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The effectiveness of family involvement in early childhood programmes: perceptions of kindergarten principals and teachers

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Family involvement can no longer be considered a luxury but is rather a main component of early childhood programmes. The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of family involvement in early childhood programmes in Jordan. In total, 84 kindergarten principals and 276 teachers participated in the study. To achieve the study objectives, the researchers designed a self-report questionnaire consisting of 28 items that addressed five domains: planning, implementation, evaluation, children's extracurricular activities, and communication with kindergarten. The results indicate that although principals and teachers perceived family involvement in children's extracurricular activities and communication with kindergarten domains as effective, they found family involvement in planning, implementation, and evaluation domains ineffective. The results also revealed significant differences between principals and teachers regarding the effectiveness of family involvement. Moreover, significant differences were found in principals' and teachers' perceptions due to region, type of kindergarten, training programmes, and area of certification. On the basis of this study, suggestions for improving the practice of family involvement in Jordanian kindergartens and for further research were discussed.

Keywords: family involvement; early childhood programmes; principals' perceptions; teachers' perceptions

Introduction

Home is the first institution young children deal with in their life. It is a cultural environment in which children's behaviours, attitudes, language, emotions, thinking, meaning, and even dreams are shaped (Al-Momani, Ihmeideh, & Abu-Naba'h, 2010, p. 767). As children spend most of their time at home, interacting with their parents and other family members, family has been viewed as occupying a central role in children's learning, whereas early childhood settings have been seen as a child's second social institution. These institutions – home and early childhood setting – play a fundamental role in children's development and well-being.

Every day young children navigate between their two most important worlds in their life; home and kindergarten (Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2010). There is now an urgent need to establish a strong relationship between home and kindergarten and to build positive and respectful partnerships between them (Prior & Gerard, 2007). Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007) pointed out that when early childhood

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educators establish collaborative relationships with each child's family, children's performance, social functioning, and emotional adjustment benefit.

Family involvement in early childhood programmes has recently received much attention from the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Jordan. Despite that, it is unknown whether family members are effective and whether parents take part in their children's educational programmes. Family involvement in early childhood programmes, which is a relatively new area in the Arab countries in general and in Jordan in particular, has not been tackled in research studies despite its importance for children, teachers, and parents. This study aimed at exploring the perceptions of Jordanian kindergarten principals and teachers towards the effectiveness of family involvement in early childhood programmes.

Theoretical framework

Educators increasingly recognise the benefits of families' participation in their children's learning and development, both within and outside the classrooms (Birbili & Karagiorgou, 2010; Coleman & Wallinga, 2000; Dai & Schader, 2001; Epstein, 2001; Tekin, 2011; Yuen, 2011). Family involvement in early childhood programmes provides learning opportunities as children develop (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Joe, & Davis, 2009), increases their literacy and language skills (Mccollough & Ramirez, 2010; Reese, Sparks, & Levya, 2010), and promotes their social-emotional competency (Sheridan, Knoche, Edwards, Bovaird, & Kupzyk, 2010). Children with involved family are more likely to increase their self-esteem (Hung, 2005), enhance their internal and external motivation (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan, 2005; Mccollough & Ramirez, 2010), and feel more satisfied with their learning (Kalin & Steh, 2010). Family members who involve themselves in early childhood programmes help their children in more successful transition between kindergarten and elementary schools (Carter, 2002). It was also shown to make significant progress to children's achievement from early childhood through high school (Guerraa & Lucianob, 2010).

Because of these benefits, much research and policy-making activities have been dedicated to increasing family involvement (Park & Holloway, 2013). Successful early childhood settings make efforts to build partnerships with parents and encourage family involvement in their educational experiences (Al-Omari, Ihmeideh, & Al-Dababneh, 2011; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Prior & Gerard, 2007).

It is well established that family involvement benefits not only children and kindergartens, but can be also advantageous for teachers and parents (Hornby & Witte, 2010; Prior & Gerard, 2007). For teachers, family involvement increases their motivation and allows them to get benefits from other experiences of involved parents (Mrayan, 2001). It also improves teacher morale and school climate (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Hornby & Witte, 2010). For parents, it was found that family involvement increases parental confidence, helps parents appreciate their role in promoting their children's learning, and increases their satisfaction in their own education (Hornby & Witte, 2010; Prior & Gerard, 2007).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2004), the world's largest organisation of early childhood educators, placed great value on family involvement in its children's educational programmes. NAEYC considered family involvement as a priority for early childhood institutions seeking accreditation through NAEYC. The standards defined by NAEYC include, but are not limited to, holding family conferences or home visits encouraging families to regularly contribute

to decisions about their child's goals and plans for activities and services, and using a variety of techniques to negotiate difficulties that increase in their interactions with parents and/or family members (NAEYC, 2004).

Literature concerning family involvement indicated that there are three types of family involvement in children's learning (Hindman, Miller, Froyen, & Skibbe, 2012). The first is home-based involvement, which includes families' engagement in academic enrichment activities (i.e. reading books and stories to children, the involvement in educational games, or helping with their children homework); the second is school-based involvement, which includes families' volunteering in kindergarten educational programmes (i.e. reading stories to children in the classrooms, addressing speech to children about family members' profession, and participating in children's trips); and the third is community-based involvement, which includes family involvement in children's community (i.e. visiting libraries, museums, and zoos, attending sport events, and playing with their children in gardens and yards) (Hindman et al., 2012).

When involved in kindergarten programmes, families can perform a number of roles. Coleman and Wallinga (2000) identified six roles that family can play during their involvement in kindergartens, including (1) support role (i.e. assist with field trips), (2) student role (i.e. attend child guidance workshops), (3) educator role (i.e. read to children), (4) advocate role (i.e. join school councils and committees) manager (i.e. help organise classroom event), (5) counsellor (i.e. provide child with different views, and (6) protector (i.e. help mediate family disagreements). In a more comprehensive view, Epstein (1995, p. 704) determines six categories of family involvement, including: (1) parenting (i.e. supporting children through establishing home environment), (2) communicating (i.e. establishing effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programmes and children's progress), (3) volunteering (i.e. serving in schools as volunteers), (4) learning at home (i.e. helping children with homework and other curriculum-related activities), (5) decision making (i.e. participating in boards and committees), and (6) collaborating with community (i.e. participating in community resources and agencies which integrate with school programmes).

The effectiveness of family involvement in early childhood settings can be increased when kindergarten principals and teachers encourages families to participate in their programme (Epstein, 2001). As urged by Eccles and Harold (1993), when principals and teachers hold positive attitudes towards family involvement, they not only help parents make their involvement in pre-school institutions possible, but they can also take advantage of their involvement in developing their programmes. Thus, attitudes of kindergarten principals and teachers in this regard could have a significant impact on family involvement in early childhood programmes. In a study conducted by Uludag (2008) to investigate the views of pre-service teachers in family involvement towards early childhood programmes in the USA, the results concluded that teachers have developed positive attitudes towards family involvement in early childhood programmes. This is because the teacher preparation programme includes parental involvement-related courses to increase pre-service teachers' awareness of parental involvement.

In the views of Peiffer (2003) principals' attitudes towards family involvement are critical in determining the extent of involvement in early childhood programmes. In a recent study conducted by Ahmad and Bin Said (2013), school principals' views of parental participation in education were investigated. They found that principals generally

do not play an active role in promoting parental participation, as they do not encourage parents to participate in the education process of their children, and they often do not know how to involve parents in the educational programme because of their limited training on the concept of parental participation in education.

Neither are all parents and other family members aware of their role in children's learning and development, nor do they have the resources or the inclination to promote their children's learning in kindergartens. For instance, Ghazi, Ali, Shahzad, Khan, and Hukamdad (2010) investigated parental involvement in children's academic motivation and found that parents were not involved in their children's learning because they were not aware of their role, and that parents were not involved in helping with their children's homework or engaging in activities. In addition, parents were also found to use negative reinforcements to motivate their children. Similarly, Zaoura and Aubrey (2010) conducted a case study about home-school relationships and found them to be generally ineffective. Moreover, the study found that parents were often passive followers of teachers, with their roles involving only checking homework and being interested in their children's achievements.

In order to get families involved in kindergarten programmes effectively, parents or/and family members need to be educated on how to deal with children appropriately. Wright and Wooden (2013) studied the effectiveness of one of the projects that aims at helping parents to be educators. The project was found to increase parental involvement through improving communication within the family, enhancing social support, and improving attitudes towards the children.

Ho and Kwong (2013) conducted a study to identify areas of parental involvement in Hong Kong as perceived by school principals. The results indicated that the parents were most involved in workshops, as well as recreational and educational activities aimed at promoting child-parent relationships. Moreover, a special day was set aside in the school's schedule for parents to participate in such activities.

Despite the prevalence of family involvement in various educational stages worldwide, there are obstacles that exclude their involvement in early childhood programmes (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Ihmeideh, Khasawneh, Mahfouz, & Khawaldeh, 2008). Studies have indicated that some of these barriers were due to the lack of families' time (Cuckle, 1996), low levels of education (Christie, Enz, & Vukelich, 2011), or socio-economic status (Hung, 2005; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007). Ihmeideh et al. (2008) found that kindergarten principals and teachers were the most serious barriers for not being involved in kindergarten, as principals were not always keen to accept parents in the kindergarten classrooms, and parents were often considered by teachers to lack the appropriate skills needed to be involved in the teaching process. The barriers facing family involvement may reduce its effectiveness and make it a useless process. Therefore, it would be worth investigating the effectiveness of family involvement in different settings around the world. This current study aimed at exploring the effectiveness of family involvement in Jordanian early childhood programmes as perceived by kindergarten principals and teachers.

The present study

In many Jordanian homes, families often foster a home environment that supports children's development before they enter pre-school institutions through activities like talking with them, reading bedtime stories to them, or playing with them (UNICEF, 2009). When children go to kindergarten, little is known about the type of family involvement in kindergarten programmes. Based on the current researchers' observation, it

has been noticed that family involvement often is limited to sending their children to kindergartens and attend occasional parent–teacher meetings. In recent years, Jordan has begun paying increased attention to the importance of increasing families’ awareness of their role in children’s development through conducting Better Parenting Projects to educate and train families on how to give their children the best care and the most stimulating home environment possible (Brown, 2000; UNICEF, 2009). In addition, the MOE designed its own national curriculum which focused on the integration of family in its kindergarten programmes (MOE, 2006; MOE & National Council for Family Affairs [NCFA], 2004). Despite the considerable rhetoric about the value of family involvement in kindergartens, it is unclear to what extent families participate in the kindergarten educational programme and what areas of family involvement in kindergartens are most effective.

Literature concerning Jordanian family involvement has focused on issues related to parents’ perceptions of their involvement at home and schools (Fayez, Sabah, & Abu-Rudwan, 2011), parental style at home (Abu Taleb, 2013), and problems facing parental involvement as viewed by parents (Ihmeideh et al., 2008). Therefore, this study was designed and carried out to explore the effectiveness of family involvement in kindergarten educational activities – that is, to examine different areas of family involvement and how these areas vary according to a number of variables. The research questions are as follows:

- How do principals perceive the effectiveness of family involvement in early childhood programmes?
- How do teachers perceive the effectiveness of family involvement in early childhood programmes?
- Are there statistically significant differences between principals and teachers in their perceptions of the effectiveness of family involvement in early childhood programmes?
- How do principals’ perceptions of the effectiveness of family involvement vary in terms of type of kindergarten, region, area of certification, and training programmes?
- How do teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of family involvement vary in terms of type of kindergarten, region, area of certification, and training programmes?

Methods

Population and sample

The population of the study consisted of all kindergarten principals and teachers working in public and private kindergartens in two Jordanian governorates: the capital Amman and Zarqa. Based on statistics collected from the educational directories in these governorates, the number of kindergarten principals in these two cities was 1052, while the total number of teachers was 3205 (MOE, 2012). Because the number of the population was too large, it was decided to select a proportionate sample from each population. One hundred and five ($N = 105$) principals and 320 teachers were selected randomly, representing 10% of the sample. In the sample of the surveys returned, 84 from principals and 276 from teachers were usable, resulting in an acceptable response rate of 80%, and 86%, respectively. All participating principals and teachers were female. Table 1 describes the demographic of kindergarten principals and teachers.

Table 1. The demographic of kindergarten principals and teachers.

Study variables	Respondent	Principals		Teachers	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Region	Amman	59	70	201	73
	Zarqa	25	30	75	27
Type of kindergarten	Public	19	23	29	11
	Private	65	77	247	89
Area of certification	ECE-related certification	6	7	201	73
	ECE-unrelated certification	78	93	75	27
Training programmes	Parental involvement – trained respondent	21	25	51	19
	Parental involvement – untrained respondent	63	75	225	81
Total		84	100	276	100

Research instrument

The researchers developed a self-report questionnaire after conducting a thorough review of the related literature (Coleman & Wallinga, 2000; Epstein, 1995; Hindman et al., 2012; Mrayan, 2001; Prior & Gerard, 2007). The questionnaire identified five domains of family involvement in educational kindergarten programmes including planning (four items), implementation (seven items), evaluation (five items), children's extracurricular activities (seven items), and communication with kindergarten (five items). The questionnaire consisted of 28 items using a five-point Likert-type scale, with 5 indicating always and 1 indicating never. Sample items from the questionnaire includes: (a) planning (i.e. 'parents and/or other family members give new ideas regarding planning daily routine implemented in kindergarten'); (b) implementation (i.e. 'parents and/or other family members participate in reading stories to children in the classrooms'); (c) evaluation (i.e. 'parents and/or other family members participate in the enrichment of their children's portfolio'); (d) children's extracurricular activities (i.e. 'parents and/or other family members participate in art exhibits, fairs, and other events held in kindergarten'); and (e) communication with kindergarten (i.e. 'parents and/or other family members respond to newsletters and instructions sent by kindergarten') (see the appendix).

For the purpose of the study, the level of effectiveness was distributed into three categories: (1) high level of involvement (between 3.50 and 5), (2) moderate level of involvement (between 2.50 and 3.49), and (3) low level of involvement (between 1 and 2.49). This criterion was reviewed and approved by three referees specialising in early childhood, and measurement and evaluation.

Validity and reliability of the instrument

A list of 28 items was reviewed by eight specialists in the field of early childhood education (ECE) to determine the suitability of each item to its specific domain. In light of their modifications, some items were added to the questionnaire, others were excluded, and others were refined. Internal consistency reliability for the questionnaire was performed using Cronbach's alpha and calculated for the total. Reliability analysis revealed that the questionnaire was reliable in all domains (planning, $\alpha = 0.78$;

implementation, $\alpha = 0.81$; evaluation, $\alpha = 0.74$, extracurricular activities, $\alpha = 0.80$; communication with kindergarten, $\alpha = 0.80$; and total reliability, $\alpha = 0.80$).

Data collection

The researchers conducted personal visits to kindergartens and met with the participants in the current study. The researchers explained to the participants the study's aims and encouraged them to read items carefully before selecting the appropriate choice. The participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Later, completed questionnaires were either collected by the researchers from the participants or sent by the participants to the researchers' work address.

Data analysis

The data collected from all participants were coded and analysed using software package SPSS version 18. Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were utilised to describe each domain and the total of the scale. Independent *t*-tests were used for two purposes. First, to compare whether there were statistically significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and parents towards the effectiveness of family involvement in early childhood programmes; and second, to find any significant differences due to study variables (i.e. region, type of kindergarten, training programme, and area of certification). An alpha level of 0.05 was set a priori.

Results

The effectiveness of family involvement as perceived by principals and teachers

Research Questions 1 and 2 examine the perceptions of kindergarten principals and teachers about the effectiveness of family involvement in early childhood programmes. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to answer these research questions.

As shown in Table 2, the overall mean scores for all domains among kindergarten principals and teachers revealed a moderate level of effectiveness regarding family involvement in kindergarten-based programmes; the mean score was 2.74 for principals and 2.55 for teachers. Regarding principals' perceptions of each domain, the extracurricular activities domain had the highest mean value (4.09), indicating a high level of involvement in children's extracurricular activities, whereas domains related to

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for the perceptions of principals and teachers towards family involvement in early childhood programmes.

No.	Domain	Principals		Teachers	
		<i>M</i>	SD	<i>M</i>	SD
1	Planning	1.74	0.62	1.92	0.68
2	Implementation	2.21	0.62	1.81	0.65
3	Evaluation	2.59	0.82	2.00	0.87
4	Extracurricular activities	4.09	0.59	3.95	0.95
5	Communication with kindergarten	3.10	0.85	3.09	1.11
Total		2.74	0.32	2.55	0.42

Table 3. Differences between principals and teachers on the five domains and the total of family involvement in early childhood programmes.

Domain	Respondent	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Planning	Principals	84	1.74	0.62	-2.15	.03*
	Teachers	276	1.92	0.68		
Implementation	Principals	84	2.21	0.62	4.96	.00*
	Teachers	276	1.81	0.65		
Evaluation	Principals	84	2.59	0.82	5.48	.00*
	Teachers	276	2.00	0.87		
Extracurricular activities	Principals	84	4.09	0.59	1.24	.21
	Teachers	276	3.95	0.95		
Communication with kindergarten	Principals	84	3.10	0.85	0.05	.95
	Teachers	276	3.09	0.82		
Total	Principals	84	2.74	0.32	3.81	.00*
	Teachers	276	2.55	0.41		

communication with kindergarten, evaluation, and implementation had moderate mean values (3.10, 2.59, and 2.21, respectively). Additionally, family involvement in the planning domain had the lowest mean value (1.74).

Regarding teachers' perceptions of each domain, the results as shown in Table 2 indicated that the domain of children's extracurricular activities had the highest mean value (3.95), whereas the domain of communication with the kindergarten had a moderate mean value (3.09). Table 2 reveals also that the domain of family involvement in implementation, planning, and evaluation had the lowest mean values (1.81, 1.92, and 2.00, respectively).

Differences between principals and teachers in their perceptions of family involvement

Research Question 3 is concerned with the significant differences between principals' and teachers' perceptions of family involvement in early childhood programmes. The *t*-test for the independent samples was utilised to answer this research question.

Table 3 shows that there were significant differences at the 0.05 alpha level between principals' and teachers' perceptions regarding the domain of implementation, evaluation, and the overall average (in favour of principals), whereas there were no significant differences between principals' and teachers' perceptions of the domain of children's extracurricular activities and communication with the kindergarten. However, significant differences were also found on the domain of planning in favour of teachers.

Table 4. Results of the *t*-test according to principals' demographics.

Domain	Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Extracurricular activities	Public	19	4.48	0.32	3.46	.00*
	Private	65	3.97	0.60		
Extracurricular activities	Parental involvement – trained respondent	21	4.44	0.32	3.39	.00*
	Parental involvement – untrained respondent	63	3.97	0.61		

Table 5. Results of the *t*-test according to teachers' demographics.

Domain	Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Implementation	Public	29	2.17	0.82	3.20	.00*
	Private	247	1.76	0.61		
Communication with kindergarten	Public	29	3.55	1.02	2.39	.01*
	Private	247	3.07	1.11		
Communication with kindergarten	Parental involvement – trained respondent	51	3.57	1.27	2.48	.00*
	Parental involvement – untrained respondent	225	2.98	1.04		
Implementation	ECE-related certification	201	1.86	0.65	2.54	.01*
	ECE-unrelated certification	75	1.65	0.62		
Total	Amman	201	2.59	0.40	2.59	.04*
	Zarqa	75	2.47	0.45		

Demographic variables and group differences

Research questions 4 and 5 explore whether any statistically significant difference exists between the means of principals' and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of family involvement in early childhood programmes, based on differences in type of kindergartens, region, area of certification, and training programmes. *T*-test was utilised to address these differences.

With regard to principals' perceptions, the results indicated that there were no significant differences at the (0.05) alpha level concerning region and area of certification. However, significant differences exist at the (0.05) alpha level regarding type of kindergarten and training programmes on the extracurricular activities domain in favour of principals who work in public kindergartens and those who receive parental involvement training programmes (see Table 4).

Regarding teachers' perceptions, the results indicated that there were significant differences at the (0.05) alpha level with regard to all study variables: type of kindergarten, region, area of certification, and training programmes. These significant differences, as shown in Table 5, were found on the domain of communication with the kindergarten in favour of teachers in public kindergartens and those who attended parental involvement training programmes. Moreover, significant differences exist at the (0.05) alpha level on the implementation domain in favour of teachers who work in public kindergartens and receive ECE-related certification, and on the total domain in favour of teachers from Amman and those who work in public kindergartens.

Discussion

The overall mean scores among kindergarten principals and teachers revealed that the effectiveness of family involvement in kindergarten-based programmes is moderately effective.

It is obvious that family involvement in kindergarten programmes exists, although the effectiveness of such involvement is not high. This may be due to the increased attention paid by the government to involve family in kindergarten programmes through Jordan's Better Parenting Projects (Brown, 2000; UNICEF, 2009), and MOE's national kindergarten curriculum, launched in 2004 (MOE & NCFA, 2004), and modified in 2006, which encourages kindergartens to communicate with families and get them involved in their educational programmes.

With regard to the planning, implementation, and evaluation domains, teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of family involvement in these domains were at a low level, while principals' perceptions about these domains ranged between low and moderate levels. This result was not surprising because these domains (planning, implementation, and evaluation) represent specific tasks demonstrated mainly by kindergarten teachers, as they are more educated and qualified than families to shoulder these tasks. It is obvious that principals and teachers consider family involvement in children's extracurricular activities and communication with kindergartens as more effective than their involvement in domains related to planning, implementation, and evaluation. This explanation is supported by Olaymat's (2008) work exploring Jordanian kindergarten teachers' practices regarding planning, implementation, and evaluation domains, which found that teachers themselves do not practice these domains in an appropriate way. In other words, if even well-qualified teachers often have difficulty with these domains, it is almost inconceivable that families would be able to make significantly positive contributions in these domains.

In the views of Prior and Gerard (2007), family involvement becomes more effective when parents involve themselves in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their children's programmes. The question that should be raised in this regard is what the effectiveness of family involvement in kindergarten programmes is if family is excluded from these important activities. NAEYC (2004) pointed out that early childhood programmes need to encourage families to regularly contribute to decisions about their children's goals and plans for activities and services.

The low level of effectiveness of family involvement may be due to the fact that planning, implementation, and evaluation are difficult to be demonstrated by family without attending training workshops and sessions to increase their awareness of these tasks. This finding is supported by Ihmeideh et al. (2008) who found that parents were often considered by teachers to lack the skills needed to be involved in the core of the teaching process. Indeed, families need to obtain more knowledge of the educational early childhood programmes, and to have a better understating of teachers' job in order to practice their role effectively.

Planning activities for daily schedules, reading aloud to small groups, following up children's work in learning centres, or assessing children's progress are examples of these professional tasks in the teaching and learning process. This explanation is also in line with the work of Christie et al. (2011), who revealed that one of the most serious reasons for families' exclusion from pre-school educational programmes is the lack of information and skills needed for them to take on educational roles in the programmes appropriately. Sharrock, Dollard, Armstrong, and Rotrer (2013) stressed the importance of empowering families through education and support to be able to take part in their children's learning experiences.

Principals and teachers perceive family involvement in the domain of children's extracurricular activities as effective. This domain had the highest level of involvement among the five study domains.

This finding is different from the work of Ahmad and Bin Said (2013), who found that principals do not encourage parental involvement in school activities. The reason behind that is that most extracurricular activities do not require parents and/or family members to have specialised and deep knowledge of their children's learning and development. For instance, activities related to helping with field trips, participating in open days and kindergarten's events, or getting involved in voluntary work do not require specialised skills from families. Another possible reason could be due to the

fact that families could find these events and activities interesting to participate in, as these activities do not require solid skills from them as previously mentioned. Dodge et al. (2010) indicated that parents enjoy participating in entertainment activities as they are considered enjoyable activities, for both children and their families.

The effectiveness of family involvement on the communication with kindergarten domain was moderately effective. In fact, communication with kindergarten is one of the traditional ways to get parents involved in early childhood programmes (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Effective communication can be established when the kindergarten's staff build positive and respectful partnerships with families and view families as partners in supporting children's learning and development (Al-Omari et al., 2011; Prior & Gerard, 2007). This result could be further explained by the fact that most kindergartens include in their routines some procedures like holding parent-teacher meetings, sending newsletters to homes, and scheduling visits by parents to kindergartens to ask about their children's progress. These procedures also do not include educational practices which require family to undertake or shoulder teaching roles with children. The aim of such procedures is to keep family informed about what is going on with regard to children's learning and development.

The results indicated that there were significant differences between principals' and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of family involvement. These differences were noticed on the implementation, evaluation, and the overall average (in favour of principals). This means that principals view family involvements as effective in the implementation and evaluation domains. The result is in line with the work of Peiffer (2003), who found that principals placed value on parental involvement in schools. The reason behind this may be that principals often see parents more than teachers in the kindergartens, as teachers tend to be busy in their classrooms with children. Most parents' visits were made in the principals' offices, where the principals can meet with families and ask or identify issues related to family involvement. Another possible reason could be that principals, especially those who come from private kindergartens, may want to reflect a rosy picture about family involvement in their kindergartens. Most kindergartens in Jordan are run by the private sector, which aims to maximise profits. As teachers value the effectiveness of family involvement as low, and principals value it as between low and moderate, it is unclear whether kindergarten principals gave their opinion based on professional or marketing perspectives.

Against this background, the results revealed significant differences between principals' and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of family involvement on the domain of planning in favour of teachers. Planning educational programmes is considered one of the most important roles of teachers (Dodge et al., 2010). As teachers send their weekly newsletters to families, explaining to them their schedule and/or the implementation of lessons, they may get comments and feedback from families which could help them in planning their educational programmes.

The results indicated that there were significant differences between principals' perceptions of family involvement due to the type of kindergarten and the training programmes on the domain of extracurricular activities in favour of principals who work in public kindergartens and receive parental involvement training programmes. This means that principals who work in public kindergartens and attend parental involvement training programmes tend to view family involvement in extracurricular activities as more effective than principals working in private kindergartens and those who do not attend training programmes. This result might be justified in light of the increased interest in the field of early childhood in Jordan, as the MOE recently established its

own public kindergartens in some parts of the country to provide pre-school services in remote and poor areas where the private sector was not providing such services. Only public kindergartens receive funding from the MOE's budget; therefore, only MOE's kindergartens' staff received training courses on a number of topics including parental involvement. Private kindergartens, on the other hand, do not receive adequate financial support from the MOE to train their staff (Ihmeideh, 2010). Thus, principals in public kindergartens are more likely to place much value on the effectiveness of family involvement in kindergarten educational programmes.

Regarding teachers' perceptions, the results indicated that there were significant differences due to type of kindergarten, region, area of certification, and training programmes in favour of teachers from the Amman governorate, those who worked in public kindergartens, and those who attended training programmes and held certification in ECE. Those teachers were more likely to view family involvement as more effective than their colleagues, who worked in private kindergartens, received no parenting-related training, served in the Zarqa governorate, or held ECE-unrelated certificates. This is due to the fact that public kindergartens have more parental projects funded by government and other agencies, and these programmes are held in the capital, Amman (Brown, 2000; UNICEF, 2009); thus it is not surprising to find that teachers from public kindergartens in Amman rated family involvement as more effective compared to their colleagues who worked in private kindergartens or came from Zarqa government. Moreover, teachers from public kindergartens are likely to have opportunities to attend training courses, including parental involvement programmes which are funded by the MOE. Finally, teachers who received ECE-related certificates might have been exposed during their studies to courses related to parent/family involvement, as these courses could increase teachers' awareness of the importance of family involvement in kindergarten educational programmes. These findings are supported by a number of researchers, who recommended that teachers should be provided with comprehensive training on parent/family involvement in early childhood programmes (Christie et al., 2011; Ihmeideh et al., 2008; Prior & Gerard, 2007)

Conclusions and recommendations

In light of the above discussion, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of family involvement in kindergarten-based programmes as perceived by principals and teachers was at a moderate level. Principals and teachers perceive family involvement in extra-curricular activities and communication with kindergartens as effective, whereas they found family involvement in planning, implementation, and evaluation ineffective. Significant differences were found in principals' perception of family involvement in favour of those who work in public kindergarten and receive training programmes, while these differences were found in teachers' perceptions in favour of teachers who work in Amman public kindergartens and those who participate in parental involvement training programmes and hold ECE-related certificates.

Based on these conclusions, several practical and theoretical recommendations are provided. From a practical standpoint, it is recommended that the MOE needs to increase principals' and teachers' awareness of the importance of involving family in the core of educational programmes (planning, implementation, and evaluation). There is also a need to re-develop the national kindergarten curriculum to include activities that require more family involvement. The curriculum should determine specifically the role of parents and/or family members in each activity and include

guidelines for teachers to help them know how to get families involved in kindergarten programmes, particularly in the planning, implementation, and evaluation domains. Additionally, kindergartens need to develop written policies on family involvement. These policies should include the procedures through which kindergarten principals and teachers can help families get involved in planning, implementation, and evaluating. Also, such policies should be determined in collaboration with families and their needs.

Teacher education programmes established in colleges and universities need to be improved in order to increase the student teachers' skills and practices in family involvement in early years' education. Additionally, family involvement programmes and projects in the Jordanian context need to be expanded in all Jordanian regions in order to increase family involvement and improve parents' skills and knowledge. From a theoretical standpoint, the researchers recommend conducting further research on investigating the effect of family involvement in improving children's learning and development. Further qualitative research should also be carried out with a focus on the perceptions of family members and children regarding their attitudes of family involvement and its benefits to families and children. Finally, the selection of the sample in this study was limited to two governorates in Jordan (Amman and Zarqa). Therefore, it would be useful in further studies to include other governorates of the country.

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Appendix**Principal/Teacher Questionnaire****Section (1)****The responder (who fills out this questionnaire)**

- 1 Principal
 2 Teacher

Kindergarten's type:

- 1 Public
 2 Private

Kindergarten's location:

- 1 Amman
 2 Zarqa

Your area of certification:

- 1 Early childhood education –related certification
 2 Early childhood education –unrelated certification

Have you received training in the area of family/parental involvement?

- 1 Yes
 2 No

Section (2)

Please read each item carefully and put a tick (✓) in the appropriate place in the following table to show how frequently parents and/or other family members involve in your early childhood programme.

No.	Items	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Parents and family members:						
1	participate in reading stories to children in the classrooms.					
2	participate in assessing children's progress in kindergarten.					
3	prepare their children for plays and songs organised by the kindergarten.					
4	attend planned meetings held at the kindergarten.					
3	participate in teacher–parent conferences.					
4	follow up on the assessment of their children's learning and development at home.					
5	participate in annual, monthly, or daily plans implemented in the kindergarten.					
6	follow up children's work in learning centres.					
7	participate in children's outdoor play activities.					
8	participate in sporting events and competitions organised by the kindergarten.					

(Continued)

Appendix (Continued).

No.	Items	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
11	contribute to identifying learning outcomes they want their children to achieve.					
12	participate in open days organised by the kindergarten.					
13	help in preparing their children's meals.					
14	participate in voluntary work organised by the kindergarten for children (i.e. olive harvest, cleaning mosques, collecting donations, etc.).					
15	respond to newsletters or instructions sent by kindergartens.					
16	give appropriate solutions regarding teaching methods and strategies employed in kindergarten					
17	participate in the enrichment of their children's portfolio					
18	assist with the development of bulletin boards.					
19	help teachers with the implementation of the morning circle.					
20	communicate with the kindergarten through their direct visits to the kindergarten.					
21	assist with field trips organised by the kindergarten.					
22	participate in art exhibits, fairs, or other events held in kindergarten.					
23	contribute to and enjoy observation of the growth and development of their children.					
24	talk to children in the classroom about their own job, experiences, etc.					
25	give new ideas regarding planning the daily routine (schedule) implemented in kindergarten.					
26	help to prepare materials for classroom activities (i.e. making dolls, providing kindergartens with old clothes for parties and religion events, etc.).					
27	help with the process of children's assessment when they enter kindergarten.					
28	participate in joining leisure trips organised by the kindergarten.					