Parental Involvement and Socioeconomic Status in Palestine: A Case Study of Jerusalem Schools

Tahani Ali-Rweide
Charles University, Faculty of Education

Abstract: This qualitative multi-case study explores parental involvement in three schools in Jerusalem with varying socioeconomic status. Two United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools in a refugee camp represent low socioeconomic status (SES), while one private school in central Jerusalem represents high SES. The study includes interviews and focus groups with school administrators, teachers, a social worker, and students with different achievement levels from the fifth and ninth grades. The key findings highlight the differences in parental involvement between high- and low-SES schools. While parents from all SES backgrounds encourage their children's education, those in elite school are more engaged and communicate frequently with teachers. Challenges in elite school include parental over-interference, pressure for high achievement, and ranking. Low-SES schools face barriers such as family disintegration, drug addiction, students' absence, early marriages, and low parental education, which limit effective involvement. However, open-minded and cultured parents tend to be more engaged across both settings.

Keywords: socioeconomic status (SES), parental involvement, home-based parental involvement, school-based parental involvement, academic achievement

Palestinian (Arab) students studying the Palestinian curriculum in East Jerusalem are enrolled in three types of schools: official schools fully funded by Israel, recognized but unofficial schools that receive partial funding from Israel (mainly private Palestinian schools), and schools with no Israeli funding (Maimon, 2019; Tatarsky & Maimon, 2017).

The third group includes Palestinian government (Waqf) schools, some private schools, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools. UNRWA is the main body providing education, health care, and social services to Palestinian refugees. In this study, UNRWA schools refer to those operating in refugee camp settings. These schools follow the Palestinian curriculum without interference from Israel, under the supervision of the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Maimon, 2019; Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2017; Tatarsky & Maimon, 2017).

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UNRWA operates schools across the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, providing free primary and lower-secondary education to Palestinian refugee children and promoting UN principles such as human rights, tolerance, and conflict resolution. Today, there are 27 refugee camps in Palestine, all under the Palestinian Authority's administration, except for Shoufat Refugee Camp in East Jerusalem, which is the only Palestinian refugee camp in the city. Although considered part of Jerusalem, most services there are provided by UNRWA rather than by the Jerusalem municipality.

This study builds on a previous quantitative analysis (Ali-Rweide, 2023) and uses a qualitative approach to explore parental support mechanisms across different schools in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was chosen due to limited research on how parental involvement and socioeconomic status (SES) affect education in this context. Many Arabs in Jerusalem suffer from the highest levels of poverty in Israel, with poverty affecting about 70% of families, 73% of individuals, and 78% of children in 2016[1], creating a deep socioeconomic disparity (Israeli National Insurance Institute, 2017). At the same time, approximately 27% of Arab citizens of Israel are considered middle class, and around 3% are categorized as wealthy, notably including many Jerusalem-based Arabs (Arlosoroff, 2017). Moreover, East Jerusalem faces a critical educational challenge, with a cumulative student dropout rate 33%; the highest under both Palestinian and Israeli authorities (Tatarsky & Maimon, 2017).

These factors emphasize the need for a detailed study about the relationship between parental involvement, SES, and education in East Jerusalem to understand how parental involvement varies across SES backgrounds and how schools can better support students and strengthen relationships with parents.

The study aims to provide insights for decision-makers by exploring family-school cooperation across socioeconomic backgrounds, focusing on school staff perspectives, collaboration methods, and challenges, as well as students' perceptions of parental involvement.

The research addresses the following questions:

1. How and why do school staff from schools attended by children of different SES seek cooperation with parents?
    1. A. What importance does the school staff attach to the involvement of parents?
    1. B. What paths do they choose to involve parents?
    1. C. What problems do school staff face in the cooperation between the school and the family?
2. How are parents of different SES involved in their children's education at home and at school?
    2. A. How are parents involved in the education of their children from the perspective of the school staff?
    2. B. How are parents involved in the education of their children from the perspective of the children?

[1] Based on data from *Table 11: Incidence of Poverty by District and Nationality, 2015–2016* (Israeli National Insurance Institute, 2017, p. 29).

1 Theoretical Background

Parental involvement is widely recognized as essential to student success, encompassing both home-based and school-based activities. Scholars such as Epstein (1987) and Comer (1995) define parental involvement as either home-based (supporting learning at home) or school-based (engaging with school staff and activities), with Kaplan Toren and van Schalkwyk (2013) further categorizing it into communication, assistance, and monitoring at home, and active participation in school events. Numerous studies confirm the positive impact of parental involvement on academic achievement (Fisher & Friedman, 2009; Kharphan & Kasmi, 2020), especially in mathematics (Alghazo & Alghazo, 2015), aligning with Comer and Haynes (1997) who emphasized that learning at school and at home is interconnected; with parents playing a key role in a child's educational journey (Makewa et al., 2012). Mothers, in particular, have a strong influence on children's educational outcomes (Zughayna, 2008).

1.1 Studies About Parental Involvement and Socioeconomic Status (SES)

The level of involvement can vary widely across families (Boonk et al., 2018) often shaped by SES (Makewa et al., 2012; Ule & Živoder, 2023). SES is usually understood as a multi-dimensional concept (Marks et al., 2000). Baker (2014) and Pulmano & Villahermosa (2017) identify parental SES by occupation, education, and financial status.

Parents with higher SES are more likely to possess the time, knowledge, educational background, and confidence needed to participate actively in home- and school-based educational activities (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Parents who combine financial resources with educational knowledge are better positioned to invest in learning materials, tutoring, and enrichment opportunities, while also helping their children engage confidently with schools, support learning at home, and maintain active involvement in their education. However, school SES, represented by the average SES of the students, has a stronger effect on student achievement than family SES, according to some studies (Kotok, 2017; Perry et al., 2022).

While school SES is a well-established predictor of student achievement (Perry et al., 2022), other studies show that it also plays a significant role in either facilitating or impeding parental involvement (Kotok, 2017). High-SES schools support parents' involvement with the school, such as invitations to parent meetings, communication channels, or involving parents in decision-making roles. In contrast, low-SES schools face limitations, including social and financial constraints, that reduce the frequency, quality, and consistency of school-based parental involvement (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Even when parents are willing to engage, existing barriers at the school level may limit their participation.

This study argues that family and school SES jointly influence parental involvement: high-SES schools tend to foster more consistent and active engagement, while low-SES schools often experience limited involvement due to structural barriers and restricted family resources.

1.2 Studies About Home-Based Parental Involvement

Home-based parental involvement plays a foundational role in supporting student learning (Alghazo & Alghazo, 2015; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Kaplan-Toren & van Schalkwyk, 2013).This involvement could have differnt patterns, such as creating a supportive home environment, discussing school-related issues, and assisting with learning activities at home.

Parental involvement in children's homework has a positive impact on learning, especially when assignments are well-designed (Walker et al., 2004). The Pew Research Center (2015) found that in the USA and Colombia, 82% of parents applied appropriate pressure for high achievement without excessive pressure. In India, Vellymalay (2012) noted significant home-based parental involvement across socioeconomic levels, which influences children's learning. Boonk et al. (2018) reviewed 75 studies and found that parental involvement evolves with age, with primary and middle grades showing positive links between home-based parental involvement and academic achievement. Similarly, in Palestine, Ali-Rweide (2023) found strong home-based parental involvement, with higher parental involvement seen in fifth-graders compared to ninth graders. Additionally, in Indonesia, Sujarwo et al. (2021) reported that upper- and middle-class parents provided financial resources but had less time, while lower-class parents had more time but fewer resources emphasizing a supportive environment, religious values, and protection from threats.

Home-based parental involvement can be both controlling and supportive. Studies generally show positive relationships between supportive parental involvement and children's achievements, particularly in middle and high grades (Chen & Gregory, 2010; Gordon & Cui, 2012, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018). Conversely, some research indicates negative relationships (Rogers et al., 2009, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018), or no significant relationships at all (Driessen et al., 2005, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018). Ali-Rweide (2023) found that supportive parental involvement had little to no correlation with student achievement in the fifth grade and only a weak link in the ninth grade. These varying results can be attributed to differences in study focus, achievement, societal context, and individual student characteristics. Studies on parental control, such as monitoring and setting rules, generally show negative relationships with achievement (Karbach et al., 2013; Levpuscek & Zupancic, 2009, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018). Gonida and Cortina (2014) found that in Northern Greece, parental interference in homework has a negative impact on student achievement, while autonomy has a positive influence. This effect varies according to the characteristics of both parents and children. However, Ali-Rweide

(2023) found that controlling parental involvement showed a weak positive correlation with achievement in fifth and ninth grades.

Supportive parental involvement generally promotes student achievement by enhancing motivation and independence. In contrast, controlling behaviors can reduce autonomy and hinder learning. Variation by age, SES, and context helps explain the mixed findings in research.

1.3 Studies About School-Based Parental Involvement

School-based parental involvement is essential for children's learning and academic success, as it integrates parents into the educational process and helps teachers understand students' home environments (The Australian Parenting Website, 2022). Although there may be only limited communication between parents and schools, many parents wish to be more involved and feel responsible for their children's education (Symeou, 2020). Regardless of SES, all parents value their children's school achievements (Symeou, 2007). According to the Pew Research Center (2015), 90% of parents engage in school meetings, talk to teachers, or participate in activities or trips, while 50% of parents expressed a desire to increase their involvement in their children's education. Additionally, the same study states that mothers are more involved than fathers This could be related to children's stronger attachment to their mothers, as well as the fact that mothers may have more time to communicate with the school, particularly if they are housewives.

Studies on school-based parental involvement for primary and middle grades show mixed results. Some indicate positive relationships with student achievement (Hung, 2007; McBride et al., 2009, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018), while others find no relationship (Johnson & Hull, 2014, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018). Parental contact with teachers, attending meetings, and volunteering have shown varying results, with some studies reporting positive effects (Martinez et al., 2007; You et al., 2016, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018), negative effects (Ho, 2010, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018), or no relationship at all (Choi et al., 2015; Wang & Sheik-Khalil, 2014, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018). Sakamoto (2021) similarly found that school-based parental involvement had no or even negative effects on achievement, especially when low-SES parents were involved in school management.

In Palestine, Yarrow et al. (2014), in collaboration with the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (2013), funded by the World Bank, found that parental involvement was four times higher in high-achieving schools, significantly strengthening student performance. Notably, there were both low-performing classrooms in wealthy areas and high-performing ones in poor areas. In Palestine, Ali-Rweide (2023) found that school-based involvement had a stronger correlation with achievement in maths in the fifth and ninth grades than home-based involvement did since learning is shaped by social and cultural interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

School-based parental involvement can enhance student motivation and learning, but its impact depends on school strategies, parental confidence, and coordination. Without clear roles or resources, its benefits may be limited, stressing the need for structured, inclusive collaboration.

1.4 Studies About Tools and Methods of Communication

Research highlights the importance of strong communication between school staff and parents for student success. Graham-Clay (2005) emphasizes tools such as newsletters, phone calls, and parent-teacher conferences, while Thompson (2008) discusses how effective email communication can strengthen the parent-teacher relationship, especially with the rise of digital communication. Epstein (2011) outlines key methods such as parent-teacher conferences, newsletters, phone calls, home visits, and digital tools such as interactive websites and portals to maintain ongoing communication. Additionally, Epstein and Sanders (2002) and Borgonovi and Montt (2012) note that parental councils enhance involvement by improving communication with school administrations and acting as advocates for students, though the role of these councils varies across countries.

School-parent communication has shifted from traditional methods to digital tools (Graham-Clay, 2005; Thompson, 2008). Parental councils have also gained influence, though their roles vary (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). These changes reflect the growing importance of structured parental involvement in education.

2 Methodology

This research focuses on Palestinian schools in East Jerusalem that follow the Palestinian curriculum without modification and are included in the National Assessment Test (NAT) survey. These schools include Waqf schools, UNRWA schools, and independent private schools.

The sample consists of three schools representing both high- and low-SES groups. Two UNRWA girls' schools in an overcrowded refugee camp, part of a three-school compound within a 0.2 square kilometer area housing over 16,300 residents (UNRWA, 2023), represent the low-SES schools. The first is a primary school with 155 students (Grades 1–5); the second is a lower secondary school with 310 students (Grades 6–10).

The third school is a high-SES private elite girls' school with 810 students (Grades 1–12), offering scientific and literary tracks. It is funded by financial contributions from parents who requested the expansion of school facilities and take pride in their daughters graduating from the school, as stated by the school's administrator. What distinguishes this school is its commitment to supporting orphaned children and those from critical social backgrounds, who form approximately 5% of the student body with around 15 students residing in the school's boarding section

(according to the school administrator, 3 April 2023). Like many elite schools in Jerusalem, it also supports students in challenging circumstances, guided by its ideological values and social mission.

Access to Waqf schools was not permitted by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Ramallah (personal meeting with Dr. Matar, Ministry of Education, Ramallah, 2022). However, since this study focuses on high- and low-SES schools, the selected school sample is sufficient for the case study.

The schools were selected from different educational levels as elite schools in East Jerusalem are mainly upper secondary, while the UNRWA schools serve Grades 1 to 10. The two UNRWA schools form a closely linked compound with a neighboring boys' school and function as a single educational unit. All selected schools follow the Palestinian curriculum and include 5th and 9th grade classes, both part of the NAT population.

Table 1 Characteristics of Student Participants

#	School	Grade	Achievement (%)		Father's		Mother's	
			Math	General Acad.	Education	Occupation	Education	Occupation
S1	Elite	5	59	78	9th grade	Chef	12th grade	Political prisoner
S2	Elite	5	68	82	12th grade	Electrician	Diploma	Housewife
S3	Elite	5	100	97	12th grade	Driver	9th grade	Housewife
S4	Elite	9	55	78	B.A.	Teacher	Diploma	Housewife
S5	Elite	9	50	66	6th grade	Deceased	9th grade	Worker
S6	Elite	9	97	96	Diploma	Employee	B.A.	Housewife
S7	Refugee P.S.	5	86	90	B.A.	Teacher	12th grade	Housewife
S8	Refugee P.S.	5	71	72	9th grade	Worker	12th grade	Housewife
S9	Refugee P.S.	5	47	54	9th grade	Bakery	9th grade	Housewife
S10	Refugee L.S.	9	60	79	9th grade	Body guard	9th grade	Housewife
S11	Refugee L.S.	9	50	65	B.A.	Shop worker	12th grade	Housewife
S12	Refugee L.S.	9	79	90	12th grade	Worker	B.A.	Housewife (former science teacher)

Note. Refugee P.S. = Refugee Camp Primary School; Refugee L.S. = Refugee Camp Lower Secondary School.

Table 2 Characteristics of School Staff Participants

Data collection method	School	Position	Experience	Grades	Notes
Focus group administrator	Elite	School administrator	31	1–12	12 years as an English teacher, 6 years as kindergarten director, and 13 years as a school administrator, all in the elite school
Focus group administrator	Elite	Assistant administrator	31	1–12	25 years as a social worker and 6 years as assistant administrator, all in the elite school
Interview	Elite	Social worker	19	1–12	All 19 years in the elite school
Focus group 1	Elite	Math teacher	22	5	
Focus group 1	Elite	Arabic teacher	30	5	Teaches class 5A
Focus group 1	Elite	Arabic teacher	19	5	Teaches class 5B
Focus group 1	Elite	English teacher	8	5	
Focus group 2	Elite	Arabic teacher	26	9	
Focus group 2	Elite	Math teacher	5	9	
Focus group 2	Elite	English	17	9	
Interview	Refugee L.S.	School administrator	30	6–10	15 years as an Arabic teacher and 15 years as a school administrator, all in a refugee school
Did not share	Refugee L.S.	Assistant administrator	18	6–10	8 years as an Arabic teacher and 10 years as assistant administrator
Focus group 3	Refugee L.S.	Islamic religion teacher	18	9	
Focus group 3	Refugee L.S.	Arabic teacher	19	9	
Focus group 3	Refugee L.S.	Math teacher	19	9	
Interview	Refugee P.S.	School administrator	32	1–5	Teacher of Arabic and Islamic religion for 10 years, followed by 6 years as assistant administrator and 6 years as school administrator; all in UNRWA schools, including 3 years in a refugee school
Focus group 4	Refugee P.S.	Math teacher	16	5	Teaches science, too
Focus group 4	Refugee P.S.	Arabic teacher	2	5	Teaches history and other subjects, too

Note. Refugee P.S. = Refugee Camp Primary School; Refugee L.S. = Refugee Camp Lower Secondary School. All school staff teach in their area of specialization and hold at least a bachelor's degree, if not a master's, along with a qualification in education.

In selected schools, interviews and focus groups with students and the school staff were conducted between March and May 2023. The researcher interviewed 12 students from the fifth and ninth grades, selecting three students from each grade with different family backgrounds and achievement levels (Table 1) and held four teacher focus groups for these grades. Three focus groups consisted of three to four teachers specializing in maths, Arabic, and other subjects. In the primary refugee camp school, the focus group included two teachers who taught fifth grade more than four subjects, including Arabic and maths. Additionally, two administrator interviews were conducted in the refugee camp schools, while in the elite school, an administrator focus group involved the administrator and her assistant. The social worker was also interviewed as part of the study. In the lower secondary school, the assistant administrator did not participate in the conversation, stating that she had nothing more to add. There is no assistant administrator in the primary refugee camp school. Staff characteristics are shown in Table 2.

All interviews and focus groups were conducted using a semi-structured format with open-ended questions to allow for consistency and depth. This format helped the researcher to guide the conversation around key themes while remaining flexible to explore unexpected topics or explain participant responses. Four different forms of guiding questions were developed, each designed according to the specific roles of the participant roles: school administrators, teachers, the social worker, and students. Within each group, participants were asked the same main questions to ensure comparability, while follow-up questions were adapted based on individual responses. This approach ensured that key areas of parental involvement, socioeconomic influences, and school dynamics were systematically explored across all school types and participant roles.

The interviews were recorded on the researcher's mobile phone and conducted in Arabic, the mother language of both the interviewees and the researcher. The researcher listened to the recordings multiple times to ensure accuracy, translated all interviews directly to English, and transcribed them[2]. Great care was taken to preserve the original meaning of participants' responses during translation, particularly when selecting illustrative quotes. Each paragraph was carefully dated to facilitate reference to the original recordings, especially when verifying quotes or clarifying unclear points. After transcribing, the interviews were reviewed to ensure accuracy and comprehensibility.

The study adopted thematic analysis approach. It focused on the relationship between SES, parental involvement, and student academic achievements following Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase framework (the analysis involved familiarizing with the data, coding line by line, developing and reviewing themes, and refin-

[2] All interviews were translated from Arabic to English, as this research is part of the researcher's PhD dissertation, which is written in English, and the supervisor does not speak Arabic. Translation was therefore necessary to share data with the supervisor, to facilitate the direct use of quoted responses from the English version, and to ensure consistency during the thematic coding process.

ing them for reporting). This was further supported by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) structure for theory-driven coding. A question-based thematic framework was used to organize the interview responses based on each research question.

Several tools supported the analysis, such as color coding, notes in the margins, tables, and tags. Color coding helped find common and different ideas across the interviews. Marginal notes captured early thoughts and observations. Tables grouped answers by theme and participant type, making comparison easier. Tags helped with consistent coding. These tools made the analysis more organized and clearly linked to the research questions.

This is a multiple-embedded case study comparing high- and low-SES schools. Responses were, therefore, grouped by school SES and participant type, and similarities and differences were analyzed to understand the dynamics of parental involvement and its impact on educational outcomes in schools with different SES.–

Validity and Reliability

Since the case study follows a multiple-embedded approach, it ensures validity and reliability, as emphasized in Yin's (2002) framework for quality control in case study research. Construct validity was ensured by gathering data from diverse sources, including administrators, social workers, teachers, and students from various academic levels and SES backgrounds. Internal validity was strengthened by revisiting the data, seeking supervisor feedback, asking consistent questions, and using observation to minimize bias. The participants confirmed information through repeated interviews, emphasizing key points. Reliability was maintained through a consistent interview protocol, careful translation, and repeated listening to ensure accuracy.

Ethical Considerations

Access and interview permissions were granted by the UNRWA office in Jerusalem and the general administrator of the elite school. School administrators approved the process, facilitated teacher participation, and reviewed student interview questions. Parental consent was obtained before the interviews. Each student participated only after returning a signed consent form. The study's purpose was explained before each interview, and verbal consent was secured. All participant identities remained confidential.

3 Results

In the elite school, despite a moderate educational background of the parents, and the conflict between them (which will be discussed later), the students' academic performance is excellent. This suggests that factors such as the school environment, resources, and support may compensate for lower levels of parental education. In contrast, an elite school student, whose father holds a B.A. and works as a teacher, and a mother earned a diploma, scored only 55 in maths, highlighting that

Table 3 Overview of Main Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes
1. Parental involvement practices across school SES	• Contextually shaped values and parental roles • Contrasting levels of involvement in elite and refugee schools
2. Parental involvement through communication and partnership structures	• Formal and informal communication strategies across SES contexts • Contextual roles and influence of parental councils in elite and refugee schools • Community-based engagement specific to refugee schools
3. School–family cooperation in diverse socioeconomic contexts	• Contrasting cooperation dynamics in elite and refugee schools • Barriers to engagement rooted in home responsibilities and school limitations • Communication differences shaped by socioeconomic conditions
4. Parental involvement patterns across socioeconomic contexts	• Academic pressure and high expectations in the elite school • Constraints on support in refugee schools due to structural and socioeconomic barriers
5. Parental academic support at home	• Forms of support: academic, emotional, and motivational • Monitoring and supervision practices • Socioeconomic variation in support strategies and capacity

high parental education does not always guarantee strong performance, since the achievement could be related to child's characters and abilities, as well as other environmental factors related to the home and broader society.

In refugee schools, the relationship between parental SES and academic performance is more consistent. The highest achiever in maths (86) has both parents relatively well-educated: the father has a B.A. and works as a teacher, and the mother completed 12th grade. Conversely, a refugee student with both parents having only a ninth grade education and the father working in a bakery scored only 47 in maths. Another high-achieving student (maths 79, general achievement 90) has a mother with a B.A. who worked as a science teacher and a father with a 12th-grade education, suggesting that even within low-SES contexts, higher parental education, especially the mother's involvement in education, positively influences student academic outcomes.

Thematic analysis of participants' experiences identified five main themes (Table 3) which are explored in the following sections.

3.1 Parental Involvement Practices Across School SES

In the elite school, parental involvement includes regular communication, collaborative meetings, and participation in school events. These efforts are designed to strengthen the relationship between the school and the parents, ensuring that

parents remain actively engaged in their children's education. The social worker highlighted the importance of this connection: "We share all issues with parents, as we form a supportive, complementary circle working together for the students' well-being." By maintaining open communication and working together, the school and parents can effectively support students academically, socially, and emotionally, this is emphasized by the administrator: "Regular communication with parents enhances the ability to address student needs effectively and implement timely interventions." These efforts support student motivation, academic success, and foster a supportive and inclusive school environment. When parents actively participate in school-related activities, students are more likely to feel valued, encouraged, and engaged, leading to better academic performance and personal development. The school administrator further reinforced this perspective: "Parental involvement in school activities fosters a sense of community and belonging within the school." This sentiment is widely supported by the school staff, who recognize that a strong sense of belonging contributes to students' academic and personal growth.

In the elite school, regular communication with parents helps identify and address academic and behavioral issues early. Keeping parents informed enables timely support through teacher-parent collaboration, as noted by the assistant administrator: "Regular communication with parents enhances the ability to address student needs effectively and implement timely interventions." This proactive approach allows educators to tailor their teaching strategies, reinforce positive behavior, and ensure that students receive the guidance they need to succeed. Individual parent meetings are frequent and proactive, aimed at building a collaborative partnership to support students' academic and emotional growth through continuous, tailored interventions.

In refugee camp schools, types of involvement focus on broader community events, individual meetings, and direct communication, each adapted to address the socio-economic challenges students face. Teachers and administrators view parental involvement as essential for reinforcing education and providing additional support, with limited school resources. The primary school administrator explained: "Parental involvement helps reinforce the education students receive at school." In addition to reinforcing learning, the goal of this involvement is to provide emotional and social stability within a challenging environment. This is what all teachers insist on in both refugee camp schools. Individual invitations are often used to discuss behavior and socio-emotional concerns, or to support, encourage, and appreciate the student. The lower secondary school administrator noted: "Mothers are sometimes invited individually to recognize a student's achievements or to address any concerns or issues." Furthermore, the school leverages frequent communication to ensure student well-being, particularly in urgent situations. The primary school administrator added: "We maintain constant communication with parents, with 90% of them accessible through my mobile. This is made easier by the small number of students in the school." The lower secondary school administrator emphasizes the importance of directly contacting the mother whenever a student is absent or late,

due to the bad conditions in the refugee camp. The social and political situation of the refugee camp is difficult. The Israeli checkpoint is located near the schools as the researcher observed during many visits to the refugee camp.

Both school types view parental involvement as essential, maintaining communication and supporting students. However, elite schools follow a structured, proactive model, while refugee schools respond to immediate needs, often centered on basic support due to limited resources and more difficult living conditions.

3.2 Parental Involvement Through Communication and Partnership Structures

To involve parents, school staff at the elite school maintain regular communication through emails, phone calls, and meetings. Teachers hold weekly office hours for individual consultations on students' academic progress and behavioural issues, especially for younger or struggling students. Teachers of ninth and fifth grades stated that they have a WhatsApp group for each class, which they use for communication. Additionally, many parents contact them individually via WhatsApp to inquire about homework, exams, and other issues. Group meetings are also organized to discuss academic results and school events. The administrator said that they organize group meetings to share and discuss academic results a few times a year. Additionally, the school offers workshops and seminars to equip parents with skills to support their children's education, and parents are encouraged to participate in school events and volunteer activities.

The parents' council plays a key role in bridging communication between the school and parents, ensuring better cooperation and problem-solving. The administrator of the elite school said: "The presence of the parental council adds credibility to issues for parents, as they tend to trust the council more than the school since its members are part of their community." Her assistant added:

> The parents' council works effectively. For example, when discussing the issue of students arriving at school without having breakfast, a nutrition specialist organized a lecture on healthy eating and the council members provided healthy breakfast for the students.

When the administrator of the elite school was asked about the limits of the parents' council, she explained:

> School policy is set solely by the administration, with no parental influence. The parent council holds an advisory role, monitoring alignment with school goals. While supportive of the school's commitment to the Palestinian curriculum, parents have limited authority beyond oversight.

The elite school retains full control over internal policies to preserve consistency and protect the Palestinian curriculum. Parents are respected stakeholders, but their role remains advisory rather than decision-making, to prevent potential

conflicts from differing views. This model balances school autonomy with structured collaboration, maintaining the school's educational vision while considering parental feedback.

School staff at the refugee camp schools maintain regular communication with parents through various channels, such as emails, phone calls, and monthly meetings to discuss academic and non-academic issues. Teachers emphasize that they contact parents through WhatsApp groups for communication and updates. Both administrators and teachers communicate frequently with parents, although responses are limited. This is what the primary school administrator emphasized, and the teachers insisted. A key platform for communication is the parents' council, which allows parents to voice concerns and collaborate with the school on issues such as student achievement, activities, and problems. Additionally, communication in the refugee camp schools extends to local social counseling institutions, further strengthening ties with the community.

Another important part of parent-school communication is the development team, which includes parents and focuses on broader academic, social, and extracurricular goals. This team collaborates on a development plan, reviewed with parental input, and aligned with UNRWA policies, while the parental council focuses more specifically on student achievement and challenges. School staff in the refugee camp schools were careful to avoid discussing political issues, applying to UNRWA policy.

There are more aspects in refugee schools than in elite ones, as these schools are part of the refugee camp and function as one of its institutions, integrated within the camp community. The administrator of the lower secondary school, who is also a member of the refugee camp community said:

> I see the girls as my own children, having taught many of their mothers and sisters. As a resident of the refugee camp, I feel closely connected to the community. I believe having a headmistress from the local society strengthens relationships and mutual understanding. I know the parents personally and maintain strong ties with them.

This is because the refugee camp is a closed community with unique challenges, best understood by those who were raised within it. Growing up in the same environment, sharing similar circumstances, and experiencing the same struggles allows for a deeper understanding and stronger connection than anyone from outside the camp who is not involved in this context.

However, in more urgent cases, particularly those involving social problems or potential dropouts, home visits are conducted. The administrator of the lower secondary school, a member of the refugee camp community, often makes these visits to encourage students to return to school, stating,

> in cases of social or academic withdrawal, I coordinate with the parents' council and, when necessary, visit the student's home to encourage re-enrollment. These efforts are generally effective, except in instances involving early marriage, where parental, particularly paternal, resistance limits intervention.

The administrator's strong ties to the community allow her to engage families and address concerns with a level of trust not easily afforded to outsiders. This reflects both respect and empathy. However, she remains limited in preventing dropouts due to early marriage, a deeply rooted social practice driven by beliefs that marriage ensures girls' comfort and security. Such views are complex and resistant to change. The problems in refugee camp schools, such as dropout rates and social issues, require multi-faceted and collaborative interventions, which is evident given the complexity of these challenges.

While both elite and refugee schools seek to engage parents through structured communication, their approaches differ significantly in form and function, shaped by social and school contexts. In the elite school, parental involvement is formal and parental influence on decision-making is limited. This emphasis on student autonomy and academic performance aligns with the school's broader mission of individual excellence.

In contrast, refugee schools adopt more flexible and relational strategies rooted in community trust. With fewer school resources, these schools depend on close social ties and personalized outreach, including home visits and informal conversations. Such practices not only compensate for the lack of formal mechanisms but also respond to the social realities of the community, such as early marriage, economic hardship, and school dropout risks, by fostering mutual support between staff and families.

This contrast underscores that effective home–school collaboration cannot be clearly understood without considering the schools capacities and social challenges that face each school's practices.

3.3 School-Family Cooperation in Diverse Socioeconomic Contexts

In the elite school, cooperation between the school and families is relatively smooth because there is regular communication. Academic, behavioural, and social issues are generally minimal and quickly resolved: "The relationship between children and their parents is more open than in the past, with students now more willing to discuss their problems at home. However, the number of issues remains low and usually involves minor, typical teenage challenges. (Social worker)" The supportive environment helps students overcome problems such as parental separation; and with the assistance of school staff, students often become stronger within a year.

> I use brief breaks between classes to check in with students who appear distressed, offering support when needed, particularly to those with separated parents. With consistent encouragement, they typically show noticeable emotional resilience within a year. (Arabic teacher for the ninth grade)

Staff at the elite school emphasize the importance of school-based support in promoting students' psychological and academic well-being. One example is a

fifth-grade student with excellent academic performance despite ongoing parental conflict. Her ninth-grade sister also excels academically. This success is attributed to multiple factors: the mother's attentive care despite limited formal education, consistent support from school staff, as noted by both staff and students, and the student's characteristics and abilities (Barry, 2018; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

In the elite school, the problems are with no major concerns, except for a small number of cases, as confirmed by the social worker,

> serious problems are mainly limited to the boarding section of the school, including academic, psychological, emotional, and family-related challenges, often due to the absence of parents… we work with boarding students and provide support. Overall, the number of students facing problems is very low.

This was evident during an interview with a fifth-grade student who has low academic achievement, appeared shy, and spoke in a low voice: "My father asks about me by telephone. I wish he would ask more. I prefer to stay with my dad. My grandmother put us here. There are two younger kids with my grandmother." Her mother is a political prisoner. Despite her circumstances, the student noted receiving kind treatment and strong support in the boarding section. School staff also emphasized their commitment to integrating and supporting such students. Nonetheless, they consistently highlight the vital role of mothers in promoting children's psychological well-being and academic success (Zughayna, 2008).

In contrast, refugee camp schools face significant challenges that hinder cooperation between the school and families. Common issues include financial struggles, drug use, dysfunctional family dynamics, and the unemployment of fathers, forcing uneducated mothers to work. An Arabic teacher at the primary refugee camp school said:

> Parental involvement is very weak, due to challenging social conditions such as parental separation, father's drug addiction, absence of the mother, remarriage of one or both parents, and children being raised by aunts or grandmothers. These difficult family situations significantly contribute to the low level of parental engagement, especially within the refugee camp context.

The primary school staff emphasized that absenteeism is a significant issue. The teachers note that many children are "like mothers", managing household duties when their parents are absent or ill. There are other problems, as the primary school administrator declared:

> Some students suffer from neglect that is not due to poverty but a lack of parental care, seen in issues like lice, poor hygiene, and untreated health problems… many girls face challenges such as violence and instability from moving between separated parents.

The primary school administrator emphasized that a significant number of families face serious health issues, and some students are absent from school to assist with caregiving responsibilities. According to the lower secondary school adminis-

trator, 2% to 3% of students are affected by parents with medical conditions, psychological problems, drug use, and divorce.

Neglecting children and showing a lack of concern for their school attendance is one of the most urgent problems faced by the school. The primary school administrator noted: "Teachers often call mothers in the morning to wake them up and remind them to send their daughters to school." Refugee camp ninth grade teachers also contact parents about absences and request doctor's notes to reduce unexcused absences.

Teachers across all schools noted that students have responsibilities at home, which can affect their academic performance. Interviewed students also emphasized that they help their mothers with household tasks. In elite schools, most students contribute minimally. However, in refugee schools, children often carry significant responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings or looking after an ill mother, even taking full responsibility for the household and managing all the work, although they are just in the fifth grade, no older than eleven. The primary school administrator said:

> One of my fifth-grade students had to take care of her two-year-old sister after their mother left the home. With their father working during the day, she was absent from school to look for the baby. The following day, her brother, who studies at the nearby UNRWA boys' school, stayed home instead to take over the responsibility.

In many cases, neglect and lack of parental concern for education further complicate cooperation with families and refugee schools struggle with low involvement. These responsibilities and unstable home environments negatively impact students' academic performance and emotional well-being, robbing them of a normal childhood. This affects them not only academically but also psychologically, as they are unable to live their childhood.

Both elite and refugee camp schools support students academically and emotionally, with teachers in both contexts maintaining communication with parents. However, the nature and impact of this involvement differ significantly due to contrasting social and school environments. In the elite school, regular and structured parental engagement facilitates effective problem-solving and reinforces school efforts. On the contrast, refugee schools deal with more severe SES problems that limit active parental involvement. So, refugee schools rely more heavily on teachers and community institutions to fill the gap, particularly as many students often carry greater responsibilities at home.

3.4 Parental Involvement Patterns Across Socioeconomic Contexts

At the elite school, parents are highly involved, regularly visiting to discuss their children's progress, signing worksheets, and asking how they can support their children academically. In Grades 1 to 3, parents often assist with classroom activities

and events. Parents also actively participate in school events, creating a collaborative environment, as the administrator noted: "Parents are very willing to participate in school events, which helps build a sense of community and belonging."

However, staff face challenges with high parental demands; teachers report receiving late-night messages from parents asking about homework and exams, as well as negotiations with parents about exam content. Fifth-grade teachers observe that high-SES parents, while supportive, often focus on grades over comprehension, sometimes hiring tutors. According to administrator, "parents are generally more concerned about their children's academic performance than about behavioral issues" and some parents use adolescence or psychological stress as reasons to excuse poor behavior. This may be because the problems are not considered very serious, such as raising one's voice at teachers, as the social worker noted when discussing students' issues at school.

Open-minded parents offer more balanced support, while others prioritize performance over learning, making it difficult for staff to manage both academic and behavioral needs. Parents place a strong emphasis on class rankings, which can exert pressure on students and limit opportunities for more holistic development. The ninth-grade Arabic teacher announced:

> When a mother visits the school and finds that her daughter received a high score but ranked tenth in the class, she often expresses dissatisfaction. This typically prompts her to become more engaged and to encourage her daughter to study harder to achieve a higher rank, especially knowing that nine classmates performed better.

The ninth grade school staff believes that parents shouldn't interfere directly in their children's learning, as this can have a negative impact.

In refugee camp schools, staff observes that many parents, due to their disadvantaged backgrounds, prioritize basic needs over educational involvement. Over 90% of parents lack formal education, and they do not hold a B.A. certificate, as noted by the primary school administrator. This limits their ability to support their children academically, with involvement often restricted to providing essential resources such as school supplies. Parental visits are infrequent, and communication with teachers is inconsistent, largely due to socioeconomic and educational barriers. According to primary school administrator, "some parents are not even aware of their children's grades." While academic support is limited, parents are more likely to participate in non-academic events, like school trips and cultural gatherings:

> If we ask to share an open day with group breakfast, they provide it. If we request educational tools, about 40% of parents provide them, while 60% do not. However, if we organize a school trip, 100% of the parents agree to send their children, even if it costs 100 shekels. They tend to be selective in their involvement. (Primary school administrator)

Their lack of education and limited awareness of how to support their children's academic progress make academic sharing less common than non-academic. This

could be due to the stress that mothers experience as a result of difficult socioeconomic conditions. They may seek moments of relief and avoid becoming involved in additional stressful details:

> We usually organize activities that involve both the school and parents, where mothers and daughters participate together. Last year, for example, mothers and their daughters played basketball and volleyball. We also organized events such as charity dish days, exhibitions, and traditional markets. (Lower secondary school administrator)

However, concerning academic issues, there is often no communication between the kids and their parents. "When we ask for a parent's signature, mothers often sign without reading the papers, and sometimes the children sign on their behalf", as all schools' teachers declared. Consistently engaged parents are few; some express a desire to help but feel unprepared, with about 20% seeking guidance from school staff on supporting their children's learning.

The lower secondary school administrator stated that some parents send their children to educational institutions in the refugee for academic support, as they are unable to help them directly. In some cases, older siblings assist them, while other parents hire private tutors, especially those with better financial means, which is around 10% as both school administrators declared. However, teachers at the secondary school noted that private tutors often solve problems for students rather than helping them understand the material.

The school staff declared that the recent UNRWA decision involves parents in student evaluations, contributing 5% to academic achievement. According to primary school teachers, most parents provide accurate evaluations of their children's performance, aligning with teachers' assessments. However, a few parents require additional convincing to accept the teachers' evaluations as accurate. This distinction encourages parents to be more involved in their children's learning and pay closer attention to their academic needs.

In the elite school, high SES and educational backgrounds enable parents to focus on academic success without financial strain, prioritizing grades for competitive achievement while viewing minor behavioral issues as less concerning. This emphasis on performance often leads to over-involvement, with parents frequently contacting teachers and negotiating academic content. In contrast, refugee camp schools face socioeconomic challenges and limited parental education, which hinder active academic participation. Many parents prioritize basic needs and feel unprepared to assist with schoolwork, often remaining unaware of their children's progress. They tend to engage more in non-academic events that require less expertise, though a small group actively seeks teacher guidance to support their children despite significant barriers.

While parents in both elite and refugee schools demonstrate some level of engagement in their children's education, the nature and intensity of this involvement vary significantly across contexts. In both contexts, parents attend school events and, in some cases, seek additional academic support through tutoring or assistance

from siblings. Teachers also declared that parents frequently request advice on how to support learning at home. However, this shared interest is shaped by different parental capacities and expectations. In the elite school, parental involvement tends to be consistent, structured, and often intense, driven by highly educated parents who maintain regular communication with teachers, sign homework assignments, and push their children toward academic excellence. This kind of involvement, while well-intentioned, sometimes manifests as pressure, with a strong emphasis on children's ranks and performance over deeper understanding. In contrast, parents in refugee schools often have limited educational backgrounds, which constrains their ability to support academic learning at home. Their involvement is largely confined to basic provisions, such as providing school supplies, and many remain unaware of their children's academic progress. Participation in school activities is more common in social or non-academic events, reflecting a different set of expectations and comfort levels. While elite parents tend to be over-involved, refugee parents are often under-involved, not due to disinterest, but because of socioeconomic stressors, limited confidence, and a lack of awareness of their potential roles in the educational process.

3.5 Parental Academic Support at Home

Students in the elite school report substantial academic support from parents at home, including help with homework, study materials, and a quiet study environment. For instance, a high-achieving student in the fifth grade shared: "My mother explains the things I don't understand and she makes a lot of worksheets to help me study." Another student with good achievements announced: "I solve problems on my own, and my mom checks my work… but if it's a final exam, she stays with me and helps me more. My father helps me in maths and Hebrew since my mom doesn't know the language." All ninth-grade students emphasized that their mothers make an effort to maintain a calm environment at home to support their studying. An excellent ninth-grade student insists that her family is actively involved in her learning: "For major exams, my mother brings me water and fruit from time to time and checks in to ask what I've accomplished. Sometimes I need her help with English… I also talk to my family about what's happening with me at school." Parents also reward good grades with money or presents, boosting motivation. A student with generally good academic performance but low achievement in math insists:

> I ask my father in English subject. I ask my mother to help me with maths problems when I find it difficult to solve… my parents reward me for good grades and provide me with a calm, supportive study environment at home. My mother ensures quiet by asking my brother to stop playing PlayStation.

Monitoring study habits is common, with some parents setting schedules and reviewing completed work, as noted by an excellent fifth-grade student: "My mom checks my work, and for major exams, she stays with me to help." Students also re-

ported frequent school involvement through calls and WhatsApp, mostly performed by mothers who are housewives. One ninth-grade student noted: "My parents come to school to ask about my performance and stay in constant contact with my teachers." All students from both grades stated that their parents do not punish them for unsatisfactory academic performance, but rather support and encourage them to improve. One ninth grader with excellent marks noted: "My parents ask about my behavior in the classroom and whether I behave politely and respect the teachers." Other students also confirm this, which shows that parents care not only about their children's academic performance but also about their behavior, politeness, and character.

In the refugee camp schools, parental academic support is more limited due to socioeconomic challenges and lower educational backgrounds. A fifth-grade student with low grades mentioned: "My parents don't know how to help me with my studies, so I rely on my siblings or attend a study center for support." Some are good supporters and open-minded. A high-achieving ninth grade refugee student noted: "My parents support my education in ways they themselves never experienced, setting them apart from other relatives who prioritize early marriage for their daughters." A weak student from the ninth grade said:

> When I get low grades, my parents tell me to study harder and say, "All the students passed except you." I find it hard to concentrate in all subjects; math and English are the most difficult for me, and my parents feel disappointed. They want me to be like my sisters. I'm the only one in the family who isn't doing well at school… I try to concentrate, but I just can't.

When asked whether the teachers help her, she responded that she does not understand what teachers teach. She does not have friends and thinks that students hate her. The stress that parents put on her by blaming and comparing affects her personality.

Despite these challenges in the refugee camp, parents still try to motivate their children with small rewards such as money or outings, as most refugee camp students claimed. Parents in the camp also monitor progress by asking about grades and encouraging improvement. A fifth-grade student with low grades mentioned: "If my marks are not good, my parents talk to me calmly. They don't put pressure on me; instead, they ask what the problem was and why I couldn't answer the questions." This case shows that there are open-minded parents in the refugee community who support their children, but this is not the general situation.

Across both elite and refugee schools, students report that parents care about their academic progress, offer encouragement, and communicate with teachers, usually through mothers' phone calls or school visits. In both contexts, parents reward good grades with gifts or money, monitor academic performance, and often respond to low grades with calm conversations rather than punishment, showing a shared emphasis on motivation and emotional support.

However, the depth and quality of academic support differ greatly. Students in the elite school benefit from consistent, hands-on help at home, structured study routines, quiet spaces, assignment checking, and emotional reinforcement, often provided by both parents. In refugee schools, such support is limited. Many parents, due to lower education levels or financial stress, cannot assist directly, leaving students to depend on older siblings or community centers. Emotional reactions also vary while encouragement is common, some refugee school students report experiencing blame or negative comparisons when they struggle academically. These differences highlight how parental involvement is shaped by each family's social and economic conditions.

4 Discussion

The main aim of this study was to examine the differences and similarities between patterns of parental involvement in high- and low-SES schools, and how these relate to academic achievement.

Both the high- and low-SES schools emphasize the importance of parental involvement. In the elite school, staff highlights that regular communication with parents improves student achievement and the school environment, aligning with Comer and Haynes (1997) and Makewa et al. (2012), who stress the connection between home and school learning. Workshops equip parents with skills, reinforcing the findings of Fisher and Friedman (2009) on the positive impact of parental involvement. In refugee camp schools, parental involvement helps overcome resource limitations and supports students holistically, echoing the findings of Vellymalay (2012) on the significance of home-based parental involvement.

Both schools use WhatsApp, phones, and emails for communication, but parents in the high-SES school are more engaged with staff. This aligns with Thompson (2008), who emphasizes the role of electronic communication in school-parent contact, and partially with Graham-Clay (2005), though newspapers are no longer commonly used. In refugee camp schools, parental involvement is facilitated by a parental council and a development team that shapes school objectives within a broader social framework, while the elite school relies solely on a parental council. This reflects the views of Epstein and Sanders (2002) and Borgonovi and Montt (2012) on the importance of parental councils for fostering engagement. Administrators in all schools stress the importance of these councils in promoting collaboration between parents and the school.

Additionally, all school staff in the interviewed schools support the students and help them overcome the problems they face while fostering their learning process. The schools collaborate with local institutions to enhance educational and extra-curricular activities, fostering a supportive community and ensuring a well-rounded education for students; similar to the views of Epstein and Sanders (2002) and Borgonovi and Montt (2012). The refugee camp schools engage local social institutions

and operate through development teams to achieve broader educational goals. In contrast, the elite school relies solely on a parental council. This difference stems from the fact that the refugee camp operates as a single compound, with all institutions inside the camp functioning under the UNRWA umbrella. The lower secondary school administrator said:

> The school has a development plan that involves parents from the development team, focusing on academic, social, and school goals. While the parental council addresses student-specific issues, the development team works on broader school initiatives in coordination with the local community. All proposed ideas must align with UNRWA policies and the school's context.

Parental involvement decreases as students progress to higher grades in the elite and refugee camp schools, aligning with the findings of Boonk et al. (2018). In the elite school, the teachers note that this decline may be due to students' growing independence and the specialised nature of subjects that parents may struggle to support. Math teacher for the ninth grade said: "It is difficult for parents to get involved in helping their children with math at this stage, as it requires subject-specific knowledge and specialization."

In addition, socioeconomic challenges limit parental involvement in higher grades, often requiring home visits to address urgent issues. This is practiced by the lower secondary school administrator in cases of serious social problems or student dropout, aligning with Epstein's (2011) recommendations. These challenges are linked to parents' socioeconomic difficulties, similar to Vellymalay (2012), who found that parents with higher SES are more involved in education. Yarrow et al. (2014) also found that parental involvement was four times higher in high-achieving schools. This may be linked to higher levels of education of parents of children in elite schools.

From the schools' perspective, regular communication with parents helps address academic, behavioral, and social issues. In the elite school, problems are minimal and staff actively support students by involving shy children in activities, assigning responsibilities, and providing psychological help. School staff play a key role in fostering student development and emotional support. The Arabic teacher declared: "We involve shy students and those facing difficult situations in activities and assign them responsibilities. At first, they feel embarrassed, but with support and encouragement, they eventually become comfortable."

In the refugee camp schools, however, the challenges are more significant and have a negative impact on student achievement and personality development. Yarrow et al. (2014) and the Palestinian Ministry of Education (2013) found that teachers in low-achieving schools spent more time on classroom management. This could explain the high math achievement of UNRWA schools in NAT 2018, as fifth-grade students recorded the highest scores in math, and ninth-grade students had a mean achievement higher than that of Waqf schools and lower than private schools (Palestinian Ministry of Education, 2018). The lower secondary school administrator in

the refugee camp stated: "The math teacher works like a bee to prepare students for the exam; she works hard with them, even during break time." Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) and Barry (2018) found that student outcomes are influenced by both teacher characteristics and students' abilities as school staff across SES levels emphasize the importance of teacher and school support. In elite schools, this fosters student learning and increases academic achievement and autonomy, while in refugee camp schools, it helps prevent dropouts, strengthens learning, and increases academic achievement.

According to all primary school staff, issues such as financial struggles, drug use, and absent fathers significantly affect students. SES plays a crucial role in student behavior and academic outcomes (Kortam, 2018). Students from stable families tend to perform better, while those from divorced or financially struggling families have lower achievement and are at higher risk of dropping out (Zughayna, 2008), and this is similar to the difficult social situation in the refugee camp. Drug addiction, reported to affect 2% to 10% of families, according to the administrator, affects students' personalities and challenges. Early marriage is a common issue among girls, with many dropping out of school at the age of 15 or 16 as a result of social and economic pressures. School staff reported that when they inform some mothers about their daughters' academic difficulties, the response is often dismissive; for example, "it's okay, she'll be getting married soon." This stands in contrast to elite schools, where academic achievement and class ranking are highly prioritized, and dropout rates are virtually zero, and aligns with Psaki et al. (2018), who found that marriage is a leading cause of dropout in low-income countries. In addition, students often bear adult responsibilities, such as caring for siblings, which has a negative impact on their academic performance and well-being (Velleman & Templeton, 2016). The researcher also observed children seeking affection from school staff, reflecting their deep emotional need for kindness and support. For example, some students hugged the primary school administrator and told her, "we love you." Others gathered closely around a teacher, embracing her tightly as they left school at the end of the day, creating a scene that resembled a protective nest.

In the refugee camp schools, home problems such as violence and neglect are common with many children arriving unclean and frequently absent, as the administrator of the primary school declared. This aligns with Kortam (2018), who found similar issues among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. However, violence and bullying are rare in the refugee schools studied, as reported by school staff and confirmed by the students. This reflects the staff's compassionate approach and their efforts to understand and manage students' problems. During school visits, their empathy was evident in both their tone and interactions with the children, as observed by the researcher. This finding contrasts with Kortam (2018), who reported that refugee children in Lebanese camps were exposed to violence at school.

During the break time, the researcher noticed someone bringing sandwiches to the lower secondary administrator. When asked about them, she explained that they were for girls who couldn't afford to bring their own. The primary school adminis-

trator also mentioned that school staff donate money to buy gifts for all students, ensuring that support is provided to disadvantaged children without hurting their feelings.

Home-based parental involvement differs across socioeconomic settings. In the elite school, parents provide substantial academic support. The administrators in the elite school note that open-minded and cultured parents are more involved and understand their children's needs better. This is consistent with Ferjan and Jereb (2008), who found that parental education has a greater impact on achievement than income does. Dukmak and Ishtaiwa (2015) also support this finding. The social worker in the elite school said: "Generally, more educated parents tend to have a closer relationship with their children compared to those who are less educated or uneducated. However, this does not mean that uneducated parents care any less."

In low-SES schools, despite limited resources, even minimal involvement has a positive impact on students and their achievements. Ali-Rweide (2023), Chen and Gregory (2010), and Gordon and Cui (2012, cited in Boonk et al., 2018), show that parental support strengthens achievement. However, the stress resulting from prioritizing marks and classroom rankings over comprehension is higher in the elite school, which supports the finding by Gonida and Cortina (2014).

In low-SES schools, parental educational support is often limited, as many parents lack educational backgrounds and rely on older siblings or community centers for help. This reflects the findings of Pulmano and Villahermosa (2017) on socioeconomic factors affecting education. Despite challenges, parents in low-SES settings still encourage their children, as found by Vellymalay (2012). In the elite school, parental involvement includes strong academic support. The studies by Walker et al. (2004) and Vellymalay (2012) show that active home-based parental involvement has a positive impact on learning, especially in high-SES contexts.

In elite and refugee schools, staff emphasize the importance of parents seeking advice to support their children's learning, as this improves academic outcomes. Walker et al. (2004) found that parental involvement, especially with well-structured homework, has a positive effect. School staff help by preparing work materials and offering guidance to parents. However, Gonida and Cortina (2014) caution that excessive parental interference can hinder achievement, while fostering autonomy has a more positive influence, depending on family characteristics. Although the lower secondary school administrator declared that approximately 20% of parents ask school staff how to help their kids study, she reported that approximately 15% to 20% of parents are unaware of their children, not only of their academic performance but even of which class they are in.

Controlling forms of parental involvement, such as strict monitoring, are more common in low-SES schools due to social and political concerns, as parents attempt to protect their children from potential threats (Sujarwo et al., 2021). This may also be attributed to a lack of effective communication between parents and children, possibly influenced by parents' mindsets, which are shaped by the challenging socio-economic conditions they experience. Globally, many parents apply academic

pressure, according to the Pew Research Center (2015) and Sujarwo et al. (2021), and this is what students from different SES emphasized. However, studies such as Karbach et al. (2013) and Levpuscek and Zupancic (2009), as cited in Boonk et al. (2018), insist that excessive parental control can negatively affect academic performance.

While parents in both elite and refugee camp schools are committed to supporting their children's education, their involvement differs. Elite school parents tend to be more structured and consistent, supported by stable resources, whereas refugee camp parents face socioeconomic barriers that limit regular engagement. Despite these differences, both groups often put high academic expectations on teachers. Both the elite and refugee camp schools engage parents through activities such as meetings, workshops, and events, fostering a sense of community. This involvement has a positive impact on student achievement by helping teachers better understand home environments, as supported by the Australian Parenting Website (2022). Parental contact through meetings and volunteering is linked to improved achievement (Martinez et al., 2007; You et al., 2016, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018). Studies in the Arab world, such as Alghazo and Alghazo (2015), Ali-Rweide (2023), and Kharphan and Kasmi (2020), confirm this. In contrast, there are other studies that show different results: either negative relationships (Ho, 2010, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018), or no relationship with achievement (Choi et al., 2015; Hayes, 2012; Wang & Sheik-Khalil, 2014, as cited in Boonk et al., 2018), and the results of Sakamoto (2021), who found that school-based parental involvement had no relationship or even a negative relationship with achievement.

In low-SES schools, mothers often argue with teachers and blame them for their children's academic struggles. The primary school administrator said about parents: "They often interfere in matters they do not fully understand. Lacking an educational background, they focus on what they want without recognizing what they need to contribute." The school staff announced that mothers talk with them in an unacceptable way. In the elite school, the administrator also reports frustration with parental interference: "They shouldn't interfere, as they are not educators." Both settings face challenges with parents who lack a clear understanding of the educational process, complicating efforts to support students. This aligns with Gonida and Cortina (2014), who found that excessive parental interference has a negative impact on achievement. Similarly, in Johnson and Hull, (2014); and Phillipson and Phillipson (2012), as cited in Boonk et al., (2018), parental interference did not correlate with student success, especially when educational support was lacking.

The refugee camp schools involve mothers in assessing their children's achievements, enhancing parental satisfaction and engagement. This practice aligns with the findings of the Pew Research Center (2015) that 50% of parents seek more involvement in their children's education. Such collaboration exerts a positive influence on students' outcomes while ensuring balanced parental participation.

Parents were excluded from the study due to logistical constraints and school policies, as well as cultural barriers that could affect openness and honesty. This exclusion was not only due to access, but also to maintain the integrity and reliability of the data. In the cultural context of Jerusalem, especially in conservative or disadvantaged communities, parents might have felt constrained in expressing their true opinions. So, by focusing on teachers, administrators, and students, the study will have more objective insights into parental involvement, as observed and experienced by students and school staff. However, the absence of parents from the interviews, especially since the study focuses on parental involvement, limited the depth of the analysis by excluding their firsthand perspectives.

Moreover, Waqf schools, although they form the largest portion of Palestinian schools in East Jerusalem, were not included in the study due to restrained access. The exclusion of this school type limits the study's ability to present a complete picture of the parental involvement across all school sectors.

In addition, in refugee camp schools, administrators selected students from relatively stable families to participate in the study. This decision was taken to protect the privacy of students whose families were facing serious social or economic challenges. In contrast, the elite school purposely included a few students from challenging backgrounds who struggled academically, despite the overall high SES of the school population. This divergence in sampling reflects ethical considerations and school attitudes, and introduces variation in the types of student experiences represented. As a result, the data from students may underrepresent the most disadvantaged students in refugee settings, which could narrow the lens through which SES disparities are examined.

Another limitation arose when some parents refused to allow their children to participate in the research, and those students were replaced with others. The parents who refused to participate may differ in important ways from those who agreed, perhaps in their level of home- and/or school-based involvement, or the overall home environment.

Finally, social workers in the refugee camp schools were unavailable during the research period; one had resigned, and the other passed away shortly before the interviews. This absence caused a significant limitation, since social workers often serve as critical links between schools and families, especially in disadvantaged communities. Their perspectives could have added depth to the understanding of family dynamics, parental needs, and school-based interventions.

5 Conclusion

This study examined how parental involvement in Jerusalem schools differs across socioeconomic contexts, revealing different patterns of families support to their

children's education and the factors that shape these interactions. Instead of considering a binary perspective on whether parental involvement has a positive or negative effect on student achievement, the findings emphasize that the interaction between home and school is shaped by social, institutional, and personal aspects. Parental involvement such as communication, emotional support, school participation, or home-based activities, is influenced by SES and the structural frameworks provided by school.

The study shows that parental involvement is not stable; it changes across grade levels and differs between elite private schools and refugee camp schools in a disadvantaged society. Schools themselves play a critical role in forming parental involvement, facilitating or limiting, through their policies, communication strategies, and outreach efforts.

Research findings offer practical implications for educators and policymakers. Developing parental involvement in low-SES school communities requires targeted interventions such as accessible and culturally responsive workshops and partnerships with local organizations. Schools serving disadvantaged communities should also receive structural support including trained counselors and social workers to meet students' broader needs. At the policy level, there is a need to develop frameworks that ensure fair and inclusive school–family engagement across all school with different socioeconomic settings and types.

Future studies should involve the voices of parents and expand school sampling to include Waqf schools and vulnerable subgroups. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how inclusive and responsive forms of parental involvement can be fostered across diverse educational settings.

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Tahani Ali-Rweide
Charles University, Faculty of Education
Myslíkova 7, 110 00 Praha, Czechia
tahaniali01@yahoo.com