) argue that meaningful partnerships require schools to offer diverse avenues for parental involvement that respect parents' time, context, and communication preferences. In this study, parents' willingness to participate, combined with their high levels of digital access, highlights the potential for a hybrid partnership model that integrates both in-person and digital strategies. The finding that parents possess strong digital access underscores the importance of leveraging technology to bridge the gap between home and school. This aligns with Siemens' (2005) theory of Connectivism, which posits that modern learning depends on individuals' ability to access and connect information through digital networks. In the context of school-family partnerships, a digitally supported approach can foster a collaborative ecosystem that is responsive to parents' needs and constraints.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory explains that child development is shaped by systemic interactions between the microsystem (e.g., family, school), mesosystem (interactions between these environments), and macrosystem (broader policy influences). The low parental participation in parenting classes reflects a disruption within the mesosystem, which may be addressed by building stronger communication bridges between schools and parents through digital technology-based approaches. Enhancing parents' digital literacy is essential as a form of "digital parenting." Livingstone et al. (2018) emphasize that parents' ability to use technology wisely to support their children's learning is a key indicator in strengthening the family's role in digital education.

The low attendance in parenting programs aligns with the findings of Hornby and Blackwell (2018), who emphasize that the success of such programs depends largely on perceived relevance, flexibility in information delivery, and mutual

respect between schools and families. The mismatch between traditional school schedules and parents' work commitments underscores the need to redesign family engagement initiatives through the lens of adult learning principles (Knowles et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the demographic profile of digitally literate and well-educated millennial parents in this study supports the implementation of technology-mediated engagement strategies. As noted by Nikken (2019), digital devices serve not only as communication tools but also as educational platforms that enable more inclusive and participatory parenting models. This study reinforces the assertion by West et al. (2018) that parental involvement significantly enhances students' academic outcomes and behavioral development. The willingness and capacity of parents to engage if provided with appropriate channels should be recognized as an opportunity for schools to redesign their partnership strategies.

Digital communication through various applications and chat groups can be a more effective way to enhance parental participation, particularly when accompanied by flexible methods and targeted engagement strategies. According to Fitria and Pangesti (2023), parental involvement in online learning is most effective when parents act as mentors, facilitators, and learning organizers roles that strengthen school-family partnerships. However, without well-planned content and appropriate delivery methods, parents may experience stress, pressure, and limited internet access, all of which can hinder participation.

The design of digital platforms must consider the digital literacy and accessibility levels of parents. Hsu (2023) demonstrates that interactive digital platforms such as user-friendly applications, real-time notifications, and chat forum enhance communication, teacher-student interaction, and the strength of family-school partnerships. Baharun (2019) introduces the concept of "smart techno-parenting," an educational approach emphasizing the importance of designing school-family partnerships that: (1) integrate technological advances into children's education, (2) promote digital and information literacy, (3) regulate screen time, (4) encourage positive digital engagement, (5) apply media selectivity for children, and (6) monitor both virtual and real-world environments. Further Hardianto (2023) developed design a participatory blended learning model in partnership between schools and parents of elementary school students that is feasible and practical to implement.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that parents in Yogyakarta exhibit a strong willingness to engage in school-family partnerships. The main implication of these findings is the need to redesign such partnerships: (1) schools must diversify their partnership models by offering more flexible and adaptive schedules; (2) parental engagement strategies should be co-designed with parents to ensure mutual relevance and benefits; and (3) educational institutions should adopt a participatory blended model that incorporates digital platforms to enhance participation and address structural barriers. These implications also extend to educational policymakers and school

leaders, who are encouraged to rethink family partnership programs in ways that align with contemporary life realities and the rapid evolution of digital technologies.

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