

The Influence of Different Forms of Parental Involvement on Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the influence of different forms of parental involvement in education activities on students' academic performance in public secondary schools. The study employed a qualitative research approach and a single case study design to gain deeper insight and better understanding of the different forms of parental involvement and their influence on students' academic performance. Three (3) public secondary school heads were employed as sample together with fifteen (15) parents, whose children are schooling in the selected secondary schools. Qualitative data collected from interviews conducted with the key informants were analysed thematically by considering six steps: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, refining themes, and writing-up process. The findings revealed that, parental involvement occurs in different forms such as attending school functions, having conducive home learning environment, and students-parents' home discussions on school matters. Furthermore, the findings discovered issues like checking academic progress forms, providing educational needs to students, and contacting school regularly about children's academic achievement. The study recommends that the parents should spend time with their children to discuss their academics at home to make the students succeed academically. Parents should also have frequent interaction with teachers and management of school in order to know that how they can help their children to get academic betterment of their children. Government should take measures to encourage capable children of less affluent class specially to have quality addition to manpower of the country.

Keywords: education activities, parental involvement, public secondary schools, students academic performance

1.0 Introduction

Parental involvement in student's education activities is crucial and has ultimate influence on students' academic performance. Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) assert that parental involvement is an important determinant of youth's education success and it is linked to higher academic performance across grade levels. Parental involvement refers to the participation of parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning

and other school activities including ensuring that (a) parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; (b) parents are actively involved in their child's education at school; and (c) parents are full partners in their child's education and are included as appropriate in decision-making at school ((Mugagga, Sekiwu & Kiggundu, 2016). In so doing, children achieve higher academically as a result of their families being involved in their education.

Parental involvement is found as a strong determinant for academic performance of secondary school students. Learners whose parents are actively involved in their academic activities display better behaviours and academic outcomes (Vijaya & Rajeshkumar, 2016). Parental involvement provides not only good and conducive climate for social, intellectual and emotional development of child but also love, security, guidance, and care that contribute to good academic performance. On top of that, parental involvement is a primary vehicle, which improves child education under the hands of school heads, teachers, parents, and the child's immediate family members (Fajoju, Oyaziwo, Aluede & Ojugo, 2016; Umeana, 2017).

Nevertheless, there are mixed ideas on the way parents influence academic performance of their children in schools. A study conducted by McQuiggan and Megra (2017) reported a variation in parental involvement based on demographic characteristics of the parents whereby in Washington, DC, for instance, parents with higher education have higher rates of involvement in their children's education activities in 2016 (Gestwicki, 2018). Conversely, Krenn & Yuan (2016) opined that involvement of parents is perceived to be significant in students' academic achievement and bridging the existing school-home divide by actively engaging parents both at school and at home as an essential instrument to improve the educational chances of all children, regardless of their family background.

Mugumya, Basheka, Mweigye, Atibuni, Aduwo & Ahimbisibwe (2022) revealed that parental involvement in children's education, through provision of basic needs and effective communication, significantly influence the child's academic performance. Addition to that, effective communication is also crucial for parents to stay informed about their children's progress and align their actions as it involves discussions on academic and non-academic matters, displaying interest in a child's well-being (Epstein, & Sheldon, 2019). To make effective communication, teachers need to connect parents through face-to-face interactions,

coaching, and regular parenting groups (Shellenbarger, 2018). The less they involve in communication, the gap they create for students' success academically.

Besides that, Đurišić & Bunijevac, (2017) states that schools and the family are a unit; collaboration and effective communication with all school sectors are critical to assisting children in reaching their full potential. Collaboration and communication between the parent(s) and schools enhance and strengthen the values, culture, and learning experiences schools should have for their students. Parental involvement in monitoring the academic progress of the students at home and school is significant as Mahuro & Hungi, (2016) says that, consistent form of parental involvement contact, such as providing a supportive home environment, reviewing progress records for students and occasional school visits, significantly increases the numeracy and literacy scores for students. Also, Gyamfi & Pobbi (2018) suggests that academic discussions that parents offer to their children at homes building a strong foundation for effective learning.

Furthermore, according to Sharma, (2017), parents should attend school meetings and events, meet with teachers, and speak to their children about what they are doing and learning at school. Likewise, Dahie, Mohammed, and Mohammed (2018) emphasize that parents support their children's schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations like parent-teacher meetings or conferences and discuss their children's academic progress. The intervention encourages parents to spend more time assisting their children and monitoring their school work.

In India, parental involvement in education activities on students' academic performance takes various forms, such as monitoring homework, ensuring children get to school and rewarding children's efforts; all of which are linked to better attendance, better grades and effective preparation for college (Singh, & Mahajan, 2021). Critically, not all parents who are aware of all those forms and implement them as they are at home and in school.

In Tanzania, research carried out in Kibondo District by Masabo, Muchopa and Kuoth (2017) provided different outcome as there are many challenges observed towards parental involvement in public secondary schools despite the fact that parents do involve in education activities of their

students. Such challenges include the majority of parents not to enquire not only about the material on their children's reports but also not to see the end-of-term letter. This is simply ignorance of parental duties. As also noted by Antoine (2015), parental involvement tends to decline as students move to higher classes. That means a transition from primary school to secondary school may be an overwhelming and stressful experience for secondary students whereby students' experience both a contextual change and a personal change (physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively), which might be a confusing time for their families who seek to support their healthy development and learning.

However, lack of concern by parents in influencing students' academic performance in public secondary schools is worrisome despite the fact that the government creates a conducive environment for learning such as provision of learning materials, including textbooks and distribution of chemicals for practical, and so on. Therefore, the focus of this study was to examine how different forms of parental involvement influences students' academic performance?

2.0 Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Approach and Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach, which aimed at examining the influence of parental involvement in education activities on students' academic performance in public secondary schools. In addition to that, the study used a single case study design to gain deeper insight and better understanding of the different forms of parental involvement and their influence on students' academic performance.

2.2 Participants

Being the qualitative study, the study had a target population that involved heads of schools and parents in Iringa municipality. The sample was (3) heads of schools and 15 parents residing in Iringa Municipality whose children are studying in three schools studied. The 18 participants were selected purposively because they have enough data regarding the problem under investigation. For instance, parents are the ones cherishing parental roles in the home including supervising their children's homework assignment, attending the parents-teachers' meeting and

others. The school heads were also key participants in the study because they are the administrators in-charge of all school activities, including the parents-teachers meeting.

2.3 Data Collection Method

The study employed interview method for data collection, where a prepared interview guide, was used to gather information from the key informants of the study. Such data collection method was deemed important as it enabled the researcher to cover all questions targeted the key informants.

2.4 Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data obtained through interviews from the heads of the schools and the parents. Six steps noted by Maguire and Delahunt (2017) were considered by the researcher. Such steps included: (i) familiarization with the data – the researcher read all the interview transcripts collected from the heads of the schools and the parents; (2) generation of initial codes – the researcher creates some codes based on the collected data so that to organize them in a meaningful and systematic way. Each segment of data that captured something relevant was coded; (iii) searching for themes – the researcher searched for specific issues related to the research questions. All themes searched were descriptive as they described patterns in the data relevant to the research questions; (iv) reviewing themes – the researcher reviewed the identified themes by modifying and developing the preliminary themes in order to make them sensible and supportive to the data; (v) refining themes – the researcher also refined the themes and presented them in a way that related to each other; and (vi) writing-up process – the researcher started writing the organized themes with related excerpts in a paper.

The researcher observed the following ethics before, during and after data collection. Firstly, the researcher obtained the research permit from the Director of Postgraduate Studies at RUCU that introduced her to the government authorities such as in the District Executive Director, District Secondary Education Officer, and Heads of Schools. Secondly, the researcher sought informed consent from the key informants by explaining the purpose of conducting the study so that whoever feels to withdraw from participating in the study could have done so and those wishing to participate in the study do so. Thirdly, the researcher explained to the key informants that whatever they speak will be confidential as no any information spoken by one the key informants

and the researcher will be shared to other people. That is, even their names were not considered during the interview process and during data compilation. Lastly, the researcher acknowledged all the sources used in the paper write-up process to avoid academic dishonesty.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Hereunder is the presentation of the findings regarding the different forms of parental involvement and their influence on students' academic performance. Thereafter, the researcher discusses the findings of the study in relation to the relevant literature reviewed.

3.1 Attending School Functions

It was observed that parents who attend the school functions contribute positively to their children's academic performance. During the interview with heads of schools, one of them had this to say:

The school meets with parents during the graduation ceremony day and the parents-teachers' meeting. In the last School Board, parents-teachers' sports and talk day was proposed to encourage the parents attend the school occasions as they contribute towards their children's academic performance (Interview with Head of School A, 27th February, 2024).

On the contrary, fewer parents attend the school functions because they understand the importance of such occasions in promoting their children's academically as one parent insisted:

I view education as a process and not a product. As a parent, I must get engaged in various activities taking place in my children's school. By engaging in the school activities, I also take a part of advising what the school should do to promote students academically (Interview with Parent₁, 25th February, 2024).

Nevertheless, the majority of the parents do not attend the school functions for various reasons including being busy with other family-related tasks. One of the parents had this to say:

I like attending the school functions, but I have no time to do so. As a businessman, I spend most of my time in abroad. Unfortunately, my wife is scared to engage into the meetings that involve academics and the parents (Interview with Parent₇, 26th February, 2024).

From the findings, the heads of schools have shown their concerns regarding the attendance of parents to the school functions including the meetings. They further indicate the efforts they are taking towards increasing the number of the parents to attend the school occasions. Similarly, the parents have different views on attending the school functions as the majority of them do not see the reason as why they should attend the school functions. However, Dahie, Mohammed and Mohammed (2018) emphasize parents to support their children's schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations like parents-teachers' meetings or conferences. In so doing, the parents get time to reflect on their roles to children and the school at large instead of contributing to the school by paying the school fees only.

Yseen, Zaman and Rsheed (2017) added that the decision-making process of the parents regarding the schooling of their children and provision of the requirements for the children marks a great deal of potentials and better students' commitment toward learning, which in turn, improve academic performances of the children. It should, however, be noted that students who are not working hard at school may begin to perceive school as valuable when parents actively demonstrate that they value school through involvement. Thus, decisions regarding child education require more consultation, collaboration and collective involvement of stakeholders either at home or in school (Denis & Victoria, 2019).

3.2 Conducive Home Learning Environments

Involvement of parents in children's learning at home consisted of setting up conducive home learning environments with appropriate learning materials. During the interview with parents, it was observed that, not all parents afford to have created conducive home learning environments due to varied opinions provided. One parent asserted that:

Most of us [parents] who live in town have just rent rooms.
The problem, for us, is always noise coming from the next

room or space for studying, because you find you have only two rooms and three children. That means one room is for parents to sleep, and the other one is for the children, which is also used as a dining room (Interview with Parent₄, 25th February, 2024).

Nevertheless, some parents have created conducive home learning environments for their children so that they excel academically as one parent quoted saying:

When it reaches 8:30pm, my children know that it is time for studying. The television set is usually turned off. We [parents] get to sleep. The children spend almost two hours before going to sleep, and this is always a routine unless otherwise a child is sick (Interview with Parent₁₀, 25th February, 2024).

The presented findings indicate that different home learning environments bring about different results in learning. That, students whose parents afford to create conducive home learning environment are expected to perform higher compared to those whose home learning environments are not conducive. Mahuro & Hungi, (2016) support this view by adding that, consistent form of parental involvement contact, such as providing a supportive home environment, reviewing progress records for students and occasional school visits, significantly increases the numeracy and literacy scores for students.

3.3 Students-parents' Home Discussions on School Matters

The researcher interviewed the parents and the heads of schools to understand their views on the influence of students-parents' home discussions on school matters. It was observed that, fewer parents are able to discuss with their children about the school matters. One parent spoke gently as follows:

I would love to discuss with my children about homework, assignment and tests' preparation. However, I failed to do so, because the curriculum is different from the one, we [parents]

used to have. Things have changed a lot. I fear to mislead them while helping (Interview with Parent₉, 25th February, 2024).

Other parents had no time discussing with their children on school matters. One parent, for instance, revealed that time is not enough to discuss with her daughter on the exercises she usually brought him for help. In the interview, the parent said that:

I don't have time to spend and discuss with my daughter on school-related matters. I wake up early in the morning and go to the shop. In the evening around 4:00pm, I get back home. With this tight schedule, it is difficult to have time discussing with her. I feel sorry, though (Interview with Parent₁₄, 24th February, 2024).

From the findings, it is clear that some parents engage in school matters when it comes to discuss their children's homework, assignments and test preparation. Moreover, other parents do not engage in school-related matters of their children. However, the reasons for those parents who do not engage in their children's school matters might be attributed exclusively to lack of helping skills and education interest.

In addition to that, the heads of schools shared that parents' educational level is of great importance as high educated parents use a lot of time and energy to help their children to do better academically. During the interview, one head of school said that:

It is very obvious that parents who are educated devote their time and other resources to help their children excel academically. This is because they want their children to be educated the way these parents are. For instance, in many teachers' houses, you find even their children follow their parents' footsteps (Interview with Parent₁₃, 26th February, 2024).

The heads of schools' finding indicates that educational level of the parents increases the likelihood of participating in the school-related matters. The educated parents would like their

children to be also educated, respectively. Therefore, students whose parents' education is high perform higher than those whose parents' education is low as higher educated parents support their children academically and take time to invest in their children's education (Haider, 2024; McQuiggan and Megra, 2017). Contrariwise, as affirmed by Ali et al. (2022) students whose parents are either primary education holders or uneducated perform low academically, because their parents give less emphasis to their children education. Furthermore, such children are more likely to become truant and school drop outs.

3.4 Checking Academic Progress Forms

The researcher interviewed both the heads of schools and the parents to know how parents always check their children's academic progress forms periodically. During the interview, the heads of schools said that not all parents have the tendency of checking the academic progress forms as one head of school said:

If the parents are busy as they say, do not expect them to check academic progress forms of their children, because they have no time doing it. However, in those forms, they are certain areas to be commented on the basis of a learner's performance (Interview with Head of School C, 27th February, 2024).

The parents also provided their views with regard to checking children's academic progress forms. The views of the parents varied because each one participated individually basing on his or her child or children. One parent commented that she is occupied with the schedule to the extent she wakes-up early to go to the market. Further explanation is given hereunder as follows:

I do not have time to check the progress of my child because I have to wake-up early in the morning and go to the market, which is far from where I reside. In the market, I sell cosmetics products so that I can get money to support my family (Interview with Parents, 26th February, 2024).

Conversely, fewer parents were serious on students' academic matters as they kept checking the students' academic progress forms. During the interview, one parent said that:

I want my son to become an engineer. I monitor his academic progress so that he lives that ambition. Therefore, I have set some standards [he meant average] for my son to ensure – in each subject, I want him to have 74%, which is equivalent to an 'A' (Interview with Parent₆, 26th February, 2024).

From the parent's view, it becomes clear that other parents monitor their children academically to enable them excel their ambitions. This is a reason the parent plainly is speaking that he sets some standards to be met by his son. Nevertheless, Masabo et al. (2017) explain the challenges observed to the Tanzanian parents which include not enquiring not only about the material on their children's reports but also not to see the end-of-term letter. However, Martinez (2015) agrees that observing grades scored by students can be one of aspects of parental involvement in the academic performance of students.

3.5 Providing Educational Needs to Students

The involvement of parents influences students' performance at school setting as they provide them with all the necessary materials and basic needs such as uniform, exercise books, and pay fees for the mid-day meal. During the interview, it was found that not all the interviewed parents provide their children with the educational needs as stressed by one head of school:

To some extent parents are trying their level best in making sure that their children have full uniform and counter books. Some parents do not fulfill their responsibilities, though. You may find a student does not have counter books for writing notes for almost two weeks, and when you ask him or her, they will tell you that their parents said the school should wait until their parents get money (Interview with Head of School B, 27th February, 2024).

However, other parents shown to have the capacity of scaffolding their children in order to ensure academic performance. During the interview, one parent opined positively to provide educational needs to his daughter as he said:

Who else should provide my daughter with educational needs if fail to do so? [Responding to the researcher by asking a question] It is my responsibility to ensure that her tuition fee for is paid, the mid-day meal fee is contributed, and the like. I want to make her stress free so that she concentrates more on her studies (Interview with Parent₁₁, 26th February, 2024).

From the findings, it was clearly evident that not all parents helped their children get educational needs such as uniform and counter books. However, there were factors leading to failure of parents providing their children with educational needs. Some of those factors include the extended family and poor family planning among the parents. As a result, some parents fail to provide their children with educational needs. A few parents managed to help their children get educational needs as they knew they are responsible doing that to their children. Generally, the finding is in line with the findings of Dahie et al. (2018) that parents who are involved, regardless of socio-economic status enable their students pass well, because parents as being the major mentors as they play a leading and supportive role in their academic endeavor.

3.6 Contacting School Teachers Regularly about Children's Academic Achievement

Parental involvement can also be associated with the contact parents make to teachers to know the students' academic progress. If there are immediate measures to be taken, the parents should be aware of. In getting data, both the heads of schools and the parents were interviewed.

The heads of schools were of the opinion that the parents had rarely contacting them to ask and recommend about ways to improve students' academic performance. During the interview, one of the heads of schools said that:

It is very rarely the parents either come or call teachers. Most of the calls we receive are those that are not related to students'

academic progress. When the majority of the parents have certain complaints, they make calls to us. Otherwise, fewer parents may make call regularly about their children's academic achievement, and these calls aim at finding the solution to slow learners (Interview with Head of School A, 27th February, 2024).

The parents were also asked regarding their responses on contacting the school teachers regularly about students' academic performance. However, fewer parents shown to have contacted teachers regularly as a closer follow-up towards their children's academic performance. During the interview, one parent insisted this:

I make calls sometime to greet teachers of my child. The other time I send emails, especially the time I am in the office. I see that this is also a great opportunity to be informed of the teaching and learning processes and how they affect my child academically (Interview with Parent₁₂, 26th February, 2024).

From the findings, it was clearly indicated that not all parents contact the teachers on children's academic performance. Other parents are not satisfactory to be informed about their children's poor performance. This might the reason they do not want to make calls to teachers. The finding are in line with Epstein, & Sheldon, (2019) that, effective communication is also crucial for parents to stay informed about their children's progress and align their actions as it involves discussions on academic and non-academic matters, displaying interest in a child's well-being.

4.0 Conclusions

Based on the study findings, it is generally concluded that parental involvement in children's learning activities make them surpass academically.

5.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that the parents should be considerate in ensuring all the educational needs of the children are met. Also, the parents should attend the school-related activities and/or functions

to their role played positively and influence their children academically. The parents should also devote much of their time helping their children matters-related to academics.

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