

Implementation of Parent-related Interventions for Improving Learning Achievement among Low Achievers in Public Secondary Schools in Kajiado County, in Kenya

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Abstract

This study examined the implementation of parent-related interventions designed to enhance academic achievement among low-performing students in public secondary schools in Kajiado County, Kenya. It further explored student responses to school-based academic support strategies that involve parents or guardians in academic processes. Anchored in Walberg's Theory of Educational Productivity, the study adopted a convergent parallel mixed methods design. Using Slovene's formula, a sample of 394 was drawn from a population of 972 stakeholders across 91 schools. Participants included 20 principals, 180 teachers, 154 students, 20 Board of Management members, and 20 Parents' Association chairpersons. Quantitative data were collected via questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive (means, standard deviations) and inferential (correlation, regression) statistics through SPSS; qualitative data were gathered through interviews and analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that parents actively collaborated with school administrators through support for academic programs, resource mobilization, and participation in academic clinics. However, despite principals' appreciation of parental engagement, its implementation remains constrained by contextual, perceptual, and systemic barriers. This study affirms that parental involvement is essential to student success, particularly for struggling learners. However, deeper engagement is often limited by socioeconomic challenges, passive parental roles, and cultural norms. Teachers, BoM, and PA leaders recognize the value of parental support, but schools must shift from viewing parents solely as fee payers to active education partners. Targeted parental sensitization forums, inclusive leadership training for BoM and PA, and flexible fee structures can enhance engagement. Establishing two-way communication—via SMS, home visits, and dialogue days—can build mutual trust. Schools should also involve parents in academic support initiatives and collaborate with BoM and PA representatives to design holistic interventions for vulnerable learners, ensuring more equitable and effective educational outcomes.

Keywords: Parental engagement, academic achievement, low-performing students, public secondary schools, Kajiado County, Kenya

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Context

Education remains an undisputed catalyst for sustainable development, human well-being, and social transformation. It is globally recognized as a fundamental human right, as articulated in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 2015), and is central to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all (UNESCO, 2022). Across the globe, investment in education is consistently linked to improved socio-economic outcomes, including better health, lower fertility rates, enhanced civic participation, and reduced poverty and inequality (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2021).

Empirical evidence supports the assertion that high-functioning education systems correlate positively with key development indicators. For instance, Glewwe and Muralidharan (2016) found that educational attainment significantly influences individual employability, income levels, and social mobility. Similarly, the World Bank (2020) underscores that individuals with higher education tend to experience improved quality of life, greater resilience to economic shocks, and stronger intergenerational outcomes. Conversely, education systems that fail to support low-achieving learners often reinforce cycles of poverty and social exclusion, particularly among marginalized populations.

A comprehensive study by the Eurydice Network (2020) across 47 European countries confirmed that equitable education systems are critical in fostering inclusive societies. The report highlighted a persistent challenge: the strong association between socio-economic background and low academic achievement. It noted that learners who underperform academically often lack the foundational skills—literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking—necessary for effective participation in modern economies and civic life. In response, the European Union's Strategic Framework for Education and Training (ET 2020) set a target to reduce the proportion of 15-year-olds underperforming in reading, mathematics, and science to less than 15%. Yet by 2020, only a few countries such as Finland and Estonia had met this benchmark, indicating the scale and persistence of the problem.

In sub-Saharan Africa, and Kenya in particular, national statistics often paint a promising picture of expanding access to education. However, a deeper analysis reveals stark disparities in academic performance across regions, school types, and socio-economic groups (Uwezo Kenya, 2021; Republic of Kenya, 2023). Despite high enrollment rates in secondary education, a significant proportion of learners continue to underachieve, especially in public schools located in underserved counties such as Kajiado. These students—often categorized as "low achievers"—struggle to meet curriculum benchmarks and are at heightened risk of school dropout, diminished life opportunities, and long-term economic vulnerability.

This persistent gap in academic achievement raises urgent questions about the effectiveness of current interventions, particularly the role of parental engagement. While numerous studies affirm the positive impact of parental involvement on student outcomes (Jeynes, 2018; Kim & Hill, 2021), there remains limited empirical evidence on how parent-led strategies are being implemented in practice within Kenyan public secondary schools, and how these efforts affect students who are academically at risk. This study, therefore, seeks to critically examine the implementation of parent-related interventions targeted at improving learning outcomes among low achievers in public secondary schools in Kajiado County, Kenya.

1.2. Problem Statement

Despite ongoing educational reforms and teacher-led efforts to improve academic outcomes, a significant proportion of students in Kenya—particularly in marginalized counties like Kajiado—continue to perform poorly in national examinations. Between 2016 and 2022, over 40% of KCSE candidates in Kajiado scored grades D and below, severely limiting their chances for further education and employment (KNEC, 2024). These outcomes persist despite widespread concern and repeated policy interventions.

Research indicates that teacher-driven strategies and parental involvement can significantly boost learner performance (Hattie, 2009; Epstein, 2005). However, most interventions are fragmented, not tailored to low

achievers, and rarely assessed for effectiveness in diverse contexts. Moreover, negative societal perceptions of low achievers further marginalize them. There is limited empirical evidence on how parent -based interventions can be optimized to support struggling learners. This study therefore seeks to examine the effectiveness of parental interventions in public secondary schools in Kajiado County.

1.3. The Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyse the perceptions of various stakeholders regarding the involvement of parents in school activities that enhance students' academic performance among low achievers in secondary schools in Kajiado County, Kenya. The specific objectives were to:

1. Determine the student's views on parental involvement in assisting low performing students to enhance their academic achievement.
2. Establish teachers' perceptions on parental involvement in assisting low performing students to enhance their academic achievement.
3. Determine the views of Board of Management on parental involvement in assisting low performing students to enhance their academic achievement.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in *Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning* and *Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory*, which together provide a robust lens for understanding how teacher practices, coupled with parental involvement, can influence academic outcomes among low-achieving students in public secondary schools. First, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that learning is deeply embedded in social contexts, where cognitive development occurs through interaction with more knowledgeable others. These "others" are not limited to teachers or peers, but include *parents and caregivers* who form the child's earliest and most consistent learning environment. Through the concept of the *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*, Vygotsky highlights that children achieve more when guided by adults—suggesting that *parental support at home, such as assisting with homework, setting routines, and modeling learning behaviors*, plays a crucial role in facilitating academic success. For low achievers, such parental engagement becomes essential in bridging classroom instruction and home learning environments.

Secondly, employing Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory propounded by Joyce Epstein (2001) proposes that a child's education is shaped by *interactions across three overlapping spheres*: the family, the school, and the community. These spheres work best when *collaboration is strong and consistent*, supporting shared goals for student development. Epstein outlines six types of parental involvement—including parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community—as critical for reinforcing student achievement. In the context of Kajiado County, where many students struggle with low performance, engaging parents—particularly in learning at home and meaningful communication with schools—can strengthen student motivation, accountability, and achievement. This theory legitimizes the view that teacher interventions alone are insufficient without structured and intentional involvement of parents.

Together, Vygotsky and Epstein's theories underscore the importance of *teacher-parent synergy* in supporting low-performing learners. They justify a dual focus on instructional quality and home-based support structures, especially in marginalized regions where educational outcomes are suboptimal.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The *conceptual framework* for this study, displayed as Figure 1, is based on the integration of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning and Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory, with a focus on how parental involvement influence academic performance among low-achieving students in Kajiado County, Kenya. This framework underscores the interplay between *teacher interventions*, *parental involvement*, and the *learning achievements* of students, considering moderating variables such as government policies and socio-economic conditions.

As Orodho (2017) contents, the components of a conceptual framework should illustrate the relationships between the three key components of the framework, namely; the independent variables, the dependent variables and the moderating or intervening variables of the study. In this study there were two intervening variables: the teacher based interventions that include specific strategies such as differentiated instruction, individualized support, and formative assessments. Teacher interventions also involve creating a supportive learning environment that accommodates the needs of low achievers. According to Vygotsky's theory, such interventions facilitate learning within the students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). The other key one was the parental involvement which according to Epstein's model emphasizes the importance of parental engagement in the learning process, such as assisting with homework, fostering a learning-friendly home environment, and maintaining open communication with the school (Epstein, 2001). Parental involvement is seen as an essential support mechanism that complements the interventions provided by teachers (Orodho, Nzabwirwa, Odundo, Waweru & Ndayambaje, 2016).

The dependent variable was the Student Learning Achievement. This was measured by the academic performance of low-achieving students in national examinations (e.g., KCSE) is the outcome being measured. Improvement in learning achievement is expected when teacher and parental interventions are harmonized. The moderating variable in this study were the Government policies and the socio-economic factors influencing the teacher and parental involvement in teaching learning process. The **Kenya Government's policy** on extra tuition and regulations regarding hidden school costs can moderate the implementation of interventions. These policies may either facilitate or hinder the execution of teacher-based and parental interventions due to their impact on school resources and affordability for parents. The **socio-economic status** of students' families can also influence the effectiveness of interventions; as low-income families may struggle to fully engage in the academic processes due to lack of resources or time.

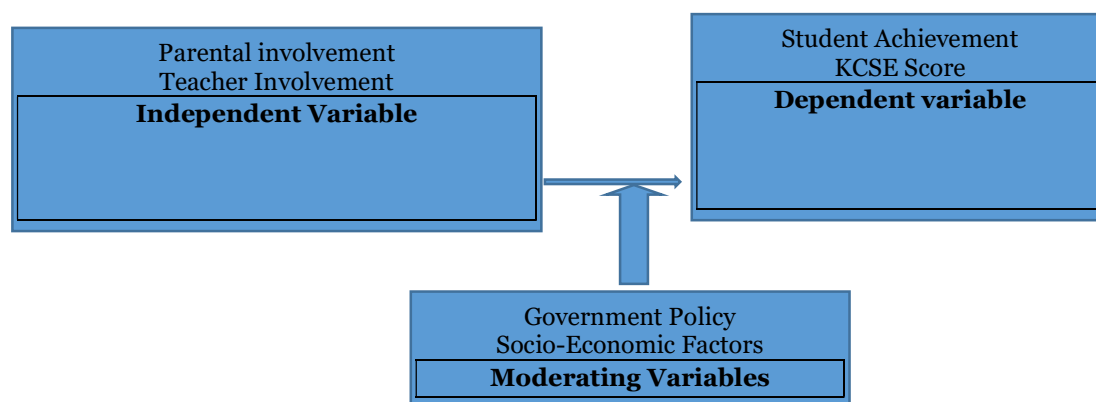


Figure 1: The interrelations between parental-teacher, student achievement and Policy as well as socio-economic factors

Teacher-based interventions (such as differentiated instruction and individual support) directly influence student learning achievements by providing tailored academic support. The Parental involvement strengthens these interventions, providing additional home-based support and reinforcing school-based learning, which leads to improved student performance. The moderating variables such as Government policies (such as the regulation on extra tuition) moderate the implementation of both teacher interventions and parental involvement by influencing the resources available for educational activities. Additionally, Socio-economic factors affect both the extent to which parents can be involved in their children's education and the types of teacher interventions that can be implemented effectively, thus impacting student achievement. This framework draws on the theoretical foundations of Vygotsky and Epstein and suggests that improving student performance among low achievers requires a holistic approach involving both teacher interventions and parental support, while being mindful of external factors like government policies and socio-economic constraints. This conceptual framework integrates parental involvement into teacher-based interventions to provide a holistic approach to improving academic outcomes among low achievers, contextualized within local and national policy constraints.

2. Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed methods design, which enabled the researcher to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data concurrently. This approach allowed for the triangulation of findings, enhancing the depth and validity of insights into the nature and impact of parental involvement in secondary schools (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The target population consisted of 24,958 individuals from 91 public secondary schools in Kajiado County, including 91 principals, 685 teachers, 24,000 students, 91 Board of Management (BoM) chairpersons, and 91 Parents' Association (PA) chairpersons. A total of 394 participants were selected through a combination of random and purposive sampling techniques, ensuring both representativeness and relevance. The final sample included 20 principals, 180 teachers, 154 students, 20 BoM chairpersons, and 20 PA chairpersons, providing a balanced perspective from key education stakeholders.

2.2. Methodology

2.2.1. Research Instruments

The study utilized *questionnaires, interview guides, and focus group discussions (FGDs)*. Questionnaires targeted principals, teachers, and students for the quantitative phase, while interviews and FGDs gathered in-depth qualitative data from principals, BOM and PA chairpersons, and student groups. Interviews and FGDs captured perceptions and lived experiences, translating spoken views into analyzable narratives (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, as cited in Kelly, 2003). The selection of mixed instruments was guided by the need to triangulate data sources and enhance validity (Orodho et al., 2016a; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

2.2.2. Pilot Testing and Validation of Instruments

A **pilot study** was conducted in 8 public secondary schools in Kajiado County not included in the main study. Piloting helped identify and correct ambiguities in the instruments and ensured clarity and relevance (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Content validity was established through expert review by five specialists who rated questionnaire items for relevance. Items were revised or removed based on expert feedback. In quantitative strands, validity was enhanced through representative sampling and appropriate statistical treatments. For qualitative data, credibility was ensured through depth, triangulation, and reflective interpretation (Winter, 2000, as cited in Louis, Lawrence, & Keith, 2011).

Instrument reliability was tested using the *split-half technique and test-retest* method with the same pilot participants over a two-week interval. The *Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient* was used to determine internal consistency. These values exceed the 0.80 threshold, indicating high reliability (Guilford & Fruchter, 1978; Orodho, 2017).

2.2.3. Data Collection Procedures

Prior to the commencement of data collection, the researcher sought and obtained formal authorization in accordance with national research regulations. A research permit was secured from the **National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI)**, which is the official body mandated to oversee and regulate research activities in Kenya. This permit was issued upon submission and approval of a comprehensive research proposal, and after obtaining an official introductory letter from **Kenyatta University**, affirming the researcher's academic affiliation and purpose of study.

Following the issuance of the NACOSTI permit, the researcher presented it to the **County Commissioner** and the **County Director of Education (CDE)** in **Kajiado County**. These administrative steps were crucial to gain access to the selected public secondary schools and to ensure local authorities were fully informed and supportive of the research process.

The data collection exercise took place over a period of **four weeks**, strategically scheduled during the regular school term to ensure the availability of participants—teachers, students, and school administrators. The researcher personally administered all data collection instruments, including questionnaires, interview guides, and observation schedules. This hands-on approach was adopted to maintain uniformity in data collection

procedures, ensure the integrity of responses, and to address any questions or issues that arose from respondents in real-time. Personal administration also helped in building trust with participants and ensuring ethical standards were upheld throughout the research process.

2.2.4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using *descriptive statistics* (means, frequencies, standard deviations) and **inferential statistics** (correlation and regression analysis) using **SPSS software**. Results were presented in tables, graphs, and charts. Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were *analyzed thematically*, and findings were reported in *narrative form*, ensuring alignment with research objectives (Best & Kahn, 2006; Orodho, 2019; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

2.3 Logistical and Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained through the university and NACOSTI, ensuring the study adhered to ethical research standards. Participants provided **informed consent**, and their confidentiality, privacy, and autonomy were upheld. Ethical practices guided every stage—from planning and data collection to analysis and reporting (Free, 2013, as cited in Njue, 2015; Orodho, 2017).

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The findings are provided along the thematic areas of the objectives. The themes are the student's views on parental involvement in assisting low performing students to enhance their academic achievement; teachers' views on parental involvement in assisting low performing students to enhance their academic achievement and views of Board of Management on parental involvement in assisting low performing students to enhance their academic achievement.

3.1. Students views on parental involvement in assisting low performers

Parental involvement not only influences students' academic achievement and behavior but also determines whether students continue with their schooling or not. The views of students on how parental involvement assists low performers improve their learning outcomes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 : Students views on how parents are involved in assisting low performers

Statements of opinion	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
My parents freely participate in school meetings and activities when called	191	61.7	86	27.9	23	7.4	4	1.4	5	1.7
My parents are involved in my academic progress in your school personally come to see my teachers	111	36	84	27.1	55	17.9	33	10.7	26	8.3
My parents encourage me to study while at home and provide for my academic needs	213	69	61	19.5	24	7.9	5	1.7	6	2
My parents check and sign my academic report every term and reward me when I do well	135	43.6	81	26.2	43	14	28	9	22	7.1
My parents organize for my remedial lessons to help me do better.	125	40.5	72	23.3	54	17.4	37	12.1	21	6.7
My parents have high expectations of me and motivate me to have high targets	236	76.4	57	18.3	8	2.6	2	0.5	6	2.1
My parents pay fees and do everything to ensure I don't miss school	231	74.8	46	14.8	21	6.7	8	2.6	3	1.2

The study sought to examine students' perceptions regarding the role of parents in school activities and academic support. Table 1 illustrates a high level of parental involvement as perceived by the learners. A majority of students, 277 (89.6%), agreed that their parents actively participated in school meetings and events when called upon. Similarly, 274 (88.5%) reported that their parents not only encouraged them to study at home but also provided essential academic support, such as learning materials. Furthermore, 216 students (69.9%) affirmed that their parents consistently checked and signed their academic reports each term and provided rewards for good performance. However, 50 students (16.1%) disagreed with this statement, indicating variability in this aspect of parental engagement. Notably, 195 students (63.1%) agreed that their parents personally visited schools to engage with teachers regarding their academic progress, signifying a level of direct parental-school interaction. Additionally, 293 students (94.8%) reported that their parents had high academic expectations and consistently motivated them to achieve academic excellence. A comparable proportion, 277 (89.6%), affirmed that their parents ensured timely fee payments and other forms of support to prevent school absenteeism.

3.2. Views of teachers on how parents are involved in assisting low performers

Parents who choose to involve themselves in school programs influence positively their children's academic achievement (Mphale & Mhlauli, 2015). The views of teachers on how parental involvement assist low performers improve their learning outcomes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 : Teachers views on how parents are involved in assisting low performers improve their learning outcomes.

Statements of opinion	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Parents freely participate in school meetings and activities when called.	66	35	68	36.3	37	19.7	12	6.4	5	2.5
Parents are involved in the academic progress of their children in my school and personally come to see the teachers.	74	39.6	65	34.8	27	14	14	7.6	8	4
Parents encourage their children to study while at home and provide for their academic needs.	45	24.2	62	33.1	55	29.3	16	8.3	10	5.1
Parents check and sign academic report every term and motivate them when they do well.	42	22.3	66	35	32	17.2	26	14	22	11.5
Parents organize for remedial lessons to help low achievers do better.	45	24.2	62	33.1	32	17.2	28	14.6	21	10.8
Parents have high expectations of their children and motivate them to set high targets.	44	23.6	49	26.1	54	28.7	31	16.6	10	5.1
Parents pay fees and do everything to ensure their children don't miss school.	65	34.4	52	27.4	31	16.6	26	14	14	7.6

Table 2 presents teachers' perceptions regarding the extent of parental involvement in school activities and support for learners' academic development. A clear majority of the teachers, 134 (71.3%), agreed that parents readily attend school meetings and participate in school-related activities when invited. However, 17 teachers (9.0%) disagreed, indicating that while general participation is perceived positively, a small segment of parents may remain disengaged. Similarly, 139 teachers (73.9%) affirmed that parents are involved in monitoring the academic progress of their children, with some parents personally visiting schools to confer with teachers. Notably, 27 teachers (14.4%) were neutral, suggesting that perceptions vary depending on context or parental consistency in engagement.

In terms of academic reinforcement, 108 teachers (57.4%) agreed that parents regularly check and sign their children's academic reports and motivate them through recognition or rewards when they perform well. However, 48 teachers (25.5%) disagreed, indicating that a substantial proportion of parents may not actively track academic performance.

Regarding parental expectations, 93 teachers (49.5%) believed that parents have high academic expectations of their children and motivate them to set and strive for ambitious targets. On the other hand, 41 teachers (21.8%) disagreed with this view, and 54 (28.7%) remained neutral. This division reveals that while some parents foster aspirational mindsets, others may lack the same level of engagement or belief in academic potential.

Additionally, 107 teachers (56.9%) observed that parents make arrangements for remedial lessons, particularly for learners who are struggling academically. This proactive role suggests a growing awareness among parents of the importance of individualized academic support.

3.3. Board of Management members' opinions on parents' role in helping low achievers

Society considers academic achievement as a means to better social and economic gain. The opinions of BOMs on roles of parents in helping low achievers are presented in Table 3

The data shows that a significant majority of the BoM members, 17 (89.4%), agreed that parents of low-achieving students express concern about their children's academic performance. Similarly, 17 respondents (89.5%) affirmed that parents are supportive of academic programs implemented within the schools. Furthermore, over half of the BoM members, 11 (57.9%), agreed that parents strive to pay school fees on time to prevent student absenteeism. However, it was noted that in this arid and semi-arid region, fee payment becomes inconsistent, particularly during dry seasons when economic hardships intensify.

Table 3 : BOM members' opinions on parents' role in helping low achievers do well

Statements of opinion	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Parents of low achievers get concerned over their performance.	10	52.6	7	36.8	2	10.5				
Parents support academic programs	5	26.3	12	63.2	2	10.5				
Parents pay fees on time to avoid student absenteeism.	5	26.3	6	31.6	4	21.1	2	10.5	2	10.5
Parents provide remedial help for their children while at home	3	15.8	6	31.6	5	26.3	4	21.1	1	5.3
Parent support school development	5	26.3	11	57.9	2	10.5	1	5.3		
Parents support motivational programs to uplift low achievers	5	26.3	11	57.9	1	5.3			2	10.5
Parents visit school voluntarily to check learners progress	3	15.8	11	57.9	3	15.8	2	10.5		

The findings also reveal that 16 BoM members (84.2%) agreed that parents actively support motivational programs aimed at uplifting the performance of low-achieving learners. Additionally, 14 members (73.7%) noted that some parents voluntarily visit schools to follow up on their children's academic progress, demonstrating a proactive approach to engagement.

3.4. Chairpersons of Parents Association (PA) and Parents Involvement

Table 4 presents the perceptions of Parents' Association (PA) chairpersons regarding the role of parents in supporting learners' academic performance, particularly low achievers.

Table 3 : PA Chairpersons' opinions on parents' role in helping low achievers do well

Statements of opinion	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Parents of low achievers get concerned over their performance.	8	44.4	5	27.8	5	27.8				
Parents support academic programs	7	38.9	7	38.9	4	22.2				
Parents pay fees on time to avoid student absenteeism.	5	27.8	4	22.2	4	22.2	2	11.1	2	11.1
Parents provide remedial help for their children while at home	3	16.7	4	22.2	5	27.8	4	22.2	1	5.5
Parent support school development	3	16.7	11	61.1	2	11.1	1	5.5		
Parents support motivational programs to uplift low achievers	5	27.8	9	50.0	1	5.5			2	11.1
Parents visit school voluntarily to check learners progress	2	11.1	10	55.5	3	16.7	2	11.1		

The data indicates that nearly three-quarters of PA chairpersons, 13 (72.2%), agreed that parents of low-performing learners express concern about their children's academic outcomes. A larger proportion—14 chairpersons (77.7%)—affirmed that parents actively support academic programs in their respective schools. In terms of financial commitment, half of the respondents, 9 (50.0%), agreed that parents strive to pay school fees on time to prevent absenteeism. However, it was noted that due to the economic vulnerabilities typical of arid and semi-arid regions, timely fee payment becomes a significant challenge during dry seasons. Additionally, 14 PA chairpersons (77.8%) agreed that parents support motivational programs aimed at improving the performance of low achievers, while 12 respondents (66.7%) noted that some parents voluntarily visit the school to monitor their children's academic progress.

Summary of Discussion and Interpretation

The study reveals that teachers, BoM members, and PA chairpersons generally hold moderately positive perceptions of parental involvement, especially in areas of school participation and academic support for struggling learners. Teachers acknowledged parental contributions to student performance and teacher morale, affirming existing literature that highlights parental engagement as a critical factor in educational outcomes (Mphale & Mhluli, 2015; Houtenville & Conway, 2008). However, they also pointed to gaps in proactive parental action and expectations, often shaped by socioeconomic challenges and limited parental education, echoing Jeynes (2012).

BoM members demonstrated high appreciation for parents' support, particularly in educational programs, but noted recurring challenges such as delayed fee payments during economic hardship. This underscores the need for context-sensitive strategies, such as flexible fee structures or community-based safety nets, especially in arid and semi-arid regions. Importantly, BoM members' proactive leadership and competence were seen as influential in mobilizing parental engagement, aligning with Ngugi and Mumiukha (2016) on the role of governance in enhancing school-community collaboration.

PA chairpersons expressed generally positive views on parental concern, especially towards low-performing students, but similarly noted economic barriers to full involvement. Their active leadership emerged as a catalyst for encouraging broader parental participation and advocacy, supporting Mutua and Thinguri's (2016) findings on the importance of Parents' Associations in fostering school-home linkages.

When synthesized with broader literature, the findings align with Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres, highlighting the value of school-family-community synergy. Yet, the study also reflects enduring tensions—such as one-way communication, limited cognitive involvement from parents, and the cultural expectation of adolescent autonomy in education—highlighted by Hornby & Lafaele (2011), Oketch & Rolleston (2007), and Desforges & Abouchaar (2003).

Ultimately, while the study underscores growing awareness of the importance of parental roles, it calls for targeted strategies, leadership empowerment, and responsive policies to address participation gaps and ensure sustained, meaningful engagement—particularly for vulnerable learners.

Conclusion

This study underscores a growing consensus among teachers, Boards of Management (BoM), and Parents' Association (PA) chairpersons that parental involvement plays a vital role in supporting student achievement and school effectiveness, especially for learners at risk of underperforming. While there is broad appreciation for parental contributions—particularly in academic support and participation in school programs—persistent socioeconomic barriers, passive engagement, and cultural assumptions about adolescent self-management continue to limit deeper and sustained parental involvement.

The findings affirm that effective leadership from BoM and PA representatives can catalyze broader parental engagement, especially when such leaders are informed, motivated, and inclusive. However, parental roles often remain narrowly defined by financial obligations, with limited emphasis on academic or cognitive engagement—reflecting a need to reframe and support parental involvement as a shared, multidimensional responsibility. To truly realize the promise of parental participation, schools must foster two-way communication, redefine parental roles beyond fee payment, and accommodate the diverse realities of families, particularly in resource-constrained settings.

Actionable Recommendations

1. **Establish Parental Education Programs:** Schools, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and local community organizations, should provide regular sessions to sensitize parents—especially those who are illiterate or semi-literate—on how to support their children's education both at school and at home.
2. **Reinforce Accountability Structures:** Schools should implement follow-up mechanisms that hold parents accountable for participating in academic clinics, reviewing report cards, and attending meetings, with a focus on parents of low achievers.

3. **Promote Context-Sensitive Communication Channels:** Use flexible and localized means such as home visits, vernacular radio announcements, or SMS-based academic updates to reach parents who may not attend physical meetings due to work or distance.
4. **Review the Ban on Remedial Charges:** The Ministry of Education should re-examine blanket bans on remedial levies. Instead, they should establish a regulatory framework that permits targeted, transparent support initiatives for academically struggling learners, especially in under-resourced schools.
5. **Strengthen Home-School Collaboration Models:** Schools should develop structured platforms such as Parent Academic Support Committees for Low Achievers to co-create solutions for learners' academic challenges.

Limitations of the Study

The study had three key limitations. First, contextual boundaries: It was limited to public secondary schools in selected counties, which may not accurately represent practices or experiences in private schools or other regions. Second, social desirability bias: Some principals may have described idealized forms of parental involvement to align with perceived expectations of the researchers. Finally, lack of student and parent perspectives: The study primarily relied on principals' viewpoints; incorporating voices of students and parents could have provided a more holistic understanding of parental engagement dynamics.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare **no conflict of interest** in the conduct, analysis, or reporting of this study. All data were collected ethically and with informed consent from participants, and the analysis was conducted independently without external influence or sponsorship.

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