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## **The Role of Parental Involvement on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Kenya: The Case of Kajiado North District, Kenya**

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### ***Abstract:***

*Parental involvement in children's education has overwhelmingly been shown to be positively related to their academic performance. This has been demonstrated to occur more particularly in developed countries. The purpose of this study was to establish the role of parental involvement on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Kajiado North District of Kenya. To establish this, a study was undertaken in which a descriptive survey research design was employed. Applying a stratified random sampling procedure, three boys', two girls' and five mixed schools were selected from a total target population of 25 schools. Stratified random sampling was then used to select 140 respondents comprising of head teachers, teachers, and students. Given the small number of head teachers, purposive sampling was used to select 10 of them, while simple random sampling was used to select 50 teachers and 80 students from the sampled schools. Data was collected using semi structured questionnaires, which were administered with the help of research assistants. Collected data were analysed for descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (the Chi-square). The findings of this study are expected to provide guidelines to management of public schools and parents to come up with clear arrangements that will ensure effective involvement of parents in education of their children. These highlights will also guide the government, together with the school management, to formalise ways of increasing the levels of parental involvement on students' education to enhance their academic progress. It is established that parental involvement in school management has positive effects on students' academic performance in which the majority of sampled head teachers (60%) and teachers (68%) were in support of this view. It was therefore recommended that a public policy review is undertaken to incorporate active parental involvement in secondary schools' education.*

## **1. Introduction**

### ***1.1. Background of the Study***

In Kenya, the provision of education and training to all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the Government's overall development strategy. First, one of the long-term objectives of the Government of the Republic of Kenya (GOK) has been to provide every Kenyan with basic quality education and training, including two years of pre-primary, eight years of primary and four years of secondary / technical education. This has seen the GOK introduce free and compulsory primary school education and later free secondary school education. Education is given priority because it enhances individual well-being, enables Kenyan citizens to embrace and participate in development initiatives, and it also enhances the ability of Kenyans to preserve and utilize the environment for productive gains and sustainable livelihoods. Hence, the development of quality human resource is central to the attainment of national goals for industrial development. The realization of universal access to basic education and training will be necessary to ensure equitable access to education and training for all children, including the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Education is therefore crucial for the development and protection of democratic institutions and human rights (GOK, 2007, 2005).

Because of the importance attached to education, the poor achievement in class work as indicated by various empirical studies (for example, Yara and Wanjohi, 2011; Lydiah and Nasongo, 2009; Mwangi, 2009; Daley et al., 2005; Cohen and Hill, 2000; and Frey and Ruble, 1994) has attracted insightful concerns of many stakeholders including researchers to conduct investigations into the causes of this poor performance. In Kenya particularly, the education system is largely examination oriented. This tends to lead to the quality of education to be evaluated by the number of students passing national examination (Lydiah and Nasongo, 2009; Eshiwani, 1993). Subsequently many factors have been identified and regarded as being responsible for the dwindling trends in the poor performance of students' academics. These factors include but not limited to school and teacher related characteristics, socio-economic conditions, social incentives, home and family background, parental involvement, and a host of other factors (Olatoye and Ogunkola, 2008;

Olatoye, 2002; and Gianzero, 2001). This suggests that if the afore mentioned factors can be tackled, students would improve further on their academic performance. Although with mixed results, some research findings have overwhelmingly demonstrated that parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to academic achievement (Cotton and Wikelund, 1989).

It is further reiterated that research has shown that the more intensively parents are involved in the children's learning, the higher the achievement effects; and that this position may hold true for all types of parental involvement in children's learning and for all types and ages of students. Findings from other studies (Jeynes, 2005) have complimented positively the parental involvement and secondary school student educational outcomes using meta-analysis methods on 52 studies. The results from this meta-analysis study were very enlightening in which the notion that parental involvement had salient effects across various populations. It was found as well that not only did voluntary parental involvement have an effect, but also parental programmes did. In fact, the meta-analysis study suggested that among the most important aspects of parental involvement are some of the subtler facets of the practice, among them parental style and expectations. However, the fact that issues of parent-school linkages have been widely investigated, they have not been exhaustively researched (Gianzero, 2001).

In attempting to tackle some of the stated factors, therefore, parental involvement was chosen and singled out. The parental involvement or participation was chosen because it was considered that it would be easier and faster to elicit parental participation in school affairs than tackling the other factors that affect students' performance. According to Muriithi (2003, parental involvement may be described as the interest parents show in their children's schooling by encouraging them to do well in school. Parents help their children with homework, appreciating when a child does well in school, talking with teachers about the child's progress, among other things. It is expected that this involvement varies from one family to another and can take different forms from communicating with teachers about children's progress and helping children with homework (Ogoye-Ndegwa et al., 2007), to participating in the school policy-making. By getting involved, parents can reduce children's risk of failure and dropping out of school.

Parental involvement may improve students' morale, attitudes and academic achievement across many subjects. Children's behavior and social adjustment could also improve when parents are proactively involved in school affairs and neighbourhoods in order to cultivate an environment that promotes learning. Parent involvement has actually been shown to be an important variable that positively influences children's education. One of the reasons attributed to this is due to the fact that the child's first contact with the world is the family. The child as a result acquires initial education and socialization from parents and other important persons in the family. Parents are the primary source of support for young children. When parents are involved in the education of their children, children tend to model their parents' attitudes and actions, suffice it say that parents exert profound influence on every aspect of child's life (Reynolds and Gill, 1994). More and more schools are observing and realizing the importance of parents' participation and are encouraging families to become more involved. Because of this recent trend, it has become essential to understand what is meant by parental involvement and in what ways it has had an influence on children's education.

Through the Epstein's (1997) model, it is discussed how children learn and grow through three overlapping spheres of influence: family, school, and community. These three spheres must form partnerships to best meet the needs of the child. Epstein defined six types of involvement based on the relationships between the family, school, and community: parenting (skills), communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Epstein stressed the fact that all of these six types of involvement need to be included to have successful partnerships. Much of the research that examines the relationships between parent involvement and children's education assesses parent involvement by utilizing one particular measure, such as counting the number of parents that volunteer, coming to meetings, or coming to parent-teacher conferences (Baker and Soden, 1997). Other studies utilize measures that consist of a few closed ended questions that target a particular aspect of parent involvement and often focus on the number of times parents participate in particular events (Zellman and Waterman, 1998; Griffith, 1996; Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994; Goldring and Shapira, 1993). According to Baker and Soden (1997), this type of measure does not allow for a rich picture of parent involvement, nor generates new ideas.

In this research, it was thus proposed to investigate the influence of parental involvement on academic performance and success of children. The study sought to establish the extent to which parents are involved in activities described as home-related as well as school-related activities that encourage children's education. Home-related activities included parents working with children on their homework, parents talking to children about school-related topics, and parents taking kids on fieldtrips. In addition, the study will give the Head teachers (HTs), teachers and students an opportunity to explain more about parents' involvement in school affairs.

### *1.2. Problem Statement*

Parental involvement in schooling of their children is one of the most prominent questions of enquiry in contemporary education as it has long been advocated as integral to positive childhood development and school success (Desforges, 2003; Rosenblatt and Peled, 2002). Fuelled by concerns on how to improve students' academic achievements and reduce educational inequities in the larger Kajjado District, which has continuously shown declining performance (Mboko, 2008), parental involvement and family-school partnerships are considered among the most successful educational strategies for improving academic performance of students. Some research findings have supported the existence of a positive relationship between parental involvement and educational success, especially during the elementary school years. However, current knowledge regarding the nature and magnitude of the effects of parental involvement in secondary education is inconsistent and limited in scope. Although researchers vary in their approaches to the study of parental involvement in school matters, most of the existing research has investigated parental involvement in the primary level of education. There is, therefore, limited knowledge about the effects of parental involvement in high schools, particularly in Kenya.

Previous studies have linked parental involvement with improved academic achievement and motivation of children (Desforges, 2003). A study on teachers' perceptions of the benefits of parental involvement in British schools found the improvement of pupils' achievements to be a leading benefit (Jowett and Baginsky, 1988). Thus, it is believed that when parents monitor home works, encourage participation in extra-curricular activities, are active in parents-teacher associations, and help children develop plans for their future; children are more likely to respond and do well in school. Mounting evidence has caused educational researchers and practitioners alike to seek ways to bolster parental involvement in schooling; in particular, among parents whose children traditionally have low academic achievement (Coleman, 1987). Therefore, the effects of parental involvement on students' academic performance are of particular importance to parents, teachers, children and other stakeholders in the education sector.

In spite of the aforementioned strong relationships between parental involvement and academic performance of children, it is still evident that most parents have left the roles of monitoring the performance of their children to teachers and only come in to rebuke the children when they do not perform well at the end of terms. The introduction of free and compulsory primary education and free secondary education in Kenya worsened the problem of shortage of teachers in most schools; and parental involvement in education of their children may prove beneficial in improving the academic performance of their children. While there has been a lot of research in parental involvement in the education of children, research of this kind is limited in most developing countries, especially in Africa (Olatoye and Agbatogun, 2009). Most of the research on parental involvement has been done in the developed countries, leaving a scarcity of local research on how parental involvements are associated with children's academic performance. The present study therefore sought to fill the gap by looking into the role of parental involvement on the academic performance of students in school work. Specifically, the study sought to establish the extent to which parents in Kajiado North District (KND) secondary schools are involved in education of their children and what impact this has on the performance and success of the children.

### *1.3. Objectives of the Study*

The general objective of this study was to establish the extent to which parents in Kajiado North District are involved in education of their children and the impact this has on the performance and success of their children.

#### 1.3.1. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- (a) Establish the effect of parental involvement in school management on the academic performance of public secondary school students.
- (b) Find the effect of parental involvement on academic performance of the child's education in public secondary schools.
- (c) Establish the effect of communication between parents and schools on academic performance of secondary school students.

### *1.4. Research Questions*

- (a) What effect does parental involvement in school management has on the academic performance of public secondary school students?
- (b) What effect does parental involvement on child's education has on the academic performance of public secondary school students?
- (c) How does communication between parents and schools affect the academic performance of secondary school students?

### *1.5. Significance of the Study*

The findings of the study will be significant in improving relationships between parents, schools and students. The GOK through the Ministry of Education (MOE) will use results of this study to formulate and implement an appropriate policy, which will make it necessary for parents and schools to improve participation of parents with schools. In particular, the HTs and teachers will use the findings to improve on the relationship between the parents and the school; hence increased parental involvement in education in schools leading to good academic performance by students. Parents will also use the findings of the study to improve their relationship with the school and even their children as a way to improved academic performance of their children. In the same token, the students will gain from the study in that they will understand and appreciate the importance of parental involvement in their studies.

### *1.6. Conceptual Framework*

A conceptual framework is a diagrammatic representation of hypothesised relationship between dependent and independent variables of the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). A simple diagrammatic framework to guide data collection and analysis was conceptualised (Figure 1). In this conceptual framework we observed students' academic performance as the dependent variable that is influenced by a number of independent variables. Three main independent variables were conceptualised including parental responsibility involvement in school management, parental involvement in the child's education, and parental communication with school.

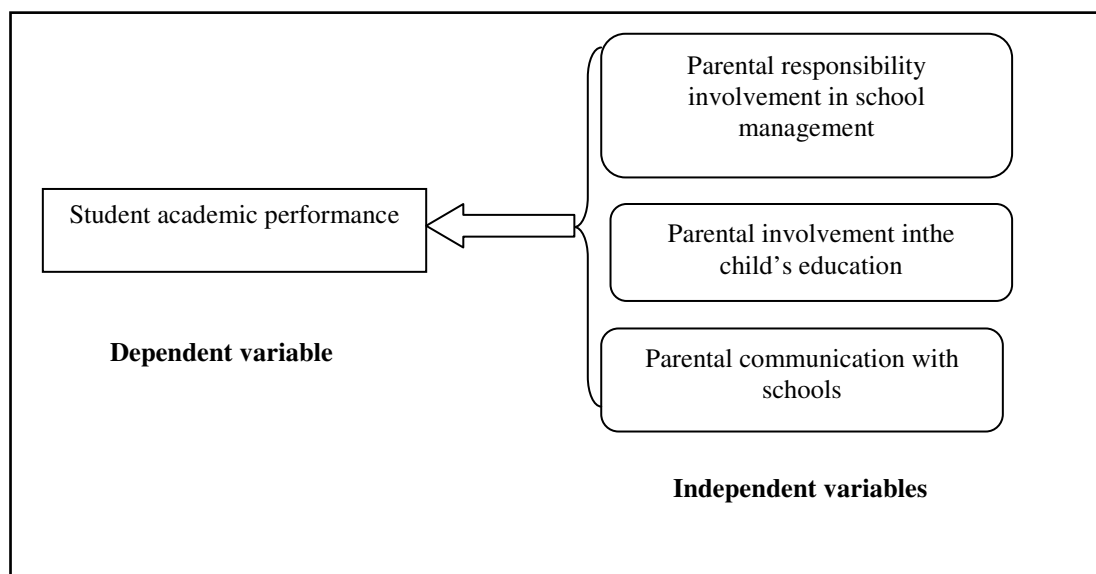


Figure 1: Parental involvement on academic performance of secondary school students in Kenya

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Parental Involvement in General Education

The term 'parental involvement' includes several different forms of participation in education and with schools. Parents can support their children's schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations like parent-teacher meetings, workshops and conferences. They can become more involved in helping their children improve their schoolwork by providing encouragement, arranging for appropriate study time and space, modeling desired behavior (such as reading for pleasure), monitoring homework and actively tutoring their children at home.

According to LaBahn (1995), parental involvement is a combination of commitment and active participation of parents to schools and students. However, many problems are concerned with involvement. Many secondary schools simply do not know how to deal with nontraditional families and the areas of concern that they represent. Parents feel unwelcome at schools, have limited knowledge and education, and may not feel that education is important. The number of solutions that can be used to improve parental involvement are many. The most important of them, however, is for the HTs of schools to be totally committed. When these solutions are implemented, the effects are great, especially for the students. Improved student achievements are the key objective. Parent involvement can also be defined as frequency of talking with teachers, parent interest in planning for post-high school activities, and parent monitoring of school work (Engle, 1989).

Much of the literature reviewed below appear to favour parental involvement in schools as effective means of improving student achievements or changing parent, teacher and student behavior (Macmillan, 2004). However, cautionary measures should be taken not to believe these as gospel truths given that there are some research evaluations that have found little empirical evidence in support of this widespread claim (Mattingly et al., 2002). Outside the homes, parents can serve as advocates or ambassadors for the schools. They can volunteer to help out with school activities or work in the classroom or can take active roles in governance and decision-making necessary for planning, developing and providing an education for the community's children (Cotton and Wiklund, 1989).

Children who come from homes where parents are interested in education, those parents offer them help, encouragement and stress the value of deferred rather immediate gratification, which highly motivates children. Parents should communicate with their children's teachers. Teachers are able to advice on what can be done on children's weak areas. This stimulates and reinforces student learning. It is asserted that parents should occasionally make visits to schools where their children learn to monitor their academic progress. Students of high academic potentials have been wasted due to lack of commitment of their parents to their education. Douglas (1964) observed that parents who are unskilled are more often than not of low educational attainment, take little interest in their children school work, have large families, live in grossly overcrowded homes, lacking amenities and tend to send their children to ill equipped schools.

It had also been observed that the achievement in mathematics of children in boarding and day schools in Britain found out that parental encouragement led to improved performance. The results showed that boarding schools children who tended to come from favourable home backgrounds achieved high scores in early years of primary schools. Their performance was compared to that of day school children. It was discovered that day school pupils performed well at higher levels because of the day-to-day support and encouragement given by their parents at home. Parental encouragement and interest shown to the child's school progress can greatly provide an explanation as to why children who are assisted to solve difficult homework problems record better performance in school. The socio-economic background of school candidates tends to influence performance of those candidates. Well educated parents tend to provide their children with educationally stimulating environments by encouraging them to study and have access to relevant books and related literature of their work. Parents should thus note that it is unfair to be rough to their children who are not as sharp as their

siblings because all children have different levels of development. However, the seed of success is usually planted early in a child's life.

Epstein (1995) and Gianzero (2001) reported that family practices of involvement are as or more important than family background variables in determining whether and how students' progress and succeed in school. No one is more important than parents in sending signals and messages to students that reading and education matter and that school work is not a form of drudgery but a ticket to a better life. By encouraging their children and assisting on their homework, parents can set examples for their children, which are powerful and positive (Gianzero, 2001). Henderson and Berla (1997) and Gianzero (2001) asserted that when schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life.

Having recognized the importance of parental involvement in schools and academic achievement, the United States Government made a declaration in a federal legislation declaration to 'educate America' that was enacted in 1994. The declaration tagged the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which stated that 'by the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in the social, emotional and academic growth of children'. Utah Education Association (2001) asserted that when parents are involved in their children's education at home, they do better in schools. Conway and Houtenwille (2008) also found that parental involvement has a strong positive effect on student achievement.

Some parents and families are able to get involved in school affairs in many ways; others may only have time for one or two activities. Whatever the level of involvement, consistency matters a lot as it would make an important difference in the child's life (Utah Education Association, 2008). The cultivation of strong family-school linkages is increasingly and widely viewed as an essential component of strategies to improve students' educational outcomes.

While researchers acknowledge a strong direct relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and academic achievement, they also claim that motivated families, regardless of their SES, can and do help their children improve school performance through several types of involvements. Research documenting the effects of parental involvement at home and in school concludes that differences in the achievement levels of working class and middle-class children is more explained by the nature of child-parent and parent-school interactions than by characteristics of SES (Flouri and Buchanman, 2004; Conway, 2008).

A review by Henderson and Berla (1997) of 66 studies on the subject of parental involvement in school matters concluded that the most accurate predictor of students' achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which families are able to create a home environment that supports learning; communicate high and reasonable expectations for their children's achievement; and become involved in their children's schools. Programmes designed to foster linkages between families and schools have been shown to help compensate for limited family resources and effectively alter the traditional relationship between SES and school performance. This was corroborated by Flouri and Buchanman (2004) that parental involvement is a more powerful force than other family background variables such as social class, family size and level of parental education. However, it is further shown that parental involvement in schools is affected by many factors including the family structure, socio-economic status, parents' work schedules and educational levels, and even the expectations of school administrators and teachers.

Research has shown that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's academic performance (Fan and Chen, 2001). Fennstein and Symons (1999) agreed with this and concluded that it works in both primary and secondary schools. Melhinch et al. (2001) discovered that parental involvement in children's learning leads to higher academic achievement, greater cognitive competence, greater problem solving skills, greater school enjoyment, better school attendance and fewer behavioural problems at school. McMillian (2000) also reported that parental involvement on public school is a strong determinant of school performance as measured by students' scores in achievement tests. Thus parents influence the educational process of their children. The importance of parental involvement cannot be over emphasized. To make this involvement completely meaningful, both parents should be involved. Garg et al. (2007) found that youths from single-parent families reported lower educational aspiration than those from two-parent families. Another issue to be concerned about is whether parents are more involved in their daughters' than sons' educational progress. Olatoye and Ogunkola (2008a, b) reported there is no significant difference between parents getting more involved in their daughters' than their sons' academic progress.

Numerous studies have reported that parental involvement improves student achievement. For instance, Hornby (2000) argued that evidence that parental involvement improves student achievement and that parents are critical to children's successes during their school years is actually observable. According to the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, parental involvement in the education of their children cannot in today's world be viewed as an optional extra for professional teachers and effective schools. It is clear that parents want to be positively and productively involved in the life and work of their children in school and that positive parental attitude to education are an important influence on children's educational development and subsequent life chances. Teachers therefore have a professional obligation to create and nurture structures that will support and develop positive parental involvement and participation in the life and work of schools.

Studies involving children at all levels, from infancy to secondary schools, show that parental involvement makes a difference. For example, Berger (1987) says that reading specialists stressed the importance of parents reading to and with their children, encouraging, eliciting questions, and setting realistic goals for their child's learning. Other studies of reading skills have argued that parental involvement in activities as reading to their children, having books in the home, and hearing their children read is vital for reading attainment (National Literacy Trust, 2001).

Ballantine (as cited in Hornby, 2000) states that parents are critical to children's successes during the school years. Sussel (1996) identifies the benefits of increased parental involvement as: more positive parental attitudes towards teachers and schools; more positive student attitudes and behaviours; improved student performance; improved teacher morale and; improved school climate.

Research by Cairney and Munsie (1992) has shown that virtually all parents are interested in their children's education and that parents know far more about language and learning than most teachers realise. However, they say, 'it seems that the ability of parents to support their children is often impeded by the 'schooling' of literacy': parents feel teaching is a specialised subject from which they are excluded. Many parents are unaware of the real improvement that even a relatively small effort on their part may bring about. They are conscious of their own limitations as teachers, and feel they do not know what to do, or how, in order to give effective help and encouragement. According to Howe (1999) the most important qualities required in parental participation in schooling of their children are 'sensitivity, patience, enthusiasm, common sense and perseverance, rather than particular instructional skills or teaching techniques'. It has also been found that 'parents who doubt their efficacy to help their children learn, turn over their children's education entirely to teachers', while parents who are confident in their ability to help 'guide their children's learning and participate actively in the life of the school.

A research carried out for the British Government by the Plowden Report (1967) found that parental involvement in educational and community-based programmes is an entirely positive influence on the child. Bedi and Castleberry (cited in Long, 1986) suggest that the Plowden Report may be seen as a starting point in the process of involving parents:

'It has been proved that parental involvement improves children's school performance, and anything that does so must merit close attention ... The success of any parental involvement venture depends very largely on the attitudes of the teachers putting it into operation'.

Study by Davidson et al. (1996) on the role of parents on children's performance found that 'overall, the most academically able children had the highest levels of parental support'. Other studies have also shown that parent involvement, in form of encouragement, support, supervision and participation in lessons, in the early stages of learning, is a better predictor of student achievement than other factors such as aptitude test (Creech, 2001). It is the quality of the nurturing environment that is critical, and the onus for this is placed firmly on parents and teachers who need to provide not only an academically stimulating environment but also one in which 'the child's enthusiasms are noticed, listened to, and responded to with sensitivity and imagination' (Kemp and Mills, 2002).

Sloboda (1993) identifies high levels of appropriate family support as one of five factors which contribute to high levels of academic achievement. But support must be of a particular kind – non-threatening to the child's self-esteem. All children in his sample reported periods of low motivation for practice, and claimed that had their parents not pushed them to study during these periods, they probably would have done none at all. Most parents provided high levels of time and material resources.

Davidson et al. (1996) found that the highest achieving children received the most support from their parents, particularly up to the age of 11. Thereafter parental support diminished as the children were increasingly driven by intrinsic motives to practise regularly by themselves. Zdzinski (1996) found that at elementary level children's academic performance outcomes were significantly correlated to parental involvement, whereas at junior high and senior high levels parental involvement had more effect on pupils' motivation and attitude. Once children start learning, Davidson et al (1996) believe parental involvement is often critical as to whether the child persists or gives up. They believe that high levels of academic achievement are likely to be unattainable without such supportive parental involvement. They also claim that the more crucial determinant of the academic achievement of children is not the literacy level of the parents, but rather the level of support and time commitment, which the parents are willing and able to make.

According to Ericsson et al. (1993) the elite performers have received continued parental and environmental support. Sosniak (1985) studied the musical development of 21 concert pianists and found that talent development involves many people working for the achievement of just one. Unusually successful learning seems to be a group effort involving the children, parents, teachers, other family members or family friends.

It has further been shown that more parents are involved in their children's schools at the primary than at the secondary school levels. Partly, this occurs as a result of teenagers often discouraging their parents from coming to schools. Parents of secondary school students are often unsure how to help their children, and many high schools do not make parent involvement a priority. But research has shown a link between parent involvement in high school and future student success (Engle, 1989; Hick, 1995-96). Engle (1989) indicates that students whose parents remained involved through high school were much more likely to complete college. These students were three times more likely to complete a bachelor's degree than children of parents who were not involved in high school. Twenty-seven percent of the students whose parents remained involved completed a bachelor's degree, compared with only 8% of the students whose parents were not very involved in high school.

In South Africa, participative management by school stakeholders has been embraced by rural school management. They are potential positive aspects that have been brought about by participative management to schools, namely school vision, common goals, shared decision making, and general involvement of relevant stakeholders such as parents. However, there are challenges facing rural schools in terms of parental involvement in school governance. Some of these challenges include lack of commitment to schools, illiteracy among parents, and communication breakdown between schools and parents. In spite of these challenges, the spirit of participative management in schools is ever growing in the South African rural schools (Ngubane, 2005).

In Kenya, work done by Ogoye-Ndegwa et al. (2007) on parental participation in pupils' homework indicates that although parents are willing to be involved in pupils' homework, their involvement is hampered by many socio-economic factors including illiteracy and low incomes. Consequently, in many occasions home works are not only incomplete but are also not done; and pupils end up being punished for this failure. Ogoye-Ndegwa recommends the formulation and implementation of a clear written policy on home works. In another study, an investigation was conducted on principals' and students' perceptions on parental contributions to financial management of secondary schools in the larger Kericho District in Kenya (Koross et al., 2009). Findings from this study indicate that principals and students perceived parental involvement in financial management is present to some degree in most sampled schools in

Kericho District. This parental involvement had positive influence on financial management outcomes. The recommendation from Koross et al. (2009) study was for the education stakeholders to increase parental involvement in school affairs. Similarly, findings of parent' involvement in the management of secondary schools in the larger Busia and Uasin Gishu Districts in Kenya found that actually majority of the parents were involved in the management of schools; and that the involvement supported HTs in their various roles, hence more parents' involvement was requested for (Achoka, 2003). Achoka also found that no significant differences were found between parents and HTs; and parents and students on teacher / student perceptions of parents' involvement in school management. Apart from parents' involvement, the role of headmasters in academic achievements in secondary schools in Vihiga District Kenya was investigated (Lydia and Nasongo, 2009). Results from this investigation indicate that HTs roles were important in academic achievements. In this, they used quality improvement measures, teamwork and ensured that staff members were well established as organisational skills that influenced academic achievement. The HTs were also involved in academic activities by observing and checking the students' and teachers 'work, monitoring students' discipline and helping in eradicating cheating in examinations. In a most recent study, work was undertaken to determine factors that influence performance of Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) in Mathematics of secondary schools in Nyamira District of Kenya (Yara and Wanjohi, 2011). It was found in this study that teachers' experience and qualifications, teachers' / students' attitudes, and the school category were important determinants of KCSE performance in Nyamira District. It was thus recommended that adequate attention should be paid to these determinants that can predict students' performance by the government.

### *2.2. Teachers' Attitudes to Parental Involvement*

A Gallup poll in 1993 in some American schools concluded that 'teachers intuitively know that children are far more likely to do well in classes if their parents play active roles in the children's education'. When teachers were asked 'How important do you think is it to encourage parents to take a more active part in the education of their children?' Ninety-six percent of the polled teachers responded as 'very important' (Elam et al., 1994; Louis Harris and Associates, 1993).

Ramirez (1999) conducted a survey on teachers' attitudes regarding parents and parental involvement in children's education. Responses on his questionnaire from 203 teachers in two American High schools elicited contradictory results. Almost all teachers (99%) in the survey reported that parental involvement is important for a good high school; similarly, 98% of the respondents thought that parental involvement could increase student effectiveness, and 94% of them agreed that parental involvement increases student achievement. On the other hand, over half of the surveyed teachers (54%) believe it is not their responsibility to involve families, and only a few teachers (14%) had meetings in the previous year with 50% or more of parents. Interestingly, very many teachers (81%) interviewed felt that parents do not know how to speak to their children about schoolwork; but most teachers (92%) felt that parents could learn how to assist their children with schoolwork. While the Ramirez study does not discuss reasons why the interviewed teachers acted and felt as they did, just over half of those teachers (53%) reported that they did not have time to involve parents. However, 44% of them indicated that they had the time. Apparently it appears that the teachers in the Ramirez (1999) study knew in theory that parental involvement is beneficial to pupil progress, but were unwilling to put these ideas into practice.

But it appears that what may be important in the parental involvement in school matters is well reported by the Plowden Report (1967). The Plowden Report stated that what matters most are the attitudes of teachers toward parents and parents to teachers. These attitudes depend on whether there is genuine mutual respect between the two parties, parents understand and appreciate what the schools are doing for their individual children, and teachers realise how dependent they are on parental support.

### *2.3. Children's Attitudes to Parental Involvement*

Children's motivation and enjoyment at school are affected by many factors, including the repertoire they study, their view of ability and effort, their teachers, and parents. High levels of support and challenge have a positive effect on teenagers in all talent areas and, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1993) (cited in Creech and Hallam, 2003), parents of accomplished children typically: devote great amounts of time and energy to meeting the needs of their children, set high standards, encourage productive use of time, provide challenging opportunities, make sure lessons and materials are available, and set aside areas of the home where the child can work privately.

According to Crozier (1999) and Macmillan (2004) children in all age groups, including secondary school students, are happy with the above parenting practices as being effective. Overall, the majority of the students in most year groups seemed to value their parents' help, interest and support (Macmillan, 2004; Crozier, 1999). In particular, Crozier found that 62% of year seven students (aged 11-12) and 50% of year 10 students (aged 14-15) always or usually received help from parents with homework. The year seven students expressed appreciation about parents' help, although a minority of them felt guilty at getting help and sometimes they did not agree with the advice given by parents. Year 10 students said they were glad their parents helped. The help increased their confidence and helped them get better marks. Some of them said the help improved their understanding, although others said that sometimes they got confused. However, it seems to be important that parental involvement is based on negotiations and that both parties regard it as optional rather than obligatory. O'Neill (2001) studied 832 children in year six (ages 10-11) and again in year seven (ages 11-12). It was found that the children who stay involved in learning to play an instrument believed that their parents were supportive of this activity far more than children who give up.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Target Population

The target population, which was also the sampling frame, was all the public secondary schools in Kajiado North District. In total, there were 25 public secondary schools in KND.

#### 3.2. Research Design

Given that the researcher had no control over independent variables in this study, a descriptive survey research design (or a formal survey model) of the *ex-post facto* type was employed (Yara and Wanjohi, 2011). Cooper (2000) states that a descriptive study is concerned with finding out who, what, where and how of a phenomenon, which is the concern of a given study. The purpose of descriptive research design was to describe the state of affairs as it was at present (Kothari, 1990). It provides data and information about the population being studied; it was also used when the objective was to provide a systematic description that is as factual and accurate as possible.

Described differently, descriptive survey / analysis was a method that involves asking a large group of people questions about a particular issue, like parental involvement in school affairs. Information is obtained from a sample rather than the whole population at one point in time. This time may range from one day to a few weeks. This study used descriptive survey / analysis to establish opinions and knowledge of different stakeholders on the roles of parents' involvement in schooling issues, more specifically the academic performance of secondary school students. While it is appreciated that many research undertakings are quite costly, the descriptive survey design was deliberately selected for this study because it permits for fast data collection at a comparatively cheap cost (Lydiaiah and Nasong, 2009; Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993; Grinnel, 1993).

#### 3.3. Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

In this study various simple sampling procedures were applied to arrive at the final samples that were interviewed. First because of budgetary, communication, and time constraints, 10 out of a total of 25 schools were purposively selected for this study. To take gender issues into consideration, out of the 10 selected schools, five were boys' and the other five were from girls' and mixed schools. Again due to consideration of cost, time and communication, it was decided that a total sample of 140 respondents would be adequate for a scientifically sound study, which could lead to valid inferences. The researcher then stratified this sampling into three categories *viz a viz*: HTs, teachers (including class and career teachers), and students.

Head teachers were purposively sampled by picking all the HTs of the 10 selected secondary schools. However, class / career teachers and students were subjected to simple random sampling in order to get our working sample. As explained by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), simple random sampling gives each member of the population equal chance of being selected. Although each of the 10 schools had an average of 15 teachers, some schools had 20 teachers, while others had slightly more than 25. Hence the schools were stratified into three categories namely three small schools with about 15 teachers, four medium with 20 teachers and three large schools with at least 25 teachers. Out of these schools we randomly sampled 50 teachers for our final sample. The 50 teachers consisted of 12 teachers from the small schools with four randomly picked teachers from each small school, 20 from the four medium schools with five randomly picked teachers per school, and 18 from the three large schools in which six teachers were picked randomly. For students, a similar sampling procedure was followed where a total of 80 students were selected. Each of the three small schools had an average student population of 360, where six students were randomly selected from each school making a subsample of 18 students. The four medium schools had an average of 640 students each. Seven students were randomly selected from each of the four medium schools making a total subsample of 28 students. The three large schools had an average of 540 students in which 11 students were randomly picked from each two schools and 12 from the third school making a subsample of 34 students. Adding the three subsamples together gave a total sample of 80 students that were used in this study. Thus the total sample of HTs (10), teachers (50), and students (80) came to 140 as the final sample for the study.

#### 3.4. Research Instruments

Data and information for this study were collected using structured interviewing questionnaires as the main instruments. Three categories of questionnaires were developed – the first questionnaire for HTs, a second one for teachers and a third questionnaire for students (Appendix 1). The questionnaires were preferred as the most suitable instruments for the data collection. Questionnaire methods for data collection were regarded as suitable because they allow researchers reach many respondents (or large samples) within limited time. Questionnaires also ensure confidentiality and thus help gather more candid and objective answers. The questionnaires were developed to address the objectives of the study. Best and Khan (1993) observes that questionnaires enable the person administering them to explain the purpose of the study and to give meaning of the items that may not be clear. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) argue that, questionnaires were used to obtain important information about the population.

#### 3.5. Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

##### 3.5.1. Validity

Validity of a research instrument is described as the extent to which the instrument measures what it is purports to measure (Borg and Gall, 2003).



In this research, content-related validity is more relevant because it refers to the degree to which the research instrument or test measures what it should measure. Content validity is determined through expert judgement by examining the items that make up the instrument.

Consequently, the draft questionnaires for this research were given to a selected person knowledgeable in research to ascertain the items suitability in obtaining information according to research objectives of the study.

### 3.5.2. Reliability of Instruments

Reliability of instruments is concerned with the degree to which a particular instrument gives similar results over a number of repeated trials (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003; Charles, 1995). To ensure reliability of the survey instruments for this research, the researcher pre-tested all the three types of questionnaires using a pilot sample. The respondents of the pilot sample were not used in the main study. Pre-testing was conducted to check the questionnaires structure and the sequence, meaning and ambiguity of questions. This was conducted with respondents that were drawn from outside the KND since they were regarded to have similar characteristics as those of the study's target and were outside the geographical scope of the study. The pilot respondents were drawn from the Mary Leakey Girls' High and Nderi Mixed Secondary School in Kikuyu District. Pre-testing was done in order to refine and ascertain the reliability of the research instruments before they were applied in the actual research. As a result of piloting the questionnaires were adjusted by removing errors that were discovered, making questions clearer, correcting understandable language, making questions more relevant, and revising some contents.

The questionnaire instrument was also tested for reliability in which scale reliability was tested using Cronbach's (1951) alpha ( $\alpha$ ) statistics. Scale reliability was preferred here because most questions in my questionnaire instrument were Likert questions, i.e., most questions were multiple objective questions. In this test it is noted that in general a Cronbach's ( $\alpha$ ) value that lies between 0.7 and 0.8 is an acceptable value for reliability of an instrument.

### 3.6. Data Analysis and Presentation

Upon completion of the data collection exercise, all completed research instruments were assembled, coded, summarized, and analyzed using the descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics consisted of computation of sums, means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. The analyses were further amplified by subjecting selected results by use of graphical and tabular techniques permitting some of the results be presented in form of tabular matrices and pie / bar charts – for clarity. The study applied inferential statistics such as Chi square to test the hypothesis.

## 4. Data Analysis, Presentation, Interpretation and Discussion

### 4.1. Objective One – Effect of Parental Involvement in School Management on the Academic Performance of Public Secondary School Students

In this section the study sought to assess the effect of parental involvement in school management on the performance of public secondary school students. Parental involvement in school management means different things to different people. However, in this study, school management is mainly concerned with the affairs of Board of Governors' (BOGs), and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and its subcommittees. The findings of parental involvement in school management are presented in the subsequent sub sections. The issue of parents' involvement in school management (assisting top school management in decision making processes through BOGs and PTA meetings and other consultations) was asked to student respondents to provide their perceptions on this.

The student respondents gave various responses in the extent to which they perceived their parents were involved in the management of schools. It is shown in Figure 2 that majority of the student respondents (33%) indicated that their parents were involved to a small extent in school management while 24% of them indicated that their parents did not participate in any way in school management. However, only 3% of the student respondents indicated that their parents participated in school management to a very large extent. These particular findings appear to suggest that majority of parents were little involved in school management decisions. This could be attributed to various reasons some of them being the level of parents' socio-economic status, education, businesses, and travelling distances. Some parents may not even see the value they may gain in getting involved in school management activities.

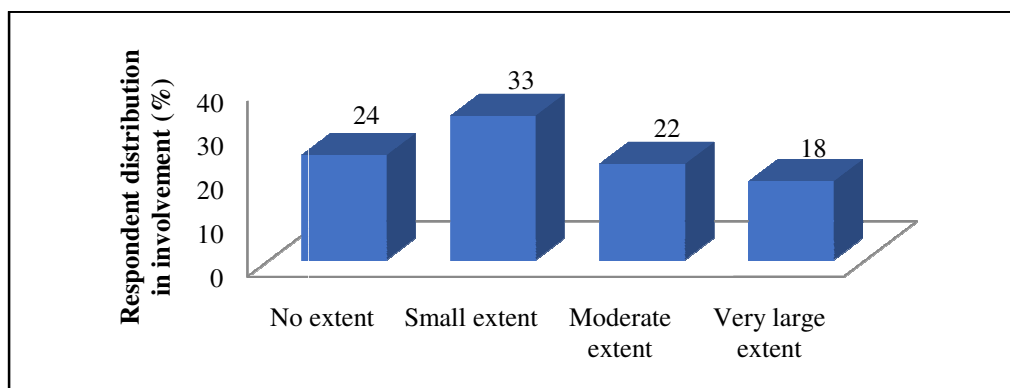


Figure 2: Extent of parents' involvement in school management

These findings seem to contradict some previous studies such as those reported by Cotton and Wikelund (1989) where it was found that in many cases parental involvement in schools can assist in various roles such as governance and decision-making, which are necessary for planning, developing and providing good education for their children.

When the same students were asked to indicate the capacity under which their parents were involved in school management, 10 and 16% of the student respondents indicated that their parents were involved as BOG and PTA officials respectively. However, a large proportion of student respondents (74%) gave no response (implying their parents were non officials of the committees) to the concerned question (Figure 3). This could imply that a majority of the parents were not involved in the school management. This is true because only a few elected parents represent the entire parents' body in school management processes.

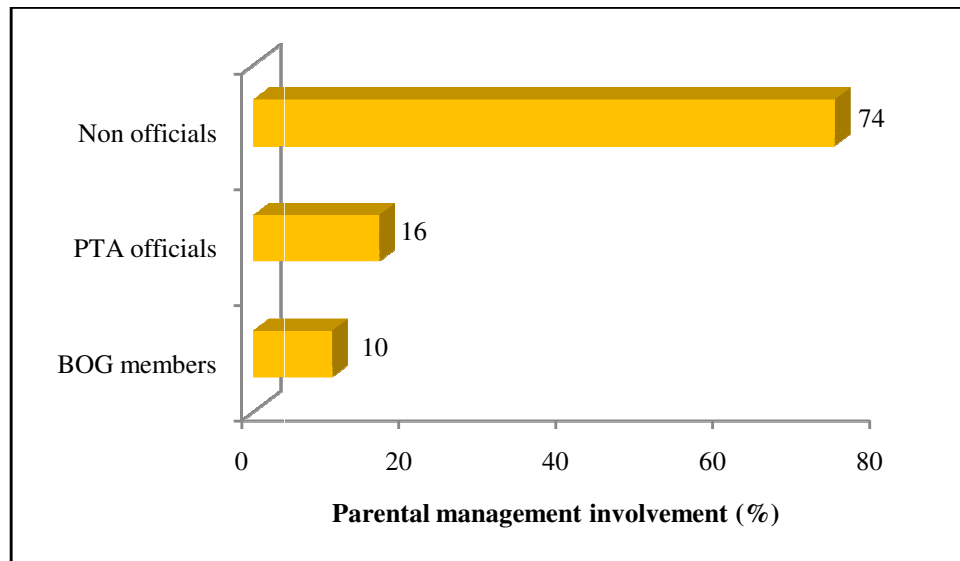


Figure 3: Parental involvement in school management capacities

4.1.1. Extent Parents Participate in Core School Activities

The respondents in the three categories (students, teachers and HTs) were asked to indicate the extent to which parents participate in core school activities. In this study, core school activities include all or some of the following: parents' days, open (academic) days, class academic consultation days, prize giving days, visiting days, prayer and thanks giving days, and annual general meeting (AGM) days. The results (Table 1) show that the majority of the student (58%) and teacher (56%) respondents were in agreement that parents were hardly (little to small extent) involved in the core school activities. This appears to be contrary to the HTs' observations in which 60 and 40% of them indicated that the parents were actually involved in core school activities to a moderate and large extent respectively. This appears to be in agreement with other studies that indicated that parental participation in school activities can improve school visibility and students' performance (Koross et al., 2009; Ngubane, 2005; Creech, 2001).

Extent of participation	Students		Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
No extent	19	25	6	13	0	0
Small extent	25	33	20	43	0	0
Moderate extent	16	22	10	21	6	60
Large extent	13	17	6	13	1	10
Very large extent	2	3	5	10	3	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1: Extent of parents' participation in core school activities

It worth noting that the differences in the responses between students and teachers on one hand and HTs on the other may be due to the fact that the HTs may be more informed about parents' participation in the school activities than both the students and teachers. As a matter of fact, many students and ordinary teachers may not be aware of parents' presence in schools during such activities. This implies that attendance of such activities by students and teachers was not necessarily a requirement by the school management.

In a related scenario, the student respondents were asked to state the frequency of their parents' involvement in selected specific school activities. The selected activities included regularity of parents coming to school to check on progress of students' class work, regularity of parents' attendance of parents' days and AGMs, relationships with students' teachers, and parents' responses to teachers concerns whenever they are raised. Results of students' responses on these specific activities by their parents are described in Figure 4.

Basically results in Figure 4 indicate that parents were more concerned with their children's class progress and teachers' concerns than regular attendance of parents' days, AGMs and developing good relationships with teachers. This is depicted by the fact that almost

60% (25+35) and 65% (30+35) of student respondents agreed that their parents almost often and always went to school to check on their class progress and attended to concerns raised by teachers respectively. Similarly, about 70% (35+35) and 55% (30+25) of the sampled students indicated that almost often and occasionally their parents attended parents' days and AGMs, and developed good rapport with their teachers respectively. However, about 10% of the student respondents were in consensus that their parents never attend to any of the four selected specific school activities across the board.

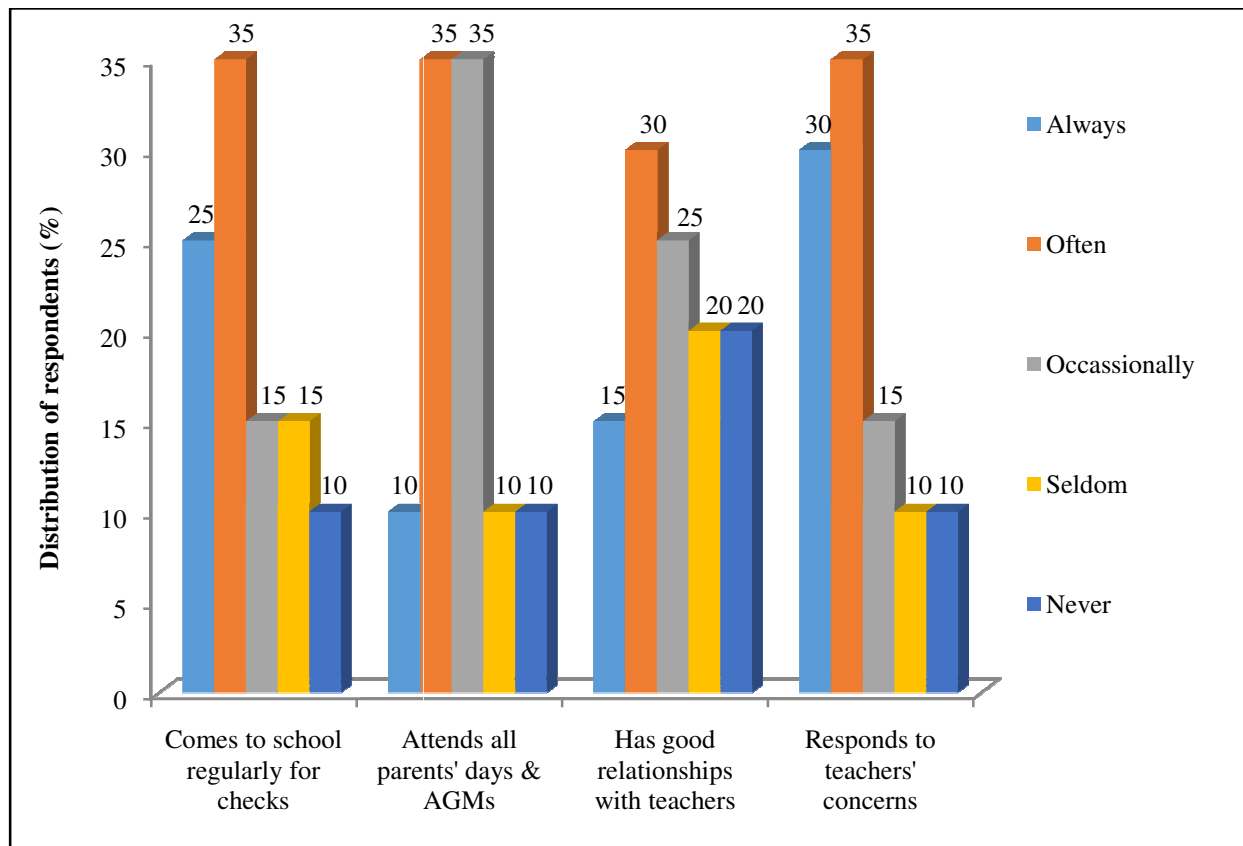


Figure 4: Extent of parental participation in specific school activities

Overall, it appears (from Figure 4) that at least two thirds majority of the parents are concerned with their students' academic performance and welfare; while about the one thirds minority of the parents do not seem to be concerned. Reasons contributing to this scenario could include socio-economic status of parents, their educational levels, health, ignorance, poverty, occupation not allowing them enough time, and or mere negligence. This scenario seems to be in agreement with LaBahn (1995) suggestions and Ogoye-Ndegwa's findings that while parents are willing to assist their children with their school work, this is hindered by many socio-economic factors.

4.1.2. Effect of Parental Involvement in School Management on Students' Academic Performance

This study sought to establish whether parental involvement in the school management had any effect on the students' academic performance. As presented in Table 2 majority of the HTs (60%) and teacher (68%) respondents were in consensus that indeed parental involvement in school management had effects on the students' academic performance. This is contrary to the students' perceptions in which majority of the student respondents (75%) indicated that parents' involvement in the school management had little effect on their academic performance. One of the reasons for these contradictory responses could be that many students are apathetic to their parents' participation in school management. Students do not foresee direct benefits from their parents' involvement in school affairs, which they could link with their academic performance.

Effects	Head teachers		Teachers		Students	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	6	60	32	68	12	16
No	3	30	12	26	56	75
No response	1	10	3	6	7	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2: Effect of parental involvement in school management on students' academic performance

However, those (HTs and teacher respondents) who appeared to be in favour of parents' involvements explained that it was easier for parents who get involved in the school management to monitor, evaluate and follow up the progress of their children's academic performance in schools. These parents take advantage of what is going on as they are perceived to be in close contact with the school administration and the teachers. These parents also make routine check-ups on their children's performances. Respondents also indicated that students knowing that their parents were in contact with the school administration, made the children to work harder resulting in better academic performance. The HTs and teacher respondents also indicated that parental involvement in the school management changes students' perceptions on their education as they put in more effort in academics in order to impress their parents. These findings appear to be in agreement with Cotton and Wikelund (1989) who stated that when the schools worked together with the parents, children tended to perform better.

Respondents were asked to indicate what schools were doing to encourage parental involvement in school management. According to the teacher respondents, many schools were engaging as many parents as possible in formal meetings where parents participate in giving their ideas on how well schools should be managed and in this way parents also get briefed on progress of school projects. The respondents also indicated that schools also involve parents' representatives in various school running organs. In general, these findings reveal that according to some respondents, schools can involve parents in the management of schools by simply raising the needs of the schools with the parents.

#### 4.6. Objective Two – Effect of Parental Involvement on Academic Performance of the Child's Education in Public Secondary Schools

The study sought to establish the effect of parental involvement in the children's education on their academic performance. Various activities such as asking for end-term reports, helping with home works / holiday assignments, demanding to know academic performance of their children as well as monitoring the children's academic performance are among the activities in this particular parental involvement in the child's education. The findings of this investigation are presented in the subsequent subsections.

##### 4.6.1. Parents' Demand for End-Term Reports

The student respondents were asked to indicate whether their parents demanded for the end-term reports, especially the report forms. As presented in Figure 5, it is shown that 84% of the student respondents indicated that indeed their parents demanded to see their end of term report cards. On the other hand, about 16% of the respondents were not asked to produce end-term report cards. This is not surprising given that some parents are apathetic, negligent, illiterate, unnecessarily too busy, and perhaps forgetful. In other cases, those students who do poorly dodge their parents that they were not given end of term report cards or they internationally lose the reports.

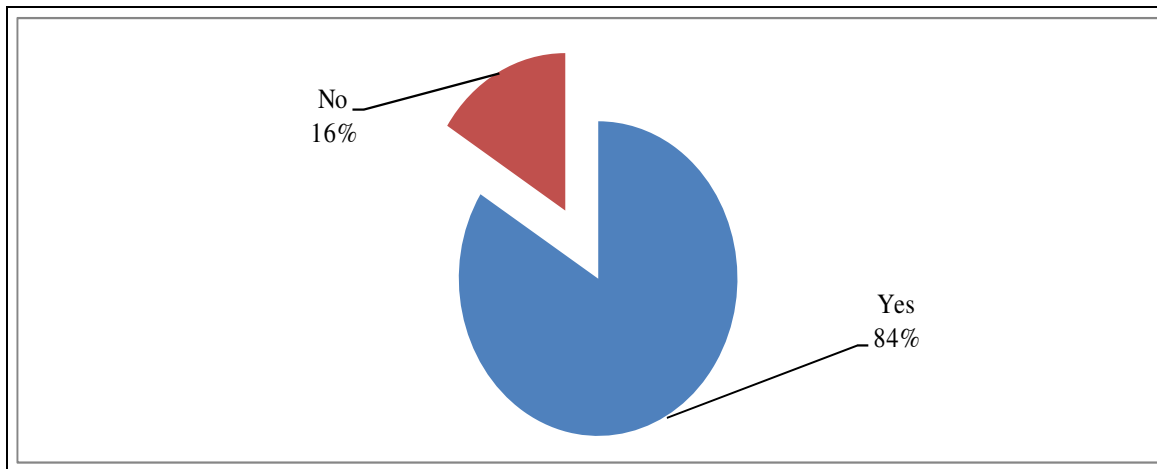


Figure 5: Parents' demands for end-term reports

##### 4.6.2. Parents' Help with Home Works / Holiday Assignments

The study sought to establish whether parents helped students with their homework and / or holiday assignments. Results of this investigation are displayed in Figure 6. Up to 32% of the student respondents were in agreement that their parents helped them with their home works / holiday assignments as compared with a majority (53%) of the students who agreed that their parents never assisted them with their school assignments and / or home works. There was no response from 15% of the students. By and large, this implies that not many parents assisted their children in finding solutions to their home works and / or assignments. Many reasons could be attributed to this among them parents' illiteracy, ignorance, limited knowledge on some of the homework subjects, and sometimes expressly leaving children to struggle with their home works on their own – as one way of training them to think and do things independently.

The findings seem to contradict Crozier (1999) and Macmillan (2007) who reported that children of all age groups including those in secondary schools are happy and value their parents' help, interest and support in their academic work. In fact, Ogoye-Ndegwa et al. (2007) appear to have found that parents' assistance to their children's home works was important and recommend formulation and implementation of a clear written policy on school home works.

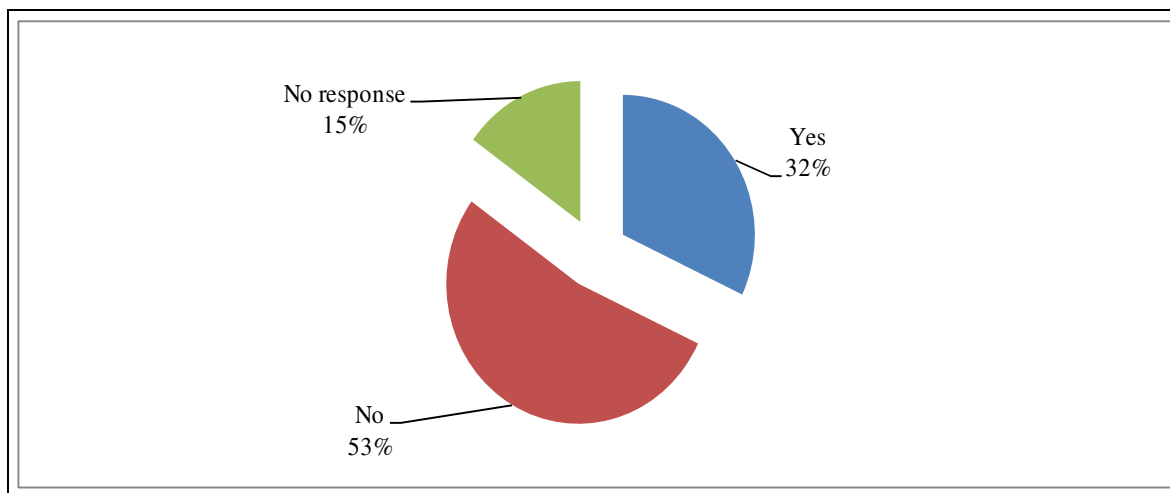


Figure 6: Parental assistance with home works / holiday assignments

#### 4.6.3. Parents' Assistance with Other (Extra-Curricular) School Activities

The study sought to establish from students to what extent parents assisted them with other school activities such as games, provision of resources to do home works, encouragement to work hard and be focused, helping in career choices, participating in Kenya National Association of Parents (KNAP), and other extra-curriculum activities. The results described in Table 9 indicate that 50% of the student respondents agreed that their parents assisted with other school activities to a large and very large extent combined. About 19% of the respondents indicated that their parents assisted them only to a moderate extent, while about 29% of the sampled students indicated that they were assisted only to a very minimal extent (little to small extent combined). Although other activities are important in developing students' talents, parental assistance in these activities to students appears not to be a popular practice because this may overstretch parents' energies, resources and could also be time consuming. Some parents perceive extra-curricular activities as time wasting for students' studies. So, some of the parents may not encourage their children to pursue other school activities too much.

Extent of assistance	Students	
	Frequency	%
No extent	12	16
Small extent	10	13
Moderate extent	14	19
Large extent	14	19
Very large extent	23	31
No response	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3: Extent to which parents assist with other school activities

#### 4.6.4. Parents Demand Academic Performance of Children

Sampled teacher and HT respondents were asked to indicate how often parents demanded to know the academic performance of their children in class and school. Results in Table 3 show that most teacher and head teacher respondents (47 and 60% respectively) indicated that parents very often demanded to know academic performance of their children. These demands are normally requested through various forms of communication and meetings some of which comprise visiting days, impromptu visits, class / academic meetings, parents' days, open days, AGMs, and academic reports.

Frequency of demands	Teacher		Head teacher	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Very often	22	47	6	60
Occasionally	16	34	2	20
Rarely	6	13	2	20
Never	0	0	0	0
No response	3	6	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4: Frequency of parents' demands to know academic performance of children

#### 4.6.5. Effect of Parental Involvement in Children's Education on Academic Performance of Students

The study sought to establish from the three categories of respondents whether parental involvement in children's education affected their academic performance. As expressed in Table 5, 70 and 100% of the teacher and HT respondents respectively agreed that parental involvement in children's education affected the children's academic performance. On the contrary, most of the student respondents (49%) indicated that the parental involvement in their education did not influence their academic performance. In this finding, teachers and HTs appear to favour parental involvement in children's education because most of them believe, by observation and through time, that those students who normally perform well in academics belong to the parents who actively participate in the children's education activities and programmes. Seemingly, most students have little experience about positive results emanating from their parents' involvement in their education. It also appears that students have attitudinal behaviour towards their parents' involvement in their education, both of which make the students be apprehensive towards their parents' involvement in their education. The findings agree with Coinway and Houtenwille (2008) who found that parental involvement has a strong positive effect on the students' academic achievements.

Parents' involvement?	Students		Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	36	48	33	70	10	100
No	37	49	10	21	0	0
No response	2	3	4	9	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5: Effect of parental involvement in children's education on academic performance of students

#### 4.6.6. Parents' Monitoring of the Children's Academic Performance

Teacher and HT respondents were asked to state how often they would like to see parents monitor their children academic performance in schools. This question was asked after it was established that monitoring of students' academic performance by the parents was a necessary requisite. Results of this enquiry are displayed in Figure 7 in which it shown that about 40% of the teacher and HT respondents indicated that they would prefer to see parents come to schools as and when they want to monitor the progress of their children's academic performance. At the same time, about 26% of the respondents indicated that parents should monitor their children's academic performance at least once a term, while 17% of them preferred this activity to be undertaken monthly. These results are indicative of the necessity of monitoring of students' academic performance by their parents. Many teachers appear to have embraced and some of them are internalising the idea of monitoring of student academics by parents. This finding appears to be in line with recommendations by Engle (1989).

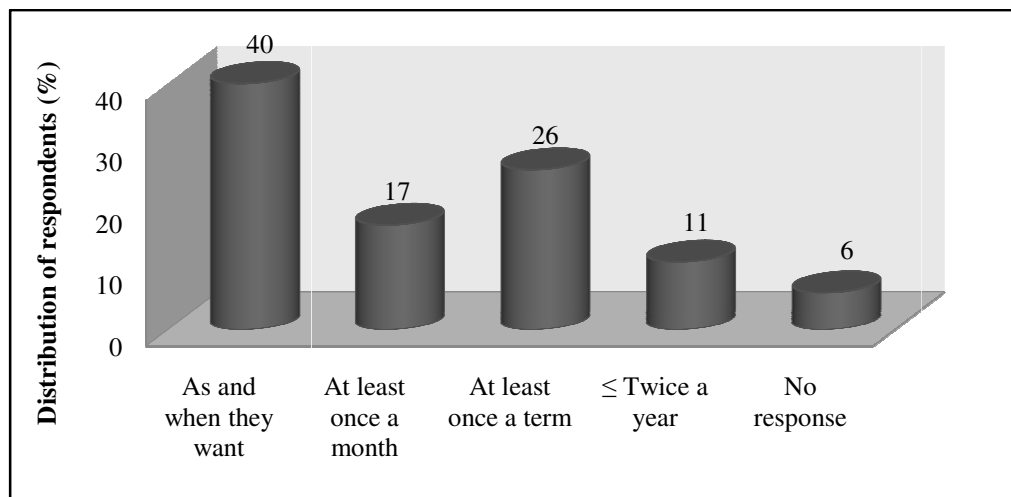


Figure 7: Parental monitoring of children's academic performance

#### 4.7. Objective Three – Effects of Communication between Parents and Schools on Students' Academic Performance of Secondary School Students

The study sought to establish the effects of communication between the parents and the schools on the academic performance of students. The findings of this objective are presented in the subsequent subsections.

##### 4.7.1. Communication between Parents and Teachers

The teacher respondents were asked to describe the communication between the parents and the teachers. As presented in Figure 8, most teacher respondents (38%) described the communication between parents and teachers as very good, while 30% of them described it as good. However, 4% of the sampled teachers appeared not to be sure about this communication as they did not respond to the question

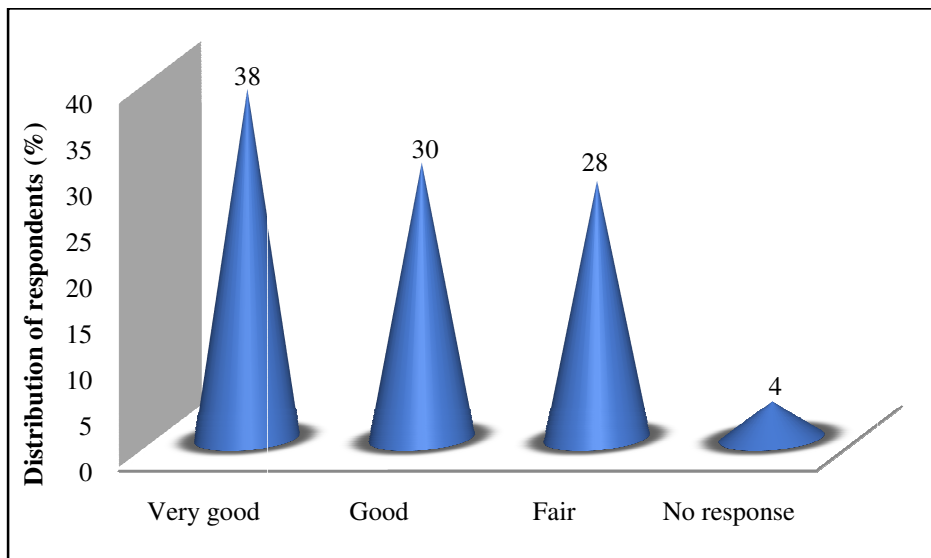


Figure 8: Communication between parents and teachers

In general, it appears that about 68% of the sampled teachers were happy about their communication with parents. This communication is normally conducted and enhanced through letter writings (by the post office or sending the students), mobile phones and even email communications.

**4.7.2. Areas of Communication between Parents and Schools**

In the communication objective, it was also sought to establish areas of major concerns for communication between the schools and the parents. These areas of major concerns were identified as students’ school and class attendance, behaviour, academic performance, and wellbeing (including health issues and provision of basic needs). Together the teachers and HTs were asked to indicate to what extent parents attended to these major concerns when communicated to them. The results of this inquiry are presented in Figure 9.

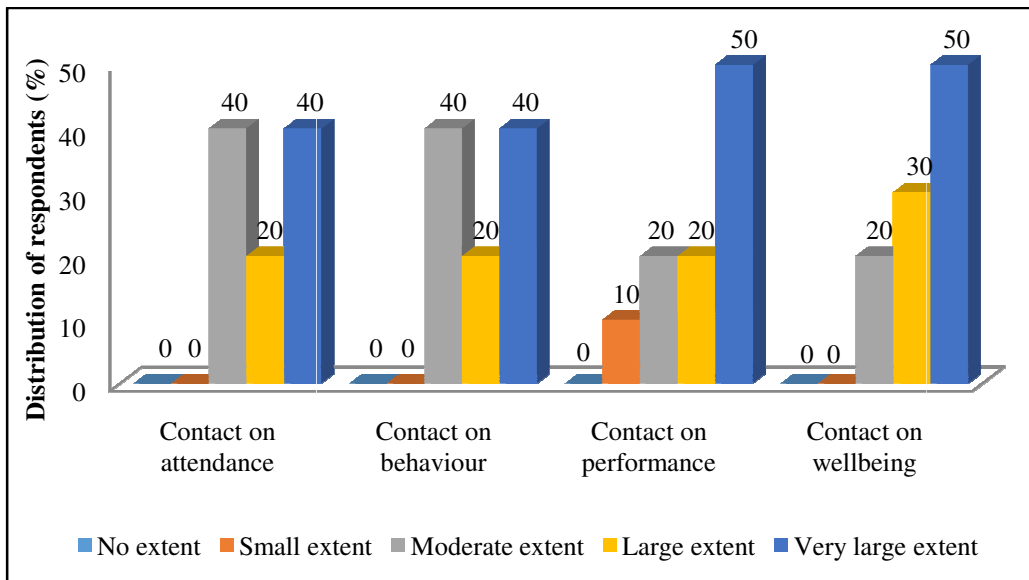


Figure 9: Areas of communication between parents and schools

The results in Figure 9 show that about 60, 60, 70 and 80% of the teacher and HTs respondents indicated that to a large and very large extent put together the school contacted the parents about their children’s school attendance, behaviour, academic performance and wellbeing respectively. This implies that the sampled schools were very active in contacting parents about major issues affecting students. Whether parents responded or not, and if they did, how fast did they respond, appear to be questions for further research, but some of these are clarified in the next subsection. This is in line with Engle’s (1989) recommendation that frequent communication between parents and teachers is important in preparing students for improved academic performance through parents’ monitoring of school work and opening more doors for post high school activities.

**4.7.3. Preferred Forms of Communication between Parents and Teachers**

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent the preferred selected forms of communications were used between teachers and parents. The preferred forms of communication were selected as informal face to face, formal face to face, phone and email communications. About 89% of the teacher respondents (large to very large extent combined) indicated that formal face to face was the most preferred form of communication between the teachers and parents (Figure 10). It is instructive to note here that formal face to face communication is where parents are called (through writing) to come to schools to discuss the concerned issues with the HTs and teachers as applicable. On the other hand, informal face to face is where parents are called to come to schools through informal means like sending children and any other persons to inform the concerned parents. The next forms of communications between teachers and parents were informal face to face (29%), phones (28%), and emails (25%) in that order. Modern technology of communication (by use of mobile phones and emails) seems to be catching up quite fast.

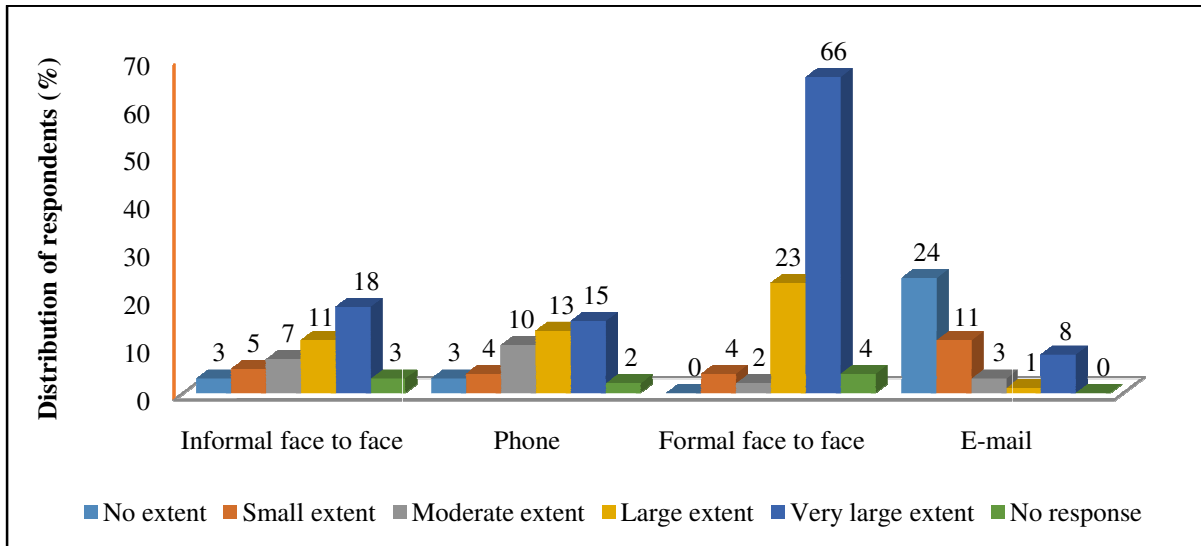


Figure 10: Preferred forms of communication between parents and teachers

**4.7.4. Frequency of School Communication with Parents**

The study sought to establish how often schools communicate with parents including sending formal reports of their children’s academic performance to parents. This enquiry was asked to all the three categories of the respondents (the teachers, HTs and students). The results of this enquiry are explained in Table 6 where it is shown that majority of the teacher (51%), student (58%) and HTs (80%) respondents indicated that the schools communicated with the parents very often. Occasional communication was also confirmed to exist between schools and parents by 43, 28, and 20% of the teacher, student and HT respondents. Thus there appears to have existed quite robust communication between schools and parents in the sampled schools.

Frequency of communication	Teachers		Students		Head teacher	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Very often	24	51	43	58	8	80
Occasionally	20	43	21	28	2	20
Rarely	0	0	0	0	0	0
Never	0	0	10	13	0	0
No response	3	6	1	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 6: Frequency of school communications with parents

**4.7.5. Effect of Communications between Parents and Teachers on Students’ Academic Performance**

The three categories of respondents were further asked to indicate whether the communications between the schools and parents affected the academic performance of the students. The results in Table 6 show that 55, 96, and 90% of the student, teacher and HTs respondents respectively were in consensus that indeed communications between the schools and parents affected the academic performance of the students. It is important to note that the effects could be positive, negative or even no effect. This may depend on the types of communications – whether they are positive consultations, positive or negative critiques, intensity and frequency of communications, and / or whether these are two ways or one way communications. This is another grey area for further research. The finding agrees with Dauglas (1964) who reported that parental communication with the school affected the academic performance of the students.



Communication effects?	Students		Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	41	55	45	96	9	90
No	32	43	1	2	1	10
No response	2	3	1	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 7: Effect of communications between parents and teachers on students' academic performance

## 5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1. Summary of the Findings

A study on the role of parental involvement on the academic performance of secondary school students in Kenya was undertaken in the KND and findings are summarised here below in accordance to objectives:

#### 5.1.1. Objective One

Summary findings of the effect of parental involvement in school management indicate that:

Parental responsibility in school management was mainly concerned with parents' contributions in the affairs of BOGs, PTA and their subcommittees. It was observed that 3, 33 and 24% of the sampled students indicated that their parents participated in school management to a very large, small and little or no extent respectively. This implies that majority of the parents were little concerned in school management decisions, hence many school decisions could have been made top down.

The extent to which parents participated in core school activities were mixed and contradictory between teachers and students on one hand and HTs on the other hand. Core school activities were regarded to be some or all of the following: parents' attendance to parents' days, open (academic) days, class academic consultation days, prize giving days, prayer and thanks giving days and AGMs. Majority of students (58%) and teachers (56%) respondents were in consensus that parents were hardly (little to small extent) involved in core school activities, whereas 60 and 40% of HTs agreed that parents were actually involved in core school activities to a moderate and large extent respectively.

Parental involvement in school management has effects on students' academic performance, *al beit* in contradictory manner depending on perceptions of the category of respondents. Majority of HTs (60%) and teachers (68%) respondents were of the view that parental involvement in school management had effects on students' academic performance. Contrary to this view, majority of the student respondents (75%) were in agreement that parents' involvement in school management had little effects, if any, on their academic performance.

#### 5.1.2. Objective Two

The summary findings of effect of parental involvement on academic performance of the child's education show that:

Parents who participated in core school activities were more concerned with their children's class progress and teachers' concerns than regular attendance of parents' days and AGMs. This was affirmed by 60 and 65% of student respondents who indicated that their parents almost often and always respectively went to school to check on their class progress and attend to concerns raised by their teachers.

While 70 and 100% of the sampled teachers and HTs respectively were in consensus that parental involvement in children's education affected their academic performance, most student respondents (49%) were of the contrary view that parental involvement in their education did not influence their academic performance.

Up to 84% of the student respondents indicated their parents actually demanded to see their end of term reports, while up to 32% of student respondents were helped in doing their home works / holiday assignments by their parents as compared with a majority of sampled students (53%) who denied being assisted in their home works by their parents.

To a large extent parents assisted their children with other (extra-curricular) school activities. Fifty percent, 19 and 29% of student respondents agreed that their parents assisted them with the other (extra-curricular) school activities to large and very large, moderate and minimal extent respectively. At the same time, parents demanded to know academic performance of their children as agreed by 47 and 60% of teachers and HTs respondents respectively.

Parental monitoring of children's academic performance is increasingly becoming relevant in contemporary education. This was affirmed by most (40%) of the teacher and HTs respondents who preferred to see parents come to schools as and when the parents want in order to monitor children's progress in academic performance. Similarly, 26% of the same respondents agreed that parents should monitor their children's academic performance once a term, while 17% of the teachers preferred this activity to be undertaken monthly.

#### 5.1.3. Objective Three

Summary findings of the effect of communication between parents and schools on academic performance of secondary school students pointed that:

Communication between parents and teachers was described as very good by majority of teacher respondents (38%), while 30% of them described it as good. Schools were very active in communicating with parents about major issues affecting their children. This

was revealed by 60, 60, 70 and 80% of the teacher / HTs respondents agreeing that to a large and very large extent schools contacted parents about their children's school and class attendance, behaviour, academic performance and well-being in that order.

The most preferred forms of communication between schools and parents were formal face to face, informal face to face, phones and emails as consented by 89, 29, 28 and 25% of the teachers and HTs respondents respectively. The frequency of communication of schools with parents was very often. This was agreed upon by the majority of the teacher (51%), students (58%) and HTs (80%) respondents.

Most sampled students (55%), teachers (96%), and HTs (90%) were in consensus that actually communication between schools and parents affected the academic performance of students.

### 5.3. Conclusion

In this study it is concluded that:

Parents were involved in the school management mainly as officials of BOGs and PTA committee structures. However, only a few parents represented the whole body of the entire parent population, leaving the majority of parents out in major decision-making processes.

With regard to the children education, parents were involved in finding class progress of the children, and attending to concerns raised by teachers. Parents also demand to see end-term reports of their children; and sometimes assisted in doing and supervising assignments and home works. Occasionally, parents visited schools to monitor work and progress of the students.

It is also concluded that there was fairly good communication between schools and parents, where pertinent issues affecting students' performance were raised and discussed. In addition, communication was identified as the foundation of a solid partnership between schools and parents and this relationship enabled students to make great academic progress.

### 5.4. Recommendations

Given that it has now become clearer than before, from the literature reviewed as well as the results of this study that parental involvement in students' schooling is beneficial, it is recommended that everything possible be done by the schools to encourage the parents to become more involved in school's affairs. Some of the ways of doing this could be schools:

Sensitizing parents to realise and appreciate the importance of getting actively involved in their children's schooling in, for example, organising orientation training programs for parents to be able to get enlightened on to how they can be involved in their children's studies for improved academic performance.

Organising a series of attractive programmes (such as awareness workshops, seminars, consultations, sports) and invite parents, teachers and student together for interactive participation. This will encourage parents to participate more in academic activities of their children in order to complement teachers' efforts.

The MOE should review the roles of parents' involvement in secondary school management with a view to giving legal status to the roles played by parents in public secondary schools.

MOE and schools should engage in parent professional development through parents' bodies like PTA and KNAP in order to develop rapport and widen partnerships with parents.

Establish and maintain respectful and productive relationships with parents to support the interaction of ideas and experiences centred on the learning of children. This may be realised through establishing open and two-way lines of communication for thoughtful and reflective conversion. Schools are also encouraged to increase lines of communication with parents regarding positive students' performance and behaviour; and not just on mischief and failure.

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