

# Impact of Parents' Profession on their Children's Learning English in Pakistan

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to see the impact of parents' profession on learning English at intermediate level. With respect to learning English as a second language (as in Pakistan) has several challenges in the academic achievement for the students. Some of these are students' lack of appropriate study skills and strategies; their academic learning anxiety; their low social self-efficacy; their financial difficulties; and improper guidance from the family members. In the case of family members parents have a great influence in this perspectives and learning a language means acquiring the set of pragmatic norms and cultural values embedded in the target language. But the cultural values and social norms are transferred from home environment especially from parents to children. In relation to interacting family norms; parents' attitude, parents' academic level are considered important. Therefore, the study was conducted to explore further dimensions of parents' impact on their children's learning English. The objective of this study was especially to see the impact of parents' profession on their children's learning English language. Participants were 430 students of intermediate class. A self-reported survey questionnaire was used to collect the data. The collected data was analyzed by using SPSS-16 to find mean value and correlation value.

The results revealed that for learning English parents' profession has positive correlation on it that varies with respect to their professions.

**Keywords:** Learning, Learning environment, Lingua-Franca, Second Language Acquisition

## Introduction

Pakistan is a multilingual country where students have to learn more than one language even from early years of their schooling. These languages are English, Urdu that is a national language, Arabic taken as a sacred language due to having the language of the Holy Quran (Pakistan being a Muslim state and the Quranic education is compulsory part of school education) and in the province of Sindh, Sindhi (a regional language) are part of basic education. In the case of learning languages; a child learns mother tongue and a dominating language of that area if that is other than mother tongue by informal method at home as well as from the society where one lives (Melhuish, Phan, Sylvia, Sammons & Taggart, 2008). With respect to learning a language in Pakistan; English is given much importance even from the academic year 2011-12 mathematics and science subjects have been introduced in English from class 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>. All this importance is given to English due to these reasons;

- Pakistan had been a part of British colonialism (before independence) and English remains the language of power and prestige.
- English is a language of science and technology.
- English language is used for communication at international level and 85% (Cao, 2007) of international organizations in the world use English as their official language for trans-national communication.
- It is a language of education especially at higher education level and in science and technology the medium of instruction is English in Pakistan.
- Most of the learning material of high rank is found in this language.

Other than Pakistan in international scenario during last few decades the role of English language has developed all around the world (Hui, 2001), especially as a lingua franca for economic and scientific exchange. At international level educational, economic, scientific and technological globalization has greatly speeded up the growth in the use of English language as a language of communication. So, English has got a place of power and prestige and its knowledge guarantees a secure future and better job (Rasool & Mansoor, 2007) in Pakistan due to which much emphasis is being given on its' learning in Pakistan.

### 1.1. Learning a language and factors affecting on it

Almost all job descriptions now stress communication skill that is the mean of the use of a language use. We need a language to think and to talk as well as to assist other's language and to explicit our thoughts. According to Dickens (2005) linguist is studying the behaviours and characteristics of language acquisition at different stages in life. With respect to learning (Adeeb, Arshad, Aman & Najam, 2010) other than internal, external factors are also important that mediate processes and actualize the genetic tendency of children into skills, abilities, and adaptive strategies, which result in resilience. In the case of development, there is interaction between;

a) Intrinsic factors: these are child's own characteristics across developmental domains. During their development children vary in this respect with respect to biological, physical, psycho-cognitive, social, emotional etc that impact on their learning.

b) Extrinsic factors; are school and family environments. The learning situation for bilingual learners varies greatly with respect to culture, region and home environment. At home a child is more likely to learn dominant language quickly and competently (Nitta, 2006). These indicators are parents' education; socio-economic background; family situation; primary language of parents; gender; attitude towards learning that language; parental involvement in school etc.

This study has focused on family environment that are formed on socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics such as, English literacy of the people, attitude of the society towards English, atmosphere at home with respect to parents' education, occupation, facilitating for learning, use of media at home.

### **1.2. Community involvement**

Most of the time a child spends in the society where a child learns and builds habits. It is the society that nourishes habits of children about things, their likeness and unlikeness and it is motivation for learning (Smith, 2005). Children adopt norms and traditions from the society that every society has established to live a peaceful life. So it is the duty of society to provide complete education and environment (Gratze, 2006) for this. In the same way community indirectly involve in a family for educating a child by the name of cultural traditions (Brighton, Kirbey & Smith, 2005, Qadeer, 2006). In this case low-income neighborhoods in which low socio-economic status families live; have a great influence on children's learning that are related to the quality of public schools, community resources, peer influences such as role models, and parental monitoring. In case of creation of atmosphere for learning and building attitudes of children their own (people of that society) education plays an important role.

### **1.3. English literacy and attitude of people of area**

Peoples' literacy and interest has a great influence on learners of that area because community not only helps (Gelade & Stehlik, 2004) directly on learning a subject but also moulds their aptitude for learning, learning style and building the concept about that subject. According to Kindles (2002) learning style is an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills and "Culture," on the other hand, stresses not only the individual, but is also what is shared by the members of a group. So, learning styles is strongly influenced by the culture. There is another factor that learning a language means (Zhang Xue-wei & Yan Ying-Jun 2006) acquiring the set of pragmatic norms and cultural values embedded in the target language that endangered to spoil learners' parental cultural values. In learning a foreign language negative attitudes of society (Selma, Elyidirum & Sally, Ashton, 2006) impede learning of that language and conversely positive attitude increase language learning success.

### **1.4. Home environment; parents' role**

Home is the place from where a child starts its' learning and is always flux of all hopes of a child. So atmosphere of the home, relations of family members with children and time spend and how time is spent is the matter. All these things build and nourish habits, characters and attitudes of a child towards things. All these things in most of the cases depend on parents' education, profession and system of society. The amount and quality of time that parents spend with their children, the

emotional health of parents, the level of stimulation, the physical environment at home (Report to Australian Government by Department of Education and Training, 2005), and the affective and warmth provided in the parent-child relationship also affect much in this case. With respect to direct affect on learning at home is the learning and stimulation environment at home. In creating home environment for learning parents' education plays a major role (Aturupane, Glewwe & Winswnieski, 2009). This stimulation is in different form; reward on performance, enquiring about study progress, provision of educational requirements and facilities without any delay and hesitation, kind words, passionate behaviour help to motivate children to learn and build confidence among their children. Parents are centre of all activities and a source of inspiration for their children and children imitate them. All it depends upon parents that what kind of atmosphere they are providing to their children for learning and making attitudes at home. A socio-cultural approach to child development assumes (Aram, 2009) that children's mental progress is gained through social interactions with parents that are the major providers of experiences to their young children. Families set children's basic skills that establish foundations for later literacy development. In this case mother and father play central roles. Mother's lap is first learning institution for children along with mother's education and profession play important role in this case (Irum, 2007). A mother still shoulder the lion's share of the parenting, but fathers' involvement relative to that of mother's appears to be increasing (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean & Hofferth, 2001).

In Pakistan father is head of the family and has decision power so father is responsible for all activities of family members and with respect to behaviour has an important impact on a child's overall development. A father's own education ([www.fatherhoodinstitute.org](http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org)) level is an important predictor of his child's educational achievement. Successful child rearing requires active and continuing physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual presence of parents in the lives of their children. While the relationship of parents' education and occupation value system of students, (Donner, 2006) found positive correlation of father's education and occupation with knowledge power, stimulation and social values, while mothers education has positive correlation with economic value. At home educated parents involve their children in a range reading, writing activities along with story telling that traditionally every family in all over the world parents tell them.

### **1.5. Socio-economic conditions of parents**

Parents' socio-economic status has direct impact on their children's learning (Jerrim, 2009) in the form of providing educational resources. According to a Report to the Department of Education and Training Australia in 2010 gap of scores attained by students whose parents were poor and prosperous was observed. Parents pass on a measure of their advantages or disadvantages to their children that affect their children's educational outcomes. The duration, degree, and timing of poverty the parents spend during their children's educational career have a great impact on their learning. Parents with lower incomes (Gratze, 2006) often have to work longer hours to earn more for their families. This leaves less time for them to spend among their family members and getting more involved in their kids' learning process. There is also more conflict in homes of lower incomes because there is more tension on provision of needs of the family either basic or/and luxuries of life and cause stress within the family. With respect to provision of education parents always wanted their children to do well in the institutions because it helps in shaping their future (Smith, Ewing & Cornu, 2003).

### **1.6. Use of Media for learning English**

Television is one of the most prevalent media at homes being used only for the purpose of amusement that influences kids' life (Canadian Teachers' Federation in 2004) but it depends on the time spend on watching T.V(Television), whether they watch alone or with adults, or whether their parents talk with them about what they watch on television. To minimize the negative effects of television, it is important to understand its' use in a positive way. Parents should pay attention to what their children see and use it for learning purpose. For example English that is frequently being used in all the programmes can be helpful to enrich English vocabulary. As in society, new technologies (Allan, Peter & Katerine, 2000) have created demands for educating students in new skills and new media supports the teaching of these skills better than more traditional instructional methods. So as the demands on education change, understanding how to use new media to teach new skills is critical. In this era of science and technology (Parkinson, McAdam & Moffett, 2004) a broader array of communication tools are developed for learning. Among these, each of the new media has different affordances and constraints with respect to its application. So it needs a better understanding that what kind of communication each medium is the best suited for the learners. Television is one of the most prevalent media in homes in Pakistan that influences on kids' lives should be guided to use for learning purposes.

### **2. OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of this study was to see children's learning English from parents' having different professions. Its objective was to see relation of parents' profession on their children's learning.

### **The Research tool**

A self structured and self-reporting survey questionnaire based on five point Likert-scales was used to collect the required information.

The items that were considered important for this study and the research too contains were;

- Literacy of the people of the area
- Helps provided by the people of the area in learning English
- Helps provided in learning at home
- Financial support provided by parents
- Use of media for learning English

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Population and sample**

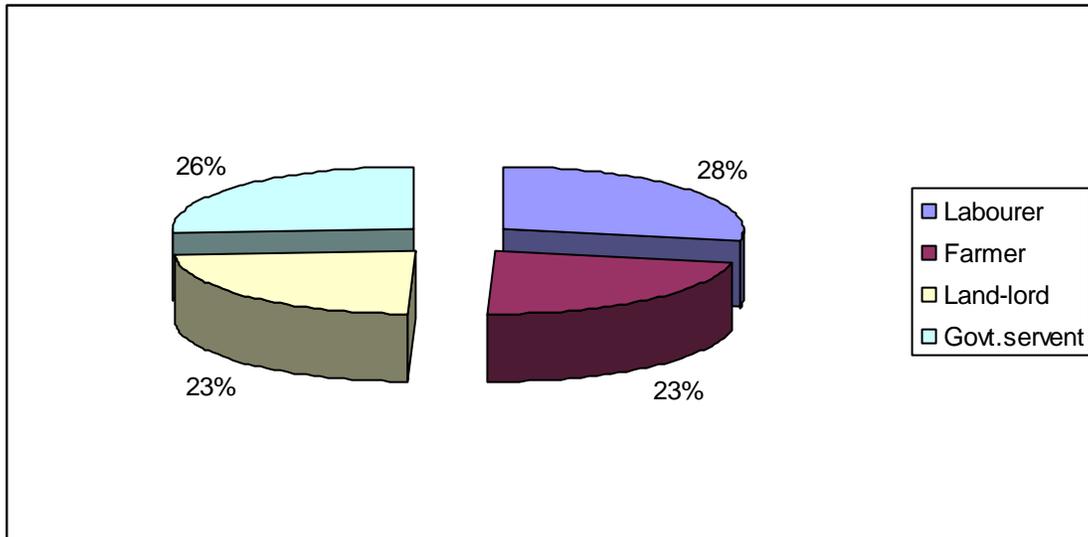
Population of this study was the students of intermediate classes from different disciplines of the district Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan. In this study random sampling technique was used. The number of the respondents was 430 with nearly equal number of female and male, rural and urban students.

#### **Categories of the respondents**

The percentage values presented in graphical form are rounded up.

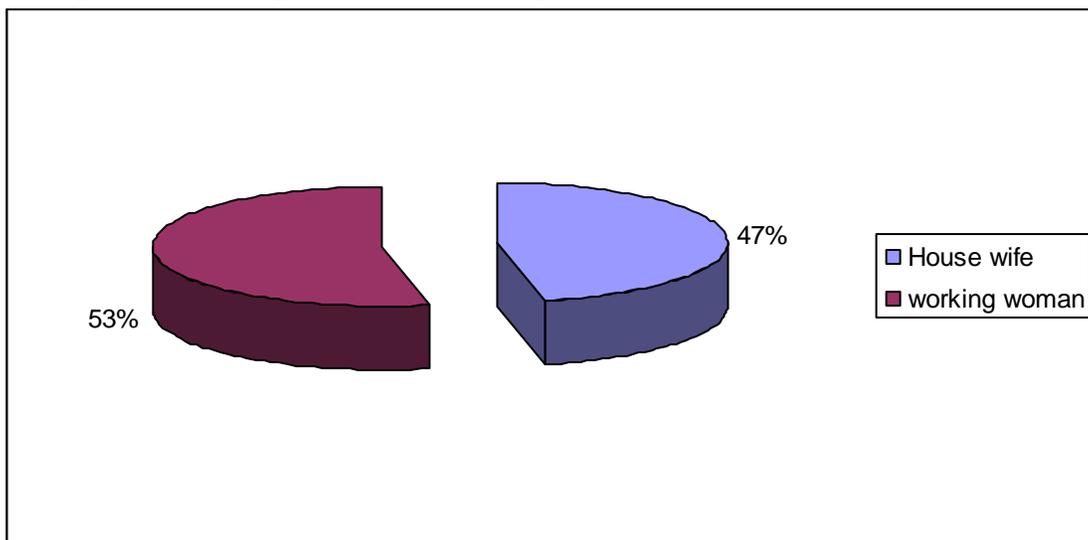
The number of the respondents from arts groups (Humanities) was 32%, science (pre-medical and pre-engineering) 35% and from I-Com (intermediate in commerce) was 33%. Gender wise division of the respondents was 49% male and 51% female that is nearly equal.

**Graph-1: Fathers' profession of the respondents**



According to the graph-1 the number of the respondents with respect to their father profession was labourer 28%, farmer 23%, land-lord 23% and serving in government sector were 26%.

**Graph-2: Mothers' profession of the respondents**



Graph-2 presents number of the respondents' with respect to their mother's profession that is 47% housewives and 53% working persons.

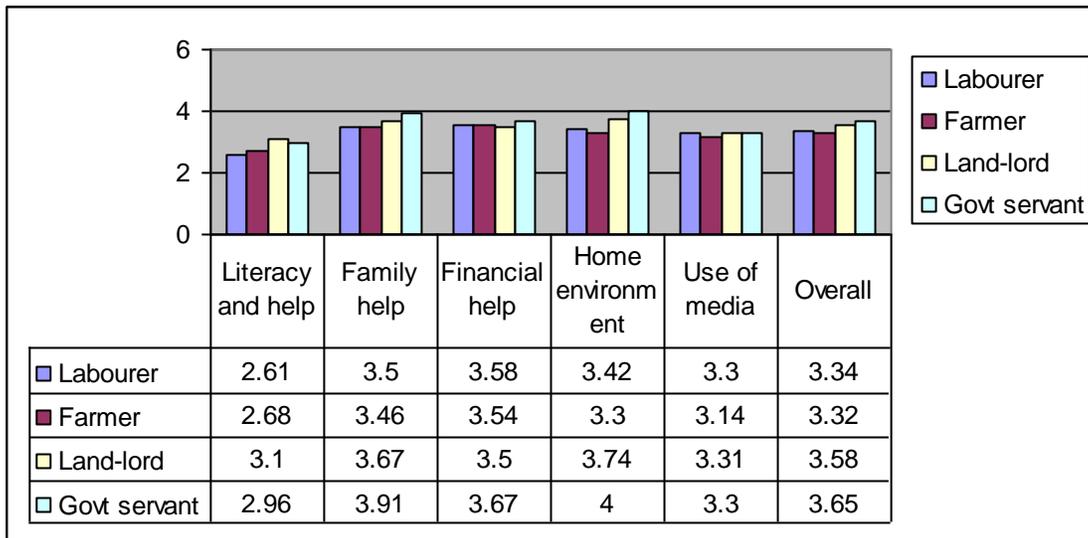
### 3.2. Data analysis and interpretation

A self-reporting survey questionnaire having five point Likert-scales was used to collect the required information. Data was tabulated by giving values;

Strongly disagree=1, Disagree=2, Un-decided=3, Agree=4, Strongly agree=5.

The reliability of the tool was checked by internal consistency method using SPSS-16 by finding Cronbach's alpha value that was 0.865 overall and no single item's reliability was found less than 0.70. That according to Ingalill, Thomas, Jonhn and Bondmark (2007) the calculated value 0.70 or higher is reliable.

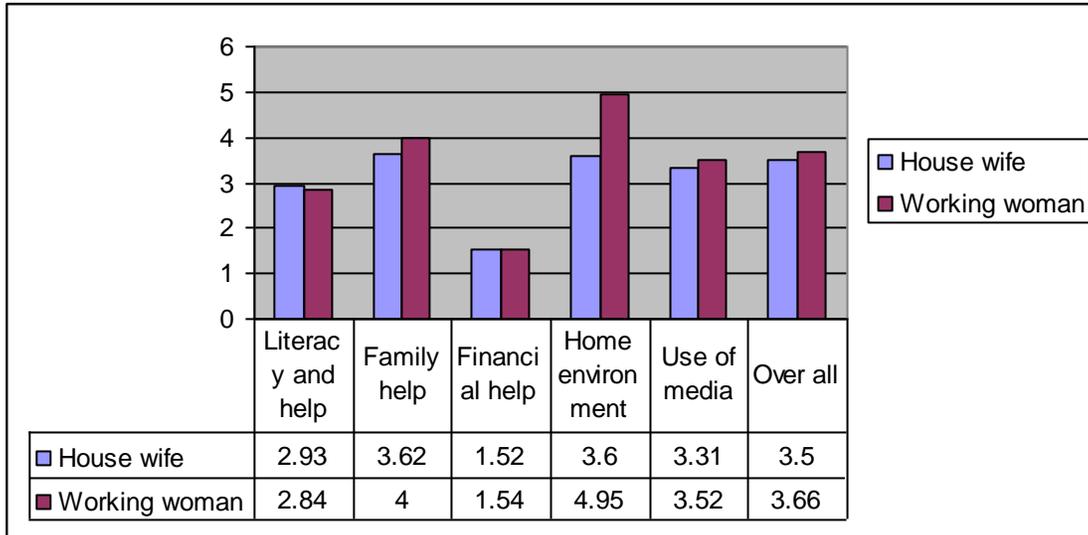
**Graph-3: Impact of Fathers' profession on their children learning English**



Graph-3 presents detail calculated results in mean values. The calculated result is presented into four categories of respondents' fathers' professions and also culture of the areas that are affecting on their learning English at intermediate level. According to it help from the society and attitude where land-lord professionals are living has mean values 3.10, government servant 2.96, farmers 2.68 and labourer 2.61. In the same way family help in learning English is among government servants 3.91, land-lords 3.67, labourer 3.50 and farmers 3.46. The calculated mean values with respect to providing financial help to their children fathers having working in government sectors is 3.67, labourer 3.58, farmers 3.54 and land-lords is 3.50. Home environment conducive for learning is having fathers' in government sectors 4.00, land-lords 3.47, labourer 3.42 and farmers 3.30. So while using media that is T.V at home to enrich English at home is having father profession of land-lord 3.31, labour and in government sectors 3.30, and of having farmers' is 3.14.

Overall atmosphere for English learners at intermediate level is more positive for the learners having their fathers' working in government sectors as (M=3.65, Max=5).

Graph-4: Mothers' profession and their children learning English



Graph-4 present the calculated mean values of the provision of help for learning English in a society with respect to learners’ mothers’ professions. Provision of help from the society having housewives’ children is 2.93 and working is 2.84 while help at home is 4.00 at working women and 3.62 housewives. In the same way financial help to both categories is 1.54 and 1.52 while positive environment for learning is of working women 4.95 and housewives is 3.60 on the other hand use of media to enrich English is 3.52, 3.31.

Overall results shows that provision of societal helps for learning English to the learners having their mothers on job is more as compare to those whose mothers are housewives.

**Table: 1. Correlation of parents’ profession**

	Family help		Financial support		Home environment		Over all	
	R	Sign	R	Sign	R	Sign	R	Sign
Father’s occupation	0.177	0.00	0.009	0.00	0.172	0.00	0.159	0.00
<b>Mother’s occupation</b>	0.190	0.00	0.009	0.00	0.147	0.00	0.164	0.00

Table-1 compares the affects of respondents’ father and mother profession on their learning English. With respect to family help is guidance of brothers/sisters, parents’, relatives in learning English. In this respect mother’s profession has more close relationship with her children’s learning English (0.199>0.177). It may be due to that working women in most of the cases are educated and help their children in learning.

With respect to financial help of parents to their children’s learning English purposes that shows insignificant results. It means parents provide financial help to their children without any distinction of their professions (0.009 both). Parents’ providing learning atmosphere at home that varies with respect to their profession. In this case mother’s and father’s profession has significant affect on it but father’s profession has greater value of correlation (0.172> 0.147). In Pakistan a man is head of the family and in Pakistani culture families are called male dominant so all the decisions are taken by the head of the family so man is responsible for creating atmosphere that he likes.

The overall picture of social factors affecting on learning English with respect to parents' professions shows that both the values are significant but mother's profession shows by calculated values ( $0.169 > 0.159$ ) greater affect on provision of learning conducive for learning English out of institutions.

### **Results and Discussion**

Parents are considered responsible for nurturing the habits of their children. Children learn from home and society especially from their peers. There is significant correlation between fathers' profession and helps provided to the offspring for learning English especially with fathers' profession who are working in government sector have greater value that may be due to that they live in the area where most of the people are educated of English. As if learners are living in a society where people of the area are well educated and that education has culture relevancy, students would learn more (Shamim, 2008; Hywel, 2010). But in this study students are living in the areas where most of the people of that society are not well in English in spite of that they encourage English learners to learn English. It may be due to that they are well aware of the importance of English that ensures their jobs (Mahboob, 2003; Rahman 2006). English is considered a language of elite families and jobs (Rahman, 2006; Shamim, 2008). Most of the parents afford educational expenses of their children and it has a positive impact on students' learning that is associated with their parents' income it supports the claim of Shamim (2006); Gulzar and Qadir (2010). At home in Pakistani culture female is dominant in creating home atmosphere as well as look after her children. It is also found in this study by calculating correlation value that has high value than that of calculated values of correlation of the fathers of the respondents. With respect to financial support parents afford expenses of their offspring for learning English and the calculated value of parents high than that of mothers it may be due to that in Pakistani culture father is responsible of provision of financial resources.

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