Promoting Parent Involvement by Social Media

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**Abstract**

 One of important factors which can impact students’ academic performance is parent involvement. Students will value their grades and performances when their parents pay attention on their school life. However, time is a constraint. It is impossible to ask every parent to sit in classrooms and update every information about their children. Also, parents may not spend time to communicate with their children every day. As a result, the gaps among parent, teacher, and children will become bigger. This study is going to use social media to promote parent involvement. Nevertheless, some teachers have used social media to inform children’s information to parents, but the effectiveness does not go well. Through the survey, findings show the different aspects of information that parents want to receive. Hence, researchers can determine what kind of information are parents really need, rather than receive useless information.

Keywords: parent involvement, social media

**Promoting Parent Involvement by Social Media**

Although student performance is related to school environment, parent involvement is an important influence which can affect children’s achievement too. In Taiwan, more and more families that not only fathers have jobs but also mothers need to work; in this situation, some of gaps will be created between the parents and their kids. For example, lack of time for accompany or lack of communication that cause poverty of school information for parents. As the result, lots of parents do not understand what their child learn or do at school; further, some of parents even do not know which grade is their child studying? It should not be happened because parent is a crucial role on the way of child’s learning. “When parents take the time and trouble to participate in school events, children may view parents as placing importance on learning” (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015). In other words, children will value their academy actives when their parents value it too. Hence, based on the importance of parent involvement, the researchers in this study are going to use social media to promote parental engagement in elementary school in Taiwan. This study is focused on how to promote parent involvement effectively by LINE app. LINE, which can text or send picture and document, is the most popular social media in Taiwan. Actually, the participants in this study which include parents have used LINE to contact with the teacher of their kids sometimes. Yet, they do not use it frequently because they do not know what kind of information that should be posted. The researchers will conduct a mixed-method research in this study; the data will be collected by survey which includes checklist and opened-questions in order to determine the frequency of using LINE and essential information that should be informed. Thus, the finding of this research can be used for increasing parental engagement efficiently in elementary school in Taiwan.

# Literature Review

According to Olmstead (2013), she claims that “students who have parents who are actively involved in their education have higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher-level programs”. Briefly, students can have better academic performances if their parents engage in their learning. Furthermore, in order to enhance parent involvement on school, the author investigated the perspectives of using technologies on teacher-parent communication from teachers and parents to understand what kind of technologies can support parent involvement better. Olmstead proposed three research questions, and used survey and semi-structured interview as methodology to collect data. The findings show that email is highly utilizing on teacher-parent communication; in contrast, social media are not used frequently. Yet, parents can highly accept using social media to communicate with teachers.

Qilong (2015) asserts three themes about meaningful parent involvement, and each theme has three categories. First theme is dynamics of involvement which includes teacher-driven, parent-driven, and child driven. In brief, teacher-driven is general invitation of engagement from teacher, and parent-driven is that parent should understand what their kids need and support them, the last one, child-driven is that children are interesting to share ideas with parents. Second theme is activity of involvement which is also break into three parts, home-based involvement, home-center conferencing, and center-based involvement. In short, home-based involvement is mean learning at home with parents, and home-center conferencing focuses on communicating with family, then center-based involvement is to observe what kind of physical needs that their kids want. The third theme is impact of involvement which is consist of impact on child, parent, and teacher. For children, they will have positive emotion at school; for parents, they can learn how to be a better parent, and for teachers, they will be motivated to support more to their students.

Dessoff (2009) also proposes the importance of parental involvement in his article. He indicates that when parents engage in their kid’s school actives, the test score and attendance will be increased. Yet, parental involvement is not just that parents accompany their child to do homework, it means parents have to involve in child’s school life. For example, parents can be volunteer of crossing guards or attend school events with their kids. Also, the author mentions about a program which let parents and children to read the same book, and discussed it together; in the end, the researchers discovered that the children’s score were be higher. As the result, parent involvement is a great support for children on their learning.

## Research Question: How to promote parent involvement effectively by LINE app in elementary school in Taiwan?

In elementary school, teachers usually use contact books to convey information to parents, but the information will be written down on the contact book by each student and passed to their parents after school. In this way, students may write the information incorrectly or miss any detail. Furthermore, the parents cannot receive the correct information about school. As a result, the researchers propose to utilize social media to connect teacher and parent directly. According to Olmstead (2013), “teachers were willing to use social networking tools for parent communication”. However, some teachers tried to use social media to contact parents, the process did not work efficiently. Thus, the situation guides the research question: How to promote parent involvement effectively by LINE app in elementary school in Taiwan? LINE app, which can send message or document, is the most popular application on smartphone in Taiwan. Hence, the researchers will investigate the perspectives of parents which regards to how does LINE work on parent involvement in order to make it more efficient.

**Null Hypothesis**

 There is no statically significant difference between parents' age and the frequency of using LINE. Parents’ age will be organized in three ranges, 21~30 year-old, 31~40 year-old, more than 40 year old. In addition, parents who check LINE message 1~3 times per day will be defined as low frequency users, who check 4~6 times per day will be defined as moderate frequency users, and who check message more than 6 times will be defined as high frequency users.

Methodology

Participants

 Thirty parents were recruited as samples in this study. The sample included different ages of parents whose children were studying in 3th grade of Tam Sui elementary school in Taiwan. The participants’ age distributed in three ranges, 21~30years (20%), 31~40 years (57%), and more than 40 years (23%), and 29 participants (97%) reported they use LINE app, and one participant (3%) does not use LINE app; furthermore, 23 participants (77%) check LINE message more than 6 times per day, and 4 participants (13%) check message 4~6 times per day. Those data reflected demographic age in the class and the usage rate of LINE app. Overall, the average age (n=30) was 31~40 years, and the standard deviation was between -1 to 1 (SD=0.67). Also, 97% of the participants used LINE app and 77% used LINE frequently.

***Pilot Test***

 The researchers recruited 7 people whose children were studying in elementary school to participate in pilot test. There were two findings in the test which were helpful for developing instrument. First, based on the result, 5 participants did not answered all the opened-ended questions. Thus, researchers only kept one opened-ended question at the end and designed more multiple choice questions in order to make data more reliable. Second, 2 participants reported that survey questions were insensitive; this might decrease the validity of data. Thus, researchers revised the questions which were presented by Likert scale.

**Data Collection *and Instrument***

This study was a mixed-methods research which was convergent design. Researchers designed a 13-question survey that had 12 Likert scale (quantitative data) and one opened-ended question (qualitative data), and the options for Likert were strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Since “understanding the barriers that parents felt they faced can help staff make changes to the approach they take, and increase parental involvement” (Kirkbride, 2014), the purpose of the survey was to investigate parents’ perspectives of receiving children’s information from teacher. Hence, the Likert scale questions collected data in four phases; first, personal information, for example, age and the frequency of using LINE; second, different aspects of children’s information; third, the period time of teacher-parent contact; final, the willingness of parents to use LINE on parent involvement. For the opened-ended question, it focused on other information that were important for parents. Besides, researchers created the survey via Google form, and sent the link to the sampling. In case, some participants could not do the survey through Internet, the survey were sent to all the samples during the family conference which was conducted in computer- lab at school.

***Quantitative Data Analysis***

Data from the Likert survey were analyzed by Microsoft Excel for descriptive statistics. All the data were calculated the mean, mode, percentage, and standard deviation. Based on the four phases of Likert questions mentioned in data collection and instrument section; first, researchers will calculate the average age of the samples, the percentage of using LINE, and the frequency of using LINE per day; also, the percentage of agreement of using LINE on parent involvement. Second, there were four questions which are about different aspects of child’s information, according to the distribution of data, researchers may have used mean or mode to analyze which aspect of child’s information needs to be informed from teacher. Third, two questions were asking about the period time of teacher-parent contact; through calculating the mean, researchers could understand how often did the teacher contact with parents now and how often did the parents expect. Fourth, calculating the mean of two questions which were asking about the willingness of using LINE with useful information.

***Qualitative Data Analysis***

In order to investigate more about parents’ perspectives, researchers put one opened-ended question to ask about what else child’s information were also important for parents. Researchers were using coding scheme to analyze this question. Based on Webber & Wilson (2012) and Olmstead (2013), five themes were created by the researchers, child’s behavior, child’s performance, child’s health, child’s social network, and teacher’s teaching style. Thus, all narrative data were organized in different categories.

***Statistical Inference***

 The null hypothesis was about the relationship between parents’ age and the frequency of using LINE. The researchers used Chi-square test to calculate the level of significance (*p*-value) to determine whether the null hypothesis can be rejected or not. Parents’ age were collected in three ranges, 21~30 years, 31~40 years, and more than 40 years. Also, the data of frequency on using LINE were collected in three period times, 1~3 times per day, 4~6 times per day, and more than 6 times per day. Based on these data, researchers calculated *p*-value and compared with alpha level (α=0.05); if *p*-value > 0.05, the null hypothesis was failed to reject. On the other hand, if *p*-value<0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Results**

 The findings were presented in three themes: (1) child’s information, (2) period time of teacher-parent contact, and (3) parents’ willingness of using LINE on parent involvement.

***Child’s Information***

The views of parents about their child’s school information are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.**



Parents would like to receive information about their child’s school activities schedule (M=2.93, SD=0.69), child’s performance (M=2.97, SD=0.61, child’s concern (M=2.8, SD=0.61) and child’s behavior (M=2.83, SD=0.65); the mean in each aspects were close to 3. In addition, through coding scheme of narrative data, there were two more information that parents wanted to receive from teacher: (1) child’s health, and (2) teacher’s teaching style.

***Period time of teacher - parent contact***

Two questions were asked in this aspect. One was that how often child’s teacher contacted with parent, another one in how often parents expected teacher contacted with them. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.**



As you can see two findings: (1) teachers contacted with parents in every three days (M=3.2), and (2) parents expected teachers contacted with them every week (M=4.1). Also, 4 participants mentioned that they preferred to receive child’s health information only in emergency situation.

***Parents’ willingness of using LINE on parent involvement***

First of all, the survey asked the perspectives of receiving child’s information by LINE from parents. 3% of the participants strongly disagree, 10% of the participants disagree, 73% of the participants agree, and 13% of the participants strongly agree. Since the data are very dissimilar among the scales (strongly disagree N=1, disagree N=3, agree N=22, strongly agree N=4), the researchers used mode to describe this finding. Hence, the participants thought using LINE for sending child’s information was appropriate.

Also, researchers used mode to describe the perspective of effectiveness on using LINE for sending the information. The result was shown the participants felt that using LINE was more effective on parent involvement (strongly disagree N=1, disagree N=5, agree N=17, strongly agree N=7).

Second, one question on the survey was asking were the information (e.g. child’s behavior, score, concern, school schedule, health, social network, and teacher’s teaching style) helpful for parents on their involvement? Since the data were also dissimilar (strongly disagree N=1, disagree N=1, agree N=19, strongly agree N=9), it were described by mode. The result shows that the information were helpful for them.

**Result of Statistical Inference**

Null hypothesis: There was no statically significant difference between parents' age and the frequency of using LINE.

After researchers had used Chi-square test to do statistical inference (N=29, one participant was more than 40 years old did not use LINE), the *p*-value was 0.82. To compare with alpha level (α=0.05), *p*-value was greater than alpha level (*p* >0.05), so the null hypothesis was failed to reject. Hence, the researchers claimed that there was no statically significant difference between parents' age and the frequency of using LINE.



**Discussion**

Since this study was to investigate parents’ perspectives by survey, the researchers used descriptive statistics on Likert questions and coding scheme on opened-ended question. In descriptive statistics, researches applied mean, mode, frequency to explain the phenomenon of parents’ perspectives. In coding scheme, researchers organized five categories, and based on the data from opened-ended question to determine parents’ thoughts.

 This study found three aspects of results for using LINE on parent involvement. The three aspects were what information are useful for sending to parent, how often teacher should send the information to parent, and how is parent’s willingness of using LINE on parent involvement. In child’s information of results, both of quantitative and qualitative data showed that the most essential information for parents was child’s academic performance; yet, school schedule, child’s concern, and child’s behavior were also the information that parents would want to receive. Also, based on coding scheme analysis, child’s health and teacher’s teaching style were the aspects that parents wanted to focus on. To sum up, school schedule, academic performance, child’s concern, behavior, health, and teacher’s teaching style were the information that could be provided by LINE in order to promote parent involvement effectively. However, we knew that what kind of information were expected by parents and might increase parent involvement in the future. Additional research needs to be conducted to determine does parent involvement help child to have better achievement at school in Taiwan by using LINE. As a result, we can not only know about parents’ perspectives but also determine the effectiveness of parent involvement. Besides, teachers contact to parents every three days, but parents expect that teachers contact with them every week. The period time of contact is also an important reason for promoting parent involvement since parents will not want to be disrupted by a large amount of child’s information during their works. Yet, some parents reported that they would only want to receive child’s health information when the situation is emergency, so the health information does not need to be sent in every week. In addition, the data shows that parents have high willingness to use LINE on parent involvement if teachers send child’s information to them. Parent involvement can be more effective through LINE, and it also can help parents to understand more about their child.

 The study had three limitations. First, the sample size was too small. Even if researchers were investigating parents whose child was studying in elementary school in Taiwan, different perspectives may be collected in different schools. So that the data of perspectives from other schools are limited, the data may be unreliable. Second, the survey questions could be more integrated. In order to collect the high validity of data, the questions should involve in more aspects of child’s information, not just focusing on certain items. Third, the lack of qualitative data. The qualitative data was collected from opened-ended question, but several participants ignored it. In this situation, the lack of qualitative data could not help the researchers to answer the research question clearer.

 There was another study focusing on increasing parent involvement by technologies, the technologies included multiple tools, such as email, website, cell phone, or social media. Olmstead (2013) conducted a qualitative research to investigate the perspectives of using technologies on parent involvement from teachers and parents. The author recruited more than two hundred participants to do the survey, and did semi-structure interviews to several participants. The result showed that teachers and parents preferred to use effective tools to assist parents to connect with schools, but it was important for choosing tools. Also, the author mentioned about that parents could accept using social media to receive information; however, teachers would not like to use social media for sending information; teachers would only like to use social media to inform parents about school activities.

**Conclusion**

 Promoting parent involvement by LINE is available for parents. Parents can receive child’s information faster, and consider how to help their child earlier. However, teachers cannot send everything to parents with high frequency, it will decrease the effectiveness of parent involvement on LINE. Thus, the author investigated parents’ perspectives on using LINE, and found the effective way for using LINE on parent involvement. Based on the data, parents are really focusing on child’s academic performance, so teachers can send score record, teaching style, class progress, and school schedule to parents every beginning of the week; the information and the period time of sending message will be good for parents. On the other hand, child’s behavior, health information, or other concern from child can be informed to parents by LINE when the situation is emergency. To sum up, if parents can receive information effectively, they also can help their child effectively, and that is the importance of parent involvement.

**Reflection**

 In ETEC 643, I went through all the processes for conducting an educational research. Honestly, it was not easy for me. I started with a research question, designing methodology, collecting data, and analyzing data. During the processes, I have learned that there are lots of detail should be considered, and the most important things are validity and reliability. If you ignore these two importance, there is no meaning in your research. Through the project that I had done this quarter, it really helped me to understand research completely; the biggest improvement for me was that I can read other articles easier now because I know the meaning of each section of educational research. Also, I understand the terminology that authors used. Everything is clearer for me. One improvement that I want to mention is critical thinking, it helps us to obtain more ideas when we were doing literature review. I did borrow some ideas from other articles, and I developed it to support my research, it was really helpful because I received different ideas from different experts instead of just sitting at the desk and thinking by myself.

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