

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Relationship between Parental Involvement and Academic Performance of Primary School Pupils in Kenya

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Abstract:

Developed and developing countries alike understand that providing basic education for all children is essential not only to their future welfare but for the development of the country.. In Kenya the introduction of Free Primary Education in 2003 in the public schools by the Government of Kenya has increased the enrollment from 5.99 million to about 8.5 million children. The Government of Kenya has employed and posted trained teachers in all public schools but the pupils continue to post poor performance. This study sought to identify the influence of parental involvement to the academic performance of pupils in primary schools in Nyamira South Sub-County. The study targeted the 3543 standard eight pupils in 147 primary schools in Nyamira sub-county. Stratified sampling was used to get a sample of 355 pupils, 84 teachers and 15 head teachers. A mixed method design was adopted for this study that used qualitative and quantitative approaches in collecting and analyzing data concurrently. Two questionnaires were used to collect data from the teachers and pupils while an interview schedule collected from head teachers. Quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistic was used to describe and summarize the data in form of frequencies and percentages. Statistical included t-test and Pearson correlation analysis which was used to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data from the interview was analyzed using thematic approach. Data was coded and themes analyzed as they emerged. Analyzed data were then merged for presentation and discussion. The study established that parental involvement had a major impact to academic performance of standard eight pupils. The study recommended that parents should participate more in academic activities of their children. The results obtained may help the government and the community to make necessary changes and improvements so as to improve the education performance in the sub county.

Keywords: Parent, involvement, academic achievement

1. Introduction

In 1990, a world conference in Jomte in Thailand, urged all nations of the world to adapt policies that would ensure Universal basic education by the year 2000. A new focus is towards a broader approach to education that would create high quality learning opportunities in the face of a rapidly changing global environment (Care 2017). Since Jomtein conference, considerable progress has been made in expanding the capacity of primary school systems in all regions of the world. Primary education in some developing countries has expanded to the extent that it reaches nearly all school age children. In Kenya, the introduction of Universal (Free) primary education programme in the public schools in January 2003 by the government of Kenya (GOK) has raised the total primary school enrolment from 5.99 million to about 8.5 million children which is a tremendous improvement so far.(Economic Survey,2009) While giving all children the opportunity to attend school is obviously an important priority, it is but a first step towards the goal of Education For All (EFA goals). Once pupils find seats in a classroom, they need quality instruction, otherwise there will be little motivation to persist in school (Wasanga, 2010)

The Government of Kenya has also employed and posted trained teachers in these schools. However, pupils in these schools continue to perform poorly in the national examination. There is reliance on scores and transition rates as measures of achievement in Kenya examinations are generally accepted as valid measures of achievement (Maiyo 2009). Secondary school placement and to some extent admission depend on performance of Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination in standard eight (Michael, Miguel and Rebecca 2004).The marks a student achieves in K.C.P.E determines which secondary schools they will join. Those who score 350 marks and above have the privilege of joining National

schools and top performing County schools where they are assured of passing very well in K.C.S.E. On the other hand those who score below 300 marks can only join Sub-County secondary schools where the majority of the students score grade c and below. Most pupils in Nyamira South Sub County has an average mean score of 220 for the last six years.

When parents take their children to school, their main objective is that they will get education that would prepare them for future to enable them to compete in the globe for the available job vacancies. In order for the children to achieve this education, three factors have to work together that is, the school, the parents and the pupils. In addition to taking their children to school, parental involvement in school enables students to achieve higher grades and test scores, improves students' attendance, improves students conduct and attitude and increases the chances of a child going onto higher education (Djane, 2011). This was also revealed by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations who said that millions of children in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere in the developing world are now going to school but are leaving without knowledge and skills they need. (Djane, 2011) " but parents power can make a difference to help children get a head start in Education " says Blachford , a basic education specialist at the institute of education, University of London (Blachford ,2009).. Nyamira South District (now Sub-County) was in the lime light when 2011 K.C.P.E results were announced and a school from the region was the last among all the schools in Kenya with a mean score of 119.36. Also among the private schools category the last school came from the District with a mean score of 137.55. It is against this background that the current research was undertaken to find out whether the parental involvement has an influence to the academic performance of primary school pupils.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In 1990, a world conference in Jomtein Thailand, urged all nations of the world to adapt policies that would ensure Universal basic education by the year 2000 (Wasanga 2010). Since Jomtein conference, considerable progress has been made in expanding the capacity of primary school systems in all regions of the world. Primary education in some developing countries has expanded to the extent that it reaches nearly all school age children. However according to United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization , millions of children in the Sub-Sahara Africa and elsewhere in the developing world are going to school but leaving without the basic knowledge and skills they need (Blachford,2008). Article 51 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) provides all children a right to access free basic education. The Government of Kenya provides both learning materials and trained teachers to all public primary schools. At times parents have stormed and closed schools which had consistently produced poor results in National Examinations. Using examinations results as a measure of pupil performance, this study attempted to establish whether the parental involvement had a significant influence to the academic performance of primary school pupils in Nyamira South sub-county in K.C.P.E. The independent variable was parental involvement while the dependent variable was the academic performance. Similar studies have been done in other counties but none has been carried out in Nyamira South Sub-County. This fills in the gap in that it revealed whether similar results were found. The purpose of the study was to establish the influences of the parental involvement to their academic performance in primary schools in Nyamira South Sub-county

1.2. Research Questions

- What is the level of parental involvement in school activities?
- How are parents involved in school activities?
- How does parental involvement influence pupils' academic performance?

2. Research Design

A mixed method design was adopted for the present study (Creswell & Plano-Clack, 2011) explained that its central premise therefore is to use quantitative and qualitative approaches in a combination which provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. In this study, Concurrent triangulation design is where the researcher converges or merges qualitative and quantitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed at the same time of the research study.

The population of the study comprised of all the 3543 primary school pupils in standard eight in 2014 in Nyamira South Sub-county, 145 head teachers and 843 teachers in 15 schools. Standard eight pupils were used because of their ability to read and write in English in filling in the questionnaire, the teachers who taught class eight the previous year were used due to their experience in handling examination class while the head teachers of those schools were used since they are the drivers of their respective schools and therefore knew everything going on there.

Stratified sampling was done by classifying the schools into stratus of educational zones. There are six educational zones in Nyamira South Sub-county namely Kebirigo, Township, Nyagachi, Gesiaga, Nyamaiya and Keera. Purposive sampling was then done to give a required number of schools from each zone depending on the total number of schools in that zone taking into consideration the type of schools that is public day , public boarding and private schools. In the chosen schools, the standard eight pupils were taken as a representative sample of all standard eight pupils. The standard eight pupils were used because of their ability to read and understand English in filling the questionnaire and also the fact that they were sitting for K.C.P.E in that year and could reveal all mechanisms put in place to prepare for the exam.

Instruments used in this study to collect data were interview schedule and questionnaire. Interview schedule was used to collect data from head teachers. Two questionnaires were used one for teachers and another one for the pupils and an interview schedule for the head teacher. Semi-structured interview that had fixed, preplanned questions but the

interviewer could vary the course of the interview depending on the interviewee's responses for example probing so as to get in depth information. Research interviews were conducted by the researcher and took at least forty five minutes to one hour. All the interview notes were processed in first person statement and analyzed using thematic approach Berker (2007). 14 head teachers of the 15 primary schools sampled were interviewed using the Head teacher's interview guide. Teachers' questionnaire sought to get information on parental involvement in their children's academic activities. There was 69 (82.1%) return rate due to those teachers who were absent at the day and the questionnaire was left for them to be given but could not be traced when I went to collect them. Anonymous and confidentiality were ensured as their names were not to appear anywhere in the questionnaire. A questionnaire was used for pupils that sought to get information about the pupils' background and how their parents are involved in school activities. The pupils were given a consent form to fill having been explained the purpose of the research after being introduced by the head teacher or the deputy.

3. Result and Discussions

3.1. Level of Parental Involvement in School Activities.

The teachers' respondents were presented with statements that had parental involvement connotations. They were Likert-scaled statements, in which respondents choose from 5-point score; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents were asked to score on each statement based on their perception of the statement in regard to academic achievement. The researcher computed percentage frequencies of the responses from the teachers and was tabulated as shown in Table 1

From the findings of this study, it clearly emerged that teachers generally have a perception that parental involvement in school activities has a bearing on the academic performance. While it is generally believed that pupil success largely relies on factors like study habits, school attendance, effort made by the teachers and more, this research has established that parental involvement also has a large impact on student achievement in the classroom.

Statement	SA%	A%	U%	D%	SD%
Parents who check children's homework contribute to children participation.	45.6	11.8	1.5	2.9	38.2
When parents come to school regularly their children perform better.	79.4	14.7	0.0	1.5	4.4
Lack of parental involvement is the main factor influencing academic performance.	70.6	22.1	0.0	1.5	5.9
Parental support is the most important way to improve pupil's academic performance.	75.0	20.6	0.0	1.5	2.9
Parents do not receive information on their children's academic performance.	51.5	10.3	0.0	10.3	27.9
Schools do not encourage parents to participate in the academic activities.	30.9	8.8	1.5	13.2	45.6
When parents talk too much they are labeled trouble makers.	29.4	22.1	0.0	10.3	38.2
Parents do not know whom to contact if they had any concern about their children's progress.	29.4	16.2	1.5	10.3	42.6

Table 1: Percentage on Teacher Response on Parent Involvement

Table 1 shows that three quarters (75%) of the teachers who participated in this study strongly indicated that parental support is the most important way to improve pupil's academic performance and a further 20.6% of them also supported that fact by agreeing to the statement that parental support is the most way to improve pupils academic performance. Only quite negligible proportion (2.9%) of the teacher respondents disagreed with the statement. On the same note, 92.7% (strongly agree: 70.6%; agree: 22.1%) of respondents agreed that lack of parental involvement is the main factor affecting academic performance in a learner. Only quite insignificant proportion (5.9%) of the teachers negated the statement. This means that teachers felt that parents are not involved in their children's learning or if they are, it is not enough. The results is in line with what Jeynes (2015) found that achievement score distribution for children whose parents were highly involved in their children's education was substantially higher than that of their counterparts whose parents were less involved. However Nermeen, Bachan and Drzal (2011) found contrasting results in their study that greater engagement in a variety of parent involvement practices was largely unrelated to academic achievement and improvements in parent involvement did not predict gains in any of the standardized achievement measures.

On the aspects of the components of parental involvement which influenced pupil academic achievement, the study findings show that the facets of parental involvement include investment of time on the school activities such as reading and communicating with the child, monitoring child's school assignments and expressing expectations on child academic achievement, creating suitable academic home environment and parental attendance and participation at school functions. For example, although 38.2% of the respondents held the opinion that parents who check their children's homework does not necessarily contribute to children participation in school, a significant population (57.4%) of the teacher respondents agreed that checking of children's homework by the parents' impact positively on the children

academic participation. Terril, Shelton and Calkins (2010), Goodal & Montgomery (2014) and Odundo (2007) supports that parental involvement has a significant relationship to academic performance of their children. However Chowa, Ansong & Akoto (2012) found contrasting results that parental involvement in maths is not always associated with maths performance as parents who ensure that their children do homework perform slightly worse than those whose parents do not. This was because the children whose parents were involved were already poor in mathematics or below average students.

It also emerged from the findings of the study that regular school attendance and participation in school activities/programmes by the parents positively influence the academic performance of the learner. An overwhelming majority [94.1%; (strongly agree: 79.4%; agree: 14.7%)] of the teachers who participated in the study held the perception that when parents come to school regularly their children perform better. This concurs with Jeynes (2015) who found that children whose parents were more involved in school activities had higher academic score than those whose parents were less involved. However it was noted that just a mere 4.4% of the respondents had a strong conviction that coming to school regularly by the parents do not always positively affect learners academic performance. It is in this light that the school has made it easy for parents to be involved in their children's education, as was observed by nearly a third (32.4%) of the teacher respondents. Conversely, 60.3% of the teacher respondents had the view that despite the benefits of the parents involvements in the school academic programmes the schools have not made it sufficiently easy for the parents to get fully involved in their children's education. Goodal (2008) found similar results that parental engagement significantly influences the child's academic performance. In addition, the finding of the study revealed that majority (51.5%) of the teacher respondents strongly believed that parents do not receive adequate information on their children's academic performance. This was supported by 10.3% of the respondents who also disagreed that parents are adequately informed on their children academic issues. However, more than a quarter (27.9%) of the respondents strongly refuted the claim that parents were not exposed to adequate information regarding their children education. In fact, three quarters (75%) of the teachers argued that even the information given by the teachers was not understood by most parents. They maintained that a lot of information about the pupils given to parents by the school is full of jargon. Only a very small proportion (7.4%) of the teacher participants felt that the information given to the parents were adequate. On the same note the study findings also showed that 39.7% of the teacher respondents held the view that schools do not sufficiently encourage parents to participate in the academic activities. This belief was, however, rejected by a significant (45.6%) teacher respondent who held the perception that their schools encourage parents' participation and involvement in academic activities. However, it emerged from the results of the study that parents' involvement and participation in school activities were hampered by the fact that sometimes teachers do not involve the parents as expected or lack of knowledge on the part of parents on how to get involved. For example, it was established that, although 42.6% of teacher respondents denied the allegation that parents do not know whom to contact if they had any concern about their children's progress, a significant proportion (45.9%) of the teachers agree that it was true that most parents don't know who to contact in school in the event of a concern with their children's academic progress. It also came out from the study that sometimes failure to participate in school's decision making by the parents is blamed on the teacher. The teacher do not whole heartedly welcome parents in some school decision making, insinuating that parents interfere with their work. The results of the study show that more than a quarter (29.4%) of teacher respondents strongly held the perception that when parents talk too much in school meetings they are labelled trouble makers. This notion was also supported by another 22.1% of the teachers who simply agreed that teachers consider parents who truthfully talk out their thoughts in school matters as trouble shooters. Notwithstanding such line of argument, a significant proportions (10.3%) and (38.2%) of the teachers who took part in the study disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively to the claim that the parents who talk too much in school meetings are labelled trouble makers.

In conclusion, the study findings show that parents want and need information about what's happening in their child's classroom and how they can help. Some parents are able to be involved in many ways; others may only have time for one or two activities. The findings of this study are similar to what Goodal & Montgomery (2014) found that parents need to be engaged rather than involved in the activities. This means active involvement like in decision making on many issues. Schools should communicate with and not to parents. Harris and Goodal (2008) found that schools give information to parents but do not seek information from them. It came out that parents want to be engaged more in their children's academic welfare including being involved in decision making and not just getting information to rubberstamp.

3.2 How are the Parents Involved in School Activities?

To examine how the parents get involved in school academic activities of their children, the pupil's respondents were presented with statements that had parental involvement inferences. The findings of the study show that many parents buy scholastic materials such writing materials, text books, paying school levies, communicating with the teacher, supervision of completion of school assignments and motivating the children, among others. Table 4.9 summarizes how parents are involved in the academic activities of their children.

Method	Frequency (n=334)	Percentage
Motivating their children	312	93.4
Buying text books/revision materials	298	89.2
Communicating with teachers	272	81.4
Paying school levies	224	67.1
Attending school programs	200	59.9
Assisting children with their home work	160	47.9
Others	102	30.5

Table 2: How Parents Get Involved in Education of Their Children

The findings of the study show that most (93.4%) of the pupils who participated in the study confirmed that their parents encourage and motivate them to work hard in their academic endeavor. It was established that parents motivated their children using different methods; some of them were told that bright and good life at later age was certain if they worked hard and became successful in their education, others were promised goodies such as presents/gifts if they performed well in school and some of the pupils had personal tutors employed to coach them at home, among others. Motivation of children in academic pursuit as a type of parental involvement in their education was established by this study to be equally distributed in both public and private primary schools. Nonetheless, motivation levels were established to be more rigorous and evident from the parents whose children were learning in private schools. It also emerged from the findings of the study that parents were involved in the education of their children by provision of scholastic materials. The study established that parents buy texts books, revision materials, exercise books and general stationery to be used by their children while at school, as was confirmed by 89.2% of respondents. In addition qualitative analysis from the head teachers' interview revealed that on the theme of parental involvement, parents were involved in various ways.

Some parents buy revision materials for their children but majority do not agree to buy as they say the school should buy with the free money provided by the government. HT 14

More than four out of five (81.4%) of the pupil respondents said that their parents regularly communicate with teachers in issues that affect their academics. This was followed by another group of pupil respondents who said their parents were involved in their education by paying school levies as was noted by more than two thirds (67.1%) of the teachers.

Another form of parental involvement was attending school programmes by the parents. This was noted by 59.9% of the pupils who participated in this study. Parents attend and participate in school programmes such as PTA meetings, fundraising, open days and education days. The rest of the head teachers, 41.1% revealed that parents in their schools do not attend school meetings.

Majority of parents in this school do not come for school meetings even when we send pupils to bring them the pupils are told to remain at home and join the parents to the farms.

This shows that the majority of the parents especially in the rural schools do not value education and therefore do not motivate their children to work hard for better performance. This contrasted what the head teachers the information given by head teachers through the interview that majority of the parents do not attend school meetings even when called upon especially in the public day primary schools. However in the private primary schools majority of the head teachers said that parents come or call the school administration to find out their children's academic progress.

Majority of the parents attend school meetings only when called upon and participate in deliberations positively. However only a few come to school on their own to find out about their children's academic performance. H.T3 This was also revealed by Jeynes (2015) who found that the academic achievement score distribution for children whose parents were highly involved in education of their children was substantially higher than that of their counter parts whose parents were less involved.

It also emerged from the finding of the study that parents get involved in the education of their children by assisting them with their homework. This was noted by 47.9% of the pupils' respondents. Chowa, Ansong, and Akoto (2012) found that more parental involvement in mathematics is not associated with mathematical performance. One reason given for this was that the students were already poor in mathematics and that is why their parents got involved. However, it was clear that majority of the people assisting in doing homework were siblings, as confirmed by a quarter (27.8%) of the pupils who participated in the study. This contrasted what the head teachers said in the information through the interviews that majority of the parents do not attend school meetings even when called upon especially the public primary schools. However in the private primary schools most of the head teachers said that the parents come or call the school administration to find out their children's academic progress.

3.3. Statistical Relationship between Parental Involvement and Academic Performance of Children

This relationship was investigated by use of a correlation analysis. A Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed by using teachers' perception on parental involvements scores as independent variable and school mean score in the last examinations as the explanatory variable (dependent variable).

Table 3 which shows the SPSS output of the Pearson moment correlation coefficient analysis, indicates that there was a positive relationship between parental involvement and academic performance of their children.

		Parental Involvement	Mean Score
Parental Involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	.218
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.047
	N	69	69
Mean score	Pearson Correlation	.218	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.047	
	N	69	69

Table 3: Parental Involvement and Academic Performance Correlation Is Significant at the 0.05 Level (2-Tailed)

From Table 3 the findings of the study revealed that there was a reasonable positive correlation between the two variables. The Pearson's moment correlation coefficient of $r = 0.218$ indicated a fairly positive correlation between parental involvement and mean score at $p\text{-value} = .047$ at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance.

This implied that there was significant evidence to reject the null hypothesis stating that: "there was no statistically significant relationship between parental involvement in school activities and pupils' academic performance. Hence it was concluded that if the level of parental involvement in school activities increases, then the pupils' academic performance equally increases and vice-versa. This concurs with the results of a study carried out by the National Tax Payers Association in partnership with the ministry of Education, KNUT and KEPISA that reported that only a handful of parents looked at their children homework abandoning the bulk of the responsibility to teachers. The study revealed that regions that had more parents involved in their children's learning process posted better results in National examinations. The study concurs with Mark (2007) who found that majority of parents felt that it was extremely important to help their child with homework. Blachford (2008) found similar results that parental involvement in school is important to academic success, children with parents who really care about their children are usually more successful than students whose parents do not. Keronye, Shiundu and Mutsotso (2012) found that while parents appreciate their roles in provision of ECE teachers did not want to involve parents in decision making roles. This is in contrast to what Nermeen, Bachan and Drazil (2011) found that greater engagement in a variety of parent involvement practices was largely unrelated to academic achievement and improvements in parental involvement did not predict gains in any of the standardized achievement measures.

4. Conclusions

The study concluded that parental involvement in school activities played a major role to the academic performance of their children. Many parents have bought textbooks and revision materials where they lack but only few go to school to check on the children's academic progress at will and they only go when called upon especially during schools' education day while in public primary schools some parents do not attend meetings even when called upon. It was also established that parents only get involved in activities that are dictated by the schools but their views are never sought.

5. Recommendations

The study recommended that parents should be guided and counseled so as to be more involved and engaged in school activities which would make the children work harder and perform better. Parents should be engaged in decision making in the schools like being allowed to give their opinions and not be dictated to rubber stamp the decisions of the school administration.

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