



# An assessment of the influence of parents' role in monitoring learning activities on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

*The study sought to establish the influence of parents' role in monitoring learning activities on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county, Kenya. It adopted a descriptive survey research design. It targeted all (27) public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county, all (27) school heads, all (27) parents' association chairpersons, all (339) teachers and all (2,663) form three students. The study employed a census technique to include all schools; 24 in the main study and 3 in the pilot study. All the 24 school heads as well as all the 24 parents' association chairpersons of the participating schools were included in the study. It sampled 30.0% of teachers that gave 102 teachers. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select participating teachers where a proportionate weighted sample was identified per school using proportional allocation method. Then, simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the participating teachers in each school. Yamene (1967) formula was used to give a sample of 348 students. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to identify and select weighted random samples per school. In total, 498 respondents participated in the study. Data collection instruments included questionnaires for school heads, teachers, students and an interview guide for parents' association chairpersons. Validity of the research instruments was ascertained through expert judgment and piloting. Reliability was achieved through test re-test method where the instruments were piloted in schools at a time interval of two weeks and the two results were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation method. Data were entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26.0) for analysis. Further, inferential analysis was employed that involved correlational analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis was accepted or rejected at a 0.01 level of significance. Results establishes: a weak positive correlation between parents' role in monitoring learning activities and students' academic performance which was statistically significant ( $R=.451$ ;  $p=0.035$ ). Recommendations are put forth such as: the Ministry of Education to establish more adult education centers; parents to be more involved in their children education and create a supportive home learning environment; and government to initiate educative and enlightenment programs on how to improve and sustain intact parenthood.*

**Key words:** *Monitoring learning, Learning activities, Academic Performance*

## Introduction

Narad and Abdullah (2016) define academic performance as acquired knowledge that is measured through marks by a teacher and/or a set of educational goals which are assessed through examinations. Academic performance is influenced by many factors among them being parental role in monitoring learning activities which is of interest to this study.

Parents play a crucial role in the academic success of their children. In support of this line of argument, Naite (2021) stated that parents exert a significant influence on the performance of their children because of the authority and skills they have to shape and develop their children into motivated, inspired, and lenient people. Parents can influence the academic performance of their children by investing their time and money (Bengesai & Nzimande, 2020). For instance, previous research has shown that parental level of monitoring the academic activities is an important predictor variable for academic success (Naite, 2021). Thus, this study investigated how this variable and its consequence to students' academic performance.

Lara and Saracosti (2019) in their study still done in Chile reported a positive and significant correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement. The results of this study confirm that parents can significantly and positively influence the academic performance of their children when they partner with schools to monitor their children learning activities.

The nexus between parental influence and students' academic performance has motivated research in Bhutan. On this note, a study done in Bhutan by Gurung, Dorji, and Nepal (2021) blames low performance on the majority of the Bhutanese students coming from illiterate family backgrounds. This study found that parents who had a low level of education lacked the required knowledge and skills to guide and support their children's educational programs beyond the classroom situation. As a consequence, the study established that parents showed a low level of involvement in supporting their children's academic activities. It can be seen from the findings of this study that parent level of monitoring the academic activities of their children exerts a significant positive influence on academic performance. Thus, there was a need to conduct a similar study in Kenya to understand how the level of monitoring learning activities could be impacting academic performance.

The importance of the parental role in monitoring learning activities has been underscored by the Epstein Framework of six types of parental involvement (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2019). Epstein observes that schools should partner with parents to create family-like schools where each child feels special and included. She also points out that parents should partner with schools to be helped to create school-like families where the importance of school, homework, and other activities is reinforced. Thus, parents can play a role in monitoring children's learning activities at home and in school. Naite (2021) stated that parents who play an active role in their children's education impact positively their children's lives, including their development, behaviour, motivation, and academic performance. In concurrence, a study done in public day secondary schools in Meru County by Thuba (2018) on the effect of parental involvement on the quality of education showed that parental involvement was statistically and significantly correlated with quality education. There was a need therefore to conduct research in public secondary schools in the Kangundo sub-county to determine the extent to which parental role in monitoring learning activities influences students' academic performance.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on Epstein (1995) Framework of six types of parental involvement model developed from Epstein's theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence. Epstein developed a model that conceptualizes six major types of parental involvement that are common in school – home (parent) partnerships across home, school and community settings (Epstein, 1995; Epstein, 2011; Epstein et al., 2019). Epstein opines that schools should partner with parents to create family-like schools where each child feels special and included. She also points out that parents should partner with schools to be helped to create school-like families where the importance of school, homework and other activities is reinforced. Epstein identifies six types of parental involvement which include: Parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, and decision making and collaborating with community. The framework has been revised to give specific practices that schools can do to help parents to increase each of the six types of involvement (Epstein, 1995; Epstein, 2011; Epstein et al., 2019).

According to Epstein (1995), parenting addresses the responsibilities that parents have to create a supportive home learning environment. Under this obligation, parents are supposed to provide a safe and healthy home environment, adopt positive parenting practices, and establish conditions that support learning at home. Epstein stipulates that schools should offer parents support on how they can create a supportive home learning environment. Applying this model, principals in Kenya public schools can, for instance, discharge this important duty by holding parents' meetings and seminars to train and educate parents on how can create a positive home learning environment. By

doing that, schools will help parents to create family like schools where the importance of education is reinforced (Epstein et al., 2019).

### Literature Review

Students spend a smaller portion of their life in school and a larger portion at home with their parents (Ates, 2021). Thus, students' learning occurs partly at home and in school. For this reason, Epstein (1995) in her theory highlights the need for schools to involve parents in building beneficial school–family partnerships. In this regard, Epstein encourages schools to partner with parents to create schools like families where each child feels special and included (Epstein et al., 2019). Similarly, Epstein argues that parents should partner with schools to be helped to create school-like families where the importance of school, homework, and other activities is reinforced. Epping (2018) emphasizes that the involvement of parents in educational practices across the school and home settings is required to strengthen school-family partnerships. From the foregoing, parental involvement emerges as a critical ingredient of school–family partnerships.

Asiimwe and Magunda (2017) define parental involvement as the degree to which a parent is committed to his or her role as a parent in fostering of optimal child development including academic achievement. LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling (2011) define parental involvement as the investment of parents or guardians in learning processes. To El Nokali, Bachman and Votruba-Drzal (2010), parental involvement is the set of behaviors that parents display at school and home to support the education of the child. Although various definitions for parental involvement exist, it is clear that most of these definitions emphasize the important role parents play in educational processes.

Moreover, parental involvement is often used interchangeably with other terms such as school-family partnerships and parent-teacher relationships (Ferland, 2011). The reason for the different definitions of parental involvement is that researchers focus on different features of parental involvement (Ates, 2021). Related to this, Gyamfi and Pobbi (2016) assert that one key aspect of parental involvement is the parent's ability to monitor the child's school and home learning activities. In this study, parental involvement was studied as a parental role in monitoring students' learning activities. Throughout this study, the parental role in monitoring learning activities is interchangeably used with parental involvement and the two constructs refer to the parent's role in attending to a child's school and home activities that support learning processes.

Parental role in monitoring children's learning activities can be done at home and in school. Altschul (2012) agrees with Kibaara and Ndirandu (2014) that home based parental monitoring of learning activities includes: monitoring and supervising homework; helping students with homework; providing emotional support; expressing high expectations; encouraging school success; and providing a conducive environment for learning. On the other hand, school-based parental monitoring includes volunteering at school, participating in school events and school organizations, and communicating with teachers and school staff (Chowa, Masa & Tucker, 2013). This study was tailored to ascertain how parental monitoring of learning activities influences students' academic performance.

Parental role in monitoring learning activities is linked to improved students' academic outcomes (Johnson & Hull, 2014; Zhang, 2018). In addition to increasing students' academic success, the parental role in monitoring learning activities has also been shown to influence students' social functioning and behavior adjustment (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2007). These empirical claims are further supported by Gyamfi and Pobbi (2016) when they stated that increased parental involvement results in better school attendance, lower rates of suspension, decreased use of drugs and alcohol and fewer instances of violent behavior. To sum it up, Anthony-Newman (2019) points out that parental involvement enhances cognitive growth as well as positive behavior adjustment.

Furthermore, it has been found that increased quality parent-school interactions increase students' homework completion rates, improve language skills, and reduce absenteeism and hence lead to improved academic performance (Gonida & Cortin, 2014; Dumont, Trautwein, Nagy & Nagengast, 2014; Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2016). Thus, students succeed when the home and school learning environments interact in productive ways (Epstein, 2011). Despite these laudable benefits arising from parent-school partnerships, a study had not been

conducted in public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county to establish the contribution of parents' role in monitoring learning activities on students' academic performance and hence there was a need for the present study.

Using a meta-analysis approach, Ates (2021) completed an international study that investigated the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement. The study involved 53 studies that were published between 2004 and 2020. The study established that parental involvement and academic achievement were positively and moderately correlated variables. The study also investigated the effect size of the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement by school level, that is, primary, middle and secondary. Additionally, it was established that the average size effect remained moderate for all school levels. This finding suggests that parental involvement is essential in primary, middle and secondary schools. Whereas the reviewed study was implemented through the analysis of secondary in a meta-analysis approach, the present study collected primary data through a survey approach.

Flores et al (2021) explored the role of parents in monitoring students' academic performance in the new learning modality of their children by conducting a study in the Philippines that involved 27 students. The study adopted a descriptive correlational research design and questionnaires to collect data. The study results established a weak correlation (0.2391) between parents' role in monitoring learning activities and students' academic activities. Perhaps, the weak coefficient could imply that the academic performance of students was influenced by other factors other than the parental role in monitoring learning students. However, the validity of the results may have been affected by the smaller sample of students. Thus, this study was different in that it included a larger sample of 498 respondents and was conducted in Kenya where contextual factors might have been different from the Philippines.

In a study done in Ghana, Gyamfi and Pobbi (2016) investigated parental monitoring and child performance. The study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed design. The study involved 810 students who were selected through a simple random sampling technique. A questionnaire was used to gather primary data. The study findings established that parental monitoring of all the activities investigated was low. The study found that parents were unable to monitor their children because of long working hours, illiteracy and negligence. This reviewed study is different from the current in that it adopted a sequential explanatory mixed design whereas the present employed a descriptive research design. This study was implemented in a foreign context while the current study was done locally. In addition, this study failed to investigate how the variables were related by undertaking inferential analysis as it was done in the current study.

By including a random sample of 168 respondents, Omary, Salum and Mapunda (2021) investigated parental involvement and children's education in selected secondary schools in Tanzania. The study findings indicated that parental involvement was low. On factors leading to low parental involvement, the responsible factors were: parents lacked knowledge on how they could get involved in their children's education; many parents lacked the skills on how to get involved; parents were not aware whether they had a role to play at home and school; and parents lacked time and resources such as money. The results suggest that parental monitoring can be mediated by other factors such as level of income, education and nature of family which were still of interest to this study. This study did not undertake inferential statistics to test the relationship between variables as was done in the present study.

By employing a mixed methods sequential explanatory research design, Asiimwe and Magunda (2017) investigated whether parents were enablers of academic achievement in secondary schools in Uganda. The study included 105 students drawn from 6 senior secondary schools. The study results established a moderate and statistically significant relationship between parents as enablers of academic achievement and academic achievement. This study is similar to the present study in that they were both implemented at the secondary school level. However, the reviewed study was done in a foreign context while the current study was conducted in Kenya. Further, the reviewed study employed a mixed method sequential explanatory research design while the present study adopted a descriptive survey research design.

In Kenya, Echaune, Ndiku and Sang (2015) stated that the role of parents in improving educational outcomes has been given prominence by successive governments. Schools are required by the Ministry of Education to have in

place Parents' Teachers Associations. Further, the Basic Education Act of Kenya (2013) requires school Boards of Management (BOM) to assess school needs with the full participation of parents. Schools also implement programs such as academic days where parents, students and teachers interact to discuss the academic issues of the students and thus raise the level of involvement.

Makhoka, Raburu and Onditi (2018) examined the effects of parental monitoring on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Busia Sub-County of Kenya. They included 7 schools, 58 teachers, 172 students, 129 parents, and 23 principals through adopting an ex-post-facto design. The study results established a weak positive correlation (0.488) between parental monitoring and students' academic performance. The findings of this study suggest that an increase in parental monitoring can increase the academic performance of students. However, this study was conducted in Busia Sub-county which is a completely different geographical context while the present study was conducted in Kangundo Sub-county. Furthermore, the present study employed a descriptive survey research design while the reviewed study adopted an ex-post-facto research design.

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. To Cooper and Schindler (2013), this design involves collecting data to answer questions on current status of subjects of the study. The independent variable of this study was parents' role in monitoring learning activities while the independent variable of the study was students' academic performance. Therefore, this research design helped the researcher to collect data on the parental income (the independent variables) to describe how it influenced the academic performance of students in Kagundo Sub-county public secondary schools.

### Participants

According to the Kangundo Education Office (2020), there are 27 public secondary schools, 2,663 form three students, 339 teachers and 27 Parent Association Chairpersons (PAC) in Kangundo Sub-county. This study targeted all 27 school heads, all 339 teachers, all 2,663 form three students and all the 27 PAC in Kangundo Sub-county. It included form threes only because they were considered to have considerable experience regarding their school life. It was also anticipated that they would be free compared to their seniors in form four who were expected to be busy preparing for their KCSE examination.

A census technique was employed to include all the 27 schools although 3 were used to pilot the study instruments. The entire population of schools was 27, and therefore below 30. Thus, a census method was justified. With the exclusion of 3 pilot schools, the main study involved 24 schools where all the 24 school heads as well as all the 24 PAC of the participating schools were included in the study. Out of the 339 teachers, the study included a sample of 102 teachers representing 30% of teachers' population recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). Stratified random sampling technique was employed to identify the 102 teachers. Because teachers' population was not the same in each school, the 24 participating schools formed the strata from where weighted random samples were drawn. Thereafter, the desired sample of 102 teachers was drawn from each school using proportional allocation method as follows:

$$\text{Sample per school (S)} = \frac{n}{N} \times 102$$

N

Where S is sample per school, n is teachers' population in a school, and N Sub-county teachers' population.

After establishing the required sample per school (S), simple random sampling technique was employed to select the participating teachers. Names of all the teachers in each school were written on pieces of paper, folded and shuffled in a cup. Then, the required number of folded pieces was selected to give the names of the participating teachers. As for students, the study employed Yamene (1967) formula to determine the appropriate sample for students as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad n = \frac{2,663}{1 + 2,663(0.05)^2}$$

$$= 347.7 \approx 348 \text{ students}$$

Where  $n$  is sub-county sample size,  $N$  is sub-county

Population and  $e$  is sample error at 95% confidence level.

Because students' population was not the same in all the 24 participating schools, the study used stratified random sampling technique to select the 348 students proportionally according to their school's populations relative to the overall Sub-county population. Thus, proportional allocation method was used to allocate the 348 students per school as shown as shown:

$$\text{Sample per school} = \frac{m}{2,663} \times 348$$

Where  $m$  is the form three students' population in each school

After determining the sample per school, simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants in each school. Like it was done with teachers, all the names of form three students were written on pieces of paper and folded. The folded pieces were put in a bowl and shuffled. The required number of pieces was drawn from the bowl to give the actual names of the students.

In mixed gender schools, an equal number of boys and girls were chosen. To achieve this, the population was first stratified into boys' strata and girls' strata. Then, all the names of boys were written on pieces of paper, folded, put in a cup and shuffled. The required number of pieces was chosen to give the actual names of the boys. Similarly, all the names of the girls were written on pieces of paper, folded and then shuffled in a cup. The required number was drawn to give the names of the participating students.

**Table 1: Sample Size**

Description	Population(N)	Sample Size (n)
School Heads	27	24
Parents' Association Chairpersons	27	24
Teachers	339	102
Students	2,663	348
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,056</b>	<b>498</b>

**Source: Kangundo Sub-County Education Office, 2022 Measures**

The study used 3 sets of questionnaires and an interview guide to collect data. Creswell (2014) opines that a questionnaire can be designed to have both closed ended and open ended questions. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), questionnaires are preferred because they save time and uphold respondents' confidentiality. Due to the advantages questionnaires have, they were preferred in this study.

### Data Analysis

Data was coded and captured through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer program (version 26.0) for analysis. Data that were to be correlated were transformed to create new variables, academic performance (A), and parents' role in monitoring learning activities (E). The intention was run Pearson's Correlation. Spearman rank order correlation was performed at a 0.05 level of significance.

## Ethical Considerations

Before the study, the researcher wrote a letter to the Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS) at the South Eastern Kenya University to have the proposal reviewed. The researcher was issued with an introduction letter that was used to apply for research license at the National Commission for Science and Technology Innovation (NACOSTI) online portal. After a few days, the researcher was issued with a research license to proceed with the study. While attaching the license, the researcher wrote letters to Kangundo Deputy County Commissioner and Kangundo Sub-county Director of Education seeking permission to collect data in Kangundo public secondary schools. At the beginning, the purpose of the study was disclosed to the study participants verbally and it was also printed at the introduction part of the instruments. Voluntary participation was sought from the study participants. Respondents were informed that they had a right to choose to participate or not to participate. They were also informed that their participation or non-participation would not affect them in any way. Respondents were not required to indicate their names, the names of their schools, their phone numbers or anything that could identify.

## Research Results

The objective of the study sought to determine the influence of parents' role in monitoring learning activities on students' academic performance. To achieve this statistical goal, a null hypothesis was formulated as follows: "*H<sub>03</sub>: There is no statistically significant influence between parents' role in monitoring learning activities and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county.*"

In order to test this hypothesis, a Spearman's order correlation was performed at 95% confidence level. The results are presented in Table 2

**Table 2: Correlation between Parents' Level of Monitoring Learning Activities and Academic Performance**

		Academic Performance	Monitoring of learning activities
Spearman's rho	Academic Performance	Coefficient 1.000	.451*
		Sig. (2-tailed) .	.035
		N 22	22
Learning Activities	Monitoring	Coefficient .451*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed) .031	.
		N 22	22

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Results obtained in Table 2 show that there was a weak positive correlation between parents' role in monitoring learning activities and students' academic performance which was statistically significant ( $R=.451$ ;  $p=0.035$ ). The results imply that 45.1% of students' academic performance variability could be explained by parents' level of monitoring learning activities.

On the other hand, the hypothesis was accepted when the level of significance was larger than 0.05. In the correlation model, the level of significance was 0.035 which was lower than the critical value of 0.05.

Using the criteria set, the null hypothesis that stated, "*There is no statistically significant influence between parents' role in monitoring learning activities and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county.*" was rejected at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus, it was inferred that parents' role in monitoring learning activities has a statistically significant influence on students' academic performance.

## Discussion

Inferential results obtained show that there was a weak positive correlation between parents' role in monitoring learning activities and students' academic performance that was statistically significant ( $R=.451$ ;  $p=0.035$ ). The results suggest that 45.1% of students' academic performance variability could be explained by parents' level of monitoring learning activities. The study findings are consistent with an international meta-analysis study done by Ates (2021) that concluded that parental involvement influences academic performance positively irrespective of the geographical context. The results are consistent with a study done by Flores et al (2021) in the Philippines which established a weak correlation between parents' role in monitoring learning and students' academic activities.

The present study established that parental monitoring was low. The finding is consistent with a study done in Ghana by Gyamfi and Pobbi (2016) which established that parental monitoring of all the activities investigated was low. The finding is consistent with a study done in Tanzania by Omary, Salum, and Mapunda (2021) which still established that parental involvement was low. The finding that the parental level of monitoring learning activities is positively correlated with academic performance is supported by a study done in Kenya by Makhoka, Raburu, and Onditi (2018) which established a weak positive correlation between parental monitoring and students' academic performance.

## Recommendations

On parental monitoring of learning activities and students' academic performance, the study recommends to parents to create a supportive home learning environment that involves giving the children space and time to study on their own. The study also recommends parents to be more involved in attending school meetings, monitoring performance trends, discipline management, conducting school to find out how their children are doing, and supervising and monitoring homework, among others. The study further recommends to fathers to fully participate in the educational activities of their children. To schools, principals should use Parent Association (PA) meetings as a medium for creating awareness on how parents can be fully involved in school and home-based learning activities. The Ministry of Education can consider using Epstein's Theory to develop a nationwide Parental Involvement Programme for schools that can be crucial for enhancing school-home partnerships.

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