

Chapter 6

Parental Factors

6.1 Introduction

The central theme of this chapter is that parents can influence the educational achievement of their children. Researchers are of the opinion that parental involvement, encouragement and interest are important for the academic achievement of the children. Dale and Griffith (1965), Barwick and Arbuckle (1962), Cohen (1972), Marimuthu (1975), Aziz (1989), Wolfendale (1989), and Leong et al. (1990), Epstein (1991), Eggen and Kauchak (1992), suggest that parents are crucial in determining whether their children will succeed or fail in the school system.

Primary school children usually spend more than two thirds of their time at home. They usually complete their homework and engage themselves in studies and other learning activities at home. Thus, what they do

in the house, the kind of assistance they get in their homework and the home environment, in general, will influence their academic achievement in school.

In this study, a number of independent variables pertaining to the home and their effects on academic achievement are analysed. These independent variables, categorised as parental factors, relate to parental praise for educational success, encouragement of the child to work hard, parents' knowledge of pupils' progress, parents' reaction to the child's performance in school, parents' attention to the child's learning difficulties and parents' educational and occupational aspirations for the child. Besides quantitative data collected from the administration of questionnaires to pupils, qualitative data is obtained by means of interviews with selected parents of high, medium and low-achieving pupils.

6.2 Perception of Parents

During the interviews, most parents expressed dissatisfaction with their children's progress at

school. However, in spite of being 'unhappy' with their children's progress, most of them did not consult the teachers to see how they could assist their children at home.

In the area of communication with the school and teacher, it was found that parents of the high achievers visited their teachers more often and in greater numbers. Furthermore, they showed considerably higher attendance at functions organised by the school, including the Parent Teacher's Association meetings. It was also found that parents of high achievers display a positive attitude towards the school and teachers, compared with parents of low achievers.

Most parents in the PTSSR are from the low SES category. They live in or on the edge of poverty, are poorly educated, and irregularly employed or working in jobs requiring little or no training at all, and constantly concerned with meeting their basic needs in life. The attitudes, values, beliefs and ways of behaviour and interaction of these parents are reflected in their children.

Most of the parents work till the late hours of the day and therefore they do not have adequate time for their children. Sadly, they do not understand the essence of KBSR at all. In their residential areas, formal tuition centres hardly exist so that they have to depend more on the school for their children's education. Although most of the parents have a high regard for the school, some of them complain about certain aspects of schooling. They do not want their children to pick up rubbish or to tidy up their school. This shows that parents have a narrow , myopic view of what 'education' is.

Besides, they are dissatisfied with physical facilities such as the school building that accommodates the pupils. It is a puzzle to them as to why new buildings have never been built since the school is situated in the middle of a developing area. Compared to the neighbouring schools, the school building is pathetic. They do not know who is to be blamed for this. These parents give many excuses for not sending their children for extra tutorial or remedial classes organised by the school. Among the excuses are that

they do not have transport facilities and childrens' help is needed at home.

A few of the parents pointed out that their children in Tamil schools are doing much better than those in the Malay medium schools. When asked to elaborate, they said that the children in the Tamil school are able to communicate well with the teachers. Most parents say that they are sending their children to Tamil schools so that their children can master the Tamil Language. This will help them to understand Tamil culture and religion better.

6.3 Parental Reward for Educational Success and Academic Achievement

The data in Table 6.1 shows that 47.6% of the high-achievers received rewards or prizes from their parents at times. In contrast, only 7.2% of the high-achievers indicated that they never received any prizes from their parents. A higher proportion of the low-achievers (46.4%) indicated that they have never received any rewards from their parents. Conversely,

Table 6.1
Frequency of Parental Rewards by Academic
Achievement in UPSR, 1991

Frequency of Parental Rewards	Level of Achievement			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Never	46.4 (26)	46.4 (26)	7.2 (4)	40.0 (56)
Seldom	15.9 (10)	65.1 (41)	19.0 (12)	45.0 (63)
Sometimes	4.8 (1)	47.6 (10)	47.6 (10)	15.0 (21)

Note. For Tables, 6.1 to 6.20, figures given are in percentages. However, numbers within brackets indicate frequencies.

only 4.8% of the low-achievers indicated that they were given a reward by their parents.

As shown in Table 6.2, the relationship between parental rewards and pupil academic achievement seems

Table 6.2
Frequency of Parental Rewards by Pupil Academic
Achievement in UPSR Subjects, 1991

UPSR Subjects	Parental Rewards						Signi- ficance Level
	Never		Seldom		Sometimes		
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	
Tamil Comprehension	63.8 (37)	36.2 (21)	81.0 (51)	19.0 (12)	90.5 (19)	9.5 (2)	.020
Tamil Composition	37.9 (22)	62.1 (36)	60.3 (38)	39.7 (25)	71.4 (15)	28.6 (6)	.009
Bahasa Malaysia Comprehension	23.2 (13)	76.8 (43)	46.0 (29)	54.0 (34)	90.5 (19)	9.5 (2)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Composition	12.5 (7)	87.5 (49)	34.9 (22)	65.1 (41)	52.4 (11)	47.6 (10)	.001
English Language	32.8 (19)	67.2 (39)	55.6 (35)	44.4 (28)	81.0 (17)	19.0 (4)	.000
Mathematics	33.9 (19)	66.1 (37)	61.9 (39)	38.1 (24)	71.4 (15)	28.6 (6)	.002

to be of a positive nature. A higher proportion of pupils who received rewards or prizes performed well in the UPSR subjects. They obtained 90.5% passes in Tamil (Comprehension), 71.4% in Tamil (Composition), 90.5% in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), 52.4% in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition), 81.0% in English Language and 71.4% in Mathematics. In contrast, pupils who never received prizes from their parents scored less than 38% in all the subjects, the exception being Tamil (Comprehension) in which the score was 63.8%.

6.4 Parental Praise for Educational Success and Academic Achievement

The giving of praises serves many purposes. It is used to reinforce appropriate behaviours and to motivate pupils. Overall, it is a good idea to give praises frequently, especially with young children (Good and Brophy, 1991).

Table 6.3 shows that 32.0% of the pupils who were praised by their parents were in the high achievement category. In contrast, 72.7% of the pupils

Table 6.3

Frequency of Parental Praise for Educational Success and Academic Achievement in UPSR, 1991

Frequency of Parental Praise for Educational Success	Level of Achievement			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Never	72.7 (16)	22.7 (5)	4.6 (1)	15.7 (22)
Seldom	25.4 (18)	60.5 (43)	14.1 (10)	50.7 (71)
Sometimes	6.2 (3)	61.8 (29)	32.0 (15)	33.6 (47)

who were never praised by their parents were low achievers. Only 4.6% of the high achievers indicated that they were never praised by their parents. This means there is a relationship between parental praise and the academic achievement of PTSSR pupils in the UPSR 1991.

Table 6.4

Frequency of Parental Praise for Educational Success and Academic Achievement in UPSR Subjects, 1991

UPSR Subjects	Frequency of Parental Praise for Educational Success						Signi- ficance Level
	Never		Seldom		Sometimes		
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	
Tamil Comprehension	43.5 (10)	56.5 (13)	75.0 (54)	25.0 (18)	91.5 (43)	8.5 (4)	.000
Tamil Composition	21.7 (5)	78.3 (18)	54.2 (39)	45.8 (33)	66.0 (31)	34.0 (16)	.006
Bahasa Malaysia Comprehension	13.6 (3)	86.4 (19)	36.6 (26)	63.4 (45)	68.0 (32)	32.0 (15)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Composition	4.5 (1)	95.5 (21)	19.7 (14)	80.3 (57)	53.2 (25)	46.8 (22)	.000
English Language	17.4 (4)	82.6 (19)	44.4 (32)	55.6 (40)	74.5 (35)	25.5 (12)	.000
Mathematics	18.2 (4)	81.8 (18)	54.0 (39)	45.1 (32)	64.0 (30)	36.0 (17)	.004

The analysis of the UPSR subjects and parental praise is summarized in Table 6.4. It shows that on the whole, pupils who were praised by their parents performed better than those who were without praises. Pupils who were praised scored 91.5% passes in Tamil (Comprehension), 68.0% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), 53.2% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition), 74.5% passes in English Language and 64.0% passes in Mathematics. In comparison, pupils who were not praised by their parents experienced a higher failure rate in all six UPSR papers. There were 56.5% failures in Tamil (Comprehension), 78.3% failures in Tamil (Composition), 86.4% failures in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), 95.5% failures in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition), 82.6% in English Language and 81.8% in Mathematics.

Parental praise for educational success was found to be an indicator of the academic achievement of PTSSR pupils in all six subjects. This is shown by the chi-square which registered 0.006 for Tamil (Composition) and 0.05 for Mathematics. In the other four subjects, the level of significance ranged from 0.000 to 0.004.

Of the 32 sample parents interviewed, 68.8% of them do not buy any presents for their children, 28.1% of them buy them presents irregularly, and only 3.1% of the parents often buy presents for their children. Most parents see their role as limited to that of buying of books and essential materials needed for school. More than 65% of the parents are unaware of the importance of praises. As indicated by Dusa (1992), praise is one of the ways to increase efforts of pupils in learning tasks which will bring about better school performance. School authorities of the PTSSR should convey this message to the parents through the PTA.

6.5 Parental Encouragement to the Child to Work Hard and Academic Achievement.

One of the most significant aspects of parental influence on children is the possession of favourable attitudes towards education in general and school in particular. These favourable attitudes correlate positively with the degree of parental encouragement and the degree of interest shown by them.

Table 6.5
Parental Encouragement of the Child and
Academic Achievement in UPSR, 1991

Parental Encouragement	Level of Achievement			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Without Encouragement	65.9 (29)	31.8 (14)	2.3 (1)	31.4 (44)
With Encouragement	8.3 (8)	65.6 (63)	26.1 (25)	68.6 (96)

Table 6.5 indicates the influence of parental encouragement on the academic achievement of pupils in the UPSR. A total of 26.1% of the pupils who were encouraged by their parents were in the high achievers category and 65.6% of them were in the medium achievers group. In contrast, 65.9% of the children without

encouragement to work hard were in the low category. Only 2.3% of the pupils who did not receive any encouragement from the parents were in the high achievers category. These results concur with the findings of Griffith (1965), Yong and McGeony (1969), McCarthy and Houston (1980) and Lockheed et al (1989).

In analysing the UPSR, 1991 performance in the PTSSR, the difference in performance between pupils with parental encouragement to work hard and those without encouragement to do so was significant (Table 6.6). Pupils who were encouraged to work hard scored 87.6% passes in Tamil (Comprehension) compared to 48.9% passes from the group without encouragement. In Tamil (Composition), the pupils with parental encouragement performed better with 66.0% passes compared to 24.4% passes from pupils without parental encouragement. Similarly, pupils with encouragement from parents scored 58.3% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), 39.6% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition), 66.0% passes in Mathematics. In comparison, pupils without parental encouragement obtained only 11.4% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), a meagre 4.5% passes in Bahasa Malaysia

Table 6.6
Parental Encouragement to the Child and Academic
Achievement in UPSR subjects, 1991

UPSR Subjects	Parental Encouragement				Signi- ficance Level
	Without Encouragement		With Encouragement		
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	
Tamil Comprehension	48.9 (22)	51.1 (23)	87.6 (85)	12.4 (12)	.000
Tamil Composition	24.4 (11)	75.6 (34)	66.0 (64)	34.0 (33)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Comprehension	11.4 (5)	88.6 (39)	58.3 (56)	41.7 (40)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Composition	4.5 (2)	95.5 (42)	39.6 (38)	60.4 (58)	.000
English Language	15.6 (7)	84.4 (38)	66.0 (64)	34.0 (33)	.000
Mathematics	22.7 (10)	77.3 (34)	65.6 (63)	34.4 (33)	.000

(Composition), 15.6% passes in English Language and 22.7% passes in Mathematics.

During the interview sessions, 78.1% of the parents indicated that they encouraged their children to work hard. Comments ranged from "How nice that you figured that out yourself," "Keep trying," "Don't give up," to "I am sure you can handle it,". These responses encouraged pupils to keep on trying in achieving better examination results. They emphasized the importance of education to obtain a good job and a bright future. Dusa (1992) and Moore (1995) indicated that encouragement differs from praise in that it stimulates the efforts and the capacity of the individual.

6.6 Parents Knowledge of Pupils Progress and Academic Achievement

Parental awareness of the child's educational progress was suggested by Majoribanks (1979) as an important variable in determining educational success. Sudarsono (1984) found parent's knowledge of students

progress to be associated significantly with pupil achievement in Social Sciences, Science and Mathematics.

Table 6.7 indicates that only 7.1% of the parents are aware of their children's progress in school.

Table 6.7

Parental Knowledge of Pupils' Progress and Academic Achievement in UPSR, 1991

Parental Knowledge of Pupils' Progress	Level of Achievement			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Without Knowledge	27.7 (36)	53.8 (70)	18.5 (24)	92.9 (130)
With Knowledge	10.0 (1)	70.0 (7)	20.0 (2)	7.1 (10)

A large majority (92.9%) were not aware of the childrens' progress. Of the high achievers, 20.0% of them indicated that their parents are aware of their progress in school as against 18.5% who reported that their parents had no knowledge of their school progress.

When parents were asked "Do you know what your child is studying, say, in the Tamil Language in school?", only 9.4% of them replied "yes". This clearly indicates that many of the parents in the PTSSR had little or hardly any knowledge of pupils' progress in school. Aziz (1989) found a similar situation among the rural parents of Malaysia.

Most of the parents work from morning till evening or into the night. Thus, they say that they do not have the time to check on their children's progress. Furthermore, some of them say that they are sending their children to tuition classes and left it to the tuition teacher to check their children's progress. Thus, the parents tend to shirk their responsibilities, passing them instead to the teachers and tutors.

Table 6.3

Parental Knowledge of Pupils' Progress and
Academic Achievement in UPSR Subjects, 1991

UPSR Subject	Parental Knowledge of Pupils' Progress				Signi- ficance Level
	Without Knowledge		With Knowledge		
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	
Tamil Comprehension	75.0 (99)	25.0 (33)	80.0 (8)	20.0 (2)	.932
Tamil Composition	52.3 (69)	47.7 (63)	60.0 (6)	40.0 (4)	.886
Bahasa Malaysia Comprehension	42.3 (55)	57.7 (75)	60.0 (6)	40.0 (4)	.449
Bahasa Malaysia Composition	26.9 (35)	73.1 (95)	50.0 (5)	50.0 (5)	.233
English Language	47.7 (63)	52.3 (69)	80.0 (8)	20.0 (2)	.101
Mathematics	53.1 (69)	46.9 (61)	40.0 (4)	60.0 (6)	.639

difference between the pupils whose parents had knowledge of their progress in school and those without was small (Table 6.8). Pupils whose parents had knowledge of their progress in school scored 80.0% passes in Tamil (Comprehension) and 60.0% passes in Tamil (Composition). In comparison, pupils without parents knowledge obtained 75.0% passes in Tamil (Comprehension) and 52.3% in Tamil (Composition). As for Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), pupils with parents who were aware of their progress in school scored 60.0% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension) and 50.0% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition). In contrast, pupils with parents who were not aware of their progress in school obtained 42.3% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension) and 26.9% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition). In English Language, pupils with parent who were knowledgeable of their progress in school scored well, with 80.0% passes compared to 47.7% passes from the pupils whose parents were without knowledge of pupils' progress in school. However, the findings were not statistically significant at the 0.05 level in all six UPSR papers, given that probability level ranges between .101 and 0.932.

6.7 Parents Reaction to Child's Performance in School and Academic Achievement

It is suggested that the majority of parents have the interest of their child at heart. However, it is the methods that they employ at times which can that

Table 6.9

Parental Reaction to Child's Performance in school and Academic Achievement in UPSR, 1991

Parental Reaction to Child's Performance	Level of Achievement			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Scold & Hit	36.2 (21)	55.2 (32)	8.6 (5)	41.4 (58)
Scold & Do Not Hit	22.4 (15)	58.2 (39)	19.4 (13)	47.9 (67)
Talk it over	6.7 (1)	40.0 (6)	53.3 (8)	10.7 (15)

create further problems for the child . This may be due to apathy, preoccupation with their own affairs or even sheer ignorance of the cause of the problems faced by the child. Often, parents tend to resort to methods which are undesirable and even high-handed when trying to improve the performance of children who are slackening in their work.

Table 6.9 shows the PTSSR parents' reaction to their children's performance in school. It is to be noted that 41.4% of the parents scold and hit the children who turn in poor performances at school. At the same time, 47.9% of the parents scold but do not hit the children when they do not perform well in school. Only 10.7% of the parents talk it over with their children.

As shown in Table 6.9, 53.3% of the pupils who indicated that their parents talk it over with them when they do not perform well in school were in the high achieving category. Only 8.6% of the high achievers indicated that their parents scold and hit them when they perform poorly in school. In contrast, 36.2% of the parents' of low achievers scold and hit them: Only 6.7% of low achievers indicated that their parents

talk it over with them when they do not perform well in school.

During the interview, most parents indicated that they do not let their children know of their satisfaction when they perform well in school. However, if they do not perform well in school, 87.5% of the parents punish their children while only 12.5% of them discussed the problem with their children.

The data in Table 6.10 indicates that pupils with parents who talked it over when they performed poorly in school scored better than the pupils who were scolded and hit by their parents. The pupils who indicated that their parents discussed with them their school progress scored 93.3% passes in Tamil (Comprehension), 86.7% passes in Tamil (Composition), 80.0% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), 66.7% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition), and 80.0% passes each in English Language and Mathematics.

Conversely, pupils who were hit and scolded by their parents did not perform well in UPSR subjects. Although they scored 67.2% passes in Tamil (Comprehen-

Table 6.10

Parental Reaction to Child's Performance in School and
Academic Achievement in UPSR subjects, 1991

UPSR Subjects	Parental Reaction to Child's Performance in School						Signi- ficance Level
	Scold & Do						
	Scold & Hit		Not Hit		Talk it Over		
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	
Tamil Comprehension	67.2 (39)	32.8 (19)	78.3 (54)	21.7 (15)	93.3 (14)	6.7 (1)	.083
Tamil Composition	41.4 (24)	58.6 (34)	55.1 (38)	44.9 (31)	86.7 (13)	13.3 (2)	.007
Bahasa Malaysia Comprehension	37.9 (22)	62.1 (36)	40.3 (27)	59.7 (40)	80.0 (12)	20.0 (3)	.010
Bahasa Malaysia Composition	17.2 (10)	82.8 (48)	29.9 (20)	70.1 (47)	66.7 (10)	33.3 (5)	.001
English Language	41.4 (24)	58.6 (34)	50.7 (35)	49.3 (34)	80.0 (12)	20.0 (3)	.028
Mathematics	48.3 (28)	51.7 (30)	49.3 (33)	50.7 (34)	80.0 (12)	20.0 (3)	.073

sion), their performance was unsatisfactory in the other subjects. They obtained 41.4% passes in Tamil (Composition), 37.9% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), 17.2% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition), 41.4% passes in English and 48.3% in Mathematics. The chi-square was significant for all the subjects, at the 0.05 level, the exception being Tamil (Comprehension). This result reinforces the findings of Wolfendale (1989), Leong et al. (1990) and Dusa (1992).

6.8 Parents' Attention to Child's Learning Difficulties and Academic Achievement.

Tizar et al. (1982) conducted an experiment to find out if there was a relationship between active parental help and academic performance. It was found that children who received parental help were significantly better off than children who were not given any support by their parents (Sudarsono, 1984; Lockheed et al., 1989; Aziz, 1989 and Epstein, 1991).

Table 6.11 shows the attention given by parents to the learning difficulties of their children. From

Table 6.11, it is shown that the children who received help from their parents performed better than those without parental help. For example, 33.9% of the pupils who had received help from their parents were in the high achievers category and 53.6% were in the medium-achievers category. In contrast, only 12.5% of the

Table 6.11

Parental Attention to Child's Learning Difficulties
and Academic Achievement in UPSR, 1991

Parental Attention to Child's Learning Difficulties	Level of Achievement			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Without Help	35.7 (30)	56.0 (47)	8.3 (7)	60.0 (84)
With Help	12.5 (7)	53.6 (30)	33.9 (19)	40.0 (56)

pupils who received parental assistance were in the low achievers group. Conversely, 35.7% of the low achievers indicated that they were without such help from parents.

During the interviews, 20 out of 32 parents (62.5%) said that they are unable to help their children, especially in Bahasa Malaysia and English Language. The majority of the parents interviewed have had little formal educational background. Thus, in many of the cases, parents are incapable of helping their children with school work. Other parents do not see themselves as having a direct role in helping the children in their school work as they feel that the teachers are solely responsible for their children's education.

As shown in Table 6.12, the relationship between parental attention to a child's learning difficulties and the child's educational achievement is positive in the UPSR results of PTSSR. A higher proportion of pupils who have had parental attention in their learning difficulties performed well in all UPSR subjects, exception being Bahasa Malaysia (Composition). In

Table 6.12

Parental Attention To Child's Learning Difficulties
and Academic Achievement in UPSR, 1991

Parental Attention To Child's Learning Difficulties					
UPSR Subjects	Without Help		With Help		Signi- ficance Level
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	
Tamil Comprehension	67.4 (58)	32.6 (28)	87.5 (49)	12.5 (7)	.012
Tamil Composition	40.7 (35)	59.3 (51)	71.4 (40)	28.6 (16)	.001
Bahasa Malaysia Comprehension	28.6 (24)	71.4 (60)	66.1 (37)	33.9 (19)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Composition	15.5 (13)	84.5 (71)	48.2 (27)	51.8 (29)	.000
English Language	40.7 (35)	59.3 (51)	64.3 (36)	35.7 (20)	.100
Mathematics	44.0 (37)	56.0 (47)	64.3 (36)	35.7 (20)	.030

Bahasa Malaysia (Composition), pupils with parental attention obtained 48.2% passes. Pupils with parental attention scored 87.5% passes in Tamil (Comprehension), 71.4% passes in Tamil (Composition), 66.1% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), and 64.3% passes each in English Language and Mathematics.

In contrast, pupils without parental attention scored lower in all subjects. They scored 67.4% passes in Tamil (Comprehension), 40.7% passes in Tamil (Composition), 28.6% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), 15.5% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition), 40.7% passes in English Language and 44.0% passes in Mathematics.

This study reveals that the concern of parents, when translated into acts of support, have had positive influence on the academic achievement of children in UPSR subjects. Almost all of the parents wish for the future success of their children. Unfortunately the gap between this desire and the ability to play a supportive role seems fairly wide, given crowded home, low income and a low level of education (Gordon, 1970; Lockheed et al. 1989;; Aziz 1989; Eggen and Kauchak, 1992).

6.9 Importance of Marks and Academic Achievement in UPSR

Table 6.13 shows the responses of pupils regarding the importance of good marks to their parents. Of the 140 pupils who responded to this item in the

Table 6.13
Importance of Marks and Academic
Achievement in UPSR, 1991

Importance of Marks	Level of Achievement			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Not Important	83.3 (15)	16.7 (3)	0 (0)	12.9 (18)
Fairly Important	55.6 (15)	40.7 (11)	3.7 (1)	19.3 (27)
Important	7.4 (7)	66.3 (63)	26.3 (25)	67.9 (95)

questionnaire, 67.8% of them indicated that their parents regard high marks in school as important. About 19.3% of the pupils expressed the opinion that their parents consider high scores to be fairly important. However, 12.9% of the pupils feel that good marks are not important to their parents. A total of 26.3% high-achievers indicated that their parents regarded high marks in school work as important. In comparison 83.3% of the low achievers felt that high marks were not important to their parents.

The analysis of the UPSR subjects and importance of marks to parents is summarized in Table 6.14. It shows that, on the whole, pupils who indicated that their parents regarded high marks in school work to be important achieved better results. They obtained 92.6% passes in Tamil (Comprehension), 71.6% passes in Tamil (Composition) 60.0% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), 40.0% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition) and 64.2% passes each in English Language and Mathematics. In contrast, pupils whose parents considered high scores as unimportant attained a lower level of achievement. They obtained 25.0% passes in Tamil

Tables 6.14

Importance of Marks and Academic
Achievement in UPSR Subjects, 1991

UPSR Subjects	Importance of Marks						Signi- ficance Level
	Not Important		Fairly Important		Important		
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	
Tamil Comprehension	25.0 (5)	75.0 (15)	51.9 (14)	48.1 (13)	92.6 (88)	7.4 (7)	.000
Tamil Composition	5.0 (1)	95.0 (19)	22.2 (6)	77.8 (21)	71.6 (68)	28.4 (27)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Comprehension	0 (0)	100.0 (18)	14.8 (4)	85.2 (23)	60.0 (57)	40.0 (38)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Composition	0 (0)	100.0 (18)	7.4 (2)	92.6 (25)	40.0 (38)	60.0 (57)	.000
English Language	5.0 (1)	95.0 (19)	33.3 (9)	66.7 (18)	64.2 (61)	35.8 (34)	.000
Mathematics	27.8 (5)	72.2 (13)	25.9 (7)	74.1 (20)	64.2 (61)	35.8 (34)	.000

(Comprehension), 27.8% passes in Mathematics, and 5.0% passes each in Tamil (Composition) and English Language. It is to be noted that there was a significant relationship between academic achievement and the importance of higher scores in the UPSR papers.

6.10 Importance of Homework and Academic Achievement

The importance attributed to homework by parents

Table 6.15
Importance of Homework and Academic
Achievement in UPSR, 1991

Importance of Homework	Level of Achievement			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Not Important	72.7 (16)	27.3 (6)	0 (0)	15.7 (22)
Fairly Important	30.2 (19)	60.3 (38)	9.5 (6)	45.0 (63)
Important	3.6 (2)	60.0 (33)	36.4 (20)	39.3 (55)

is significant for performance in UPSR subjects. Table 6.15 shows that 36.4% of the pupils who indicated that homework was important for their parents were high achievers. Conversely, 72.7% of the pupils who perceived that homework was not important to their parents were low achievers. This shows that children who considered homework to be important to their parents had performed well in UPSR 1991. As indicated by Wolfendale (1989), homework was not just a matter of bringing work home from school; it was about home as a place to learn and communicate with parents.

In analysing the UPSR 1991 performance in the PTSSR, differences between pupils whose parents gave importance to homework and those who did not was significant (Table 6.16). Pupils whose parents considered homework to be important scored 92.8% passes in Tamil (Comprehension), 76.4% passes in Tamil (Composition), 72.8% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), 45.6% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition), 67.3% passes in English Language and 72.7% passes in Mathematics. Conversely, performance of pupils whose parents did not consider homework to be important was low.

Table 6.16

Important of Homework and Academic
Achievement in UPSR Subjects, 1991

UPSR Subjects	Importance of Homework						Signi- ficance Level
	Not Important		Fairly Important		Important		
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	
Tamil Comprehension	34.8 (8)	65.2 (15)	75.0 (48)	25.0 (16)	92.8 (51)	7.2 (4)	.000
Tamil Composition	13.0 (3)	87.0 (20)	46.9 (30)	53.1 (34)	76.4 (42)	23.6 (13)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Comprehension	0 (0)	100.0 (22)	23.8 (21)	76.2 (42)	72.8 (40)	27.2 (15)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Composition	0 (0)	100.0 (22)	23.8 (15)	76.2 (48)	45.6 (25)	54.4 (30)	.000
English Language	17.4 (4)	82.6 (19)	46.9 (30)	53.1 (34)	67.3 (37)	32.7 (18)	.000
Mathematics	22.7 (5)	77.3 (17)	44.4 (28)	55.6 (35)	72.7 (40)	27.3 (15)	.000

They obtained 34.8% passes in Tamil (Comprehension), 13.0% passes in Tamil (Composition), 17.4% passes in English Language and 22.7% passes in Mathematics. Infact, none of them passed in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension and Composition). Parents' positive attitude towards homework is significant in relation to good performances in all six UPSR papers.

6.11 Parents' Educational Aspiration for the Child and Academic Achievement

Parent's educational aspiration for their children is important in determining the academic achievement of pupils. Sudarsono (1984) and Lockheed *et al.* (1989) found parental educational aspirations to be significantly associated with pupils academic achievement.

In this study, parental educational aspiration for their children was significant for all six UPSR subjects (Table 6.17). It is noted that pupils with parents who had academic aspiration performed well in

the UPSR, 1991. A total of 47.1% of the high achievers had parents who hoped that they will aspire for tertiary education. None of the parents with high educational

Table 6.17

Parental Educational Aspirations by and
Academic Achievement in UPSR, 1991

Parental Educational Aspiration	Level of Achievement			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Form 3	72.2 (26)	27.8 (10)	0 (0)	25.7 (36)
Form 5	35.5 (11)	61.3 (19)	3.2 (1)	22.1 (31)
Form 6 or College	0 (0)	95.5 (21)	4.5 (1)	15.7 (22)
University	0 (0)	52.9 (27)	47.1 (24)	36.4 (51)

aspiration had children who were low achievers. In contrast, 72.2% of the pupils with parents who had low educational aspiration were low achievers. In fact, none of the low achievers had parents who wanted their children to attain university education.

Within subjects, parental educational aspiration for their children was found to be a strong predictor of academic achievement. The relationship was significant at the 0.05 level for all six UPSR subjects. As shown in Table 6.18, children of parents with high educational aspirations scored 98.0% passes in Tamil (Comprehension), 82.4% passes each in Tamil (Composition) and English Language, and 86.3% in Mathematics. In contrast, the children of parents with low educational aspiration recorded poor performances in UPSR subjects. They attained 42.1% passes in Tamil (Comprehension), 15.8% each in Tamil (Composition) and English Language, 5.6% in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), 2.8% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition) and 16.7% passes in Mathematics. The findings indicate the association between parents' educational aspiration for their children and academic achievement.

Table 6.18

Parental Educational Aspirations for Children Academic
and Achievement in UPSR Subjects, 1991

UPSR Subjects	Parental Educational Aspirations								Signi- ficance Level
	Form 3		Form 5		Form 6 or College		University		
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	
Tamil Comprehension	42.1 (16)	57.9 (22)	64.5 (20)	35.5 (11)	95.5 (21)	4.5 (1)	98.0 (50)	2.0 (1)	.000
Tamil Composition	15.8 (6)	84.2 (32)	41.9 (13)	58.1 (18)	63.6 (14)	36.4 (8)	82.4 (42)	17.6 (9)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Comprehension	5.6 (2)	94.4 (34)	25.8 (8)	74.2 (23)	45.5 (10)	54.5 (12)	80.4 (41)	19.6 (10)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Composition	2.8 (1)	97.2 (35)	16.1 (5)	83.9 (26)	22.7 (5)	77.3 (17)	56.9 (29)	43.1 (22)	.000
English Language	15.8 (6)	84.2 (32)	32.3 (10)	67.7 (21)	59.1 (13)	40.9 (9)	82.4 (42)	17.6 (9)	.000
Mathematics	16.7 (6)	83.3 (30)	38.7 (12)	61.3 (19)	50.0 (11)	50.0 (11)	86.3 (44)	13.7 (7)	.000

6.12 Parents' Occupational Aspirations for the Child and Academic Achievement

The occupational aspiration of parents for their children is an important variable in enhancing academic achievement in the PTSSR. Table 6.19 shows that 53.7%

Table 6.19
Parental Occupational Aspirations by Pupils'
and Academic Achievement in UPSR, 1991

Parental Occupational Aspirations	Level of Achievement			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Professional jobs	0 (0)	46.3 (19)	53.7 (22)	29.3 (41)
Semi-professional jobs	26.5 (13)	65.3 (32)	8.2 (4)	35.0 (49)
Blue-collar jobs	85.7 (6)	14.3 (1)	0 (0)	5.0 (7)
No Aspiration	41.9 (18)	58.1 (25)	0 (0)	30.7 (43)

of the high achievers had parents who wanted them to obtain professional jobs. Conversely, none of the parents of children from the low-achieving group wanted their children to obtain professional jobs. In fact, 85.7% of the pupils whose parents indicated blue collar jobs for their children was in the low-achieving category. Surprisingly, there were 43 parents (30.7%) without any occupational aspiration for their children. The analysis suggests that it is pupils with parents who had high occupational aspiration for them that scored better results than those with parents who were contented with semi-professional and blue collar jobs for their children.

The analysis of the UPSR subjects and occupational aspiration of parents for their children is summarized in Table 6.20. It shows that, on the whole, pupils with parents who have high occupational aspiration for them performed better than pupils whose parents had low occupational aspirations for their children. The commendable performance of pupils whose parents had high occupational aspirations was seen when

the high achievers had parents who wanted them to obtain professional jobs. Conversely, none of the parents of children from the low-achieving group expected their children to obtain professional jobs. In fact, 85.7% of the pupils whose parents indicated blue collar jobs for their children was in the low-achieving category. Surprisingly, there were 43 parents (30.7%) without any occupational aspiration for their children. The analysis suggests that it is pupils with parents who had high occupational aspiration for them that achieved better results than those with parents who were contented with semi-professional and blue collar jobs for their children.

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Table 6.20

Parental Occupational Aspirations for Children Pupils'
and Academic Achievement in UPSR Subjects, 1991

UPSR Subjects	Parental Occupational Aspirations								Signi- Ficance Level
	Low		Medium		High		No Aspiration		
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	
Tamil Comprehension	25.0 (2)	75.0 (6)	71.4 (35)	28.6 (14)	100.0 (41)	0 (0)	65.9 (29)	34.1 (15)	.000
Tamil Composition	12.5 (1)	87.5 (7)	44.9 (22)	55.1 (27)	78.0 (34)	22.0 (7)	16.3 (18)	83.7 (26)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Comprehension	0 (0)	100.0 (7)	26.5 (22)	73.5 (27)	58.5 (32)	41.5 (9)	7.0 (7)	93.0 (36)	.000
Bahasa Malaysia Composition	0 (0)	100.0 (7)	26.5 (13)	73.5 (36)	58.5 (24)	41.5 (17)	7.0 (3)	93.0 (40)	.000
English Language	0 (0)	100.0 (8)	42.9 (21)	57.1 (28)	82.9 (34)	17.1 (7)	36.4 (16)	63.6 (28)	.000
Mathematics	14.3 (1)	85.7 (6)	49.0 (24)	51.0 (25)	85.4 (35)	14.6 (6)	36.4 (13)	63.6 (30)	.000

they scored 100% passes in Tamil (Comprehension) and 78.0% passes in Tamil (Composition), 82.9% passes in English Language, 58.5% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension), 58.5% passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition) and 85.4% passes in Mathematics.

In contrast, the performance of pupils with parents who had low occupational aspiration, was low. They obtained 25.0% passes in Tamil (Comprehension), 12.5% passes in Tamil (Composition) and 14.3% passes in Mathematics. However, none of them passed in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension) and (Composition), and English Language. Occupational aspiration of parents for their children was significantly related to the performance of all six UPSR subjects at the 0.05 level. The study of Sudarsono (1984), Lockheed *et al.* (1989), Leong *et al.* (1990) and Epstein (1991) indicated that the occupational aspiration of parents had a strong effect on the academic achievement of their children in primary schools.

At the interviews, parents were asked to respond to the question: 'How much schooling do you want your

child to get?. Parents of low achievers have very low expectation of their children and are quite content if their children attained a Form 3 level of education. At the end of their Form 3 education, parents expect their children to find their own jobs in any of the nearby companies and thereby help to reduce the family's burden by supporting their sisters and brothers in any way they can. However, parents of medium-level achievers cherish the hope that their children will be able to go to teachers training colleges to be trained as teachers. Parents of children who are high achievers expect their children to go on to universities and become university graduates.

Most of the parents think that education is very important in order to get a good job. They are of the opinion that their current socio-economic status is influenced directly by their level of education and attainment. However, they do not know how to go about to improve their children's achievement.

The parents were asked to respond to, "What job do you want your child to do after school?" When eleven parents of the low achieving pupils were posed

this question, two of them said that their children should get a good job although the job was not specified. Four of the parents said that their children should become factory workers while three of them preferred their children to be mechanics. One of the parents had hopes that his child would join the police force while another expected the child to become a doctor.

When fourteen parents of medium achieving pupils were interviewed, seven of them said they expected their children to become teachers while one expected the child to become a technician. Of the 7 parents of high achievers, three expected their children to become doctors, two hoped that children would become lawyers, two would prefer their children to become graduate teachers while one believed that his child would become a politician.

The discussion on the relationship between parental factors and educational achievement in the UPSR subjects has included factors such as parental praise for educational success, parents' encouragement

to the child to work hard, parents' attention to a child's learning difficulties, and educational and occupational aspirations for the child. Parental concern, interest and support were found to be important in enhancing their children's attainment in the UPSR examination.