



## PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN THE LEARNING PROCESS OF SUNDAY SCHOOL AT CETYA SANGHA RATANA GIANYAR

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### Abstract

This research is motivated by the phenomenon of declining participation and attendance rates of children at the Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar Buddhist Sunday School (SMB), where the average attendance is only 10–15 children out of 25–30 enrolled. The purpose of this study is to determine the involvement of parents as *pubbacariya* (first teachers) in supporting the sustainability of children's Dhamma learning through the Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar Buddhist Sunday School. This study uses a descriptive phenomenological qualitative approach to explore parents' subjective experiences. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 7 parents as key informants, as well as observation and documentation. The results show that parents understand the role of *pubbacariya* as a moral and spiritual responsibility in shaping children's character, but their implementation is still dominated by passive involvement, such as limited to dropping off and picking up children. The main inhibiting factors for active involvement are time constraints due to uncertain work hours and schedule conflicts with socio-religious obligations in the community. The discussion reveals that parental involvement is influenced by the individual's construction of meaning towards Dhamma education and the availability of social support from the family. The study's conclusions confirm that the sustainability of children's Dhamma learning is highly dependent on the synergy between the family and the SMB institution. Strengthening parents' awareness of their spiritual role is key to addressing the decline in children's participation in religious education.

**Keywords:** *Role of Parents, Pubbacariya, Buddhist Sunday School, Dhamma Learning, Parental Involvement*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh fenomena penurunan partisipasi dan tingkat kehadiran anak di Sekolah Minggu Buddha (SMB) Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar, di mana rata-rata kehadiran hanya mencapai 10–15 anak dari 25–30 anak yang terdaftar. Adapun tujuan penelitian ini untuk mengetahui keterlibatan orang tua sebagai *pubbacariya* (guru pertama) dalam mendukung keberlanjutan pembelajaran Dhamma anak melalui Sekolah Minggu Buddha di Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis deskriptif untuk menggali pengalaman subjektif orang tua. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap 7 orang tua sebagai informan utama, serta observasi dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa orang tua memahami peran *pubbacariya* sebagai tanggung jawab moral dan spiritual dalam membentuk karakter anak, namun implementasinya masih didominasi keterlibatan pasif, seperti sebatas mengantar dan menjemput anak. Faktor penghambat utama keterlibatan aktif adalah keterbatasan waktu akibat jam kerja yang tidak menentu dan konflik jadwal dengan kewajiban sosial-keagamaan di masyarakat. Pembahasan mengungkap bahwa keterlibatan orang tua dipengaruhi oleh konstruksi makna individu



terhadap pendidikan Dhamma dan ketersediaan dukungan sosial dari keluarga. Simpulan penelitian menegaskan bahwa keberlanjutan pembelajaran Dhamma anak sangat bergantung pada sinergi antara peran keluarga dan lembaga SMB. Penguatan kesadaran orang tua akan peran spiritualnya menjadi kunci utama untuk mengatasi penurunan partisipasi anak dalam pendidikan keagamaan.

**Kata Kunci:** *Peran Orang Tua, Pubbacariya, Sekolah Minggu Buddha, Pembelajaran Dhamma, Keterlibatan Orang Tua*

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## **A. Introduction**

Character education grounded in spiritual values has re-emerged as a key concern in contemporary educational discourse, alongside growing awareness of the importance of shaping children's character amid rapid social change. Education is no longer understood merely as a process of cognitive knowledge transfer, but also as a means of cultivating inner development, attitudes, and moral values in learners. A number of studies indicate that strengthening character education based on spiritual values plays a significant role in fostering children's prosocial and moral behavior (Andanti et al., 2024). However, the challenges of globalization and shifts in modern family lifestyles have contributed to the weakening of the internalization of these values among children.

In Bali, which is widely recognized as a society with strong religious and spiritual traditions, practices of inner development such as meditation, mindfulness, and awareness-based parenting are gaining increasing attention, particularly among urban communities. This phenomenon reflects a growing need for educational approaches that balance intellectual and spiritual aspects in child development. Nevertheless, data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2023) show an increase in labor force participation in the tourism and service sectors in Bali, which has implications for the limited time parents have to interact with their children (Muliawan, 2025). This condition potentially affects parental involvement in education, including non-formal religious education.

In addition, pubbacariya also plays an important role in influencing children's learning interest and academic success. When families, particularly parents, provide stimulation, encouragement, and guidance in their children's learning activities, children are more likely to develop stronger learning interests especially in Buddhist religious education and achieve higher academic performance. Conversely, when parents are indifferent to their children's learning activities, children tend to lack motivation, making it difficult for them to develop interest in religious studies and to achieve optimal academic outcomes (Iskandar & Handoko, 2020).

However, the reality in the domain of non-formal religious education presents a different dynamic. In Buddhist Sunday Schools (Sekolah Minggu Buddha/SMB), as one of the platforms for Dhamma learning for children, particularly at Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar, there has been a decline in student attendance in recent years. Based on the



researcher's preliminary observations during SMB activities at Cetya Sangha Ratana, the number of participating children has been unstable and tends to decrease. Attendance records from SMB administrators indicate that in the previous year there were approximately 25–30 registered participants, but in recent months the average number of active attendees has dropped to around 10–15 children per session. This decline suggests issues related to the sustainability of children's participation in religious activities, influenced not only by internal factors within the child but also by external factors such as family support.

Furthermore, initial conversations with several administrators and parents revealed that one of the factors affecting children's attendance is the limited time parents have to accompany and support their participation in SMB activities. Many parents work in tourism, trade, or informal sectors with irregular working hours, including weekends, which coincide with the schedule of Buddhist Sunday School activities. On the other hand, Balinese society is also characterized by dense social and ritual obligations, such as banjar activities, family religious ceremonies, and other communal engagements.

These conditions often force parents to prioritize multiple responsibilities simultaneously, thereby limiting their involvement in their children's religious education. This situation indicates that the continuity of children's Dhamma learning is not solely determined by children's interest or teaching methods in the Buddhist Sunday School, but is also closely related to parental participation and involvement in supporting the learning process. Research by Suleska and Jelita (2025) emphasizes that parental involvement in children's education has a positive correlation with learning success and character development; thus, low parental involvement can lead to decreased participation in educational activities.

In Buddhist teachings, parents are regarded as *pubbacariya*, the first teachers of their children who bear the responsibility of instilling moral and spiritual values from an early age. However, in everyday reality, this role is often constrained by various limitations, including time, economic factors, and socio-cultural demands. Learning in Buddhist Sunday Schools focuses on the development of students' intellectual, emotional, and social capacities. When learning obstacles arise, a *pubbacariya* must employ appropriate strategies to provide effective guidance and solutions. With suitable approaches, the learning process in Sunday School can become more engaging, foster critical thinking, and enhance students' motivation to learn more diligently. Essentially, such motivation must first arise from within the *pubbacariya*, enabling them to teach and guide with strong enthusiasm (Ayu et al., 2022).

Once a strong motivational foundation is established, the *pubbacariya* can then transmit this motivation to their students. When children possess high levels of motivation, it yields positive impacts not only for themselves but also for those around them. Through the continuous motivation provided by the *pubbacariya*, it is expected that children can transform their behavior toward more positive directions and strive to achieve noble aspirations.



Based on this background, the main problem of this study is the suboptimal role of parental involvement in supporting the learning process of the Buddhist Sunday School at Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar. Limitations in time, work demands, and the complexity of socio-religious activities are suspected to be inhibiting factors. This study offers novelty by positioning parents as the primary subjects of analysis and employing a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore their lived experiences, meanings, and forms of involvement in their children's Dhamma learning process within the socio-cultural context of Bali, particularly at Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar. Therefore, an in-depth study is required to analyze the forms, levels, and factors influencing parental involvement in the Buddhist Sunday School learning process.

## **B. Method**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive phenomenological research design. The phenomenological method is chosen because the study focuses on understanding the experiences of parents and the meaning of those experiences for the individuals who live them (Moustakas, 1994). More specifically, this approach is directed at uncovering the meanings that parents assign to their role in their children's Dhamma education, the concrete forms of parental involvement in Sunday Buddhist School activities, as well as the challenges and strategies they employ in balancing various social roles.

The focus of this research is the lived experiences of parents in carrying out their role as *pubbacariya* in supporting their children's Dhamma learning through Sunday Buddhist School activities at Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar. This includes how parents interpret their role as *pubbacariya* in the context of Dhamma education, the forms of their involvement in supporting Sunday Buddhist School activities, the factors that influence their level of engagement in accompanying their children, and the impact of such involvement on the continuity of their children's Dhamma learning.

This research was conducted at the Sunday Buddhist School (SMB) of Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar, Bali, which was selected as the research site because it serves as one of the main centers for Dhamma learning for Buddhist children in the Gianyar area. In addition, the site was chosen due to the observed phenomenon of declining attendance among children in Sunday Buddhist School activities, making it important to further examine the role of parental involvement in sustaining children's engagement in Dhamma learning.

The data sources in this study consist of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected directly from informants through in-depth interviews, with the main informants being parents whose children participate in Sunday Buddhist School activities at Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar. Approximately 5–8 parents were selected as main informants using purposive sampling. To enrich and complement the data, supporting informants were also involved, including Sunday Buddhist School teachers (1–2 individuals) and temple administrators or SMB managers (1 individual). Meanwhile,



secondary data were obtained from various documents related to Sunday Buddhist School activities, such as children's attendance records, instructional activity documents, photographs or documentation of activities, as well as books, journals, and previous studies relevant to the research topic. These secondary data were used to strengthen and support the findings obtained from the primary data.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **1. Concept in Buddhist Religious Education**

In Buddhist teachings, parents hold a very important position in the process of educating children. Parents are regarded as the first teachers, who provide the foundational moral and spiritual education for their children. This concept emphasizes that the family is the primary environment for instilling Dhamma values before children receive education through formal or non-formal institutions (Jordy Steffanus, 2025). The role as first teachers is not limited to fulfilling children's physical needs, but also includes the responsibility to provide moral exemplars, guide behavior, and instill virtues in everyday life. In the context of Buddhist religious education, parents are expected to serve as role models in practicing the Dhamma so that children can learn through direct experience within the family environment (Susilawati et al., 2025).

The concept of first teachers is explicitly found in Buddhist teachings, particularly in the Sigalovada Sutta, which explains the reciprocal duties between parents and children. The sutta states that parents are responsible for preventing their children from engaging in wrongdoing, encouraging them to perform good deeds, providing education and skills, and preparing them for the future. This teaching highlights that the role of parents is not merely biological, but also pedagogical and moral (Iswari et al., 2025). Furthermore, the Mangala Sutta mentions that honoring one's parents (*mata-pitu upatthana*) is one of the greatest blessings in life, demonstrating the importance of family relationships in shaping a child's spiritual character (Sarwi, 2025).

From the perspective of modern educational theory, the role of parents as first teachers aligns with the theory of parental involvement proposed by Joyce Epstein, which emphasizes that parental engagement in a child's education significantly contributes to academic success and character development. Epstein identifies several forms of parental involvement, such as parenting, communication, learning at home, and participation in school activities (Eko Susiono & Alexander Candra, 2024). Furthermore, empirical studies show that parental involvement in children's religious education is positively associated with the internalization of moral and spiritual values (Saccaka et al., 2024). This indicates that the role of first teachers is not only normative within religious teachings but also supported by empirical evidence in modern scholarly studies.

Social Role Theory explains that every individual in society holds multiple roles that must be performed within social life. Each of these roles is accompanied by a set of expectations and responsibilities that must be fulfilled (Acep & Epitamalasari, 2026). According to this theory, a person can carry out more than one role simultaneously, such



as being a worker, a member of society, and a parent within the family. When these various roles impose different demands, individuals may experience a condition known as role strain.

The basic concept of Social Role Theory was introduced by Ralph Linton, who stated that role is the dynamic aspect of social status. This idea was further developed by Robert K. Merton through the concepts of role set and role strain, explaining that individuals often face conflicts due to the multiple role demands they must fulfill simultaneously (Susijati, 2026). These theories provide a conceptual foundation that individual behavior, including that of parents, is strongly influenced by the social expectations attached to their roles.

In the context of this study, parents bear responsibilities as breadwinners, members of society involved in social and customary activities, and educators for their children. These various demands can influence the level of parental involvement in supporting children's participation in religious education, including Buddhist Sunday School activities. By applying Social Role Theory, this research seeks to understand how parents balance their multiple roles and how these conditions affect their involvement in their children's Dhamma education.

From the perspective of Buddhist teachings, balance in carrying out various life roles is also emphasized in the Sigalovada Sutta, which outlines reciprocal relationships between individuals and various parties in social life, including the relationship between parents and children. This sutta affirms that parents have a moral obligation to educate and guide their children, even while managing other social responsibilities. Additionally, the Vyagghapajja Sutta explains the balance between worldly and spiritual life, including how a Buddhist manages work, family life, and Dhamma practice harmoniously. These teachings are relevant to the concept of role balance in modern social theory (Johanes et al., 2021).

Theoretically, symbolic interactionism is rooted in the ideas of George Herbert Mead, who emphasized that meaning is formed through social interaction and the use of symbols in communication. This concept was further developed by Herbert Blumer, who argued that human actions are based on meanings, these meanings arise from social interaction, and are modified through individual interpretation (Muljadi Muljadi et al., 2022). In addition, Charles Horton Cooley, through the concept of the looking-glass self, explained that individuals shape their self-understanding based on interactions and the judgments of others around them. In the context of parents, how they perceive their role as educators is strongly influenced by interactions within social, cultural, and religious environments (Ida Ayu Gede Yadnyawati et al., 2022).

From a Buddhist perspective, the formation of meaning through experience and interaction is also reflected in the Kalama Sutta, which emphasizes the importance of understanding based on direct experience and personal reflection, rather than merely accepting tradition or authority. This is relevant to how parents construct meanings regarding their children's Dhamma education based on their lived experiences.



Furthermore, the Mangala Sutta states that associating with wise people (*panditanam ca sevana*) is one of the conditions for happiness, indicating that social interaction plays a crucial role in shaping values and meanings in a person's life (Joli Joli et al., 2022).

Moreover, empirical studies show that parents' perceptions and meanings regarding education significantly influence their level of involvement (Ayu et al., 2022). Parents who interpret education as a primary responsibility tend to be more actively engaged in supporting their children, compared to those who view education as solely the responsibility of institutions. Therefore, the symbolic interactionism approach provides a comprehensive analytical framework to understand how parents' constructed meanings influence their participation in the learning process of Buddhist Sunday School at Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar.

When parents and educational institutions support one another, the child's learning process can take place more effectively (L. Suniati & Muljadi Muljadi, 2022). In the context of Buddhist Sunday School, parental support may take the form of encouraging children to participate in learning activities, providing motivation, and helping them apply Dhamma values in their daily lives. Such support can strengthen the process of internalizing moral and spiritual values in children.

Sheldon Cohen and Thomas A. Wills argue that social support has a protective function for individuals, including enhancing psychological well-being and learning success (Gotami, 2023). In the field of education, Joyce Epstein emphasizes that collaboration between families and educational institutions is one of the key factors in improving children's engagement and achievement. This support includes emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal support (Chowmas, 2020).

From the perspective of Buddhist teachings, the importance of social support in human life is reflected in the Sigalovada Sutta, which emphasizes reciprocal relationships between parents and children, including the obligation of parents to guide, educate, and provide moral support. Furthermore, the Mangala Sutta highlights that living in a favorable environment (*patirupa desa vasa*) and associating with wise individuals are conditions that support a person's moral and spiritual development. This indicates that support from the social environment plays an important role in shaping individual character.

## 2. The Role of *Pubbacariya* in the Learning Process of Buddhist Sunday School

Buddhist Sunday School is a form of non-formal education conducted in Viharas or Cetiya, where the teaching and learning process is carried out by volunteer instructors (teachers). Most instructors are only high school graduates and teach according to their individual abilities. As a result, the teaching and learning process at SMB Taman Lumbini remains relatively basic. Learning that is not based on clear guidelines or a curriculum will not produce effective or optimal outcomes. This condition is caused by instructors who do not have a background in Buddhist education or religious teaching and who lack an understanding of curriculum development. The education carried out at SMB Taman

Lumbini is still teacher-centered; therefore, it cannot achieve optimal results nor clearly determine the direction of Buddhist education (Wijoyo & Nyanasuryanadi, 2020).

In light of this situation, SMB education requires structured guidance such as a curriculum in order to implement education in a planned, organized, and systematic manner. Specifically, the principles should focus more on deepening the understanding of Buddhist teachings and the practice of *sīla* (morality) and *samādhi* (concentration). Engel et al. (2021) state that loving-kindness meditation can overcome the fear of failure. By overcoming this fear, students can develop greater self-confidence and cultivate wisdom in their daily lives. These aspects should be incorporated into the curriculum so that the goals of Buddhist education can be achieved.

The role of *Pubbacariya* is to lay the moral and spiritual foundation so that children are mentally prepared when receiving instruction in Buddhist Sunday School. As the first teachers, parents are responsible for introducing fundamental values such as *Hiri* (moral shame of doing wrong) and *Ottappa* (fear of the consequences of wrongdoing) within the home environment. When children enter Sunday School, the role of parents does not cease; rather, they function as a bridge that aligns the theoretical teachings of the Dhamma learned in class with real-life practice. Without the support of parents as *Pubbacariya* who provide behavioral modeling, Sunday School learning often remains merely intellectual knowledge without resulting in character transformation (Fonataba & Silas, 2025). Parents who actively fulfill this role will continuously motivate, accompany religious practices, and serve as the first place for children to discuss moral issues they encounter.

Based on the research results using a descriptive phenomenological qualitative approach, the data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation at the Buddhist Sunday School (SMB) Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar.

**Table 1. Research Informant Data**

No	Type of Informant	Number	Criteria / Role	Description
1	Parents (main informants)	7 people	Have children who attend SMB and are involved in parenting	Main source of lived experience
2	SMB teachers	2 people	Instructors in Buddhist Sunday School activities	Provide information on the learning process
3	Vihara administrators	1 people	Managers of SMB activities	Provide institutional and policy data

**Source: Data from research interview results (2026)**

Table 1, shows that this study involved three different groups of informants, namely parents as the main informants, as well as SMB teachers and vihara administrators as supporting informants.

**Table 2. Data on Children’s Attendance Levels at SMB Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar**

<b>Year / Period</b>	<b>Number of Registered Children</b>	<b>Average Attendance</b>	<b>Description</b>
Previous year	25–30 children	20–25 children	Relatively stable
Recent months	25–30 children	10–15 children	Experiencing a decline

**Source: Documentation data from the Buddhist Sunday School Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar (2025–2026)**

Based on Table 2, it shows a decline in the level of children’s attendance in Buddhist Sunday School activities. Although the number of registered children remains relatively the same, active attendance has decreased quite significantly.

**Table 3. Forms of Parental Involvement in SMB Learning**

<b>Form of Involvement</b>	<b>Description of Findings</b>	<b>Category</b>
Dropping off and picking up children	Parents only ensure that children attend SMB	Passive
Providing motivation	Reminding children to participate in SMB	Moderate
Assisting learning at home	Helping children understand Dhamma values	Active
Involvement in vihara activities	Participating in religious activities together with children	Active

**Source: Results of in-depth interviews with parents (2026)**

Table 3 shows that parental involvement in SMB learning varies from passive to active levels. Most parents fall into the passive to moderate involvement category, characterized by limited participation focused mainly on dropping off their children without directly assisting in the learning process. Only a small number of parents actively support their children in learning Dhamma values at home as well as participating in vihara activities.

**Table 4. Factors Influencing Parental Involvement**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Field Findings</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Occupation	Irregular working hours (tourism, trade)	Limited time
Customary obligations	Banjar activities and religious ceremonies	Schedule conflicts

Religious understanding	Different levels of Dhamma understanding	Variation in involvement
Environmental support	Varying levels of extended family support	Low consistency

**Source: Results of interviews with teachers, administrators, and parents (2026).**

Table 4 shows that parental involvement is influenced by various internal and external factors. Occupational factors and customary obligations are the main barriers that lead to limited time in assisting children. In addition, differences in the level of Dhamma understanding also affect the intensity of parental involvement in children’s religious education.

Interview data with teachers and vihara administrators indicate that the primary factors influencing parental involvement are time constraints due to work in the tourism and trade sectors, as well as customary and religious activities in the banjar. This condition causes some parents to be unable to consistently accompany their children in SMB activities, which in turn affects attendance levels and the consistency of children’s learning. From a subjective experience perspective, some parents expressed a strong desire to be involved in their children’s Dhamma education; however, they are often constrained by the demands of multiple roles in their daily lives.

**Table 5. Analysis of Parents’ Interpretation of the Role of Pubbacariya**

Meaning Category	Field Findings	Pattern of Meaning
Moral responsibility	Parents are viewed as the first party to educate children	Normative-religious
Dhamma role model	Parents feel they must be an example of good behavior	Exemplary
Spiritual education	SMB is considered a continuation of education at home	Complementary
Role limitations	Not all parents are able to perform optimally due to time constraints	Realistic-conditional

**Source: Results of analysis of parent interviews (2026)**

From the interview results, it was found that parents’ interpretations of their role as *pubbacariya* vary; however, most understand that parents are the primary party responsible for shaping the moral and spiritual character of children. This indicates a gap between normative understanding and actual practice in carrying out the role of Dhamma education for children, which is dynamic and influenced by individual interpretations, socio-economic conditions, and the cultural demands of the surrounding community. Nevertheless, not all parents are able to carry out this role optimally due to time constraints, work commitments, and socio-religious responsibilities within the Balinese community.

**Table 6. Analysis of the Impact of Parental Involvement on Children’s Learning**

<b>Level of Involvement</b>	<b>Impact on Children</b>	<b>Pattern of Change</b>
High	Children are more disciplined and active in SMB	Strong positive
Moderate	Children attend inconsistently	Fluctuating
Low	Children rarely participate in SMB activities	Negative
Not involved	Children discontinue SMB	Participation dropout

**Source: Results of observation and SMB attendance data (2026)**

The analysis shows an empirical relationship between parental involvement and the continuity of children’s participation in Buddhist Sunday School activities. The higher the level of parental involvement, the more stable the children’s attendance and engagement in Dhamma learning.

### **3. The Meaning of the Role of Parents as *Pubbācariya* in the Perspective of Buddhist Theory and Education**

Most informants stated that this role is not limited to the biological aspect of being parents, but also encompasses moral and spiritual responsibilities in shaping a child’s character from an early age. Parents recognize that Dhamma values such as honesty, patience, and respect for elders must first be instilled within the family environment before being reinforced through activities in the Buddhist Sunday School.

The research findings indicate that parents understand their role as *pubbācariya* as the first teachers who are responsible for the moral and spiritual development of their children. This understanding is in line with the concept found in the Sigalovada Sutta, which emphasizes the duties of parents to educate, guide, and prevent their children from wrongdoing, as well as to prepare them for their future. This reinforces the normative foundation that the family is the primary basis of Dhamma education before children enter formal institutions such as the Buddhist Sunday School.

Furthermore, the finding that parents interpret this role as a moral responsibility and a form of role modeling is also consistent with modern educational theories such as Epstein’s concept of parental involvement, which highlights the importance of parents’ engagement in shaping children’s character through parenting, communication, and learning at home. Thus, there is a clear alignment between Buddhist values and contemporary educational theory that the role of parents is not merely biological, but also pedagogical and spiritual.

However, in practice, a gap is found between ideal understanding and actual implementation. Limitations of time, work, and social responsibilities cause the role as

pubbācariya not to be carried out optimally. This condition indicates that the ideals of Buddhist teachings have not yet been fully internalized in everyday parenting practices.

#### **4. Forms of Parental Involvement from the Perspective of Social Role Theory and Social Support**

Research findings indicate that parental involvement ranges from passive to active forms, from simply accompanying children to SMB (Buddhist Sunday School) to actively assisting them in learning Dhamma values at home. This phenomenon can be explained through Social Role Theory (Ralph Linton, Robert K. Merton, Erving Goffman), which posits that individuals perform multiple roles simultaneously, such as workers, community members, and parents.

In this context, parents experience role strain due to conflicts between economic, social, and family educational roles. This is reflected in the predominance of passive involvement, largely influenced by time constraints and work demands. Furthermore, the low level of active involvement is not merely due to a lack of awareness but also results from structural pressures within contemporary Balinese society.

Empirical data show that parents at the research site perform multiple roles simultaneously: as income earners in the tourism or trade sectors, as community members bound by customary obligations (*banjar*), and as *pubbacariya* (primary spiritual educators) for their children. The emergence of passive involvement is a clear manifestation of role strain, where rigid time demands from occupational responsibilities and religious rituals in Bali conflict with the regular schedule of Sunday School.

Moreover, findings reveal that structural pressures, particularly unpredictable working hours, serve as a determining factor in creating role conflict. From the perspective of Merton, when expectations from one role (as a worker) consume substantial time resources, individuals tend to compromise on other roles (as spiritual educators). This explains why, despite parents having a strong normative understanding of their moral responsibility as the first teachers, their actual practices are often reduced to merely logistical functions (Lutfih, 2024). This gap demonstrates that parental involvement is not solely determined by internal factors such as religious beliefs, but is also strongly influenced by how individuals balance various social expectations within a contemporary environment.

The impact of this role imbalance directly affects children's attendance consistency, where average attendance decreases from 20–25 children to only 10–15. This indicates that instrumental support from parents in their role as learning facilitators cannot function optimally, as their energy is largely absorbed by economic and socio-cultural roles (Kumalasari et al., 2024). These findings are also consistent with Social Support Theory proposed by Sidney Cobb as well as Sheldon Cohen and Thomas A. Wills, which emphasize that social support plays a crucial role in enhancing individual involvement. When support from the extended family or surrounding environment is suboptimal, parental involvement in children's education becomes limited. In the context



of this study, the lack of a structured support system from the social environment further weakens the consistency of parental involvement in children's Dhamma education.

### **5. Construction of Parental Meaning in the Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism**

Research findings indicate that parents' interpretations of Dhamma education are strongly shaped by life experiences, social interactions, and cultural environments. Parents who are actively involved in religious activities tend to have a stronger understanding of the importance of SMB (Sunday Buddhist School), whereas those with low involvement tend to view SMB as solely the responsibility of the institution.

This phenomenon can be explained through Symbolic Interactionism, as developed by George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, and Erving Goffman, which emphasizes that human actions are based on meanings constructed through social interaction. The meaning of the parental role is not fixed but is continuously constructed through experience, communication within the community, and the influence of the social environment.

This is consistent with the way social interaction connects to the practice of religious moderation observed in the vihara environment where this study was conducted. It reflects Mead's symbolic interactionism theory, in which religious and social symbols are used as tools to strengthen relationships among religious communities. Through social interaction and the use of symbols, individuals can broaden their understanding of the world, build harmonious relationships, coexist peacefully, and develop mutual respect and acceptance of differences.

Furthermore, Mead elaborated his ideas on the emergence of the self (the emergent of the self) and the self as a social product (the self as social emergent). He also introduced the concept of intrapersonal interaction between the "I" and the "Me," as well as interpersonal interaction between the self and others. In explaining the reasons behind behavior or action, Mead focused on impulses generated by behavioral stimuli that do not automatically produce action but pass through a process called the mind, which then leads to behavior (Amananti, 2024).

Mead also distinguished behavior into two types: (1) covert behavior, which does not involve others but consists of thinking processes involving meaning and symbols; and (2) overt behavior, which refers to actual actions involving both the individual and others (Derung, 2017). Not all overt behavior involves covert processes, as seen in spontaneous or habitual actions that occur without conscious thought or external influence. However, theoretically, covert behavior remains the most crucial focus within symbolic interactionism.

These findings are also aligned with the concept of the looking-glass self proposed by Charles Horton Cooley, in which parents develop an understanding of their roles based on how they perceive others view them within their social and religious communities.



Thus, parental involvement in SMB is not merely structural but also the result of a dynamic process of social meaning construction.

From a Buddhist perspective, this process of meaning-making aligns with the teachings of the Kalama Sutta, which emphasizes the importance of personal experience and reflection in shaping beliefs and actions. This suggests that parents' decisions to engage or not in their children's Dhamma education are influenced by reflective processes grounded in their own life experiences.

## **6. Social Support as a Determining Factor in the Sustainability of Children's Dhamma Education**

The research findings indicate that social support from family and the surrounding environment significantly influences parental involvement in children's education. Parents who receive support from their spouses or extended family tend to be more active in accompanying their children in participating in SMB (Buddhist Sunday School) activities.

This finding is consistent with the social support theory proposed by Sidney Cobb as well as Joyce Epstein, which emphasizes that emotional, informational, and instrumental support play a crucial role in determining individual involvement in educational activities. A lack of social support leads to inconsistent parental involvement, which tends to be situational in nature.

In the Buddhist context, these findings are aligned with the Mangala Sutta, which highlights the importance of a conducive environment (*patirupa desa vasa*) and association with the wise (*panditanam ca sevana*) as key factors supporting happiness and spiritual development. This reinforces the idea that social support is not only psychological in nature but also spiritual in shaping children's character.

Overall, the research findings show that the role of parents as *pubbacariya* is the result of a complex interaction between religious understanding, social role pressures, meaning construction, and social environmental support. The gap between the ideals of Buddhist teachings and the realities of modern social life emerges as a major factor influencing the level of parental involvement in children's Dhamma education.

This study contributes significantly to the discourse on non-formal religious education by filling a gap in the literature regarding the role of parents in the context of Buddhist Sunday Schools (SMB) amid the socio-cultural dynamics of Balinese society. The novelty of this research lies in the use of a qualitative phenomenological approach that positions parents not merely as supporting objects but as primary subjects to explore their lived experiences and subjective meaning constructions regarding the role of *pubbacariya*. Unlike previous studies that tend to focus on curriculum effectiveness or teaching methods, this study specifically examines how structural pressures such as economic demands in the tourism sector and the density of customary obligations within the banjar system create role strain that hinders the internalization of Dhamma values in children.



This study involved only parents whose children are actively participating in the Buddhist Sunday School at Cetya Sangha Ratana Gianyar, along with several supporting informants such as teachers and vihara administrators. The limited number of informants means that the variation of parental experiences has not been comprehensively represented across the entire Buddhist population in Gianyar. The phenomenological approach employed focuses on exploring parents' subjective lived experiences. Moreover, the data collection process was conducted within a specific time frame, making it unable to capture long-term changes in the dynamics of parental involvement.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the analysis presented, it can be concluded that parental involvement as *pubbacariya* is a primary determinant for the sustainability of children's Dhamma education, although its implementation faces significant structural constraints. Furthermore, parents demonstrate a high level of normative awareness regarding their role as the first teachers (*pubbacariya*) responsible for their children's moral and spiritual development, in line with the teachings of the *Sigalovada Sutta*. However, the majority of parents fall into the category of passive involvement, primarily performing logistical functions such as dropping off and picking up their children.

In addition, the low level of active involvement is not caused by a lack of spiritual motivation, but rather by the reality of role strain. Parents are caught between economic demands in the tourism sector, which often involve irregular working hours, and socio-religious obligations within the *banjar* system in Bali. As a result, the time available to carry out their pedagogical role becomes highly limited. There is also a strong empirical relationship between the level of parental involvement and the stability of children's attendance at the Buddhist Sunday School (SMB), as reflected in the decline in active attendance from 20–25 children to 10–15 children when parental involvement weakens.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed. Managers and teachers of Buddhist Sunday Schools are encouraged to strengthen communication with parents through regular meetings, communication groups, or joint activities, in order to create synergy between education in the vihara and at home. Future research is also recommended to adopt broader approaches, such as mixed methods or comparative studies across multiple Buddhist Sunday Schools.

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