

# AZƏRBAYCANLI MÜHACİR VALİDEYNLƏRİN MƏKTƏBLƏ ƏMƏKDAŞLIĞININ ONLARIN ÖVLADLARININ AKADEMİK NAILİYYƏTLƏRİNƏ TƏSİRİ

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### ANNOTASIYA

Bu məqalədə azərbaycanlı mühacir valideynlərin ABŞ məktəbləri ilə əməkdaşlığı və övladlarının akademik nailiyyətləri arasındakı əlaqə araşdırılır. Araşdırmada C. Epşteynin (J. Epstein) "Valideyn fəaliyyətinin altı növü" (2009) və H. Qelbakın (H. Gehlbach) "Ailə-məktəb münasibətləri" (2015) sorğularından uyğunlaşdırılmış maddələrdən istifadə edilib. Sorğunun birinci hissəsi dörd bölmədən (valideynlik, ünsiyyət, könüllülük və əməkdaşlıq), ikinci hissəsi uşaqların akademik nailiyyətləri ilə bağlı suallardan, üçüncü hissəsi isə valideynlərlə bağlı demografik suallardan ibarətdir. Tədqiqat işində "Valideynlərin məktəblə əməkdaşlığı azərbaycanlı mühacir uşaqlarının akademik nailiyyətlərini proqnozlaşdırma bilərmi?" sualına cavab axtarılır. Müstəqil və asılı dəyişənlərlə sıra ilə statistik təhlil üçün Pearson  $\chi^2$  testi (Chi-square) keçirilib. Məlumatların təhlili müstəqil və asılı dəyişənlər arasında statistik əhəmiyyətli fərqin olduğunu göstərib. Bu səbəbdən sıfır hipotezi ( $H_0$ ) rədd edilə bilməyib (dəyişənlər arasında heç bir təsir və ya əlaqə yoxdur). Tədqiqatın nəticəsi olaraq belə qənaətə gəlmək olar ki, azərbaycanlı valideynlərin Amerika məktəblərində iştirakı onların övladlarının akademik nailiyyətlərinə təsir etmir.

**Açar sözlər:** Pearson  $\chi^2$  testi, azərbaycanlı mühacirlər, məktəbli uşaqlar, valideynlərin iştirakı, akademik nailiyyətlər.

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## AZERBAIJANI IMMIGRANT PARENTS' SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT AND THEIR CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the Azerbaijani immigrant parents' school involvement in the USA schools and their children's academic achievement. A survey adapted from J. Epstein's "Six Types of Parent Involvement" (2009) and items adjusted from H. Gehlbach's Family-School Relationship Survey (2015) was used to collect the data. The survey consisted of four parts (Parenting, Communication, Volunteering, and Collaboration), followed by questions about the children's academic achievement and demographic questions about parents. The main research question is "Can parental involvement predict children's academic achievement of Azerbaijani immigrant families?" I conducted a Chi-square test of association for the statistical analysis with ordinal independent and dependent variables. Data analysis could not find any statistically significant difference between independent and dependent variables. Therefore, I failed to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) (no effect or relationship between the variables). I can conclude that Azerbaijani parents' American school involvement does not affect their children's academic achievement.

**Keywords:** Pearson Chi-square, Azerbaijani immigrants, school children, parental involvement, academic achievement.

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## INTRODUCTION

The already proven truth is that parental school involvement and support have been reported to have positive outcomes and a relationship with children's academic achievements. Parental involvement is a broad notion and comprises different activities and support, and of course, there is no exact and fixed definition of parental involvement. "Parental involvement in education refers to how parents attempt to support and manage their children's educational experiences. They may establish cognitively stimulating environments at home by providing books and other learning materials, setting up learning activities (e.g., reading), and stimulating language through conversation" (Crosnoe, 2010).

It is not a secret that immigrants have a bunch of boundaries, like language barriers, cultural differences, religious beliefs, and socio-economic difficulties that lead to school-home gaps and challenges. For example, parents seem reluctant to contact teachers whose cultural backgrounds differ from theirs in areas such as language, religion, values, and country of origin. However, "for immigrant students, the involvement of their parents is vital to their academic success, especially early on at the beginning of school" (Tebben, 2017). Finally, immigrant children start school with limited English language skills; cultural awareness, inter-group communications, and parental support play a critical role at that time.

There are much more valuable and efficient publishing works about the parental involvement of Middle and East Asia, African, and South American immigrants, both from parents' and children's perspectives. Almost all researchers concluded that despite the positive perception of American schooling, more support and collaborative work are needed between school and immigrant parents. Cooperation includes providing language translators and free English-speaking clubs for immigrant parents, encouragement, and more psychological/ adaptation work for children to bridge the gaps.

Azerbaijani immigrants differ from many other immigrants all over the world. According to previous research, Azerbaijani immigrants are mainly highly educated and have at least average language skills when moving to the U.S. They are active, socially involved, and easily integrated and adapted to the diverse nation (Uslu & Kocaman, 2013; Guliyev, 2015).

Some research was conducted about Azerbaijani immigrants, their sociocultural characteristics and identity issues (Guliyev, 2015), the Azerbaijani diaspora, and their history, activities (Uslu & Kocaman, 2013), well-known professors and academicians living in the USA. Prof. Shahla Nagiyeva (2016) and prominent journalist Sevindj Telmangizi (2017) comprise several interviews with long-established Azerbaijani Americans, their thoughts on lifestyle, community services, etc., in their memoirs. Exchange graduate students have done several research works related to Azerbaijani immigrants and the USA education system. However, no research has been conducted or surveys applied to identify the level of Azerbaijani immigrant parents' involvement in U.S. schools and its impact on their children's literacy.

Despite the increase in the Azerbaijani population and active diaspora participation, there have not been any studies dealing with parental involvement in American schools. Research is mainly based on Azerbaijani-American political, trade, and economic interests. European organizations have completed much research on Azerbaijani parents' school involvement, showing that parents are much more active and involved (OECD, 2019; World Bank, 2016; European Commission, 2017). I want to compare the results and determine if Azerbaijanis moving to the USA will stay involved also. My analysis starts with the belief that Azerbaijani parents are involved through parenting and communication with American schools and their education system. It is mainly linked to parents'

education and language level, which are at least above average. Lastly, I assume Azerbaijani parents are not so active in volunteering or collaboration because of cultural and religious differences.

### ***Purpose/Statement of the Problem***

This quantitative study explores how Azerbaijani immigrant parents in the United States have been involved in their children's schooling and whether this affects their children's academic success. The study explores Azerbaijani parents' involvement and role in American school activities, Azerbaijani immigrants' participation in their children's education, and how it affects their academic lives. Research to date has not defined nor surveyed Azerbaijani immigrants' school involvement and children's academic achievements. The study's primary purpose is to understand the linkage between Azerbaijani immigrant parents' participation in U.S. school activities and their children's academic achievement. Considering that more and more people want to move to the USA worldwide (including Azerbaijanis) (Esterline & Batalova, 2022) and are unsure of children's education, this study will guide and supervise all.

### ***Significance of the Study***

This research examined the Azerbaijani immigrants' American school involvement and their children's success. Results are a valuable source for future immigrants from post-soviet countries and an Azerbaijani American community. Findings will benefit all parents and elementary/middle school students from other countries.

### ***Research Questions***

This paper is titled "Azerbaijani Immigrant Parents' School Involvement and their Children's Academic Achievement," and there are the following four research questions:

1. Is there an association between Azerbaijani children's academic achievement and Azerbaijani parenting support in the U.S.?
2. Is there an association between Azerbaijani children's academic achievement and Azerbaijani parental communication in the U.S.?
3. Is there an association between Azerbaijani children's academic achievement and Azerbaijani parental volunteering in the U.S.?
4. Is there an association between Azerbaijani children's academic achievement and Azerbaijani parental cooperation in the U.S.?

I hypothesize that there will be a statistically significant mean difference in achievement and parental/communication support. Also, I hypothesize that there will not be a statistically significant mean difference in achievement and volunteering/collaboration.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study aims to explore Azerbaijani parents' perception and role in American school involvement, Azerbaijani immigrants' participation in their children's education, and how it affects their academic lives. Findings can benefit all parents and elementary/middle school students from the South Caucasus and Muslim countries. Results are valuable for future immigrants from post-soviet countries and an Azerbaijani American community.

### Operational Definitions

**Dependent Variables (DV).** Academic achievement is DV and classified on an ordinal scale from Well Below Average (1), Below Average (2), Average (3), Above Average (4), Well Above Average (5).

**Independent Variables (I.V.s).** The primary independent variables (I.V.s) included the following components: (1) Parenting, (2) Communication, (3) Volunteering, and (4) Collaboration. All are classified on a five-point Likert scale (Almost never (1), Once or twice per year (2), Every few months (3), Monthly (4), and Weekly (5)). Later, the total score was computed, classified into three levels (low (1), medium (2), and high (3)), and included in the analysis as an ordinal scale.

**Population, Sample, and Participants:** I collected the sample from Azerbaijani-born/ naturalized citizens of Azerbaijani descent. The sample consisted of 55 parents whose children had studied at American schools, K-12, for at least one year. Parents were recruited to participate through a personal acquaintance from multiple states in the U.S. (Ohio, New Jersey, Texas, Los Angeles, Washington, etc.). The sample comprised 93% (n=51) mothers and 7% (n=4) fathers aged 30 to 40/above. Families with two children were 40% (n=22) as well, as families with three and more children were 40% (n=22). Families with one child were 20% (n=11). Families in America were reported as 13.3% for less than two years, 40% for about 2-4 years, 26.7% for about 5-9 years, and 20% for more than ten years. Interestingly, the majority of participants (n=33) think that their English level is intermediate (60%), and 14 participants (26%) said that their English is proficient. Finally, parents with higher education (graduate degree) predominate (80%), followed by high school degrees (13.3%) and vocational school degrees (6.7%).

Parents reported that their children attend elementary (40%), middle (40%), and high (20%) schools. Mainly, children enrolled in public schools (96.36%), and only one child attends private and homeschooling (1.82% each). Also, parents were asked to think about their child who mainly studies in elementary or middle school and rate their academic achievements from well below average to well above average on a five-point Likert scale.

**Instrument/Materials:** The first part of the questionnaire was mainly adopted from Dr. Gehlbach's Family-School Relationship Survey (2015). I chose items from Family Engagement, Family Efficacy, and Family Support scale list. Questions were adjusted to the Likert scale response from Almost Never (1) to Weekly (5). The final survey comprised four topics inspired by Dr. Epstein's "Six Types of Parent Involvement": Parenting, Communication, Volunteering, and Collaboration. To keep the study concise, only three statements were selected for each topic (a total of twelve items) and adjusted to the Azerbaijani immigrants. Also, due to covid and online schooling, most questions were adapted to the recent changes. (See Appendix A.)

The second part of the survey consisted of three questions about the child's education, and the third part consisted of six demographic questions about parents. All questions were closed-ended with a neutral option and compulsory to answer. All the items were positively worded. Parents spent around ten minutes completing the survey, and they had no direct benefit.

**Procedures/Data Analysis:** Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was already obtained. "All ethical considerations as proposed by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2009) – beneficence and non-maleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, justice, respect for rights, and dignity-were considered" (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I think the researcher's ethical awareness is of the utmost importance, not depending on the type of research or situation. Therefore, parents were first informed verbally about the research aim, then received written information about the purpose of the study, the right to withdraw, and the confidentiality of the data. I explained that the research aimed to voice parents' involvement with their child's education. Also, the findings would

help academics, teachers, and policymakers both in Azerbaijan and for Azerbaijanis. Azerbaijani immigrants are not accustomed to being surveyed or interviewed; however, personal acquaintances worked. Anyway, all the ethical rules were followed during the survey.

After preliminary information, participants received information about the survey, its aim, and its importance and were kindly asked to complete it during their leisure time. The survey was in English. Participants received a WhatsApp invitation to meet a Qualtrics survey link after agreeing. Parents were encouraged to forward the survey link to other parents. Therefore, this study implemented convenience and snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961).

Data were collected online in March 2022 (remained open for April also). As there were no reversed items, the instrument was downloaded as an SPSS file directly from Qualtrics. Total scores for each topic were calculated and ready to be analyzed.

First, this study used a quantitative method, and an online questionnaire was the primary means of collecting data. The data was analyzed using SPSS 27 (IBM, 2021). Collected responses were used to determine the instrument's reliability, using an index of internal consistency (i.e., Coefficient Alpha). Secondly, an item analysis was conducted by analyzing item means, standard deviations, and inter-item correlations. The items were rated by participants on a five-point Likert-type scale, with values ranging from one to five. Item means ranged from 1.80 (i.e., Item 9: "How often do you volunteer in physical or extracurricular activities (e.g., building maintenance, carpentry, gardening or yard work, school play, sports, field trips)?") to 4.13 (i.e., Item 1: "How often do you make sure that your child attends school in compliance with all rules and regulations?"). Most item means fell above 3.00, suggesting slight negative skew as the parents rated items highly.

Coefficient Alpha was calculated using all subtopics separately. Based upon the 55 completed answers, the 12 rating scale items demonstrate acceptable internal consistency ( $\alpha = .787$ ) when attributed to parenting, poor internal consistency ( $\alpha = .479$ ) when attributed to communication, excellent internal consistency ( $\alpha = .915$ ) when attributed to volunteering and when attributed to collaborating ( $\alpha = .522$ ) unacceptable internal consistency. However, together instead of separating potential scales due to the assumed underlying factor of "service quality," gives good internal consistency for all 12 items ( $\alpha = .815$ )

As was mentioned, I have two categorical variables whose frequencies I wish to associate. I used the "Chi-square test of association, to determine the association/relationship between two variables based on observed proportions" (Hahs-Vaughn, & Lomax, 2020, p.329). For that, two statistical assumptions for the Chi-square test of association were examined before analyzing the data. The assumptions are concerned with independence and an expected frequency of at least five per cell. Twelve cells have expected counts of more than five; thus, we have not met this assumption of the chi-square test of association. The test was conducted using an alpha of .05. The assumption of independence was not met either because the respondents were not randomly selected; thus, there is an increased probability of a Type I error.

## RESULTS

The Chi-square test of association was conducted to determine a relationship between the level of support and academic achievement. The results are presented for each of the four research questions. Also, the paper concentrates on the central question of whether parental involvement can predict their children's academic achievement. All respondents answered the questionnaire thoroughly; therefore, all data were eligible for analysis.

**Table 1** Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.500 <sup>a</sup>	6	.481
Pearson Chi-Square	4.813 <sup>a</sup>	6	.568
Pearson Chi-Square	12.104 <sup>a</sup>	6	.060
Pearson Chi-Square	7.500 <sup>a</sup>	6	.277

<sup>a</sup>.12 cells (100.0%) have an expected count of less than 5.

Based on the chi-square test of association, there is no unique effect of the type of parental involvement ( $p > .05$ ) on the academic achievement of Azerbaijani children. This suggests that the mean academic achievement does not differ by type of parental involvement.

Based on the first question, statistical analysis shows no statistically significant difference in academic achievement based on the type of parenting support. This is subsequently supported statistically by the chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 5.500$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no association between parenting and academic achievement was not rejected at the .05 level of significance. Our example provides evidence to assume that Azerbaijani children can succeed without direct parental involvement.

Based on the second question: statistical analysis does not show a statistically significant difference in academic achievement based on the type of communicational support either. This is subsequently supported statistically by the chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 4.813$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p > .05$ ). For our example, this provides evidence to assume that Azerbaijani children can succeed without parental communication support.

Based on the third question: statistical analysis shows a statistically not significant difference in academic achievement based on the type of parental volunteering support – the Chi-square test is ( $\chi^2 = 12.104$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p > .05$ ). For our example, this provides evidence to assume that Azerbaijani children can succeed without parental volunteering support.

Based on the last question: statistical analysis shows a statistically not significant difference in academic achievement based on the type of parental collaboration support ( $\chi^2 = 7.500$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p > .05$ ). For our example, this provides evidence to assume that Azerbaijani children can succeed without parental collaboration support. (See Table 1.)

“Review the standardized residuals to determine which cells are contributing to the statistically significant chi-square value. Standardized residuals greater than an absolute value of 1.96 (critical value when  $\alpha = .05$ ) indicate that the cell is contributing to the association between the variables” (Hahs-Vaughn, & Lomax, 2020). In our case, only one cell, parents with middle volunteering support/well above average, has a standardized residual of 2.0 and thus contribute to the relationship. Because the results are not statistically significant, I did not feel it desirable to include a measure of effect size.

All the studies interpreted a non-significant result appropriately, indicating that there was ‘no difference’ or ‘no benefit’ of parental involvement. We fail to reject the null hypothesis that there is no association between academic achievement and parental involvement of Azerbaijani immigrant families in the USA.

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the type of parental involvement and predict children's academic achievement in Azerbaijani immigrant families. It was somewhat surprising that there were no significant results between the I.V.s and any DV. These results suggest that none of the four types of Azerbaijani parents' involvement affects children's academic achievements. These findings align with many of the deficit perspectives that hold immigrant parents incapable of or indifferent to playing a central role in their children's education as one of the benchmarks for multicultural literacy. However, it should be noted that my sample size was minimal, and this paper plays a pilot role. It was the main reason that both the assumptions and the data analysis could not reject the null hypothesis.

Literature supports that parents in Azerbaijan are much involved in school activities, as 6 in 10 parents discussed their child's progress on their initiative, and 55% discussed their child's progress on the initiative of one of their child's teachers (OECD, 2019). Of course, types and levels of parental involvement and satisfaction vary across nations, children's ages, and educational programs. Still, it creates critical bonds between parents and children, securing a successful future. "Involvement shows children that their parents value education, provides stimulation and structured activities for cognitive development, enables parents to gain knowledge about how schools work and what opportunities are available for children, and allows parents and school personnel to stay on the same page" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997 as cited in Crosnoe, 2010, p. 2). Finally, some researchers found that parental involvement provides a positive attitude, academic success, better results in reading and math for children, and improves academic self-concept (Gonzalez-peinda et al., 2002). Also, it contributes to emotional and behavioral development, social skills, and even high attendance, whereas some researchers claim a negative/no effect on students' academic achievement (Shumow & Miller, 2001).

The prior research failed to support the other researchers' findings that Azerbaijani immigrant parental involvement (or lack of involvement) from all four independent variables affects children's academic achievement. My findings contrast with existing theories and previous research by Azerbaijani and European researchers and emphasize that more research may be needed to reconcile these differences. Thus, according to parents' reports, this research concludes that Azerbaijani children tend to produce high academic achievements in U.S. schools not because of parental support (or lack of involvement).

Except for the limited sample size, there may be other reasons that caused my results to turn out differently than expected. Perhaps there were outside factors (i.e., confounds) that I did not control that could explain my findings. One of them can be the language of the survey (maybe parents failed to understand questions in English and were too shy to express it). The second one can be the gender of respondents (almost all respondents were mothers, and they could be not so active in school involvement). Finally, parents could give biased (exaggerated) information regarding their children's academic achievements (as information was from the parents).

Lastly, I would like to make specific suggestions for future researchers based on this topic. I would suggest that future researchers look at different variables and give parents language choices. Also, DV can be calculated as an interval scale, and another type of analysis can be conducted. Finally, simple random sampling (quantitative) with many more respondents as well as in-depth interviews (qualitative), is needed to develop valuable conclusions.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There was no funding for this study, and the authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.



**Appendix A. Parent's school involvement**

During 2021-2022

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Parenting</b>     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 How often do you make sure that your child attends school in compliance with all rules and regulations?</li> <li>2 How often do you help your child engage in educational activities outside the home?</li> <li>3 How often do you check/monitor your child's progress/points/grades?</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Communication</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 How often do you meet in person/online with teachers to talk about your child?</li> <li>5 How often do you attend a scheduled meeting or conference for parents?</li> <li>6 How often do you talk about how to support learning at home and homework with your child's subject teachers?</li> </ol>  |
| <b>Volunteering</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 How involved have you been in fundraising efforts at your child's school?</li> <li>8 How often do you participate in local school government, e.g., parent council or school management committee?</li> <li>9 How often do you volunteer in physical or extracurricular activities (e.g., building maintenance, carpentry, gardening or yard work, school play, sports, field trips)?</li> </ol> |
| <b>Collaborating</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 How often have you discussed your child's school with other parents from the school?</li> <li>11 How involved have you been with a parent group(s) at your child's school?</li> <li>12 How often do you rely on your Azerbaijani friends and relatives for advice on supporting your child's education in the USA?</li> </ol>   |

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