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Feasibility of School Events Strategy Employed by Heads of Public Secondary Schools to Enhance Parental Involvement in Students' Learning in Songea District, Tanzania

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Abstract:

The study investigated the feasibility of school events as a strategy employed by heads of public secondary schools to enhance parental involvement in students' learning in Songea district, Tanzania. The study used a convergent design under a mixed-methods research approach. The study was guided by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Parental Involvement Theory, targeting a population of 2174. The target population consisted of 21 heads of schools from 21 public secondary schools, 723 form-four students, 1112 parents, 317 teachers, and 1 District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO). The sample size of 185 respondents, including 10 public secondary schools, consisted of 74 students, 90 teachers, 10 heads of schools, 10 parents, and one (1) District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO) obtained through probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires, while qualitative data were collected through interview guides and validated with the help of research experts in education. The reliability coefficients of 0.839 and 0.855 questionnaire for teachers and students correspondingly Likert-type items were established using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The trustworthiness of qualitative data was ensured through peer debriefing and triangulation methods. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, statistics, while qualitative data were thematically deduced. The study revealed that school events were inclined towards parental involvement in students' learning and led to a conclusion that the use of school events by heads of public secondary schools is a viable strategy that enhances parental involvement in students' learning. According to the report, heads of public secondary schools should use more creative ways to incorporate parents into their students' education through school events.

Keywords: Feasibility, school events strategy, parental involvement, students' learning

1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental right to achieve sustainable development goals so that people can lift themselves out of poverty and fully participate in their communities. Such education should lead to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through formal or informal methods. To achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is a need to collaborate with all education stakeholders, including parents (Popadynets et al., 2020; Welsh & Swain, 2020). On the other hand, it is generally acknowledged that one of the most important factors in improving academic results is parental participation in their children's education. For instance, members of the school board and other education stakeholders have acknowledged that parental participation in their children's education is an important component of enhancing academic performance.

A child's learning and academic achievement can be supported and enhanced by a range of actions and attitudes included in parental participation. Hornby and Blackwell (2018) argued that families from higher socioeconomic backgrounds often have more time, resources, and knowledge to actively engage with their children's schooling, such as attending school events, communicating with teachers, and supporting learning at home compared to their counterparts. While parental involvement is widely recognized as beneficial for children's academic achievement, not all parents who have equal resources, knowledge, or accessibility should take an active role in their kids' education (Karam et al., 2023).

School events refer to any organized activity, program, or gathering within the school community, typically outside regular classroom education. These are designed to enrich the educational experience, foster community, and provide opportunities for students, parents, and teachers to interact and cooperate. Li (2022) defines school events as all programs or activities of school during the learning sessions for students learning to improve academic achievements. So that students can learn about things such as graduation ceremonies, Parents' Day, and academic days.

Parental participation in their children's education is discussed in this context of feasibility (Gallagher et al., 2023). Parent-teacher conferences, open communication channels, school events, parent education and workshops, school newsletters, parental engagement activities, parent involvement in decision-making, and home-school collaboration are just a few of the strategies Lechuga-Peña (2023) identified as effective in increasing parental involvement in students' learning. However, this study explicitly examined the feasibility of parent-teacher conferences and parent participation in school decision-making and activities to improve family involvement in their children's education. These strategies were chosen following Tanzania's Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014, which emphasizes the value of encouraging parental involvement to enhance educational results (URT, 2015).

The concept of involving parents in education has a long historical precedent, dating back to ancient civilizations such as Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire (Obrovská et al., 2023). This shared responsibility between parents and the community has been recognized and encouraged in developed countries like the United States of America (USA) (Hale, 2023). However, studies have shown that in many cases, digital communication is preferred over traditional parent-teacher conferences for enhancing parental involvement in students' teaching (Chen & Rivera-Vernazza, 2023). Similarly, limited awareness of parents' rights and responsibilities regarding their involvement in decision-making processes has been found in countries like South Africa and Nigeria, negatively affecting students' learning (Nghipandulwa, 2023; Otani, 2020). The study by Masayoka (2019) highlights the impact that participation in the family can have on learning outcomes. In Kenya, successful parent participation in school events has demonstrated the capacity to significantly aid in the development of children. Despite the significance of education, parents are not well-informed about their rights and obligations regarding engaging in their children's educational decision-making. This lack of awareness can lead to a disconnect between parents and educational institutions, potentially hindering students' learning outcomes.

According to Tanzania's Education Training Policy, revised edition 2023, under Circular No. 3 of 2016, school heads are crucial in fostering parental engagement. This policy emphasizes the school heads' duty to support parents' active involvement in their children's education (URT, 2018). Despite these initiatives, Kigobe et al. (2021) revealed that a lot of parents still miss school-related events. This raises questions about how involved parents should be in their kids' education. The following studies such as Freeman and Kirksey (2023), Perrigo et al. (2022), Turtulla and Lopar (2022), and Yulianti et al. (2022) describe the strategy used by school managers to contribute parents in their students' education. Involving parents in decision-making, fostering a friendly school climate, fostering connections with families, home visits, the use of social media, parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher platforms, school activities, family literacy initiatives, and technology-based communication are a few of these. However, it is important to note that, among the tactics above, there do not appear to be many studies that address how well school events encourage parental participation in their kids' education internationally.

The Songea district and other Tanzanian public secondary schools concur that parental involvement is still necessary to guarantee student success. Together with other districts in the Ruvuma area, Songea district has shown a worrisome decline in student academic accomplishment, especially in their performance on national examinations, which fell from 28% in 2020 to 19% in 2023 (Kitigwa & Onyango, 2023). This decline underscores the urgent need for increased parental engagement in the education system. According to Erick (2023), parents are not checking in on their kids' academic progress or attending school functions to learn more about their academic journeys and evaluate the efficacy of the school. Therefore, this study investigated the feasibility of the school events strategy employed by heads of public secondary schools to enhance parental involvement in students' learning in Songea district, Tanzania.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

A low level of parental involvement in students' learning has emerged as a significant concern within the context of public secondary schools in Tanzania. Heads of schools, teachers, and other education stakeholders expressed worries about the lack of parental engagement, which has had tangible impacts on students' academic achievements (Ramanlingam & Maniam, 2020). Tanzania's government revised the education policy in 2023 and made it public under Circular No. 3 of 2016, highlighting the duty of parents to encourage their children's active engagement in their education in light of the dire circumstances (URT, 2023). Despite government initiatives, family poverty, the absence of community understanding of the need for school engagement, and a restricted ability for community organizing and encouragement provide difficulties for school administrators in carrying out their duties (Stewart et al., 2023). Out of the 6.3% rate recorded in the Ruvuma area, the Songea District has a higher rate of 2.5% due to the obstacles (URT, 2023). Furthermore, Songea district data shows a worrisome decline in student performance, especially their success on national exams, which fell from 28% in 2020 to 19% in 2023 (Kitigwa & Onyango, 2023). This decline underscores the urgent need for increased parental engagement in the education system. Therefore, this study investigated the feasibility of school events strategies used by heads of public secondary schools to enhance parental involvement in students' learning in the Songea district, Tanzania.

1.2. Research Question

This study aimed to address the research question:

- How do heads of public secondary schools use school events to enhance parental involvement in students' learning in Songea District?

1.3. Significance of the Study

The study highlights the importance of active parental engagement in school events to support student's academic progress and strengthen the home-school partnership. It informs teachers about how these events improve

communication with parents, leading to better collaboration for student support. For students, the study emphasizes the value of showcasing achievements at these events to foster pride and belonging. It provides school heads with strategies to enhance parental involvement and guide the planning of impactful events. Education officers and policymakers can use these insights to shape policy and allocate resources, improving parental engagement in public secondary schools. Additionally, the study adds empirical evidence to the body of knowledge on how school events can enhance parental participation and student outcomes, guiding future research and practice.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The Parental Involvement Theory by Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey and Howard M. Sandler, introduced in 1995, serves as the foundation for this investigation, emphasizing the critical role of parental engagement in children's educational outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey, 1995). The theory posits that those parents' beliefs, motivations, and perceived opportunities significantly influence their level of involvement in their children's education. When parents feel confident in their ability to contribute and recognize the importance of their role, they are more likely to be actively engaged. According to the notion, schools must provide a warm, inviting atmosphere that encourages parental involvement and acknowledges the role that parents have to play in establishing learning opportunities at home and in the classroom. It considers factors, including individual, family, and school dynamics, which affect parental involvement. While the theory recognizes the diverse ways parents can support their children's education, such as through homework assistance, attending conferences, and participating in school activities, it may not fully account for cultural and contextual variations in parental involvement practices. School administrators can enhance parental engagement by clearly communicating the goals and processes of involvement opportunities, providing culturally relevant resources, and empowering parents through inclusive participation in school planning and activities.

2. Literature Review

School administrators use events to increase parental involvement in their student's education. Events held in school are essential for increasing parental participation in their children's education. School events aggressively include parents in their child's education by exhibiting student accomplishments, fostering parent-teacher relationships, creating cooperation and volunteer opportunities, delivering parent education, and encouraging community development. These events create a friendly and supportive atmosphere that strengthens the ties between the home and the school, thereby improving the children's overall learning and development.

Torres and Enid (2022) conducted a study investigating Latino parental involvement in school events in the United States. In addition to interviewing school administrators, the researchers mailed questionnaires to teachers and used a cross-sectional survey approach. Participants in the study were chosen at random and comprised head teachers, teacher educators, and other educators. The sample comprised seventy-three teachers, four head teachers, and four teacher educators. The study's conclusions showed that misconceptions make it difficult to provide Latino parents and educators with the opportunity to participate in meaningful conversations and activities about their kids' development, learning, and academic performance. A cross-sectional survey approach was the research strategy employed in the previous study; the use of an interview guide for school heads was not consistent with that approach. The reliability of the study's data is thus jeopardized. The present study employed a convergent design where both qualitative and quantitative research methods of sampling, data collection, and analysis were used.

Camacho-Thompson and Simpkins (2022) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between parental involvement in organized after-school activities and adolescent motivational beliefs. Data were gathered from 231 European American and Mexican American teenagers who engaged in these activities. According to the study's findings, teenagers with parents who included minimal activity linkages but provided mediocre instrumental assistance and verbal encouragement had weaker motivating beliefs than teenagers with parents who demonstrated medium engagement in all areas. The results were noteworthy in that they held for teenagers of Mexican and European American descent, indicating that ethnicity had no bearing on the connection. The prior study's findings, however, did not specify the sorts of school events in which parents take part. Consequently, the present investigation has discerned many school events that impact parents' involvement in their children's education.

A study by Myende and Nhlumayo (2022) sought to demonstrate parent-teacher collaboration in South African rural schools. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was used to evaluate the data gathered from ten parents living in rural regions through semi-structured interviews. Based on the study's findings, it appears that parents in rural regions understand the value of making an educational investment in their kids. However, they believe that schools should take the initiative to empower parents, utilize modern communication methods, clearly communicate the school's vision, and provide explicit expectations for parental involvement. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the significance of involving traditional leaders due to their influential role within the community. While qualitative research typically focuses on smaller sample sizes to enable more thorough analysis, it is crucial to recognize the sample's limitations in terms of generalizability. The study's credibility would be increased by disclosing details regarding the participant selection procedure and the steps taken to guarantee diversity and representativeness. As a result, the present research used a convergent design inside a mixed-approaches framework, enabling the utilization of a sizable sample size.

Emmanuel and Andala (2021) explored how parents' participation in school activities affected their children's academic achievement in Rwanda's 12YBE Schools. The study used a correlation research design as its research methodology. Survey instruments, interview protocols, and document analytic reviews were used to gather data. In this study, 1343 people made up the target population. Using a mix of basic random and stratified selection approaches, a sample of 308 respondents was determined. The study's conclusions showed a strong, positive correlation between

parents' involvement in their children's education and academic performance. The study utilized simple random and stratified sampling to select the sample size. It is not well-explained how the researcher was able to use both strategies at once to select participants within each stratum. Therefore, the current study will use simple random sampling to sample schools, while a stratified sample will be used to sample students and teachers.

In their study, Kagosi et al. (2021) used a mixed-method approach and concurrent embedded design to examine how parents in Tanzania's Lushoto District Council supported their children's education in public secondary schools. The target group consisted of 53 heads of public secondary schools, 2160 students, 2160 parents, 486 instructors, and 1 DSEO, for a total of 4860 respondents in the Lushoto District. Both probability and non-probability sampling methods were utilized in the investigation. There were 6 public secondary schools, 6 heads of schools, 96 instructors, 90 parents, 1 DSEO, and 300 students in the sample size for a total of 493 respondents. Both questionnaires and in-depth interview guides were used to gather the data needed to address the research topics in this study. Parental assistance with school tasks is lacking, according to the survey. Studies reveal that most parents do not routinely attend school sessions to monitor their children's academic progress. The previous contributed much to the current study on the aspect of methodology and findings. However, the previous study lacks information on school events that enhance parent's participation in children learning. Therefore, the current study mentioned various school events that enhance parent's participation in their children's education.

In summary, the research under discussion has investigated how school administrators might increase parental participation in their children's education by utilizing school activities. Comacho and Simpkins (2022) explored parental views, motivation, and decision-making but faced limitations. Myende and Nhlumayo (2022) emphasized traditional leaders' influence, while Torress and Enid (2022) highlighted parental engagement challenges. Furthermore, parents did not routinely attend school meetings to inquire about their children's progress, making it necessary to investigate how school administrators may better include parents in school events. The current study intended to close these gaps by examining the viability of the school events strategy used by heads of public secondary schools in Songea district to increase parental involvement in their students' education. This was possible using convergent design, pertinent sampling procedures, and suitable data collection instruments.

3. Research Methodology

The study utilized a convergent research design within a mixed methods approach to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic, as recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018). By integrating qualitative and quantitative data, the study targeted 2,001 individuals across 21 secondary schools, including 723 students, 1,112 parents, 144 teachers, 21 heads of schools, and 1 District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO). A carefully selected sample of 185 respondents from 10 public secondary schools was chosen to represent the population, comprising 74 students, 90 teachers, 10 heads of schools, 10 parents, and 1 DSEO. Data collection methods included questionnaires, interview guides, and document analysis, ensuring the triangulation of data sources through research expert validation before the pilot test. The reliability of the Likert-type questionnaires was rigorously tested, yielding strong Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients of 0.839 and 0.855 for teachers and students correspondingly in contrast to the dependability of qualitative data was strengthened through peer debriefing and triangulation methods. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS version 22 to provide clear and measurable insights, compared to the qualitative data, which were thematically processed, allowing for a deep exploration of themes and connections to theoretical frameworks and literature.

4. Findings

This investigation intended to determine whether the school events technique used by public secondary school heads in Songea region increased parental involvement in their students' education was feasible. Data was collected through questionnaires distributed to teachers and students while interviews were conducted with the head of school, parents, and district secondary education officers. A five-level Likert scale was utilized for data analysis, with 1 representing Strongly Disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Undecided (U), 4=Agree (A), 5=Strongly Agree (SA), F=frequencies, P=Percentages. The frequency and percentage distribution of responses were categorized as follows: ≤ 20 =extremely minority; 21-49=minority; 50-59=moderate; 60-69=majority; 70-89=very high majority; 90-99=extremely majority; 100=overwhelming majority (Taherdoost, 2019). A mean score greater than 3 indicated that the school events strategy effectively improved parental involvement in students' learning, while a mean score lower than 3 suggested otherwise. A mean score exactly equal to 3 implied ambiguities regarding the impact of the school events strategy on parental involvement in students' learning (Chyung & Hutchinson, 2023). Responses from teachers, parents, and students are summarized in table 1.

S/N	Statement	Resp	SD		D		U		A		SA		Mean
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	
i	Heads of schools use graduation ceremonies to inform parents about the school's achievements	TRs	2	2.2	6	6.7	6	6.7	9	10.0	67	74.4	4.47
		STs	3	4.1	9	12.2	7	9.5	8	10.8	47	63.5	4.17
ii	Heads of schools encourage parents to have conferences with class teachers to discuss academic and disciplinary issues.	TRs	1	1.1	3	3.3	9	10.0	38	42.2	39	43.3	4.23
		STs	3	4.1	5	6.8	9	12.2	28	37.8	29	39.2	4.01
iii	Heads of schools encourage parents to organize activities involving students and teachers.	TRs	4	4.4	7	7.8	5	5.6	18	20.0	56	62.2	4.27
		STs	5	6.8	12	16.2	7	9.5	12	16.2	38	51.4	3.89
iv	Heads of schools encourage parents to attend academic days to discuss student progress in learning.	TRs	7	7.8	8	8.9	9	10.0	37	41.1	29	32.2	3.81
		STs	6	8.1	11	14.9	11	14.9	25	33.8	21	28.4	3.59
v	Heads of schools encourage parents to come and witness their children's talents during sports and games events.	TRs	3	3.3	4	4.4	12	13.3	29	32.2	42	46.7	4.14
		STs	6	8.1	3	4.1	15	20.3	21	28.4	29	39.2	3.86
vi	Heads of schools organize appreciation days to celebrate the achievements of their children	TRs	5	5.6	10	11.1	7	7.8	5	5.6	63	70.0	4.23
		STs	6	8.1	11	14.9	8	10.8	6	8.1	43	58.1	3.93
vii	Heads of schools foster a culture of continuous improvement, where feedback from parents and teachers is used to enhance the planning and execution of future school events to maximize parental involvement.	TRs	4	4.4	6	6.7	10	11.1	10	11.1	60	66.7	4.28
		STs	5	6.8	7	9.5	12	16.2	11	14.9	39	52.7	3.97
viii	Heads of schools encourage team teaching strategies where multiple teachers collaborate on projects or presentations during events to develop knowledge for students.	TRs	4	4.4	4	4.4	6	6.7	55	61.1	21	23.3	3.94
		STs	4	5.4	4	5.4	10	13.5	41	55.4	15	20.3	3.79
ix	Heads of schools establish a feedback mechanism to gather information from parents after each event.	TRs	4	4.4	2	2.2	5	5.6	40	44.4	39	43.3	4.20
		STs	6	8.1	2	2.7	6	8.1	30	40.5	30	40.5	4.02
x	Showcasing student work during school events boosts parental engagement and motivates students in their learning	TRs	5	5.6	1	1.1	0	.0	11	12.2	73	81.1	4.62
		STs	5	6.8	1	1.4	1	1.4	12	16.2	55	74.3	4.50
	Grand Mean	TRs											4.21
		STs											4.0

*Table 1: Teachers (TRs) and Students (STs) Responses on the Feasibility of School Events Strategy Employed by Heads of Public Secondary Schools to Enhance Parental Involvement in Students' Learning in Songea District, Tanzania (n=90 TRs and 74 STs)
Source: Field Data (2024)*

*1=Strongly Disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Undecided (U), 4=Agree (A),
5=Strongly Agree (SA), F=frequencies, P=Percentages*

According to the statistics in table 1, a sizable majority of educators and learners (84.4% and 74.3%, respectively) agreed and strongly agreed that school administrators ought to use graduation ceremonies as a means of letting parents know about the achievements of their institution. However, a small minority (8.7% and 16.3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed that heads of schools should use graduation ceremonies to inform parents about the school's accomplishments. The mean scores for teachers and students are 4.47 and 4.17, respectively. This infers that, from the viewpoints of educators and students, graduation ceremonies serve as a means of informing parents about the school's achievements. Given the low levels of disagreement, steady mean scores, and unusually high levels of agreement, it appears that school administrators utilize graduation ceremonies to highlight their institution's achievements to parents. Understanding the alleged purpose and effectiveness of graduation ceremonies in fostering parental knowledge and appreciation of the school's accomplishments requires an understanding of this material. The researcher, during a face-to-face interview with the head of school 1, had this to say:

During graduation ceremonies, we utilize the platform to effectively communicate with parents about the talents and abilities of their children through a variety of activities. This provides an opportunity for parents to gain information about the various skills and strengths that their children possess. Additionally, it is a time when we recognize and celebrate the achievements of students, including those who have excelled in sports, games, and academics. This serves as a moment of pride for both the students and their parents, as their hard work and dedication are acknowledged and honored (HoS₁, personal communication, March 18, 2024).

According to the information that was supplied, graduation ceremonies are a valuable way to highlight students' skills and abilities through a range of events and build positive parent-school engagement. These events honor student accomplishments in athletics, games, and academics while also providing parents with insight into their children's abilities and capabilities. Parents should also feel proud of their children since this accolade honors and recognizes their hard work and perseverance throughout their academic careers.

The parents' reasoning, which they presented in in-person interviews, corroborated the findings. When questioned in an interview about what they felt about using graduation ceremonies to tell parent 2 about the accomplishments of the school, one of the parents said:

The graduation ceremony is always a big event. The head of the school gives an opening address, student speeches, and, of course, the qualification presentations. But one thing I've noticed is that the head of the school also uses this opportunity to highlight the school's achievements over the past year (P₂, personal communication, March 19, 2024).

According to the parent interview, the graduation ceremony serves as both a special event for the graduates and a chance for the school to showcase its achievements and indicators to the greater school community. Conventional elements, such as student speeches, demonstrate the unique quality. By giving the students a forum to discuss their experiences and recognize their diligence and success, these components aim to honor the students' accomplishments. Graduates can reflect on their journey, express thanks, and motivate their classmates via the personal touch provided by the student speeches. The results are consistent with the research by Torres and Enid (2022), which describes how parents' participation in school functions, such as commencement ceremonies, may be increased when school administrators effectively convey the institution's accomplishments. Greater school-community ties and better student outcomes are associated with this participation. Following the graduation ceremony, H2 said this:

Graduation ceremonies are a chance to celebrate students' achievements and share their talents with their families. Through various activities, parents gain valuable insights into their children's diverse skills and strengths. This recognition of hard work and dedication is a moment of great pride for both students and parents (HoS₂, personal communication, March 19, 2024).

The interviews with the head of school H2 indicate that parents should be informed about their children's skills and talents through graduation ceremonies. Through the rituals, parents can discover a great deal about the range of skills and traits that their children possess. These activities also serve as a source of pride for parents and kids alike by highlighting and celebrating the accomplishments of the students in many areas, such as academics, athletics, and games. This demonstrates how important graduation ceremonies are for raising parental knowledge and appreciation for the school's achievements. Additionally, they emphasize the role of these ceremonies in acknowledging and honoring the hard work and dedication of the students. The study's conclusions are consistent with that of Torres and Enid (2022), who found that parents and educators held insightful conversations and participated in worthwhile activities related to their kids' development, education, and academic performance. Parents and educators can actively enrich the mesosystem through meaningful dialogues and engagements. This can enhance microsystem coherence and bolster the support provided to the child in their development, learning, and academic performance. This aligns with the core principles of ecological systems theory (1970s), which emphasize the importance of understanding human development within the context of intricate, interconnected systems.

The data presented in table 1 shows that a significant majority of instructors (73.3%) and students (62.2%) both agreed and strongly agreed that school heads should invite parents to attend class days to discuss their children's academic achievement. Nevertheless, a very small percentage of instructors (16.7%) and students (23%) disagreed and strongly disagreed with the issue. The mean scores are 3.81 and 3.59 for teachers and students, respectively. This shows that there is a strong degree of alignment between the way teachers and students view the proactive encouragement of family engagement in discussing student development during academic days. This agreement provides a strong foundation for fostering cooperative parent-school relations, which will ultimately aid in the general development and academic success of the pupils. The District Secondary Education Officer, in an in-person interview, said:

The meeting provides an opportunity for teachers and parents to come together and share their insights on how best to support students in their academic endeavors. It was recognized that academic days play a crucial role in providing additional learning opportunities for students outside of regular classroom hours. This allows for focused attention on specific subjects or areas of study, which can be beneficial for reinforcing learning and addressing any areas of difficulty. In addition, the meeting served as a platform for discussing potential enhancements to the current academic day's program. Ideas such as incorporating interactive learning activities, providing additional resources, and offering targeted support for students were explored as ways to further optimize the effectiveness of academic days (DSEO, personal communication, April 9, 2024).

The information collected from the DSEO emphasizes how crucial it is for parents to talk to their children's teachers about their development during class hours. With an emphasis on the importance of academic days in offering additional opportunities for learning outside of the regular school day, this conference provided educators and parents with a venue to explore ways to support their children in their academic endeavors. This emphasizes how important it is for parents to attend these sessions so that they may concentrate on certain topics or areas of study, enhancing learning and resolving any issues. In addition, during in-person interviews, the directors of schools stressed the value of parent-teacher conferences, underscoring the cooperative effort to improve student outcomes. The information is consistent with the opinions of the DSEO, who expressed their ideas via in-person interviews. The head of school "7", through an

interview, was asked to share his perspectives on encouraging parent 1 to attend academic days to discuss student progress in learning and said:

... the school has several academic days throughout the school year where parents are strongly encouraged to come in and meet with their children and teachers. These are typically scheduled for the end of each term. Well, the main purpose is for parents to have one-on-one discussions with their children and teachers about their academic progress and performance. The teachers provide detailed feedback on things like test scores, assignments, class participation, and overall skill development in that subject area (P1, personal communication, March 20, 2024).

The parent's information implies that the school prioritizes transparent and detailed communication with parents about their children's academic journey. The school's proactive approach to involving parents in the educational process, which aims to equip them with the necessary knowledge to effectively support their child's development, is reflected in the regular and scheduled nature of these academic days. The information from the parent means that these events are highly focused on giving parents a clear, detailed, and holistic understanding of their child's academic standing and development in each subject area. This implies an emphasis on transparency, personalized communication, and the collaborative effort between parents and teachers to support the student's educational journey. The head of school 3 had this to say:

A recent meeting between teachers and parents focused on how to better support students' academic success. Academic days were recognized as a valuable tool for providing extra learning outside of class. These days allow students to delve deeper into specific subjects, solidify their understanding, and get help in areas they find challenging. The meeting also brainstormed ways to improve the academic day's program. Ideas included incorporating interactive activities, providing more resources, and offering targeted support to students (HoS3, personal communication, March 20, 2024).

The information from the school head reveals that a recent gathering of teachers and parents underscored the significance of supporting students' academic achievement through academic days. These days were recognized as a valuable means for providing extra learning opportunities beyond regular class hours, allowing students to delve deeper into specific subjects, strengthen their comprehension, and receive assistance with challenging areas. The meeting also included brainstorming sessions to improve the academic day program, proposing the inclusion of interactive activities, additional resources, and targeted support to maximize the effectiveness of these days. This illustrates a collaborative effort to continually enhance educational practices and student outcomes. The findings from the study are consistent with those of Emmanuel and Andala (2021), who confirmed a highly significant positive relationship between parents' involvement in educational activities at school and the high scores achieved by learners. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Parental Involvement Theory (1995) also supports the finding of this positive relationship. The theory emphasizes parents' role construction, self-efficacy, and perceptions of invitations for involvement, offering a comprehensive framework to understand how school-based parental participation can positively influence student academic performance.

Data in table 1 indicates that an overwhelming majority of teachers (93.3%) and students (90.5%) agree or strongly agree that showcasing student work during school events boosts parental engagement and motivates students in their learning. Conversely, a small minority of teachers (6.7%) and students (8.2%) disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. The mean scores of 4.62 for teachers and 4.50 for students further support this finding. This data suggests strong support for showcasing student work as an effective strategy to enhance parental involvement and student motivation within the school community. Parental participation in these events helps to strengthen the connection between home and school, fostering a collaborative approach to education where parents feel more engaged and supportive of their children's learning journeys. The researcher, during a face-to-face interview with the head of the school, reported the following:

During the graduation ceremony, students have the opportunity to showcase their innovative works, which serves to promote and motivate their learning. This platform allows students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired throughout their academic journey, while also inspiring their peers and the wider community with their creative endeavors. By sharing their innovative projects, students not only celebrate their achievements but also contribute to the culture of innovation within the academic institution (HoSs, personal communication, April 15, 2024).

The information from the head of the school generally suggests that graduation ceremonies serve as a pivotal platform for students to present their innovative projects, thereby advancing and motivating their ongoing learning journeys. This occasion allows the students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have gained throughout their academic endeavors, while also inspiring their peers and the broader community with their creative achievements. By showcasing their innovative work during these ceremonies, students not only celebrate their accomplishments but also contribute to cultivating a culture of creativity within the academic institution. This highlights the importance of recognizing and fostering creativity as a key component of the educational experience, ultimately enhancing a dynamic and vibrant learning environment. The researcher, during a face-to-face interview with parent 3, reported the following:

Of course, the school is very involved in student events and activities. At the end of each term, they have a showcase where classrooms become mini art galleries and science fairs. The students are proud to show their projects, essays, art, and experiments to all the parents. As a parent, I'm always amazed at the great artwork the students make. It shows me that the learning is happening in the classrooms. The students are so excited to share their achievements, and it gets the parents very engaged (P3, personal communication, April 12, 2024).

The parent's observations highlight that the school utilizes end-of-term student showcases as a multi-dimensional approach to benefit students and the broader school community. By transforming classrooms into interactive galleries and fairs, the school offers students a meaningful platform to take pride in their work and share their accomplishments with their families. This visibility is essential for enhancing student confidence and motivation, as the parent noted the students' excitement and enthusiasm in presenting their projects, essays, and experiments. The impact of these showcases extends beyond the students, fostering deeper parental involvement. Seeing the students' creations provides parents with a richer, more tangible understanding of classroom learning, aligning home and school more effectively. This allows parents to better support their child's educational journey. Additionally, the school administration plays a crucial role in highlighting the importance of these showcases. The head of the school's involvement and enthusiasm reflect the institution's commitment to celebrating student achievements and reinforcing a culture that values the learning process, not just the outcome. Another head of the school remarked:

Graduation ceremonies become a platform for students to celebrate their learning journey by showcasing innovative projects. This not only allows them to demonstrate their acquired knowledge and skills, but it also inspires their peers and the wider community. Through these creative endeavors, students contribute to a culture of innovation within the school, all while celebrating their achievements (HoS₁, personal communication, March 21, 2024).

In-depth conversations with school administrators emphasize the value of graduation ceremonies as a forum for students to demonstrate their creative endeavors, which inspires learning and enables them to highlight the information and abilities they have gained over their academic careers. The findings of this study align with those of Kigobe et al. (2019), who noted that students feel more motivated when their achievements are recognized. By displaying their work during these ceremonies, students celebrate their accomplishments, inspire peers and the broader community, and contribute to a culture of innovation within the institution. These social interactions and connections, such as sharing work, receiving recognition, and inspiring others, embody the principles of Social Capital Theory (1986), further enhancing the school's overall culture of creativity and innovation.

Data in table 1 shows that a vast majority of teachers (85.5%) and students (77%) agree or strongly agree that heads of schools encourage parents to meet with class teachers to discuss academic and disciplinary issues. In contrast, a small minority of teachers (4.4%) and students (10.9%) disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. The mean scores are 4.23 for teachers and 4.01 for students. This data suggests broad support for encouraging parent-teacher conferences as an effective approach to addressing academic and disciplinary concerns, underscoring the importance of communication and collaboration between home and school for the comprehensive development of students. The strong endorsement of parent-teacher conferences reflects a shared belief in the value of maintaining open communication to ensure students' well-being and success. These meetings offer a crucial opportunity for parents and teachers to exchange information, address concerns, and work together on strategies to support student learning and behavior. By fostering such interactions, schools demonstrate their commitment to personalized support for students and encourage a sense of partnership and shared responsibility among all stakeholders, including the school board, in the educational process. During a face-to-face interview, the head of school 8 remarked:

The meetings between class teachers, academic masters, the school discipline committee, and parents exemplify a collective dedication to the academic excellence and overall well-being of the students. By fostering open communication, mutual understanding, and shared goals, these collaborative efforts contribute to the cultivation of a harmonious and supportive educational community. It is through these meaningful interactions that the foundations for academic achievement and positive student behavior are strengthened, laying the groundwork for the continued success and growth of each student (HoS₈, personal communication, April 15, 2024).

The following was added by a different head of school seven:

Yes, we find this to be a significant issue. We think that helping our children succeed requires parents and teachers to work together and communicate openly" (HoS₇, personal communication, April 15, 2024).

The leaders of the school have expressed a strong dedication to both academic performance and the welfare of their students through collaborative meetings with parents, academic coordinators, class teachers, and school discipline officers. These meetings embody a collective dedication to student success by promoting open communication, mutual understanding, and shared objectives among all stakeholders. Such deep conversations foster the development of a welcoming and unified learning environment. This partnership builds on the basis for academic success while simultaneously encouraging good behavior from the students. In the end, these cooperative efforts help each student's continued success and development, demonstrating the school's commitment to teaching and the formation of well-rounded people.

During the in-person interviews with parent 9, the head of the school reported:

Academic days provide me with a much clearer view of how my child is performing, both academically and behaviorally. It enables me to work closely with the teacher to pinpoint areas for improvement and create a plan to support my child (P9, personal communication, March 20, 2024).

This feedback from the parent highlights that school events are an essential and effective means for gaining a comprehensive understanding of a child's academic and behavioral progress. They facilitate collaboration between parents and teachers and help develop targeted strategies to support the child's development and improvement. This detailed and proactive approach reflects the school's commitment to involving parents in their children's education and addressing any challenges holistically. Another parent, Parent 7, shared:

I think it fosters a collaborative, engaged school community. The administration sets the tone that parents are true partners in their child's education. The school events demonstrate the school's openness to feedback and their commitment to addressing any issues that arise (P7, personal communication, March 23, 2024).

The interview with the parent clearly illustrates that the school administration places significant importance on organizing regular and constructive school events. The school allows parents to interact with their child's teachers by holding these meetings twice a year and permitting extra check-ins as needed. According to the parent's comments, these activities address potential disciplinary or social-emotional issues in addition to academic development. This approach demonstrates the school's commitment to supporting the whole child and recognizing parents as essential partners in their child's educational journey. The administration's proactive communication, openness to feedback, and responsiveness to issues further enhance this collaborative and inclusive mindset. This promotes a solid, open school culture in which educators, parents, and administrators collaborate to enhance student achievement. The head of school 3 remarked during the interview:

Regular meetings between teachers, academic advisors, disciplinary staff, and parents demonstrate a united commitment to student success. Open communication and shared goals create a harmonious and supportive school environment. These collaborations strengthen the foundation for academic achievement and positive behavior, at the end of the day leading to each student's continued growth and success (HoS3, personal communication, March 24, 2024).

The information from the heads of schools highlights a strong focus on collaboration and communication among teachers, academic advisors, disciplinary staff, and parents, reflecting a shared commitment to student success. The regular scheduling of these meetings demonstrates a consistent dedication to creating a supportive school environment where all stakeholders are actively engaged in fostering positive outcomes for students. By working together towards common goals, these collaborative efforts help establish a solid foundation for both academic achievement and positive behavior. Ultimately, the goal of these collaborations is to ensure the ongoing growth and success of each student, underscoring the school's comprehensive approach to education and student development. The study's findings align with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Parental Involvement Theory, which emphasizes that when parents feel confident in their ability to contribute to their children's learning and recognize the importance of their involvement, they are more likely to be actively engaged in their children's discipline and academic activities.

The study reveals that the strategy of school events, implemented by heads of public secondary schools in Songea district, Tanzania, significantly enhances parental involvement in students' learning, with a total mean score of 4.1. The research indicates that graduation ceremonies are viewed as effective venues for updating parents on the school's achievements, as reflected by strong agreement among stakeholders. These events foster an innovative and proud culture within the school community by giving kids a stage on which to showcase their abilities in addition to celebrating their accomplishments. Additionally, the study highlights that heads of schools strongly encourage parents to actively participate in conferences with class teachers to address academic and disciplinary matters, underscoring the significance of communication and cooperation between home and school. Furthermore, the joint efforts of teachers, academic advisors, disciplinary staff, and parents showcase a collective commitment to student success. Regular meetings provide opportunities for open dialogue and the setting of shared objectives. These collaborative efforts foster a supportive and nurturing school environment, ultimately enhancing positive student outcomes and development.

To sum up, the study found that the strategy of organizing school events, implemented by heads of public secondary schools in Songea district, Tanzania, significantly enhances parental involvement in students' learning. It was noted that both students and teachers regard graduation ceremonies as valuable opportunities to update parents on the school's achievements, with high levels of agreement among stakeholders. These ceremonies not only celebrate student successes but also provide a platform for showcasing talents and promoting a culture of innovation within the school community. The study also revealed that heads of schools are actively encouraging parents to participate in conferences with class teachers to address academic and disciplinary issues, emphasizing the importance of communication and collaboration between home and school. Furthermore, the collaborative efforts of teachers, academic advisors, disciplinary staff, and parents reflect a unified commitment to student success, with regular meetings fostering open dialogue and the establishment of shared goals.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concluded that school events significantly enhance parental involvement in students' learning and that utilizing these events is an effective strategy for heads of public secondary schools. The strong consensus among stakeholders underscores the importance of maintaining open communication and collaboration between home and school. According to the study, educators should make a concerted effort to encourage students to attend graduation ceremonies, and they should keep mentoring and involving them in worthwhile activities. Teachers should have regular meetings with school officials to discuss academic and disciplinary issues. They should emphasize the need for open communication in these meetings. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in school activities to support their children's education, and District Secondary Education Officers should provide resources to help sustain these initiatives, benefiting both student outcomes and the broader school community.

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