



Assessing the Level of Community Engagement in Schools as Academic Institutions in Seremban

Muhammad Atif Azim Abdull Hamid¹, Muhammad Hakimi Marudin¹, Muhammad Hazim Shabrin¹,
Muhammad Asyraf Mohammad Tamizi¹, Muhammad Noor Fauzie Mohd Ghazali¹, Irfani Nabilah
Junizan¹, Amirah Hafizah Muhammad Sabri¹, Muhamad Fuad Abdul Karim¹

¹Fakulti Sains Pentadbiran dan Pengajian Polisi, Universiti Teknologi MARA Negeri Sembilan,
Kampus Seremban

Corresponding email: fuad645@uitm.edu.my

Article Information

Keywords

Community Engagement,
Academic Institution and
School-Community Partnership.

Abstract

Community engagement plays a vital role in enhancing educational quality by strengthening citizenship, expanding learning opportunities, and fostering collaborative partnerships between schools and their surrounding communities. Despite its importance, many schools continue to face challenges such as limited financial resources, insufficient institutional support, and weak collaboration with community stakeholders. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the level of community engagement in schools as academic institutions in Seremban. Quantitative research design was employed using a survey method, with data collected from 104 respondents comprising students, teachers, parents, school administrators, and local community members. The reliability analysis demonstrated excellent internal consistency for the 15-item measurement instrument, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.9402. Descriptive analysis revealed a high level of community engagement, with an overall mean score of 4.18, indicating that respondents generally perceived strong collaboration and positive relationships between schools and the surrounding community. The findings suggest that active participation by multiple stakeholders contributes significantly to strengthening school-community partnerships and supporting the successful implementation of community-oriented educational initiatives. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of effective communication, shared responsibility, and sustained collaborative efforts in maintaining meaningful community engagement within educational institutions. These findings provide valuable insights for school administrators, policymakers, and community stakeholders in developing strategies that foster stronger partnerships and enhance the overall effectiveness of schools as community-centred academic institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Community engagement has become an increasingly important component of contemporary education, reflecting the growing recognition that schools function not only as centres of academic learning but also as institutions that contribute to social development and civic responsibility. Beyond delivering formal education, schools are expected

to establish meaningful partnerships with parents, local organisations, government agencies, and community members to create supportive learning environments that promote students' academic, social, and personal development. Such partnerships encourage the sharing of resources, expertise, and responsibilities, enabling schools to respond more effectively to the diverse needs of students and the wider community.

School–community engagement refers to the collaborative relationship between educational institutions and external stakeholders working towards shared educational and social goals. These partnerships may include volunteer programmes, parental involvement, community service initiatives, collaborations with non-governmental organisations, and partnerships with local authorities and businesses. Effective community engagement extends learning beyond the classroom by providing students with authentic experiences that enhance their understanding of social issues while fostering civic responsibility, leadership, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that strong school–community partnerships contribute positively to students' academic achievement, personal development, school attendance, and overall educational outcomes.

Community engagement is particularly valuable for students from disadvantaged or low socio-economic backgrounds. Active collaboration between schools, families, and communities provides additional educational resources, emotional support, mentoring opportunities, and equitable access to learning experiences that may otherwise be unavailable. Consequently, effective school–community partnerships help reduce educational disparities and create inclusive learning environments that support the holistic development of all students regardless of their socio-economic status.

Recent advancements in digital technology have further strengthened communication between schools and community stakeholders. Digital communication platforms, social media, school management systems, and online collaboration tools have enabled schools to disseminate information more efficiently, encourage parental participation, and facilitate continuous interaction among teachers, parents, and community organisations. In Seremban, many schools have adopted various forms of community engagement through educational, social, and extracurricular programmes that involve multiple stakeholders. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these initiatives varies considerably depending on the quality of communication, stakeholder commitment, institutional support, and the availability of resources.

Despite the recognized importance of community engagement, schools continue to encounter several challenges in establishing and sustaining effective partnerships with their surrounding communities. Financial constraints, limited institutional resources, insufficient stakeholder participation, ineffective communication channels, and weak coordination among external agencies often reduce the effectiveness of community engagement initiatives. Previous research has also identified additional barriers, including limited awareness of engagement opportunities, time constraints among parents and community members, and inadequate mechanisms for sustained collaboration. These challenges may discourage stakeholders from actively participating in school programmes and ultimately weaken the potential benefits of school–community partnerships.

Although community engagement has received considerable attention in educational research, empirical studies examining the level of community engagement within schools in Seremban remain limited. Existing research has largely focused on general educational outcomes, while relatively few studies have investigated stakeholders' perceptions of school–community partnerships and the extent to which community engagement is recognized within local educational institutions. This lack of local empirical evidence highlights the need for further investigation to better understand the current status of community engagement in schools within the Seremban context.

Accordingly, this study aims to assess the level of community engagement in schools as academic institutions in Seremban. Specifically, the study seeks to examine stakeholders' perceptions of school–community partnerships and identify factors that contribute to effective community engagement. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for school administrators, educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders in strengthening collaborative partnerships, improving stakeholder participation, and developing sustainable engagement strategies that enhance educational quality, student well-being, and community development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community engagement has become an essential component of modern education, reflecting the increasing recognition that schools serve not only as centres of academic instruction but also as institutions that contribute to social development and civic responsibility. Contemporary educational systems emphasise collaborative partnerships between schools and community stakeholders to create learning experiences that extend beyond traditional classroom settings. According to Magnussen and Hod (2023), community engagement and service-learning integrate academic learning with meaningful community service, enabling students to develop academic competencies while simultaneously addressing real community needs. Similarly, the University of Malaya (2020)

defines community engagement as a collaborative relationship between educational institutions and the wider community that promotes mutual benefits through knowledge sharing, capacity building, and community development. Such partnerships enable schools to strengthen relationships with parents, local organisations, government agencies, and community members, thereby creating a supportive educational ecosystem that enhances both student learning and community well-being.

Service-learning has emerged as an effective pedagogical approach that integrates academic knowledge with experiential learning through structured community service activities. Rather than treating community service as an extracurricular activity, service-learning positions are an integral component of the educational process where students apply classroom knowledge to real-world situations while engaging in critical reflection (Marshall University, n.d.). Magnussen and Hod (2023) argue that experiential learning enables students to connect theoretical concepts with practical applications by participating in community-based projects that address genuine societal challenges. This approach encourages higher-order thinking skills, including critical thinking, analytical reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving, while simultaneously promoting meaningful civic engagement. Through these authentic learning experiences, students gain a deeper understanding of societal issues and develop a stronger sense of responsibility towards their communities.

Previous studies consistently demonstrate that community engagement contributes significantly to students' academic, personal, and social development. Rahman et al. (2022) reported that participation in community-based educational programmes enhances students' communication skills, leadership abilities, teamwork, adaptability, and interpersonal competence, all of which are essential employability skills in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, students who actively participate in community engagement activities often exhibit greater self-confidence, improved cultural awareness, and stronger civic responsibility. These outcomes support the broader educational objective of developing well-rounded graduates who possess not only academic knowledge but also the social competencies required to contribute effectively to society. Consequently, community engagement has become an important strategy for promoting holistic student development within educational institutions.

Strong partnerships between schools and communities also play an important role in promoting educational equity and addressing social inequalities. Through collaboration with parents, community organisations, local authorities, and non-governmental organisations, schools can mobilise additional resources and support services that benefit students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Rahman et al. (2022) recognized that collaborative school-community initiatives help educational institutions address complex social issues, including poverty, educational inequality, and limited access to learning opportunities. Similarly, Sirin (2018) and Silva-Laya et al. (2020) found that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds often experience barriers that negatively affect their educational achievement. To address these challenges, schools increasingly implement community-based interventions such as mentoring programmes, tutoring services, outreach initiatives, and family engagement activities. Cartwright et al. (2023) further highlighted that these interventions contribute to creating more inclusive educational environments by providing students with additional academic support and social resources.

Technological advancements have further strengthened community engagement by facilitating communication, collaboration, and information sharing among schools, students, parents, and community stakeholders. Digital communication platforms, online learning environments, and collaborative technologies enable educational institutions to disseminate information efficiently, coordinate community activities, and encourage greater stakeholder participation. According to Marshall University (n.d.), technology-enhanced service-learning allows students to collaborate more effectively while increasing accessibility to educational resources and community projects. The integration of digital technologies also enables schools to sustain communication with parents and external partners, thereby strengthening long-term collaborative relationships that support educational improvement.

Despite the recognized benefits of community engagement, educational institutions continue to face numerous challenges in implementing and sustaining effective partnerships with the wider community. Previous studies have identified financial limitations, inadequate institutional resources, weak communication channels, and insufficient stakeholder commitment as major barriers to successful community engagement initiatives (University of Malaya, 2020; Magnussen & Hod, 2023). Limited funding often restricts the scope and sustainability of community programmes, while inadequate coordination among schools, families, and external organisations may reduce stakeholder participation and programme effectiveness. These challenges underscore the importance of developing systematic strategies that promote sustainable collaboration, strengthen institutional capacity, and encourage continuous stakeholder involvement in educational activities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to assess the level of community engagement in schools as academic institutions in Seremban. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to systematically measure respondents' perceptions and generate

statistical evidence regarding the extent of community engagement among relevant stakeholders. The cross-sectional design allowed data to be collected at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of respondents' perceptions of school–community engagement within the study area. The target population comprised key stakeholders who are directly involved in or affected by school–community partnerships, including students, teachers, parents, school administrators, and members of the local community in Seremban. A total of 104 respondents participated in the study. Respondents were selected using a convenience sampling technique based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. Although convenience sampling may limit the generalisability of the findings, it is considered appropriate for exploratory studies involving diverse stakeholder groups and limited access to a complete sampling frame. Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire consisting of two sections. Section A gathered respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, and stakeholder category (student, teacher, parent, school administrator, or community member). These variables were included to describe the characteristics of the study sample. Section B measured the level of community engagement in schools as academic institutions using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The instrument comprised items designed to assess respondents' perceptions of various dimensions of school–community engagement, including collaboration between schools and external agencies, parental involvement in school and community programmes, communication between schools and external stakeholders, and partnerships established to support educational and community development initiatives. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. Demographic characteristics were summarised using frequencies and percentages, while respondents' perceptions of community engagement were analysed using mean scores and standard deviations to determine the overall level of community engagement in schools as academic institutions in Seremban.

RESEARCH FINDING

Profile of Respondents

Table 1.0 above represents the demographic profile of respondents in this study that gives great insights into a person's participation to be as community engagement in schools as academic institutions in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. A total of 104 respondents are involved in this study's survey, females become the majority of respondents (54.8%, $n = 57$), while males respondents (45.2%, $n = 47$). 21 - 30 years old become the largest age group (54.8%, $n = 57$), second is 31 - 40 years old (18.3%, $n = 19$), age groups 41 - 50 years old, and below 20 years old has same quantity (11.5%, $n = 12$), continued with those who above 50 years old (3.8%, $n = 4$). For the role in relation to the school, mostly from the students (50.0%, $n = 52$), followed by parent/guardian, and the community member that has the same numbers (16.3%, $n = 17$), teacher (9.6%, $n = 10$), and the school administrator (7.7%, $n = 8$). Duration of 1 - 3 years is the highest length of the respondents that associating with the school (33.7, $n = 35$), second is 4 - 6 years (25.0%, $n = 26$), then closely followed by duration of less than 1 year (23.1%, $n = 24$), while the lowest duration is more than 6 years (18.3%, $n = 19$). Based on these findings, it shows that the respondents who live in the Seremban area are interested in being involved as a community to engage with schools as academic institutions, especially females, those aged 21 - 30 years old, and students respondents who have been associated with the school within 1 - 3 years.

Table 1.0
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS (N=104)

PROFILE	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
GENDER	MALE	47	45.2%
	FEMALE	57	54.8%
AGE	< 20 YEARS OLD	12	11.5%
	21 - 30 YEARS OLD	57	54.8%
	31 - 40 YEARS OLD	19	18.3%
	41 - 50 YEARS OLD	12	11.5%

	> 50 YEARS OLD	4	3.8%
ROLE IN RELATION TO THE SCHOOL	STUDENT	52	50.0%
	TEACHERS	10	9.6%
	PARENT/GUARDIAN	17	16.3%
	SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR	8	7.7%
	COMMUNITY MEMBER	17	16.3%
LENGTH OF ASSOCIATION WITH THE SCHOOL	< 1 year	24	23.1%
	1 - 3 years	35	33.7%
	4 -6 years	26	25.0%
	> 6 years	19	18.3%

The reliability analysis produced Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.942 (Table 2.0), indicating excellent internal consistency for the 15-item instrument used to measure community engagement in schools as academic institutions in Seremban. According to Pallant (2016), Cronbach's alpha values above 0.90 indicate excellent reliability, values between 0.80 and 0.89 indicate good reliability, 0.70 to 0.79 acceptable reliability, 0.60 to 0.69 questionable reliability, 0.50 to 0.59 poor reliability, and values below 0.50 unacceptable reliability. Therefore, the obtained alpha coefficient demonstrates that the questionnaire items consistently measure the same underlying construct and possess a high degree of internal consistency. In addition, all 104 questionnaires were complete and valid for analysis, with no missing data or excluded cases, indicating excellent data quality and integrity.

Table 2.0
RELIABILITY TEST

Variable	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Assumed
Assessing the Level of Community Engagement in Schools as Academic Institutions in Seremban	15	0.942	Excellent

Based on the interpretation scale (Table 3.0), mean scores ranging from 1.00 to 2.33 indicate a low level, scores between 2.34 and 3.67 indicate a moderate level, and scores ranging from 3.68 to 5.00 indicate a high level of the measured construct. As presented in Table 4.0, the descriptive analysis of the variable community engagement in schools as academic institutions in Seremban, based on responses from 104 valid participants, yielded an overall mean score of 4.18 with a standard deviation of 0.596. Since the mean score falls within the 3.68–5.00 range, the findings indicate a high level of community engagement among the respondents. This result suggests that respondents generally hold positive perceptions of, and actively support, community engagement initiatives and collaborative partnerships between schools and the wider community. Furthermore, the relatively low standard deviation indicates that respondents' views were reasonably consistent, reflecting a strong level of agreement regarding the implementation of community engagement practices in schools.

Table 3.0
LEVEL OF MEAN SCORE RANGE

Mean Score Range	Level
1.00 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.67	Medium
3.68 – 5.00	High

Table 4.0
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Assessing the Level of Community Engagement in Schools as Academic Institutions in Seremban	4.18	0.596	104

CONCLUSION

This study assessed the level of community engagement in schools as academic institutions in Seremban from the perspectives of students, teachers, parents, school administrators, and local community members. The findings revealed a high level of community engagement, indicating that respondents generally perceived school–community partnerships positively and recognised the importance of collaborative efforts in supporting educational development. The high mean score demonstrates that community engagement initiatives are widely practised and supported, reflecting strong cooperation between schools and their surrounding communities. Furthermore, the relatively low variation in responses suggests a consistent level of agreement among stakeholders regarding the effectiveness and value of these engagement practices. The findings highlight that active participation by multiple stakeholders contributes significantly to strengthening school–community relationships and creating a supportive educational environment. Effective collaboration between schools, parents, external agencies, and community organisations enables educational institutions to extend learning beyond the classroom while promoting students' academic achievement, civic responsibility, and holistic development. These findings reinforce the view that community engagement is an essential component of sustainable educational development and should remain a strategic priority for schools. Despite the encouraging findings, schools continue to face challenges in sustaining meaningful community engagement, including financial constraints, limited institutional resources, communication barriers, and the need for stronger inter-organisational collaboration. Addressing these challenges requires continuous commitment from educational institutions, policymakers, parents, and community stakeholders to strengthen communication mechanisms, expand collaborative partnerships, and develop sustainable community engagement programmes. Schools should also leverage digital communication platforms and strategic partnerships with public, private, and non-governmental organisations to enhance stakeholder participation and maximise available resources. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on school–community engagement by providing empirical evidence from the Seremban context. The findings offer valuable insights for school administrators, educators, and policymakers in designing policies and initiatives that strengthen collaboration between schools and local communities. Such efforts have the potential to improve educational quality, foster greater civic participation, promote educational equity, and support the holistic development of students. Future research should employ larger and more representative samples using probability sampling techniques to enhance the generalisability of the findings. In addition, mixed methods or qualitative approaches could be adopted to explore stakeholders' experiences, expectations, and challenges in greater depth. Comparative studies involving different districts or states would also provide broader insights into the factors influencing community engagement and support the development of evidence-based strategies for strengthening school–community partnerships across Malaysia.

REFERENCES

- Marisol Silva-Laya, Natalia D'Angelo, Elda García, Laura Zúñiga, Teresa Fernández.(2020). Urban Poverty and Education. A Systematic Literature Review. *Educational Research Review*, 29(100280). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1747938X18305876>
- Learning as Service-Based Skills Development. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*. Advance Online Publication. https://www.newswise.com/pdf_docs/174046369349776_s10798-024-09947-w.pdf
- Kauthar Y. Khamis, Shadrack Mwakalinga.(2025). Digital Learning Tools and Student Engagement in the Learning Process: A Case of Zanzibar's Urban Public Secondary Schools Tanzania. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*. 51(11). <https://journalajess.com/index.php/AJESS/article/view/2593>
- Zulida Abdul Kadir.(2023) Student Engagement in Online Language Learning: A Study at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia. *Journal of Social Transformation and Regional Development*. 5(1). <https://publisher.uthm.edu.my/ojs/index.php/jstard/article/view/14538/5843>
- Marshall University. (n.d.). *What is service-learning?* Center for Teaching and Learning. <https://www.marshall.edu/ctl/community-engagement/what-is-service-learning>
- Taylor & Francis. (n.d.). *Inventions: Aims and scope*. Taylor & Francis Online. <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/riie20/about-this-journal#aims-and-scope>
- Taylor & Francis. (n.d.). *International Journal of Technology and Design Education: Aims and scope*. Taylor & Francis Online. <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/riie20/about-this-journal#aims-and-scope>
- Zalfa Laili Hamzah, Nor Azlin & Muhammad Asyraf. *Community Engagements Experience in Education Context*. Universiti Malaya Community Engagement Centre <https://myumcares.um.edu.my/Image/COMMUNICATE/E%20BOOK/COMMUNITY%20ENGAGEMENT%20EXPERIENCE%20IN%20EDUCATION%20CONTEXT.pdf>
- Magnussen, R., & Yotam Hod. (2023). Bridging communities and schools in Urban development: community and citizen science. *Instructional Science*, 51. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-023-09641-9>
- Cartwright, M., O'Callaghan, E., Stacy, S. T., Hord, C., & Kloos, H. (2023). Addressing the educational challenges of urban poverty: a case for solution-based research. *Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frma.2023.981837>
- Mills, M. T., Moore, L. C., & Ford, D. Y. (2026). Reconceptualizing Verbal Intelligence: Perspectives From Gifted and Talented Black Elementary Students and Teachers in Urban Schools. *Urban Education*. SageJournals. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420859261433984>