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Parental Involvement and Learners' Academic Performance in Public Primary Schools in Kesses Sub County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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Parental involvement in a learner's life begins during conception, birth and throughout the childhood development of an individual. Parental involvement extends into early life, where oral and cognitive skills are inculcated in readiness for academic life. Further parental involvement is linked to the academic progress of a learner through engagement in diverse activities such as assisting the learners in undertaking assignments, attending the learner's school mentorship programs, connecting between teachers and learners, and attending teacher-parent meetings. The study investigated the influence of parental communication on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Kesses Sub-County, Uasin Gishu, Kenya. The study was anchored on Epstein's (2018) six-type learning model and adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study moreover targeted a population of 85 head teachers, 425 teachers and 850 parents within 85 public schools in Kesses. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling in the case of head teachers and adopted simple random stratified sampling in selecting 137 teachers and parents. Questionnaires were deployed to draw data from the respondents and establish the reliability of the test instrument. Data was analysed, and meaningful interpretations and presentations were inferred through statistical tests of descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (ANOVA, Pearson's Correlations Coefficient and Linear regressions using SPSS Version 26. Findings from the analysed data established that parental communication significantly affects academic performance with sig levels $\alpha < 0.05$. The study recommends that education policymakers should enhance communication infrastructure to support learning in schools and ensure that parents are sensitised to the need for enhanced parental occupations and the benefits of having positive desires towards a learners' academic journey.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational researchers, over time, have analytically deliberated on whether parental involvement and learners' academic performance are positively related (Epstein, 1986; Fan, 2001). Communication is one of the fundamental features in building the partnership between home and school (Graham-Clay, 2005). Governments, non-governmental institutions, and social and religious institutions globally are re-evaluating the roles of families and parents towards learners' academic performance within the school and home framework. Twenty-first-century learners have been influenced significantly by the technological advancements in education where the use of computers and the internet have predisposed new, simpler education models (Brown, 2018). The use of the internet reduces the learners' workload through the use of sophisticated computer applications that are readily available to perform repeated assignments and tasks. Currently, the advent of Artificial intelligence poses newer insights such as the ability of Chat GPT to independently solve complex assignments for students (Marcus, 2020). However, this trend has encouraged learners without parental assistance both at school and home to seek paid online writing assistance, which is tantamount to academic fraud and promotes plagiarism (Wang et al., 2021).

Apparently, parental involvement has continuously become a concern to modern families that value quality education for their children (Selolo, 2018). Parental involvement involves setting aside resources for the child and such resources for the child include financial, material, and emotional support (Okeke, 2014).

Conventionally, parental involvement is related to school and home activities that mentally and physically involve the learners. At school, learners are usually in constant communication with the teachers during classroom discussions, while at home, parents guide learners in a structured manner that supports learning by supporting learners in undertaking home assignments (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). Parental involvement takes different forms, ranging from attendance at school meetings and classroom events, supporting co-curricular activities, participation in school management, and engaging in mentorship programs and guidance (Trinidad, 2019). Throughout generations, parental involvement has been the threshold that measures the social fabric that guides the actions of humanity. According to Indimuli (2022), learners' ability to comprehend improves tremendously when parents assist learners from home, which is reflected in positive academic performance, where test scores in examinations remarkably improve. Additionally, when parents were involved in the academics of learners, the family esteem was elevated, leading to a positive perception of society and the neighbourhood (Ntekane, 2018).

To a larger extent, the communities internationally and countries drastically evolved to acquire better living conditions and livelihoods. A nationwide survey conducted in the USA established that the academic achievement of learners was highly influenced by parental involvement (Paulynice, 2020). The survey adopted a qualitative case study research design, using Epstein's (1995) model of parental involvement, where the respondents were directly

interviewed about their involvement in the learners' academic progress. According to the study, communication, resources, and parental events are effective in involving parents in learners' activities.

Another study was conducted to analyse whether parents' involvement and learner's academic achievement in schools was related (Avnet et al., 2019). The study was a national survey for learners with autism challenges and normal learners. Results revealed that the learners' academic performance improved when parents were not involved since the parents' and learners' desires were in contrast.

Regionally, research on how parents' engagement influences learners' academic performance has intensified over the past decade. The major driving force for the research in the area is highly attributable to changing societal needs and the quest for better educational systems that involve learners. Assefa & Sintayehu (2019) examined how parental involvement and students' accomplishments were related through primary school examination outcomes in the Oromia State of Ethiopia. The study was anchored on a correlational research design approach where findings revealed that academic scores improved whenever parents supported their learners.

Another study by Ugwuanyi et al. (2020) investigating parenting support and academic outcomes within Coleman's social capital framework showed that poor parenting style and support led to underperformance in academic outcomes. Most parents in society have relegated the role of parenting to their elderly parents, who are weak and, in most cases, struggling to fend for their grandchildren at the expense of their academic performance.

Locally, several studies by Indimuli (2022), Noor (2021), Rabok (2021) and Wakiuru (2016) indicate that parental involvement in learners' academic work significantly influences the learning process of the children. Makokha, Raburu and Onditi (2018) examined several schools on how parental monitoring influenced

the academic achievements of students in Busia County. The results showed that parental monitoring and academic performance were positively correlated. Furthermore, most parents in Busia supported their children by offering the basic needs, attending to school activities, and engaging in school decision-making. According to Kisiang'ani (2018), parents' demographic characteristics in their involvement in lower primary positively influence academic outcomes. The findings relate to the mathematics scores that showed that parents who assisted their learners at home with mathematics greatly improved the mathematics aggregate points of the learners (Zurlo et al., 2020).

Statement of the Problem

National examinations are used by educational stakeholders to admit learners to higher levels of learning as well as guide occupational training. However, whenever national examination outcomes are released for public consumption, most parents usually lament about the poor performance posted by the learners from public schools over learners from private schools (Ogola et al., 2018). National examination results for several public primary schools in Kesses Sub-county are discouraging and heartbreaking, according to educational stakeholders, compared to private schools. According to Maende (2021), national examinations gauge the academic input of learners in accordance with the efforts used. Effective learning increases with parents' willingness to support learners, as demonstrated by private school parents who closely liaise with administrators (Nyakundi et al., 2020). Such parents of private schools assist their learners in doing homework and other academic assignments. However, the contrary is reported of parents with learners in public schools who rarely support their learners, and in some instances, some parents are absent (Mahwai, 2019). There has been a national outcry over placement inconsistencies for secondary schools because of the difference in the learners' outcomes, where the best schools absorb sizable students from private schools (Ogola et al., 2018).

Additionally, different studies show conflicting results as to whether parental involvement impacts learners' academic performance (Maende, 2021; Indimuli, 2022; Kaptich et al., 2019; Kisiang'ani, 2018; Manduku et al., 2017; Mwenda, 2017 and Ngunya, 2020). Furthermore, little research has been undertaken to establish whether parents of the Kesses sub-county support their learners academically (Kaptich et al., 2019). Therefore, this study sought to examine how parental involvement influenced learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Kesses sub-county, Kenya.

Specific Objective

This study investigated how the parental communication approach influences the academic performance of learners in public primary schools in Kesses sub-county, Kenya.

Null Hypothesis

Parental communication does not significantly influence learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Kesses sub-county, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The study was anchored on Epstein's (2018) model for parental involvement, highlighting 6 types of activities: home parenting, communicating, learning at home, volunteering and decision-making as key considerations. On parenting, Epstein (2018) advocates for supporting learners through the provision of the necessary home care, including provision for basic needs. According to the model, parents should assist their children in preparing for school and ensure they return home safely. Equally, the school should provide harbour a favourable and conducive environment for the learners to attain academic and psychomotor skills. Life skills should also be instilled in the learners. On communication, Epstein (2018) advocates for schools to create vibrant avenues for reaching out to parents for information accessibility. Parental involvement requires that information is

disseminated and shared with parents across different platforms such as social media and chat platforms such as Twitter and Facebook (Selolo, 2018). Communication facilitates parental understanding of school planning, academic progress of learners and understanding of school policies on matters such as discipline resolution mechanisms. Since communication is a bilateral endeavour between parents and schools, communication should be embraced to enhance positive academic outcomes for the learners.

On volunteering, Epstein (2018) reiterates that parents should be encouraged to wilfully volunteer in classroom activities, field trip events, and religious pastoral mentorship programs, among others. According to the hallmark model, parental involvement is created when families schedule sessions to discuss the benefits of parental engagement in learner outcomes (Epstein, 2018). Constructively, they support the idea that by volunteering in school activities, learner's academic performance is greatly improved (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

On learning at home, Epstein (2018) advocates for parental guidance through objective identification, goal setting and supporting homework academic-related activities. According to Epstein (2018), parents should support learning at home through home activities such as assisting learners in undertaking their homework and guiding the learners to follow up on educational-related programs.

In decision-making, parents should participate in teachers' association meetings, engage in the board of management meetings, and participate in school academic committees to support decision-making for their learners (Epstein, 2018). Decision-making relates to approaches to reaching amicable solutions to problems and forging avenues of achieving school objectives.

On collaboration, Epstein (2001), in his spheres of influence theory, encourages parents and schools to collaborate within the community setting. Collaboration involves incorporating the surrounding community into the school activities

through the efforts of parents by involving different community groups such as businesses and cultural and civic organisations. The school can similarly collaborate with parents on academic issues, and parents should monitor learners' behaviour at home (Eccles & Harold, 2017). Such collaboration is effective in curbing conflict between parents and teachers on academic and discipline-related issues.

Empirical Literature

The literature in this section focused on how parent's communication approaches influenced learners' academic performance. Communication enhances understanding between the parents, learners, and the whole school system. Interaction between the school and the parents is through written letters, notices, and electronic mail, which briefs parents on school events and pertinent matters of policy. Høglund et al. (2015) declare the importance of communication with teachers about children's school-related adjustment, which assists parents to actively support their children to adjustment in new school settings. With regard to the current study, communication with the teacher at the school of skills, *inter alia*, assists and informs parents about how to help their children adjust to a school of skills in making the transition from a mainstream school.

Smokoska (2020) studied parental communication with learners and how it influenced academic achievements in Chicago. A population of 540 respondents was randomly sampled for primary data abstraction. Data for the study was collected by questionnaires developed for learners and parents. Findings revealed that parents with a good communication approach resulted in better academic outcomes for their learners. Such parents used modern communication means like social media and virtual internet connectivity to reach learners remotely. However, the study was limited to using self-developed questionnaires, simple random sampling and having a constricted sample size for a survey, which can be biased. The present study improves on these study gaps by adopting a larger sample of 137 respondents that is more

representative and can allow the results to be generalised to other similar studies. Additionally, the present study uses a quantitative descriptive research design as well as purposive sampling. According to Murray, McFarland-Piazza and Harrison (2015), constant communication between the teacher and parent about the child keeps parents informed about their child's well-being, and the educator can also receive insight from the parent on how to better understand the child. Therefore, both one-way and two-way communication between the educator and the parents is vital.

Mihret et al. (2019) sought to investigate inferences of parents' presence and learners' academic undertakings through a correlational finding in secondary schools of Hiramaya University in Ethiopia. Using questionnaires and document analysis data identification, a sample of 52 parents and 60 students was identified through purposive sampling. Results revealed that parental involvement was statistically and positively significant in relation to academic performance. Additionally, parents who avoided communication with their learners disadvantaged the academic abilities of their learners. Communication between learners and parents was enhanced whenever parents used modern means of communication, including the use of messaging and the internet, which facilitated seamless information sharing. However, this research was limited to secondary schools. This gap is addressed by the current study, which examines parental performance in public primary schools. According to Hakyemez-Paul et al. (2018), some of the contributing factors to low levels of communication as a form of parental involvement are time management (for example, parents being too busy at work and not being able to contact the school during working hours) and personal differences amongst educators and parents (these are inclusive of cultural differences, interests, and resources).

Mante et al. (2021) examined family structure and learning outcomes in Ghanaian schools. The findings showed that parents supported strong ICT, which significantly improved learning.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) involves parents using telephones, emails, and social media messaging to communicate with their learners. Such communication enhanced positive attitudes emotionally and socially, which was desirable for the academic progress of the learners. For instance, learners were able to reach their parents offline and online whenever they were apart. However, the research was limited because it focused on secondary school students and fell short of the sampling procedure. This study mitigates the present research gaps by using purposive sampling and studying primary school learners.

Another study investigated the influence of parent's involvement on the academic performance of early childhood learners in disciplined forces-sponsored schools (Mariba, 2020). The findings from the research results exhibited that the communication process was a critical component for parents and learners. Parental communication improved the ability of the children to develop positive attitudes in life as they interacted with their peers, while children without proper interactive communication from their parents developed a reserved attitude that led to low academic performance. However, the study used a qualitative approach, which is more subjective. This limitation is addressed by the present study, which is descriptive quantitative research. Similarly, this study is not limited to early childhood learners but the entire primary school education in Kesses public schools.

METHODOLOGY

The study followed a descriptive design since it allowed for the description of the study characteristics (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The survey was carried out in public primary schools of Kesses Sub County in Uasin Gishu County. The study considered the components of strong parental communication systems and skills of parental communication. A population of 1360 individuals composed of school head teachers, classroom teachers and parents was considered. Simple random sampling and Purposive sampling were used to select the respondents. In descriptive

research, a sample size of 10-50% is acceptable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The researcher applied the sample of 10% according to (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A sample size of 137, which consisted of 9 head teachers, 43 teachers and 85 parents, was selected for the research. An interview was conducted to draw qualitative and quantitative information since the interview provided an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under discussion (Cohen et al., 2017). To establish whether the instrument was dependable, a test-retest was done by distributing the results, followed by scoring. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients from the Pilot study conducted in Nandi County Chesumei Sub County was used for determining test-retest reliability co-efficient. Where $r > 0.7$, it shows high dependability, which was established for the study when the study tools were retested repeatedly and established an R-value of over 0.7. Data was analysed, and meaningful interpretations and presentations were inferred through statistical tests of descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (ANOVA, Pearson's Correlations Coefficient and Linear regressions using SPSS Version 26. Modelling was done using multiple linear regression analysis to determine how the independent variables influence the dependent variable using the following equation:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon_i$$

Where Y = Academic performance of learners, β_0 = constant term that measures the unit change in the dependent variable, β_1 and β_4 = Constants of independent parameters that measure the responsive changes in Parent involvement in Learning due to a unit change in X. X_1 = Parent level of education, X_2 = communication, X_3 = Parental Occupation, X_4 = Parental educational desires and aspirations

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section sought to establish how communication between parents and teachers impacts learners, how creating strong communication systems for learners, how learners

with healthy communication are able to establish and maintain positive relationships with adults and peers if communication skills are crucial in

learning and lastly, if parents with positive communication are better equipped to support learners.

Table 1: Effect of communication on learners

	SD	D	U	A	SA
(CM1) Communication between parents and teachers	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	41.5%	58.5%
(CM2) Communication at home and school	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	23.1%	76.9%
(CM3) Communication and positive relationships	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	23.8%	76.2%
(CM4) Communication and experiences at home /school	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.9%	83.1%
(CM5) Communication and emotional responsiveness	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.2%	83.8%

SA = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, U = Undecided, A = Agree, DA = Strongly agree

Source: Author, 2022

Results reveal that overall, on average, more than 50% of the respondents strongly agree in all cases that communication influences learning. 83.8% strongly agree that parents with positive communication are well-placed to motivate younger learners. The results are in agreement with the findings of parental communication with learners and how it influenced academic achievements in Chicago (Smokoska, 2020). Findings revealed that parents with a good communication approach resulted in better academic outcomes for their learners. Such parents used modern approaches to communication, like the use of social media and adopting virtual interaction using the internet to support their learners whenever they were distanced from their learners. Several authors (Mante et al., 2021; Mariba, 2020 & Mihret; Mamo, 2019 & Makokha et al., 2018) concur with the findings that parental communication improved the ability of the children to develop positive attitudes in life as they interacted with their peers while children without proper interactive communication from their parents developed a reserved attitude that led to low academic performance.

Parental Involvement on Learners' Academic Performance

Parental involvement is an expansive array of events that include parents taking care of their own learners by providing them with elementary needs, love and regard, which improves their general growth in mental, physical, and social, which forms an essential base for education. Parental involvement also comprises an array of

activities: taking part in school activities, offering to take part in school agendas, connecting with the school on the advancement of their learners, assisting learners to do their assignments, going to teacher-parent conferences, and attending the academic clinic for their learners. The purpose of this study is to determine the involvement of parents in the academic performance of learners in public primary schools. Both the involvement of parents and the academic performance of learners were measured using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The results agree with similar findings by Ugwuanyi et al. (2020) that parents with occupations that elevate their self-esteem are empowered financially to academically better support their children than parents without structured occupations; however, the study was limited since it only focused on a survey research methodology which is prone to biases.

Results from the analysis indicated that, on average, students performed better in their internal and external assessments at a mean of 3.9738 and an SD of 0.70144. Communication had the highest mean at 4.7569, with an SD of 0.20229. However, the parental level of education PL had a mean of 3.6662 and a high standard deviation of 0.31832. Ayabulela (2019) examined how parental involvement influenced academic results using a survey research design in Western Cape schools. The study was anchored on Epstein's (2009) six typologies framework. Data for the analysis was collected from a sample of 74 individuals using questionnaires. Sampling was done using convenience sampling. Findings from the study indicated that fathers' occupations

significantly influenced the academic performance of the learners.

Table 2: Descriptive results of the variables

	Mean	Std. Deviation
AP	3.9738	0.70144
PL	3.6662	0.31832
CM	4.7569	0.20229
PO	3.7231	0.24575
PAD	4.5446	0.24017

Source: Author 2022

A correlation analysis for the study was undertaken between all the dependent and independent variables. The results showed a strong, significant positive correlation between academic performance and parental aspirations and desire 0.450 *Table 3*.

Table 3: Summary of correlation

		PL	CM	PO	PAD	AP
CM	Pearson Correlation	-0.071	1	-.285**	-0.132	-.292**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.422		0.001	0.133	0.001
	N	130	130	130	130	130
AP	Pearson Correlation	-0.045	-.292**	-0.053	.450**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.611	0.001	0.548	0.000	
	N	130	130	130	130	130

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Source: Author 2022

Further inspections of correlation analysis indicate that communication had a weak significant relation -0.292 to academic performance. that 55.1 % of changes in academic performance are due to changes in parental involvement. Accordingly, the rest of the changes are due to other attributes not in the model.

Regression Model Summary

Findings in the table above showed that the coefficient of determination ($R = 0.551$) implies

Table 4: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.551 ^a	0.304	0.282	0.59451

a. Predictors: (Constant), PAD, PL, PO, CM

Source: Author 2022

The study carried out an ANOVA test to determine the statistical significance of the regression model employed. Findings from the above table revealed that $F_{\text{calculated}} = 13.646 > (f_{\text{critical}} = 1.96)$, $\text{Sig} = 0.000 < 0.05$, which is an indication that parental involvement significantly contributes to the achievement of the academic achievement.

Table 5: Analysis of variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	19.291	4	4.823	13.646	.000 ^b
Residual	44.180	125	0.353		
Total	63.471	129			

a. Dependent Variable: AP

b. Predictors: (Constant), PAD, PL, PO, CM

Model Summary of Regression Coefficient

Regression coefficient analysis results were used to establish the significance of the model. The constant of the model ($\beta_0= 5.904$) is statistically significant since the sig.-value = $0.0006 < P = 0.05$. The study indicates that communication ($\beta_2= -1.031$) sig-value = $0.000 < 0.05$ and Parental occupation ($\beta_3= -0.572$), sig-value = $0.012 < 0.05$ are statistically significant. Parental level of education ($\beta_1=-0.231$) has a sig-value of $0.165 > 0.05$ is statistically insignificant. However, Parental aspirations and desires ($\beta_4=1.310$), sig-value = $0.000 < P= 0.05$, which is statistically significant. This finding is also in tandem with

other studies. Murray, McFarland-Piazza and Harrison (2015) agree that constant communication between the teacher and parent about the child keeps parents informed about their child’s well-being, and the educator can also receive insight from the parent on how to better understand the child. Therefore, both one-way and two-way communication between the educator and the parents is vital. Scholars like Hoglund et al. (2015) affirm the importance of communication with teachers about children’s school-related adjustment, which assists parents to actively support their children to adjustment in new school settings.

Table 6: Regression coefficients

Model	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standard Coefficient Beta	t	Sig.	Correlations Zero-order
	B	Std. Error				
1 (Constant)	5.904	2.097		2.815	0.006	
PL	-0.231	0.165	-0.105	-1.397	0.165	-0.045
CM	-1.031	0.272	-0.297	-3.794	0.000	-0.292
PO	-0.572	0.224	-0.201	-2.560	0.012	-0.053
PAD	1.310	0.222	0.449	5.901	0.000	0.450

a. Dependent Variable: AP

Y = Academic performance; CM = Communication; PO = Parental occupation; PAD = Parental desires and aspirations

Source: Author 2022

The regression equation of the model then becomes:

$$Y = 5.904 - 1.031CM - 0.572PO + 1.310PAD$$

Summary of Findings

Communication is a dual concern between parents and teachers for the betterment of the learners’ academic outcomes. Communication refers to the interaction between two or more parties to achieve a consensus. Schools should encourage communication between the parents and their learners while at home through different media channels such as social media platforms (Smokoska, 2020). Schools use communication to involve parents in the school’s academic programs, planning and implementation of education policies. Findings from this study agree with the literature reviewed that communication is paramount to the academic performance of a learner. Out of 130 respondents investigated,

83.8% of parents in Kesses strongly agreed that having positive communication better equips the parents with emotions that support the young learners. Since modern-day communication has greatly shifted to social media, most parent shares academic work with their learners using the internet, which is highly acceptable by the young generation. This finding is also in tandem with other studies (Mante et al., 2021 & Mihret et al., 2019) that parents supported strong ICT, which significantly improved learning. Information communication technology (ICT) involves parents using telephones, emails, and social media and messaging to communicate with their learners. Such communication enhanced positive attitudes emotionally and socially, which was desirable for the academic progress of the learners. Correlation results indicate that communication is significantly negatively -0.285 related to academic performance. Scholars like Hakyemez-Paul et al. (2018) argue that some of

the contributing factors to low levels of communication as a form of parental involvement are time management (for example, parents being too busy at work and not being able to contact the school during working hours) and personal differences amongst educators and parents (these are inclusive of cultural differences, interests, and resources).

CONCLUSION

Parental involvement in learners' academic performance is not highly satisfactory in most respects; however, a considerable number of parents show support for their children. Most of the parents attribute a lack of time to bond and support their children academically. They attribute this to spending a considerable amount of time in their professions, which greatly impacts learners' performance.

From the research findings, communication is important in the academic performance of the learners, as shown by the analysis that most respondents strongly agree. It can be inferred that modern forms of communication should be used more so the use of the internet, which allows for virtual interaction.

Recommendations

Communication has been identified as a key determinant in the learners' performance. Therefore, it is recommended that the educational stakeholders and the government should support communication infrastructure throughout the sub-county and nationally.

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