

# **An Examination of Effect of Parental Involvement in Child Education, on Pupil Academic Performance at Primary Schools in Kiambu County, Kenya**

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## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this research was to examine how parental involvement in pupil education influenced their academic achievement. The study was carried out in Ruiru Sub-County of Kiambu Kenya. A total of eight schools were sampled, 3 rural and 5 urban using stratified sampling. The sample size comprised of 124 respondents, including 48 teachers and 76 pupils. A pilot study was done in two schools on a sample of 12 teachers and 17 pupils to pre-test the research instruments. A descriptive research design was adopted in which questionnaire and document analyses were used for data collection and management. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-17.0) facilitated the analysis of data. The results were presented in the form of frequency tables and graphs. The study found that parental involvement in children education had an influence on how they perform in school. The study further revealed that gifts constituted the highest form of incentives that majority of parents gave to their children in recognition of good performance. The study concluded that parents were the most important stakeholders in children's education, apart from the teacher and schools could achieve better performance by capitalizing on this support. The study recommended that parents take a more active role in their children's education especially at the primary level. Moreover, the government, through the Ministry of Education (MoE), should develop policies that encourage the development of school-family-community partnerships as an essential component of academic achievement of pupils.

**Keywords:** Parental Involvement; Child Education; Pupil Academic Performance; Primary Schools

## **1. Introduction**

The role of parental involvement in the education of children has become a central issue in educational policy and research. It is stimulated by concerns of how to improve student achievement and reduce educational inequities; parental involvement and family-school partnerships are considered among the most successful educational strategies (Catsambis & Garland, 1997).

Over the years, research has demonstrated that parent/family involvement significantly contributes in a variety of ways, to improved student outcomes related to learning and school success (Drake, 2000). These findings, as Chan and Koo (2010) indicate, have remained fairly consistent despite the fact that families have undergone significant changes during that time. Schools too, operate in very different times than those of a decade or two ago. Moreover, many researchers have documented the significance of parent/family

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involvement in children homework (Lindsay & Nye, 2000). The nature of that involvement, however, determines the value of the assistance. The goal of this study was to investigate whether pupils' achievement in school is related to parental involvement.

In Kenya, a number of studies have investigated the relationship between parental involvement and home environment. A study by Omenge and Nasongo, (2010) looked at the effect of socialization with regard to gender roles on students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Kisii Central District, Kenya. Both studies indicated parental involvement as an important factor in student academic achievement.

Similarly, a recent survey by the African Population and Health Research Center, (2010) based upon classroom observation study in 72 schools in Kenya turned empirical evidence that suggested that constant parent and teacher interactions improve academic achievement of children. The policy document (APHRC, 2010) emphasizes a need for school reform policies aimed at increasing parental involvement in the education of their children. The aim of Kenya Vision 2030 for education is "to have a globally competitive quality education, training and research for sustainable development; but as of yet the importance of parental involvement has not been fully affirmed.

In Kenya, every school is expected to have a Parents and Teachers Associations (PTA). This is a unique avenue for parents to be involved in school affairs including close interaction with teachers and offering support as needed. Although there are Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs), the role of parents is often overlooked in national discussions and policies about raising pupil achievement. This is the context which informed this study among primary school pupils in Kiambu County, Kenya.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Parental Verbal Response and Academic Achievement**

Meenakshi, (2006) investigated the effect of parental behaviour on student academic and academic performance in India. The study studied 500 high school students spread equally from each gender. Results revealed that parental acceptance and encouragement scores were positively related to child academic performance. Parents who were perceived as being more acceptant and using less restrictive and hostile psychological control, tended to have adolescents with higher academic success and competence. The study was limited since it focused on high school students only.

In Kenya, Muola, (2010) investigated the relationship between academic achievement and home environment among standard eight pupils. The study used the *ex-post facto* correlational method to determine whether there was a relationship between home environment and academic achievement of standard eight pupils selected from urban and rural areas of Machakos district. The study was conducted on 235 standard eight Kenyan pupils from six urban and rural primary schools randomly selected from Machakos District. Their age ranged between 13 to 17 years. Two questionnaires, the simple profile (SP) and home environment questionnaire were used for gathering information on pupils' level of academic performance and home environment. Stratified and random sampling techniques were used for the purpose of arriving at a representative sample of respondents for the study.

The study indicated that pupils' academic performance was to some extent dependent on the nature of their home environment. Parental attention, encouragement, stimulation and support in children's schoolwork significantly improved their academic achievement. The study recommended that parents need to be aware of the importance of their role in their children's academic achievement so that they could provide the necessary facilities for self-study of at home. Similarly, teachers, educationists and leaders should try to create awareness in parents on the importance of home environment to academic achievement which could improve children's academic performance.

### **Parents Involvement in Pupils' Schoolwork**

Teacher-parent relationships do not occur in isolation, but in community and cultural contexts. Involvement in school sometimes varies across ethnic or cultural backgrounds as well. According to La Paro

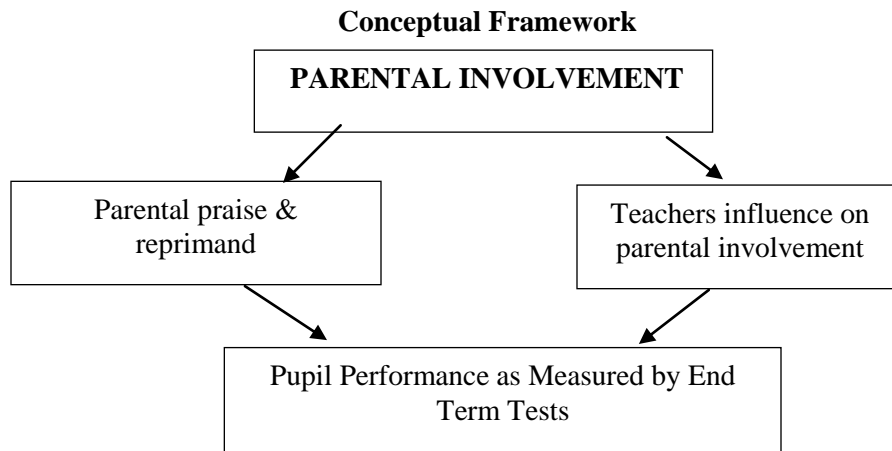
(2003), teachers can do simple things like asking a child about school, home environment or plan for parent-teacher meeting. A study was done in Ghana entitled; parental involvement in home work for children's academic success in Cape Coast Municipality (Dampson, Kwaku and Mensah, 2010). The target population for this study comprised all parents, pupils, teachers, and head teachers in the Cape Coast Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. A total of one hundred eighty pupils, one hundred eighty parents and one thirty teachers were targeted for the study. The sample for this study was limited to eight schools out of the over fifty schools in the Cape Coast municipality. Eighty eight pupils and thirty two teachers were randomly selected to participate in the study. Thirty teachers and parents were also interviewed to probe further on issues relating to their involvement in their children's homework.

The study indicated that continuous and consistent parent/teacher involvement in basic school shielded and protected children from the negative influences of poverty, lateness and absenteeism and could be one approach of reducing achievement gap between pupils. The study also found out that parents who were involved in their children education at home attended conferences, P.T.A meetings, sought to meet with their children's teachers and their children experienced greater educational success more often than their peers whose parents were not involved in their children's education. The results of the research were also consistent with the views expressed by La Paro, (2003) that parental involvement could have either a positive or negative impact on the value of homework.

### Parental Involvement Strategies in Schools

Another study by Smith and Wohlstetter, (2009) in California examined parental involvement strategies in urban charter schools. The study also assessed whether traditional models of involvement fit the urban charter context or whether a new paradigm has emerged. Epstein's typology of parent involvement in schools was used as the framework for the study. The final study sample included 12 urban charter schools in 6 States. Questionnaires and interview schedules were the main instruments for data collection. The study targeted school leaders as the main respondents. The study findings revealed the emergence of a new paradigm in parent involvement.

While the study schools differed in school size, parent education level, and student ethnicity, these factors did not appear to influence the different strategies that schools employed. Rather, a mission of parent involvement and dedication to reaching parents not typically involved in education in traditional public schools took precedence. Moreover, results indicated that parent involvement in the study schools often was linked to increasing parent's self-efficacy. In some cases, training was provided to help parents become comfortable with school involvement. While this study provides a starting point to understanding parent involvement practices in urban charter schools, several questions remain. The study reported here utilized interviews of school leaders, but did not include data from any parents, students, or teachers.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Frameworks on Academic Achievement**

**Source: Researcher, (2011)**

### **Objective of the Study**

The study had the following objective:

To examine the effect of parental involvement in child education, on pupil academic performance at primary schools in Kiambu Kenya

### **Research Question**

The following question was formulated for the study;

What is the effect of parental involvement in child education, on pupil academic performance at primary schools in Kiambu Kenya?

### **3. Methodology**

The study was a qualitative study that used descriptive survey design. This was a non- experimental descriptive research method, which helped the researcher collect data showing how parents contributed to pupils' school work, a factor which was not directly observed. The description of qualitative information described the various patterns and categories of responses related to teachers influence on the child to have parents participate in school homework. The study also described the role of verbal reward and how it affected parental involvement in their children's homework. The dependent variable for this study was academic performance, while the independent variable was parental involvement. The location of the study was Ruiru Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. Ruiru was chosen because of the diversity of the population and its metropolitan nature. The study mainly focused on public schools because they are built and maintained by the members of public with partnership with the government; hence, their keenness on improvement of pupil academic performance.

The target population for the study comprised of 30 public schools with a total enrolment of 16214 pupils; 8159 boys and 8052 girls. Respondents comprised of class seven teachers and pupils. The total number of class seven pupils in the selected schools was 809, (431 boys and 378 girls). Stratified sampling technique was used for categorizing the schools into rural and urban. The sample estimates of the study were then obtained by combining information from each stratum. There were 29 schools out of which 18 were urban with a population of 1181 and 11 rural with 1168 girls.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda, (1999), 10% study population is sufficient for survey research. This assumption was used in the selection of the sample of the study. A sample of 124 respondents was finally arrived at comprising of; 76 pupils (40 boys and 36 girls) and 48 teachers (six from each school). All class seven teachers were selected using purposive sampling technique. Teachers were chosen because they were knowledgeable about the parental involvement in pupil's homework. The main research instruments used in the study were researcher-designed questionnaires on parental involvement. There were two questionnaires; one for teachers and the other for the pupils. Questionnaires were useful instrument of collecting primary data since the respondents could read and then give responses to each item (Orodho, 2004).

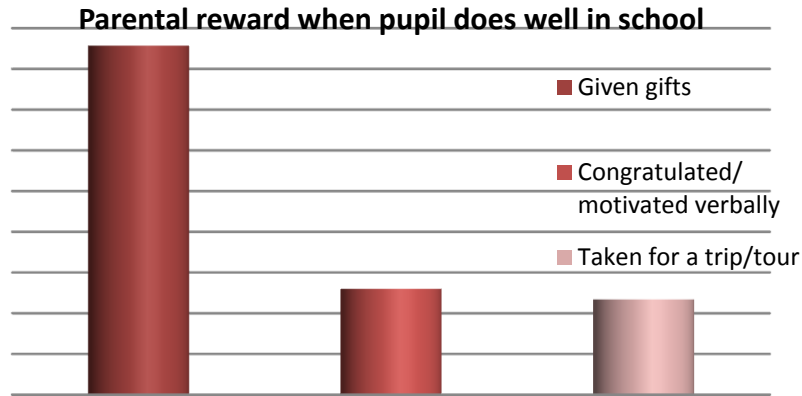
To determine reliability of the research instruments, the questionnaires were piloted in two primary schools which were not part of the sampled schools. However, they had similar characteristic with the schools where the main research was conducted. One school was from urban stratum, while the other was from rural one.

Data collected from the field were categorized manually using excel computer programme according to the questionnaire items, largely using frequency distribution tables and percentages. Simple descriptive statistics such as percentages were used. The coded data was then transferred to a computer sheet and was processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0. SPSS is able to handle large amounts of data; time saving and also quite efficient. Frequency tables, bar graphs and pie charts were used

for analysis of data with quantitative character. The responses to open ended items (qualitative data) in form of phrases and words were then organized, analyzed and reported through descriptive narratives.

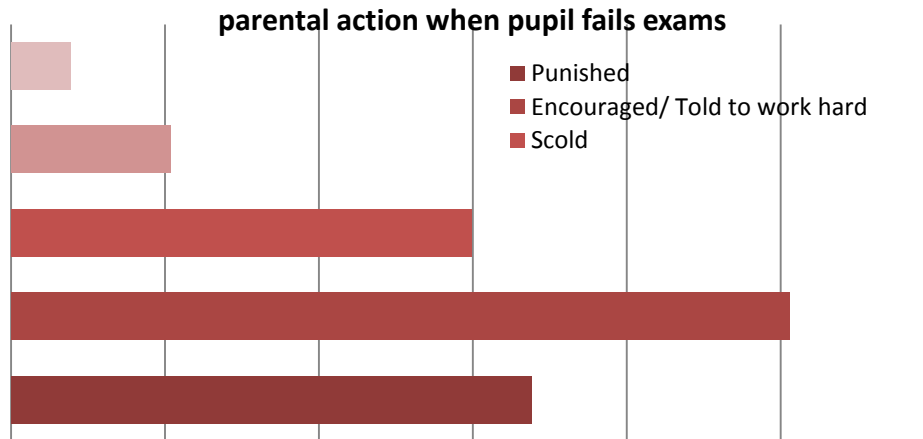
**4. Results and Discussion**

The study sought to examine the effect of parental involvement in child education, on pupil academic performance at primary schools in Kiambu Kenya. It found out that gifts (85.7%) constituted the highest form of incentive that majority of parents gave to their children in recognition of good performances followed by congratulatory messages (26.0%). Nonetheless, 23.4 % reported being taken for a trip as a reward for better performance as indicated in figure 2.



**Figure 2: Parental Rewards to Good Performance of their Children**

The researcher sought to know what the parents did when children failed in school academic performance. Based on the actions that parents take when their children perform poorly, the study found that, on average, most parents encourage their children to work hard where their performances is weak, indicated by 50.6 %. However, punishment (33.8%) was a major way that the parents employed when their children fail to perform to their expectations. Interestingly, a significant number (29.9%) reported that parents scold at them when they performed below average. Only 10.4% and 3.9% reported that their parents provided them with more revision books and tuition respectively whenever they performed poorly as shown in figure 3 below.



**Figure 3: Parental Response to Pupil Poor Performance**

## **5. Conclusion**

The study found out that parents in Kiambu Kenya mostly used gifts to motivate their children perform better academically in school. This gifts ranged from verbal praise and encouragement, trips and outings to material rewards. Some parents it was reported, also resulted to punishing and reprimanding their children when they failed to do well in school work. Other parents resorted to supporting their children by buying supplementary books for them in order to make them study more and thus perform better academically in school.

## **6. Recommendations**

The study made the following recommendations that parents needed to take a more active role in their children's education especially at the primary level. They should give their pupils guidelines and rules to help them be focused in school work by always appreciating the value of education early enough in their lives. The Ministry of Education (MoE), should also develop policies that encourage the development of school-family-community partnerships as an essential component of academic achievement in order to enhance teacher-parent-pupil relationships to boost academic achievement essential for meeting the 2030 Vision target in education. Teachers should also come up with comprehensive measures that seek to involve all families in a position to effectively handle academic performance-related issues in their children that call for remedial assistance and counselling.

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