

Correlation Between Contact Among Parents and  
Community Facilitators, and Level of Parental Involvement

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Nurashikin Bte Hassan

S10131755H

Ngee Ann Polytechnic, School of Humanities

Final Year Report

## Correlation Between Contact Among Parents and Community Facilitators, and Level of Parental Involvement

### Abstract

The subject on parental involvement has been a common theme among researchers to investigate; such as its effects, causes, influencing factors and recommendations to enhance it. Previous research supported the notion that contact between parents and schoolteachers has shown to be an effective way of parental involvement and is likely to enhance children's academic performance. This research looks at the correlation between – contact between parents and community facilitator, and the level of parental involvement. Results have shown that there is a weak correlation between contact and involvement. However, there is a significant positive correlation between type of contact and level of involvement. Discussion section taps on the limitations, recommendations and future research that can be done further.

*Keywords:* parental, involvement, learning, community facilitator

# Correlation Between Contact Among Parents and Community Facilitators, and Level of Parental Involvement

## **Introduction**

This research was based on a quantitative research that delves deeper into how contact between parents and community facilitators can affect parental involvement in a child's learning. The context of this research was tied together with the target population of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) – Beyond Social Services and hence; the participants and operationalisation of key terms such as 'involvement' were centered around this organisation's framework. The purpose of this research is to find out whether there is a strong correlation between the two variables mentioned above, and subsequently identify if contact can be one of the ways that Beyond Social Services can look at in enhancing or reducing, in hopes of building up the level of parental involvement in children's learning.

## **Defining parental involvement**

Based on several studies by different researchers, parental involvement can be categorised into three parts – home-based involvement, school-based activities and parent-teacher communication (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins & Closson, 2005; Hill & Craft, 2003; Fantuzzo, Tighe, Childs, 2000). Home-based involvement comprises of parental engagement that can be looked at in different ways such as ensuring that their children have studied and their schoolwork is taken care of, and engaging them in daily conversations. In school-based activities, parents can be involved more physically by volunteering during field trips and attending school events. Lastly, parent-teacher communication refers to the contact between teachers and parents to follow up on the learning that takes place at

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home and in school. The purpose of such communication is to bridge the learning that takes place in these two settings and ensure that they are on par with each other. Such contact can be made through conversations via telephone or face-to face meet-ups like parent-teacher conferences.

However, involvement could be a subjective term and may vary across different family background and culture. For example, parents with low socioeconomic status (SES) may interpret involvement differently from mainstream's conventional definition of it. A case study done by Smith (2006) revealed that behaviours as simple as parent's presence in an event, without being involved in the activities could be listed as an involvement. In this case study, the stakeholder – educators of Clark Elementary School – considered instilling values to children as part of parental involvement.

### ***Significance of parental involvement***

Parental involvement in child's learning is important and has its impact on children. Indeed, many research studies supported the notion that parent's involvement in their child's learning enhances the latter's achievement (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010). There have been detailed analyses on how parental involvement benefits the different stakeholders involved such as the parents themselves, children, teachers and school (Peña, 2000). Overtly, parental involvement also has its positive impact. The importance of education is conveyed to children when parents engage in activities that support their learning (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Likewise, parental involvement also fosters rapport between parent and child, and subsequently trust is

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established between them. As a result, children are more willing to put in effort in learning (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012).

### ***Factors influencing parental involvement***

Invitations to parents from stakeholders in the school community were an indication that parent's participation is encouraged and valuable (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Based on this assumption, these invitations may play a significant role in getting parents to be involved. Examples of such invitations are; making efforts to establish contact with parents and engaging them in meaningful roles in their child's learning.

It has been an orthodox that parents with low education and literacy level usually do not get involved in their child's learning. This is true to a certain extent with studies backing up its credibility. Peña (2000)'s research on parental involvement has highlighted parents' response on the difficulties in helping their children in school due to their limited education. With an interview done with the staff at Beyond Social Services, they mentioned that parents might not be aware of the ways that they can do so. Perhaps, they may have the perception that they can only be involved in their child's learning by helping them in their homework, thus; they may feel that their low level of education is a barrier to their involvement.

On top of that, socioeconomic status of parents is also considered as an influencing factor. The lack of involvement from low-income parents could be due to the nature of their work schedule (Hill & Taylor, 2004). For this reason, they are less likely to be involved in school-based activities and parent-teacher communication. This was supported by a case study done locally which revealed that single mothers with low SES struggled to balance their

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full-time jobs single-handedly, without having a male figure in the household to share the responsibility with (Chong, Anderson & Anderson, 2014). With difficulties juggling their jobs, attempts at getting involved in their child's education may further add on to their struggle.

### ***Hypothesis***

The aim of this research is to find out whether there is a correlation between establishing contact with parents and their involvement in their child's learning. Based on the literature review and interviews with several of the organisation's staff, a hypothesis was postulated – there is a strong correlation between parental involvement and contact between parents and community facilitators. The variable 'contact' was operationalised by its frequency and type of contact. Frequency of contact refers to the number of times parents and community facilitator communicate with each other per year. The type of contact on the other hand, looks at the methods of communication. Such methods are face-to-face communication, phone calls and messaging. Kail, Keen and Lumley (2011) defined community organisation as associations that run services to improve the lives of people in the local area and reaching out to those who are marginalised by society. This is in line with Beyond Social Services' mission and role in the community. Based on such definition, an assumption is made that community facilitators are staff from Beyond Social Services that help to facilitate the development of community through programs and direct them to relevant resources. Parental involvement was classified into three settings, and each setting having a specific set of behaviours that were defined as parental involvement in the literature review above. This variable will be measured by the set of

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behaviours, arranged from high to low level of involvement. Surveys were administered to a population sample to measure the variables that were operationalised above. On top of that, variables were not manipulated and hence; correlational and survey methods, were used in this study.

### **Method**

#### ***Design***

This is a correlational design study that looks at the correlation between variables. The variables measured were level of parental involvement, and contact.

#### ***Participants***

The population involved in this study was parents from two of the five communities that this organisation works with – Lengkok Bahru and Whampoa. These are parents of those who attend Beyond Social Services' learning activities at least once a week. These learning activities include sports, arts or academic programs. A total of 66 parents were involved, with 20 of them from Whampoa while the remaining participants from Lengkok Bahru. In the survey questionnaire, participants' responses to questions 2a, 2b, 3a, 4a and 5b were looked at only.

The focal point of question 2a was to explore on the type of contact. No contact and face-to-face type of contact had the same number of respondents – 18, while 17 had contact through calling. Only 4 respondents said that they had contact through messaging. For contact made through all three types, and both face-to-face and messaging, there were only one respondent each.

Question 2b looks at the frequency of contact, in which 22 of the respondents said that they had no contact with community facilitators, while

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20 had contact once a month. Only 12 of the respondents had contact once a week, and seven respondents had contact once every three months. The highest frequency of contact – four times a week – had only one respondent.

Questions 3a, 4a and 5a look at parental involvement as a whole, hence every option that was ticked, respondents were given a score. 12 participants scored four and five out of 12 points respectively. 11 of the participants had a score of two, while three of the participants had the lowest score of zero. Highest score attained by a respondent was 10. Simple random sampling was used in selecting the sample, as they were chosen randomly from the list of names in the organisation's database.

### **Materials**

A parent survey form (Appendix A) was used. This survey measured the two variables mentioned above; contact and parental involvement. The type of questions incorporated in the survey tapped on the type and current frequency of contact and level of involvement that the parents are engaged in. The types of contact listed in the questionnaire were face-to-face, telephone via calls, messaging and none, with three, two, one, zero as scores attached to each of them respectively. The highest possible score that a respondent could attain is six, in which they have picked all options, while the lowest score will be zero, in which they have picked none of them. Frequency of contact were measured based on the number of contact per year, from 0, 1, 2, 6, 26 and 108. These numbers were taken in its simplest form, which was divided by two from its raw score. As for parental involvement, the highest score a respondent can get is 12 while the lowest is 0. A score is given when there is a tick beside a behaviour that is defined as involvement.



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### ***Procedure***

The procedure is broken down into four phases; consolidating information of participants, mass survey administration, following up with incomplete surveys and scoring of questionnaire. In the first phase, information of participants was extracted and consolidated into a list for the second phase. Since this survey administration was tied together with Beyond Social Services' other survey, both surveys were administered simultaneously in the second phase. This was done on Whampoa's community first, followed by Lengkok Bahru. Volunteers from Singapore Polytechnic were recruited to help out for both communities. They were briefed beforehand on the objectives and mandatory protocols of the survey. In the third phase, follow-ups were done to get both surveys to be filled since some were incomplete in the second phase.

With all the administration done, the next phase was to score the questions answered for each respondents, and afterwards, keying them in SPSS.

### **Results**

The relationship between frequency of contact and parental involvement were assessed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. There was no significant relationship between frequency of contact and parental involvement ( $r=0.18$ ,  $n=66$ ,  $p=0.16$ ). However, there was a significant positive relationship between type of contact and parental involvement ( $r=0.28$ ,  $n=66$ ,  $p=0.25$ ).

### **Discussion**

As hypothesised, there was a strong correlation between contact and parental involvement. However results has shown otherwise, with a weak correlation of 0.1 and 0.2 between frequency and type of contact, with parental involvement respectively. Comparing this study with past researchers, the latter's prime focus on parental involvement and contact was more inclined towards contact between schoolteachers and parents. However, this study particularly looks at the contact between parents and community facilitators. Findings in past and current study probably vary due to the different stakeholders involved and the context of the setting, albeit both looks at contact with parents. In school, it is more structured and formal whereas in a community setting, it is informal and less rigid. Chavkin (1993) explained that the low level of contact between schoolteachers and parents might indicate that they have low interest in their child's learning, and as such it may imply the low level of parental involvement. It is clearly evident that in Chavkin's study, schoolteachers were involved instead of community facilitators. Similarly, a study done almost a decade after found that that there was a significant positive relationship between the mentioned variables in Chavkin's study (Kohl, Legua & McMahan, 2002). In the current study, the context was more inclined in a community setting and the vast differences in the two setting could greatly account for the distinct results.

Such differences in results could also be due to the varying limitations of the study. One possible reason could be the tendency for respondents to give socially accepted responses in the survey. Being involved in children's learning may be viewed as socially 'right' among parents. Thus, to avoid being

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regarded as an outlier, they may try to fit their response to what they perceive as socially acceptable.

Another possible limitation is the lack of information on quality of contact between parents and community facilitators. Information gathered focused on the frequency and medium of contact but not the content of what is being exchanged. Frequency of contact may be high yet exchange of information may not be related to the child's progress in learning. This could result in the discrepancy of results wherein there may be high frequency of contact, yet the level of involvement may not be high, and vice versa.

Reliability of the survey questionnaire is also another shortcoming in this study. The questionnaire was administered without using reliability estimates to measure its reliability. In addition, the survey was administered for the first time and hence; it cannot be compared to previous studies that used the same questionnaire. Another aspect of reliability that is lacking was in the survey administration. As most of the respondents were Malay, some of them could not understand English language and hence; translation could have caused a change in the meaning and context of the questions asked. Moreover, different group of volunteers carried out the survey to the participants and the former's difference in their demeanor and instructions conveyed to the respondents could be the contributing factors in affecting the reliability of the study.

Lastly, the findings in this study cannot be generalized to the entire low-income population in Singapore. With only 66 respondents, it is too small to represent the population sample of this survey. However, this could potentially be a stepping-stone to carry out longitudinal study across Singapore to

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illuminate how contact between parents and community facilitators, and parental involvement are correlated.

Future research may also look at how community facilitators can play a bigger role in helping parents to increase parental involvement. NGOs like Beyond Social Services can then cater their programs that target parental involvement. Another future research that can be done is to look at the quality of contact between the two stakeholders. The content of what is being exchanged should also be considered when making correlation between contact and level of involvement.

As part of recommendations for Beyond Social Services, findings in this study may provide them with ample relevant information before they implement programs or establish a routine that the staff can adhere to with regards to keeping contact with parents. Since results has shown that there is a significant positive relationship between type of contact and involvement, this organisation can look at the running weekly or monthly contact session with these parents to update on the child's progress. Another recommendation would be to invite parents to come down and participate in the programs, to have a hands-on experience of what the child is doing, and journey with them through the experience.

In conclusion, this study that took place in Beyond Social Services' community looks at how contact and parental involvement were correlated. Results have shown that both variables had weak correlation. Recommendations for future research may explore on role of NGOs in parental involvement and how the study can be made across the population in

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Singapore. For Beyond Social Services, more structured contact sessions can be made between staff and parents.

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Appendix A

**PARENT FEEDBACK FORM ON THEIR CHILD'S LEARNING**

Name of parent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART A**

1. a) How are you in contact with the teachers?

- Face-to-face    Telephone via conversation    Telephone via messaging  
 None (*\*skip 1b*)

b) How frequent are you in contact with the teachers?

- Once/week    Once/month    Once/quarter    Twice/year  
 Others \_\_\_\_\_

2. a) How are you in contact with program facilitators from community organisations?

- Face-to-face    Telephone via conversation    Telephone via messaging  
 None (*\*skip 2b*)

b) How frequent are you in contact with program facilitators from community organisations?

- Once/week    Once/month    Once/quarter    Twice/year  
 Others \_\_\_\_\_

3. a) How are you currently involved in your child's learning at home?

- Talking to my child about his/her day  
 Providing a suitable learning space for my child  
 Ensuring my child has studied  
 Ensuring my child has completed schoolwork  
 Helping my child in his schoolwork  
 Others: \_\_\_\_\_  
 None of the above (*\*Skip Q3b*)



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### b) Frequency of involvement

- Daily
- 2-3 times a week
- Once a week
- Once a month

### 4. a) How are you currently involved in your child's learning in school?

- Attend school events and ceremonies
- Attend parent-support group meetings/workshops
- Volunteer as helper in school events
- Meet/ follow-up with teachers at school regarding my child's progress
- None (*\*skip Q4b*)

### b) Frequency of involvement

- Once a week
- Once a month
- Once every quarter
- Twice a year

### 5. a) How are you currently involved in your child's learning in community organisations?

- Support or remind other children in the neighbourhood to attend community program
- Volunteer as helpers in community programs
- Work more closely with program facilitators regarding my child's progress
- None (*\*skip Q5b*)

### b) Frequency of involvement

- Once a week
- Once a month
- Once every quarter
- Twice a year

### 6. How do you like to be involved in the next 1 year?

#### a. At Home

- Talking to my child about his/her day.
- Ensuring my child has studied.
- Ensuring my child has completed schoolwork
- Providing a suitable learning space for my child
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

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### b. At School

- Meet/ follow-up with teachers at school regarding my child's progress
- Attend parent-support group meetings/workshops
- Attend school events and ceremonies
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

### c. In the Community

- Help out at various programs
- Work more closely with the teachers/program facilitators regarding my child's progress in the school/program
- Support other children in the neighbourhood to take part in the program.
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

## **Part B**

1. How satisfied are you with the program?

Very satisfied                      Satisfied                      Not satisfied                      Not very satisfied  
                                                                                                                                         

2. What are the changes you noticed in your child's behavioural and social skills (eg. *Being considerate of others' feelings/able to work well with others*) after he/she attended the program?

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3. What are the changes you noticed in your child's progress in school in terms of

i) Attendance

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### ii) Grades

| Subject         |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Name of child   |  |  |  |  |  |
| English         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mathematics     |  |  |  |  |  |
| Science         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mother Tongue   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other subjects: |  |  |  |  |  |

### iii) Attitude (confidence, enthusiasm, focus, motivation)

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4. How do you feel about the friends that your child has made in the program? Why?

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5. How else do you think the program can be improved?

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6. Other feedback

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Interview done by:

Remarks:

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Remarks/Feedback for progress card:

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Appendix B

**Correlations**

|                                                                      |                        | Q2a: Type of contact<br>with community<br>facilitators | Total score of<br>involvement at home,<br>school and community |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Q2a: Type<br>of contact<br>with<br>community<br>facilitators         | Pearson<br>Correlation | 1                                                      | .275                                                           |
|                                                                      | Sig. (2-<br>tailed)    |                                                        | .025                                                           |
|                                                                      | N                      | 66                                                     | 66                                                             |
| Total score of<br>involvement<br>at home,<br>school and<br>community | Pearson<br>Correlation | .275*                                                  | 1                                                              |
|                                                                      | Sig. (2-<br>tailed)    | .025                                                   |                                                                |
|                                                                      | N                      | 66                                                     | 66                                                             |

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlations**

|                                                                      |                        | Q2b: Frequency of<br>contact with community<br>facilitators | Total score of<br>involvement at home,<br>school and community |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Q2b:<br>Frequency<br>of contact<br>with<br>community<br>facilitators | Pearson<br>Correlation | 1                                                           | .177                                                           |
|                                                                      | Sig. (2-<br>tailed)    |                                                             | .156                                                           |
|                                                                      | N                      | 66                                                          | 66                                                             |
| Total score of<br>involvement<br>at home,<br>school and<br>community | Pearson<br>Correlation | .177                                                        | 1                                                              |
|                                                                      | Sig. (2-<br>tailed)    | .156                                                        |                                                                |
|                                                                      | N                      | 66                                                          | 66                                                             |

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Appendix C

**Q2a: Type of contact with community facilitators**

|                                     | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid None                          | 18        | 27.3    | 27.3          | 27.3               |
| Messaging                           | 4         | 6.1     | 6.1           | 33.3               |
| Call                                | 17        | 25.8    | 25.8          | 59.1               |
| Face-to-face                        | 18        | 27.3    | 27.3          | 86.4               |
| Face-to-face and<br>messaging       | 1         | 1.5     | 1.5           | 87.9               |
| Face-to-face and<br>call            | 7         | 10.6    | 10.6          | 98.5               |
| Messaging, Call<br>and Face-to-face | 1         | 1.5     | 1.5           | 100.0              |
| Total                               | 66        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

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Appendix D

**Q2b: Frequency of contact with community facilitators**

|               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid    None | 22        | 33.3    | 33.3          | 27.3               |
| Twice/year    | 4         | 6.1     | 6.1           | 39.4               |
| Once/quarter  | 7         | 10.6    | 10.6          | 50.0               |
| Once/month    | 20        | 30.3    | 30.3          | 80.3               |
| Once/week     | 12        | 18.2    | 18.2          | 98.5               |
| 4 times/week  | 1         | 1.5     | 1.5           | 100.0              |
| Total         | 66        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

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Appendix E

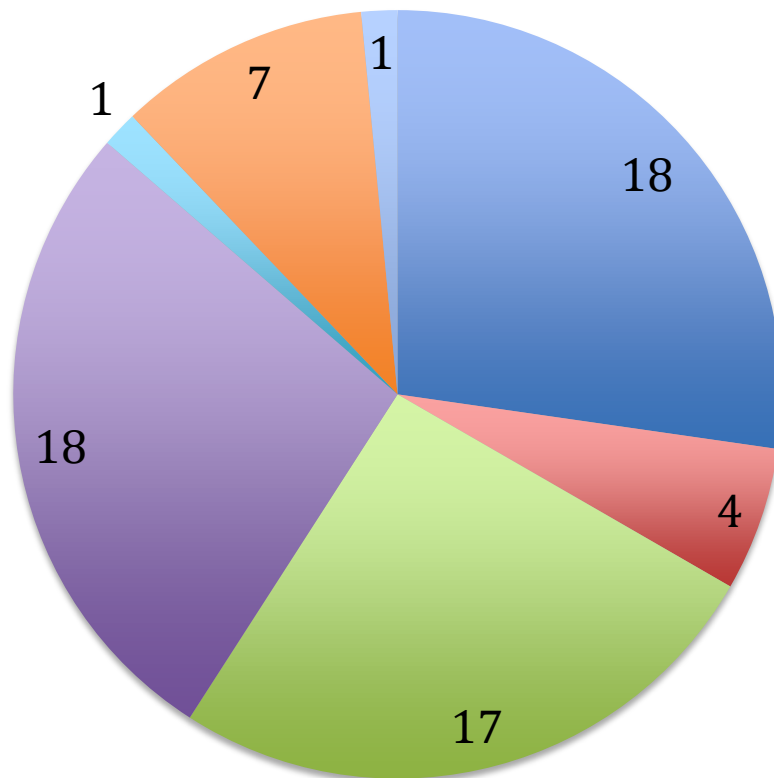
**Q3a, 4a, 5a: Total score of involvement at home, school and community**

|         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid 0 | 3         | 4.5     | 4.5           | 4.5                   |
| 1       | 4         | 6.1     | 6.1           | 10.6                  |
| 2       | 11        | 16.7    | 16.7          | 27.3                  |
| 3       | 5         | 7.6     | 7.6           | 34.8                  |
| 4       | 12        | 18.2    | 18.2          | 53.0                  |
| 5       | 12        | 18.2    | 18.2          | 71.2                  |
| 6       | 2         | 3.0     | 3.0           | 74.2                  |
| 7       | 6         | 9.1     | 9.1           | 83.3                  |
| 8       | 8         | 12.1    | 12.1          | 95.5                  |
| 9       | 2         | 3.0     | 3.0           | 98.5                  |
| 10      | 1         | 1.5     | 1.5           | 100.0                 |
| Total   | 66        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                       |

Appendix F

### Q2a) TYPE OF CONTACT WITH COMM-FACILITATOR

- None
- Messaging
- Call
- Face to face
- Face to face & messaging
- Call & face to face
- All

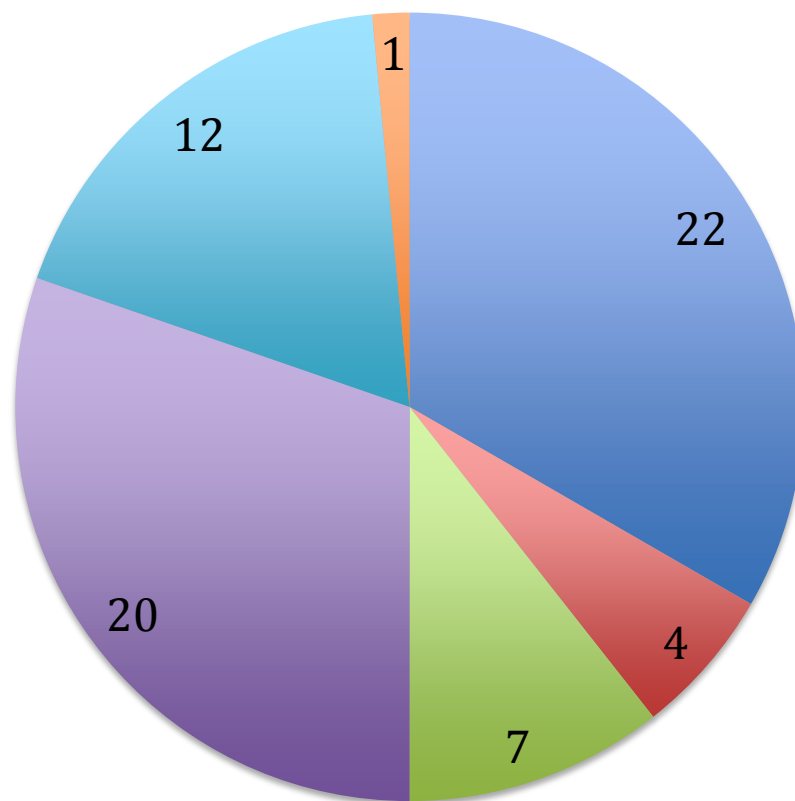




Appendix G

### Q2b) FREQUENCY OF CONTACT WITH COMMUNITY FACILITATOR

- None
- Twice/year
- Once/quarter
- Once/month
- Once/week
- 4 times/week



Appendix H

**Q3a, 4a, 5a) TOTAL SCORE OF  
INVOLVEMENT AT HOME,  
SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY**

