

“Won’t be enough to invite parents to school events”: Results of a systematic literature review of parental volunteering

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Abstract

Investigating parental involvement has come to the focus of education studies in the past decade as research on family engagement has revealed its positive impact on children’s academic achievement. Parental volunteering at school may be an essential form of parental involvement, there is no evidence-based knowledge of its impact, nor has a systematic review been published on the subject yet. This paper reviews the literature on the relationship between parental volunteering and parental involvement through 29 studies published between 2004 and 2021. The studies apply a wide variety of research methodology and define parental volunteering either as an effective means of parental involvement or as an outcome of interventions and mentoring programmes. The results suggest that initiatives to involve parents become less common as educational level increases.

Il coinvolgimento dei genitori è diventato un tema centrale negli studi sull’istruzione negli ultimi dieci anni, poiché la ricerca ha rivelato l’impatto positivo della partecipazione familiare sui risultati accademici dei bambini. Sebbene il volontariato dei genitori a scuola possa rappresentare una forma essenziale di coinvolgimento dei genitori, non esiste una conoscenza basata sull’evidenza riguardo al suo impatto, e non è stata ancora pubblicata una revisione sistematica sull’argomento. Questo articolo analizza la letteratura sulla relazione tra volontariato dei genitori e coinvolgimento familiari esaminando 29 studi pubblicati tra il 2004 e il 2021. Gli studi applicano

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una vasta gamma di metodologie di ricerca e definiscono il volontariato dei genitori sia come un mezzo efficace per promuovere il coinvolgimento dei genitori, sia come un risultato di interventi e programmi di tutoraggio. I risultati suggeriscono che le iniziative per coinvolgere i genitori tendono a diminuire con l'aumentare del livello di istruzione.

Keywords: parental involvement; parental volunteering in school, parent volunteer program; education

Parole chiave: coinvolgimento dei genitori; volontariato dei genitori a scuola; programma di volontariato dei genitori; istruzione

1. Introduction

The methodology for improving parental engagement and school participation is attributed to Joyce Epstein, who, working with James Coleman, pointed out that the way to improve the achievement of low-status students is through parental involvement in the school community. The solution proposed by previous education policy, which was to redraw the boundaries of school districts and redirect low-achieving, low-status students to other school districts, was ineffective. In the 1980s, cross-sector comparative research confirmed that strengthening the school community and involving parents in school volunteering and other community activities improved student outcomes (Coleman, 1988). Research on parental involvement and engagement focuses on the ways schools can compensate for declining parental involvement as a result of economic activity and on the factors that help parents to be more effective educators (Epstein & Sanders, 2002).

Epstein's work has led to a large body of research and initiatives in the United States, but much less research has been done on the subject in Europe. In the post-communist region of Central Europe, where it was not until after the political changes of the 1990s that volunteering became free, there is widespread interest in evidence-based findings on parental volunteering at schools.

Part of the international research focuses on the importance of “at-home good parenting” and suggests that involvement at school does not necessarily translate into positive effects on children's progress, as, for example, a higher demand for parental volunteering may be interpreted as a sign of a lack of resources at school (OECD, 2019). The main aim of our analysis is to provide a comprehensive picture of involvement in the school setting, namely parental volunteering in schools.

1.1 *The concept and definition of parental involvement*

There are not many studies providing a specific, widely accepted definition of the term “parental involvement” despite the considerable amount of educational research literature on the subject (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). Previous research defined parental involvement as the activity of parents in school (Morrison 1978), while Grolnick & Slowiaczek (1994) define it as “the dedication of resources by the parent to the child”. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) use the term to refer to parents' home and school activities that are related to their children's learning. The term parental involvement should be considered as a multidimensional concept. Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) distinguish between two aspects of parental involvement at home: talking about learning and what happens at school, and supervising the child at home (checking homework, limiting TV/computer use). Likewise, they distinguish between two types of school involvement: parent-teacher contact and school participation (in open days, parent-teacher meetings, volunteering).

2. Volunteering

A volunteer is a person who does work that is not compulsory of his or her own free will, driven by some intrinsic motive, and without any financial reward. The activity performed is primarily for the benefit of another person or group or the entire society; in other words, for the common good. Volunteering can be intrinsically (subjective, value-oriented) and/or extrinsically (instrumental, but not directly material) motivated (Handy et al., 2010). Wilson's (2000) findings suggest that better financial status, higher educational attainment, a wider social network, more frequent participation in NGOs and religiosity increase the likelihood of volunteering. Perpék (2012) stresses that social networks as resources have a greater impact on volunteering than socio-

demographic variables. Research on volunteering has identified countless personal, collective and organisational benefits (Markos et al., 2019).

2.1 Parental involvement and volunteering

The harmonious relationship and cooperation between parents and the institution are positive factors in shaping the school climate and helping the parties to work together. Epstein highlights six different types of involvement that have a favourable impact on students' school careers. One of them is covers volunteering, i.e. helping teachers and students in class and school events by doing voluntary work (Epstein, 2011).

For international comparison, recent data are provided by the PISA 2018 study. According to the school leaders surveyed, 41% of parents of students in OECD countries discussed their children's development with teachers on their own initiative and 57% on the teachers' initiative. Only 17% of parents were involved in local school councils and 12% volunteered for physical or extra-curricular activities (e.g. building maintenance, going on field trips) (OECD, 2019).

2.2 The present study

A large body of literature is available on parental engagement and its impact on student achievement, but there is a limited number of studies that focus specifically on parental volunteering. Parental volunteering is often defined as a factor of school-based participation or as a form of parental involvement. The aim of our systematic review is to highlight the importance of the subject and initiatives already in place.

3. Method

3.1 Literature search and eligibility criteria

This systematic literature review follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The articles reviewed:

1. examine parental volunteering and parental involvement.
2. Were written in English.
3. Belong to the following disciplines: education, humanities and social sciences.

Although the number of studies on parental involvement is high, much less research has been conducted on parental volunteering. Ever since parental engagement have been prioritised areas of education research, no systematic literature reviews have been made on parental volunteering. Consequently, we did not set any limits to the year of publication in our eligibility criteria.

3.2 Search strategy

Literature and studies investigating parental involvement and volunteering were identified through a search in the databases of SUMMON, which is a collection of 123 databases. SUMMON is a one-box ProQuest search engine, a web discovery tool providing access to subscribed and open access content alike.

The final searches were conducted in January 2022 with the following queries: [(“parent involvement” OR “parent participation” “parent engagement” OR “family involvement” OR “family engagement”) AND (“parent volunteer program” OR “volunteering in school” OR “parent volunteering” OR “parent volunteers in

school”)]. The SUMMON search produced 104 results, which was the overall outcome of our systematic searches. After double filtering, we excluded 75 records.

3.3 Selection of studies

To be eligible for inclusion in this review, a research study had to meet the following criteria:

- Investigating parental engagement and its relationship with parental volunteering in schools educating the age group 0 to 18.
- Discussing (the importance of) parental volunteering.
- Providing clear descriptions of the concepts *parental involvement* or *parental engagement* and of the methodological details of parental involvement programmes.

Every study that met the criteria mentioned above was included. We eliminated studies in which parents volunteered at places other than schools or school-related institutions/events (e.g. in a hospital). Studies in which volunteers were not parents or family members were also excluded. In case of uncertainty, the co-authors were consulted.

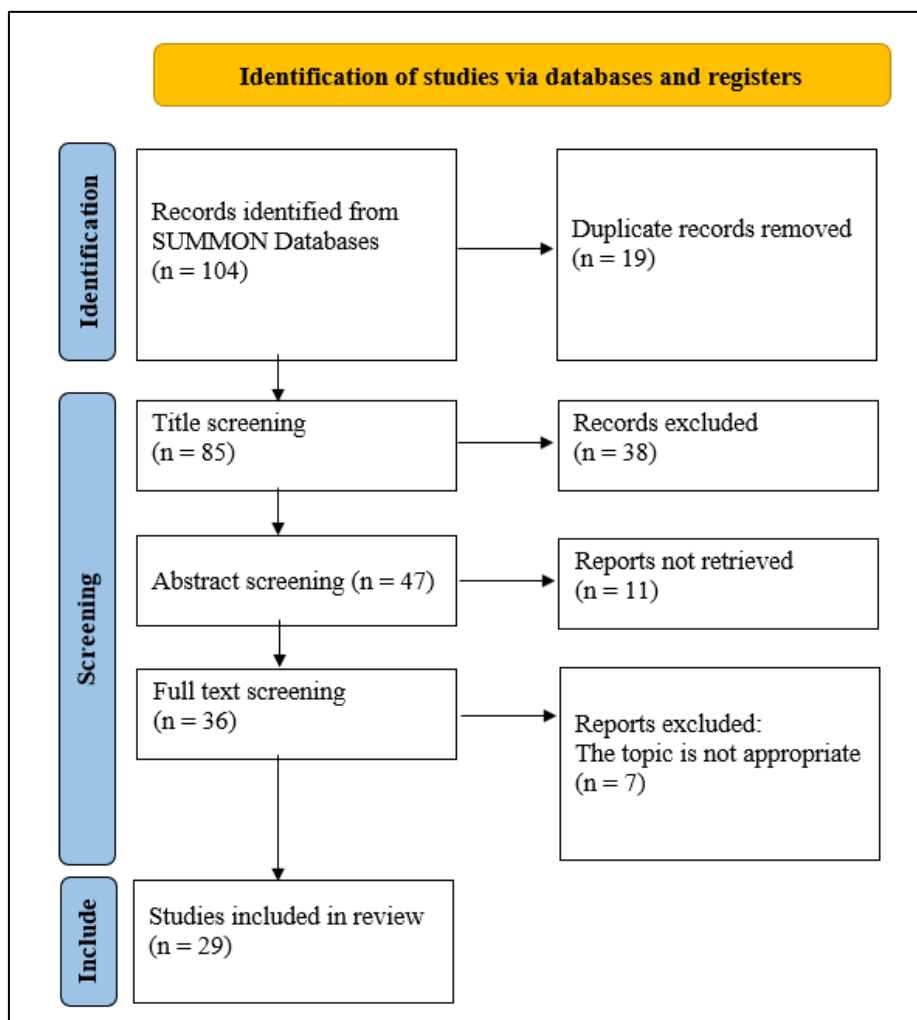


Figure 1. Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews (PRISMA) diagram

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The first screening resulted in the provisional inclusion of 104 studies, followed by a second round of selection with 85 studies left. After reviewing the abstracts, 36 studies were selected. To make the final decision, the selected studies were collected from an online library, read by the authors and considered for inclusion. After careful scrutiny, the authors found that 29 studies met the selection criteria, which came to be final number of studies included in the current review.

4. Analysis

This section presents the results of our analysis. The 29 studies were published between 2004 and 2021. Before 2010, only a few studies focused on parental volunteering and family engagement.

Table 1. The distribution of the studies by year of publication

2004	2006	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2015	2016	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	2	2	1	2	3	2	5	1	3	1	3	2	1

Most of the studies were published in 2013. It was in 2016 and 2019 that the annual number of studies published reached 3. Apparently, since 2013, parental volunteering and involvement have lost some of its prominence in education research.

Of the studies reviewed, 20 research projects were conducted in the United States of America and 2 in Australia. Related publications appeared in both US and European journals. When providing the metrics of scientific journals, we focused on the Scimago Journal Rank (SJR) indicator, based on data from the Scopus database. In terms of journal metrics, three articles were published in a non-Scopus-listed US journal, *The School Community Journal*. This may be related to the fact that the United States is the cradle of parent engagement research. These studies are followed in the table by two articles in the Q1 *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, also in the US. Of the articles we examined, 12 appeared in Q1 journals, five in Q2, one in Q3 and three in Q4 (Journal metrics: 20-06-2022.)

The studies were put in three different tables according to the ISCED level they discussed while Table 5 includes the studies where ISCED level was not indicated.

Table 2. Selected studies, early childhood education (ISCED - 0)

Authors	Methodology	N	Country	Place of volunteering	Focus of action	The way of parental involvement
Barnett et al.	survey	2250	USA	Home-based	Education	Home based volunteering
McWayne et al.	survey	813	USA	Home-based, extracurricular	Disadvantage	Home based volunteering
DeCusati & Johnson	observation, survey and interview	74	USA	School-based	Education	Parental volunteers, open door policy

González & Jackson	survey	10 000	USA	School-based	School engagement	Parental volunteers
Magnuson & Schindler	summary	X	USA	School-based	Involvement	Parental volunteers

Table 3. Selected studies, early childhood education (ISCED - 1)

Authors	Methodology	N	Country	Place of volunteering	Focus of action	The way of parental involvement
Haymes et al.	survey	469	USA	School-based	Education, community building	Parental volunteers in Parent Mentor Program
Block et al.	interview	12	Australia	School and community-based	Community building	Innovative gardening and cooking programme
Reece et al.	interview	22	USA	School-based	Community building	General school-based volunteering
Maljak et al.	interpretive ethnography	35	USA	Extracurricular	Community building	Healthy Kids’ Club, Parental volunteering is present, but focus is on presenting HKCs.
Wilson et al.	interview	6	USA	School-based	Community building	Parental volunteers in Parental Mentor Program
Coco et al.	interview	8	Australia	School-based	Community building	Parental volunteers- parent as a tutor
Kilger, M.	interview	10	Sweden	Community-based	Health and sports	Parental voluntary work in youth sports
Malluhi & Alomran	survey, interview, observation and	40	United Arab Emirates	School-based	Community building, involvement	Mothers volunteering as members of

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	documents review data.					the Mothers' Council.
Reynolds, R.	case study, interview	10	USA	School-based	Disadvantage	General school-based volunteering
Gee, L.K.	survey	2875	USA	School-based	Community building	General school-based volunteering
Wing Ng, S.	interview	X	China	School-based	Education	School leadership
Jeynes, W.H.	systematic review	X	USA	School-based	Not defined	General school-based volunteering
Harris, R.	program summary	X	USA	School-based	Community building	Volunteer parent in "Classroom Vision Council"
Patton J.R.	program summary	X	USA	School-based	Community building	Only program recommendation: Active Parenting Workshop, Parent Information Night etc.

Table 4. Selected studies, middle school and high school (ISCED - 2; 3)

Authors	Methodology	N	Country	Place of volunteering	Focus of action	Way of parental involvement
Dee et al.	survey	8000	USA	School-based	Education	General school-based volunteering
Walsh, P.	survey	5089	USA	School-based	Mixed	General school-based volunteering
Barber et al.	survey	15000	USA	Not defined	Mixed	Community building

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Table 5: Selected studies, without ISCED classification

Authors	Methodology	N	Country	Place of volunteering	Focus of action	The way of parental
Bayley et al.	interview	38	United Kingdom	Community-based	Mixed	Fathers' voluntary work programs
Kronholz, J.	program summary	X	USA	School-based	Mixed	General school-based volunteering
Egan & Miller	program summary	X	USA	Mixed	Health and sports	Parental voluntary work in youth sports
Ochs, F.	program summary	X	USA	Mixed	Health and sports	General school-based volunteering
Porterfield & Winkler	survey	381 01	USA	Mixed	Mixed	General volunteering
Ray, J.	program summary	X	USA	Mixed	Community building	General school-based volunteering
Wang & Fahey	survey	170 569	USA	School-based	Mixed	General school-based volunteering

5. Results

5.1 The approaches to parental involvement

Bottom-up programmes

It is especially relevant to our research how parental involvement is understood and to what extent the subject of volunteering is discussed. We consider it a key factor to find out whether the results presented are the outcomes of top-down initiatives or whether they derive from bottom-up programmes, i.e. those initiated by committed parents or teachers. Only three studies were found that presented initiatives by parents or individuals. Block et al. (2015) present a study on a programme started by chef Stephanie Alexander, which aims to involve parents and local community members in volunteering activities, while providing an innovative gardening and cooking programme to expose children to the gastronomy of different cultures. According to the principal's report, parents volunteered regularly in the sessions. We found two studies that reported either on parent-led initiatives or on conducting an investigation that was initiated by a parent concerned in its subject. Kilger (2020) reports that in the Nordic countries, independent sports organisations that organise training for children and young people, as well as grassroots, unpaid, volunteer-based competitions organised within non-profit clubs, are typically based on parental engagement. The study examines how fathers appear in the dual position of father and coach. Parental involvement was also at the heart of the Swedish programme, with parent volunteering

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proving to be an effective tool. In contrast, Reynolds' (2010) study focuses on children's motivation to learn and explores teacher attitudes towards black parents' school involvement in the USA. Parents' volunteering and helping their own children at home, as well as contact with teachers, are shown to be indicators of involvement.

The initiative of the school staff

In four studies, the school staff took the initiative to strengthen parental involvement and/or partnership with the local community. Ochs (2013) emphasises the involvement of various non-profit organisations in order to develop a partnership between the school and the local community. Several grassroots innovations have been launched in schools with good practices to promote health and wellness, but the author mentions only a few which focus on parental volunteerism. Although DeCusati & Johnson's (2004) primary interest was children's development (letter and word recognition), they did examine the effectiveness of parental volunteering. In the experiment, the parents' role was to provide personal assistance to the children, so they spent a few hours in the institution as volunteers, where they were also given specific training. Two studies presented parental engagement programmes initiated by teachers without any empirical results. The aim of Patton's (2006) article was to report on parent engagement programmes. The author relates that a teacher attended a workshop on involving families in children's education, and, as a result, started to apply this approach in her own institution (see Table 3). The recruitment of classroom volunteers (mainly retired people) to work with students who needed more attention was an intervention relevant to subject of this study. In this case, parents were less likely to volunteer. Harris (2012) also presents an educator's initiative, the idea of the "Classroom Vision Council", which had a simple objective: to bridge the gap between teachers and families. The programme, involving both parents and teachers, aimed to increase engagement with home-based elements (reading together at home) and school-based activities (field trips).

The initiative of NGOs or research groups

Five of the studies are linked to NGOs or research groups. Healthy Kids Club was found to have increased parental engagement and voluntary participation, even though this was not its main objective. Programme implementation was enhanced by parent recruitment and participation (Maljak et al. 2016). Vidal de Haymes et al. (2019) report on a parent mentoring programme initiated by a predominantly low-income, Latino community-based organisation called Logan Square Neighborhood Association. The aim was to increase social capital as well as parents' self- and collective efficacy, facilitated by parent volunteering. Although volunteering was only used as a tool in the intervention, parental involvement also improved as a result. Another study is also centred around a parent mentor programme, they worked to reduce systemic marginalisation. Parents completed an initial 20-hour orientation course, and then spent two hours a week in a classroom and two hours in follow-up meetings with researchers and school coordinators (Wilson et al., 2021). The Computer Learning Project was also launched in collaboration with researchers and the local community centre to provide a computer training programme for disadvantaged students in south-east Queensland. Parents were involved in the project as tutors (Coco et al., 2007). The Neighboring Project was an initiative of a Project GRAD site and the local public housing authority. The aim was to create opportunities and raise awareness among disadvantaged families about volunteering opportunities in schools and neighbourhoods (Reece et al., 2013).

Studies presenting large sample studies

The remaining studies do not identify who initiated the programmes but only state the purpose of the research. Of the articles below, 15 studies present the results of large-sample research on parent engagement and volunteering in schools. Four studies do not contain empirical data.

Among the large-sample studies, the issue of parental involvement is the least prominent in the work of Porterfield & Winkler (2007), who examine teenagers' time use through data from three large-sample studies, but no figures are provided on the specific content of volunteering. Barber et al. (2013) focus instead on how involvement in volunteering appears, as does Walsh (2010), who applies longitudinal research to examine the relationship between transferring to another school and willingness to volunteer, in order to establish, among other things, the extent of involvement in relation to the size of the institution.

The study by Dee et al. (2006) seeks empirical evidence on the relationship between the size of public schools, parental involvement and social capital (Educational Longitudinal Study, n=8000). They examine involvement based on whether the parent attends or belongs to an organisation of the school and whether they participate in PTA (parent-teacher association) activities and school volunteering. González & Jackson's (2013) longitudinal study examines the relationship between school efforts to involve parents and the average socioeconomic status of families in terms of students' reading and mathematics achievement. Involvement is understood as communication, parental volunteering, parental influence in school decision-making and the promotion of parenting skills. The longitudinal study by Barnett et al. (2020) investigated in a sample (ECLS-B; N = 2250) how early childhood education practices reflect parental involvement (e.g., informing parents about the child), parental involvement in the institution (e.g., volunteering, attending meetings), and home learning activities with parents that are related to children's readiness for kindergarten. The authors focused on the temporal features of involvement rather than social indicators.

Gee (2011) examine the extent of parental involvement when the children of the family attend the same institution. Discussing the returns on volunteering, the author elaborates on several motivations for voluntary activity: on the one hand, parents set an example to their children, and on the other hand, it increases parents' capacity for asserting their interests in the institution, which they can use to the benefit of their children. She points out that in some cases, if a parent does not volunteer, they are stigmatised and negatively evaluated. Alternatively, parents are more likely to volunteer if they are asked to do a specific task. Wang & Fahey (2011) investigate the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act in the U.S. on parent volunteering in schools. One of the aims of the legislation is to increase parent involvement in schools through volunteering. The authors measure trends in involvement between 2002 and 2008, with volunteering as the dependent variable and general demographic characteristics as independent variables. McWayne et al. (2018) examined the engagement of minority parents (Head Start programme), with some of the questions addressing parent volunteering. The questionnaire consisted of 43 items, of which the eight-item set of "school participation" measured parents' school involvement.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research techniques were also used. Occasionally, the interviews were supported by document analysis. Bayley et al. (2009) examine fathers' participation in programmes for parents, focusing on barriers and good practices. Wing's (2013) research explores Hong Kong's public education system through two focus groups and content analysis of government documents. He distinguishes four eras: "parents not welcome", "parents as volunteers", "parents as clients – accountability approach", "parents as school leaders". Over the four eras, the

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government has taken measures that have increased parental involvement, and focus group results suggest that they have had a beneficial effect on cooperation.

Malluhi & Alomran (2019) investigate the relationship between school leaders and parents who volunteer at school as well as the attitudes of leaders towards involvement using qualitative and quantitative tools and document analysis. The data were collected in a primary school in Abu Dhabi, where several forms of parent volunteering were present. It is emphasised that parent volunteering has an important role to play, especially if it is regular.

In their meta-analysis of parenting education programmes, Magnuson & Schindler (2016) discuss at length that the reliability of the effects of parental involvement is doubtful in most cases. They point out that some programmes fail because they require a high investment of time and energy from parents, and therefore suggest the use of ICT tools. Similarly, Egan & Miller (2019) approach parental involvement through meta-analysis, discussing high and low levels of involvement based on Epstein's model. In relation to volunteering, they highlight parental involvement in events and extracurricular activities.

Jeynes (2011) focuses on exploring changes that have taken place in involvement. For many years, professionals portrayed engaged parents as those who frequently attend school events or help their children with homework etc. This means that most individuals tended to view parental engagement as a set of intentional, overt actions. Jeynes examines how this outlook has changed recently. School staff are supportive of parents and believe that specific guidelines for parents are important.

Program descriptions

The last category includes studies that do not include empirical analyses of their own, but present different programmes or make suggestions to enhance parent volunteering. Among the forms of involvement mentioned by Kronholz (2016), Home Visit initiatives play a major role, which is the main focus of the study, but the author also mentions efforts to involve parents in school life through volunteering. Ray's (2013) work suggests that traditional ways of involving parents (parent-teacher meetings, newsletters, etc.) are outdated among today's "millennial" parents, and therefore new strategies such as digital tools and online platforms are needed. Her proposals could indeed be considered as a novel strategy in 2013, but the spread of social media and the COVID-19 pandemic have shifted communication habits into that direction. She also recommends that school events should be open to all family members ("Family and Friends" events instead of "Mother's Day Tea").

5.2 Volunteering as reflected in the studies

As volunteering is one of the central themes of our research, the following section of this paper contains findings related to volunteers and volunteer programmes in the studies.

Socio-cultural and other factors influencing volunteering

First, we seek to describe the sociodemographic characteristics of volunteers and the factors that may positively influence their volunteering activities. Of the 29 studies reviewed, we found no information on the social background of volunteers in 15 studies. One reason for this was that the target group, i.e. the volunteers, were schools rather than individuals, with no mention of the social background of either students or teachers (Ochs, 2013). Another reason was that the studies focused primarily on volunteering projects and their effectiveness, rather than on the participants themselves (Block et al., 2015; Bayley et al., 2009).

The other 14 studies describe the sociodemographic characteristics of volunteers to varying degrees of depth. Some papers give only basic information about volunteers such as their gender (Reece et al., 2013; Gee, 2011) or age (Kilger 2020). In several studies, however, volunteers are characterised with other background variables as well. One such factor is financial status. Since most of the studies focus on disadvantaged, low-income target groups, the parents involved as volunteers were also typically from low-income backgrounds (Vidal de Haymes et al. 2019; Wilson et al., 2021; Magnuson & Schindler, 2016; McWayne et al., 2018). Coco et al. (2007) reported on volunteer projects in which the participants were predominantly women (parents, teachers, project coordinators), but each volunteer group had different social backgrounds. Parents were members of the traditional working class and of low socioeconomic status, while participating teachers and researchers were from the middle class. Barnett et al. (2020) found that mothers with higher educational attainment were more likely to volunteer, and DeCusati and Johnson (2004) concluded that parents with higher educational attainment were better able to adapt to classroom conditions in volunteer projects. Other studies worked with samples in which the average level of parental education was lower (Coco et al., 2007; Wang & Fahey, 2011). Labour market status may also influence the extent of involvement in volunteering. DeCusati and Johnson (2004) found that people with more flexible jobs were more likely to volunteer. Barnett and colleagues' (2020) findings show that participants who worked fewer hours were more likely to volunteer. According to Barber et al. (2013), religiosity also had a positive effect on volunteering. Furthermore, their results reveal that those who had participated in volunteering and community-based civic activities as adolescents and had been involved in various extracurricular activities were also more likely to volunteer. They also highlight parental involvement in NGOs, which is also positively associated with continued community involvement. Gee (2011) mentions that parents whose children study at the same institution are more likely to be asked to volunteer, which also means they have a higher return on their volunteering.

Overall, the studies suggest that those who volunteered tended to be less affluent, but in some projects those who had better financial status were reported to have participated more effectively. Volunteers were more likely to have a more flexible labour market presence and to have participated in civic activities in the past. Being religious and having several children from the same family attending the same school also increased the chances of volunteering.

5.3 Classification of voluntary activities

In the studies examined, volunteering activities typically took place at school. Exceptions are Kilger's (2020) study on fathers' participation in sports organisations and Bayley et al.'s (2009) paper on fathers' activity in voluntary parenting programmes. Patton (2006) gives a report on Active Parenting Workshops organised as part of an after-school programme. In Egan & Miller's (2019) study, volunteers participated in extracurricular and sports activities and community events.

The majority of volunteering activities are therefore directly linked to school work, to supporting children's academic achievement or to remedial education. Parent volunteers assisted teachers at their children's school for two hours every school day. The program involved assigning parent mentors to classrooms (not to their own children's classes), where they worked individually and in small groups with children to assist teachers for two hours a day. On Fridays they attended Parent Mentoring workshops (Vidal de Haymes et al. 2019). Malluhi & Alomran's (2019) interview analysis reveals that school leaders have taken various steps to increase the opportunities for parents to volunteer at school. One such step to increase parental involvement was "parent-teacher substitution", which meant that parents with appropriate qualifications were able to substitute for teachers on

sick leave. In the article by Reece et al. (2013), parent volunteering was mostly related to school work, while in the study by DeCusati and Johnson (2004), volunteering was seen in the context of mother tongue and maths remedial tutoring for children who needed it or were behind in their studies.

Volunteering in activities related to school events is discussed, among other authors, by Kronholz (2016). Here, the first instance of volunteering was that a family-engagement leader invited a parent to volunteer at a student basketball game. Malluhi & Alomran (2019) also report that the school leadership made it possible for parents to volunteer in environmental, health and social workshops as well as in celebrations and sports programmes.

The importance of health and sport is emphasised in the following studies. Block et al. (2015) present an innovative gardening and cooking programme linked to the school curriculum. Apart from volunteers, this programme often involved parents. Ochs (2013) presents projects promoting health and wellness. Kilger (2020) looked at the experiences of volunteer fathers aged 35-61 who were involved in the life of the organisation as coaches (football, basketball, hockey etc.). Another example was when an athlete father offered two hours of exercise to overweight students (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019). Egan and Miller (2019) also highlight the promotion of sport activities. They refer to suggestions based on Epstein's model, arguing that parent volunteers are key to the success of before- and after-school physical activity, because in many cases extra adult supervision is essential to the success of these programmes. Kronholz's (2016) study mentions a parent volunteering to photograph and videotape a basketball game. Although the location was a gym, which was directly related to sport, the use of digital technology also played an important role in the volunteering activity. In addition to the use of digital technology, the area of Information Technology was also given prominence in several other studies. Computer Learning Project's aim is to involve parents, teachers and researchers in the acquisition and development of computer knowledge and skills among primary school pupils. The researchers worked with a local community centre that helped implement the IT training programme (Coco et al 2007).

Cultural and community experiences also played an important role in the programmes. Ray (2013) makes recommendations that not only parents but also grandparents be involved in school life, for example, as volunteers at events. Wilson et al. (2021) present the Pleasant Grove Parent Mentor Program, launched in 2015, which aims to transform school culture by increasing the school's investment in parents' social and cultural capital. Another goal is to reduce dropout rates by working with parents and teachers. In addition, it is important to build community with parents who support each other while participating in school work. Parents' community involvement is also underlined by Harris (2012), who mentions volunteering in the context of class council participation, which means that volunteers are involved in the work of the council and the delivery of the programmes organised by them. The council is well structured, with all of the classroom's parents considered as members, who are represented by a teacher-appointed board. The teachers and the board meet twice a month to seek feedback from other parents.

However, several studies do not examine the content of volunteering. Some studies include the fact of volunteering as a variable in the quantitative analysis (Dee et al., 2006; Porterfield & Winkler, 2007; Barber et al., 2013; Barnett et al., 2020), but do not report on the volunteer as a person or the circumstances of volunteering. For example, Barber et al. (2013) asked the following question about volunteering, "*In your teenage years, when you were 12-18 years old, did you regularly volunteer or take part in community service?*" Dee et al. (2006) use the variable *volunteer at school* in their study; however, there are further variables that indicate willingness to volunteer, e.g., you did a friend's parents a favour or they did one to you, or your friend's parents chaperoned a field trip. Altogether, these studies mainly look at either what factors affect volunteering; or how volunteering affects some of the variables under study, such as parental involvement in school. Based on statistical data, Barber et al. (2013) found that participation in community activities was more likely among younger students and those

with higher levels of education. Regarding demographics, there were no statistically significant differences between racial/ethnic groups in the likelihood of participating in community activities and in levels of parental education. Those who had previously volunteered were more likely to participate in such programmes, and religiosity also had a positive effect. Barnett et al (2020) found that mothers with higher educational attainment and those who worked fewer hours were more likely to volunteer. González & Jackson (2013) point out that schools of medium socioeconomic status tend to involve parents in volunteering more often than schools of higher and lower SES. Gee (2011), in a quantitative study comparing families where children attended separate schools and those where children attended the same institution, found that in families where both children attended the same school, parents spent more time volunteering, were more willing to volunteer and were more likely to participate in fundraising. The motivation for volunteering is firstly that parents set an example to their children, and secondly, it increases parents' capacity for asserting their interests in the institution, which they can use to the benefit of their children. The author notes that parents are more likely to volunteer if they are specifically asked to do so. In the discussion of his quantitative results, Walsh (2010) mentions the reasons for the lack of parental volunteering. The value added in a larger community is not given enough attention and is less beneficial for the child than in a smaller school where such involvement receives more attention.

6. Discussion

This review has analysed the results of 29 studies examining the relationship between parental volunteering in school and parental involvement. The most important conclusions of the present systematic literature review are given below.

The vast majority of the studies focus on disadvantaged, low-income, immigrant or minority target groups. One of the reasons for this may be that, as a goal of parental involvement, the programmes studied strive to reduce educational disadvantages due to social status. These ideas seek to compensate for the impact of different types of deprivation by involving parents as active actors in school life. There are also approaches that focus on sensitising teachers to the needs of deprived families. As such, unfortunately, there is no possibility for our study to adequately compare different social groups, as one might expect for representative studies covering the entire population.

The initiatives studied were mainly organised from above and in response to policymakers' needs. Although the studies clearly show that there is a need for parents to volunteer and be actively involved, the design and funding of initiatives is mostly at municipal or national level. Our corpus contains only three studies presenting parent-led initiatives (Kilger, 2020; Reynolds, 2010; Block et al., 2015). The strength of these programmes lies in the legitimizing power of the community with the parents themselves being the initiators, which also makes it easier for them to remain in control. Furthermore, they can be more successful in achieving the objectives due to the greater energy invested. We also classified initiatives by local educators or school leadership as grassroots programmes, as the organisers had an ongoing and personal relationship with the target parents and the community in which they worked (Ochs 2013; DeCusati & Johnson 2004; Patton 2006; Harris 2012).

It is also clear from the studies that, with a few exceptions, volunteering is only present in connection with usual day-to-day school activities. There are several mentions of parental assistance at home, which manifests itself in writing homework with the child or exercising together. Teachers sometimes ask parents to help with the organisation of school events, but these activities, by their nature, require high-intensity involvement from parents lasting for a short time. On the other hand, it is not uncommon for parents to be involved in parent-teacher associations or in decision-making processes, which demands active and regular work from the participants,

who thus achieve continuous involvement and intensive contact with the school. There are also projects involving NGOs, churches and research groups as third parties, which have helped to set up community initiatives that create partnership between teachers and parents. Voluntary activities can typically be linked either to schoolwork or to extracurricular activities. Out-of-school programmes cover different areas of activity such as health and sport.

The studies show that there is a significant correlation between parents' labour market status and voluntary involvement. Parents who are involved in volunteering activities are sometimes more likely to have a more flexible labour market presence (DeCusati & Johnson, 2004; Barnett, 2020). In addition, involvement in volunteering is more likely among those who have been or are currently involved in civic activities or volunteer for an NGO (Barber, 2013).

One of the limitations of the studies is that they do not discuss the long-term impact of the programmes. One of the studies we reviewed looked at attitudes towards parental involvement across generations and showed that lasting impact can only be achieved after many years of work when all resisters have already left the institution (Wing, 2013). This can be particularly true for top-down initiatives, in which case it can take years before the programme or legislation results in real action rather than forced apparent cooperation. This is because, despite the rapid flow of information, the understanding and internalisation of principles and related explanations cannot happen overnight.

In some cases, parental involvement and volunteering were used as a means of overcoming disadvantage. In these schemes, the focus of action was on improving parents' strategies for raising children and reducing teachers' prejudices. Few studies examined the existence of volunteering in schools among families from more favourable socio-cultural backgrounds.

A further limitation of the research is that only four studies focusing on secondary schools were found, and two of these were large-sample studies including primary schools (Dee et al., 2006; Porterfield & Winkler, 2007). The absence of literature on parental involvement in secondary schools suggests that such programmes are less frequent or not present at all at higher levels of education. One hypothesised reason for this may be that as children become more independent, no need is felt for intensive parental contact any longer. International comparisons are made more difficult by the fact that the vast majority of the papers reviewed describe research and good practices in the United States of America and in various countries of the European Union.

Most research focuses on the experiences of parents and organisers. Investigating parents' perspectives is of paramount importance to research on parental involvement. Another significant number of papers reflect the experience of teachers or professionals, which is also indispensable. However, there is a lack of research investigating the children's experience.

From a methodological perspective, the majority of the studies reviewed were based on empirical data except for 6 papers which only put forward suggestions and presented programmes, leaving it unclear whether the good practices could be used elsewhere. Most researchers preferred qualitative research methods, typically due to the specificity of the target group and the need for deep analysis of the subject and related phenomena. Due to the qualitative nature, it is hard to determine whether the programmes can be implemented in other circumstances. However, knowing the specifics of the programmes makes it possible to tailor some specifics for other purposes.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

Research has shown that the labour market status of parents has a decisive influence on the extent and form of their involvement. The first step in the design of voluntary programmes should be to assess parents' leisure time

capacity, as it is often not under-motivation but an inflexible presence on the labour market that is the reason for lower levels of involvement. Regular communication with teachers could help to develop a more flexible form of cooperation. The fields of activity are typically limited to health and sport, IT, cultural and community activities, while other fields such as social and support activities are marginalised. Voluntary activities are typically carried out for the benefit of a closer community, e.g. school pupils or their parents, while broader voluntary activity projects, such as those addressing local community needs or working with NGOs at the local level, are less common. The development of a supportive relationship between schools and local communities could provide a new purpose for volunteering projects.

A further suggestion is that in institutions where service-learning subjects are present, the involvement of parents could make the practice even more efficient. Involving parents in service-learning programmes could increase the success of parent-child co-learning, the commitment of parents to their school or other NGOs and hence their involvement in volunteering. This is important because research has shown that parental membership of NGOs and volunteering are positively associated with school involvement.

The most important element of any initiative is the preconception of teachers and parents about voluntary involvement. If schools are able to create an environment that not only provides opportunities for volunteering, but also welcomes parents with open arms, it is clear that children can benefit from such cooperation. There are numerous examples of volunteering that work well in the studies we have collected. Our goal was to fill this gap by presenting research results to date on parental volunteering at school.

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