

Effectiveness of Parental Involvement on Students' Participation in Schooling in Public Secondary Schools in Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

This research investigated how different dimensions of parental engagement influence student involvement in educational activities within Meru County's public secondary schools, examining fee payment patterns, school activity participation, and academic assistance provision. A mixed-methods design combining descriptive and correlational approaches. Using stratified random and purposive sampling, 331 respondents were selected from 1,903 participants, including principals, parent association chairpersons, teachers, and student leaders. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions, analyzed using SPSS version 27.0 and thematic analysis. Merely 26.4% of educators and 34.3% of student representatives verified meaningful parental engagement. Chi-square analysis revealed a significant relationship between parental involvement and student participation ($\chi^2 = 9.362$, $p = 0.002$), with parental involvement explaining 24.5% of the variance in student participation. Qualitative findings revealed reluctant participation often driven by coercion rather than voluntary engagement, with clear socioeconomic disparities between school categories. Despite its statistical significance, parental involvement remains suboptimal in Meru County. Schools should implement comprehensive communication strategies, parent education programs, and collaborative governance frameworks. Policy makers should develop targeted interventions for lower-category schools and create guidelines extending beyond financial contributions to include academic support partnerships.

Keywords: *Parental involvement, student participation, secondary education, Kenya, educational outcomes*

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1. Introduction

Educational systems function as primary drivers of community development and social integration, facilitating universal opportunities for knowledge acquisition and skill development necessary for meaningful civic engagement. Quality education encompasses both academic achievement and personal development through curricular and co-curricular activities, serving as a vital tool for combating disparities and fostering equity as emphasized in Kenya's Vision 2030 framework.

Learner engagement in educational settings encompasses dynamic participation in academic discussions, regular school attendance, and substantive contribution to extracurricular

programs (Balwant, 2018). Research demonstrates that learner participation significantly contributes to development, self-confidence, and improved learning outcomes (Azila-Gbette et al., 2020). This positive association extends to students' overall well-being, influencing educational, behavioral, and career trajectories.

Parental involvement represents a critical sociological intervention that creates supportive environments fostering educational engagement. According to Epstein's framework (2011), parental involvement encompasses six dimensions: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. These dimensions collectively influence children's educational experiences and academic outcomes.

Despite widespread support for parental involvement, implementation challenges persist globally. In sub-Saharan Africa, studies indicate varied levels of parental engagement influenced by socioeconomic factors, cultural contexts, and educational system structures. In Kenya, while policies promote parental involvement through Parent-Teacher Associations and Boards of Management, the effectiveness of such involvement on student participation remains underexplored.

According to the 2017 Kenya Economic Survey, retention rates in class 8 were 78.9% for boys and 77.0% for girls, with transition rates from primary to secondary declining from 81.9% to 81.3% between 2015 and 2016. In Meru County specifically, educational inefficiencies affect student retention and transition, highlighting the need for effective interventions.

1.1 Problem Statement

Secondary educational institutions in Meru County encounter ongoing difficulties regarding insufficient learner engagement levels across both curricular and extracurricular domains, correlating with substandard outcomes in standardized assessments. Despite policy frameworks promoting parental involvement through PTAs and BOMs, the effectiveness of these interventions on student participation remains unclear. The limited empirical evidence on how specific dimensions of parental involvement influence student engagement creates a knowledge gap that hinders the development of targeted intervention strategies.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study sought to:

- i. To establish the effectiveness of payments of levies on student participation in schooling in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.
- ii. To establish the effectiveness of parental participation in School Activities on student participation in schooling in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.
- iii. To find out the effectiveness of parental learner academic support on student participation in schooling in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres (2011) provides the conceptual foundation for understanding parental involvement. This theory suggests that student learning and development are optimized when family, school, and community work collaboratively. The theory identifies six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community, each contributing uniquely to student outcomes.

Complementing this, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model (2005) explains the motivational basis for parental involvement, emphasizing role construction, self-efficacy beliefs, and contextual invitations. These theoretical frameworks guide understanding of how parental involvement mechanisms translate into student participation outcomes.

2.2 Empirical Review

International research consistently demonstrates positive correlations between parental involvement and academic achievement. Castro et al. (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of 37 studies, revealing that parental involvement in children's learning activities showed the strongest correlation with academic performance. Hill et al. (2018) found that collaborative efforts between parents, schools, and communities enhanced academic outcomes, including improved grades, higher attendance rates, and increased participation in advanced programs.

In African contexts, Segoe and Bisschoff (2019) found that South African parents demonstrated high expectations and significant engagement levels, with parenting styles, parent-teacher communication, and home support being critical factors. In Tanzania, Lema (2022) identified limited parental involvement in secondary schools, with parents perceiving school involvement primarily as teachers' and students' responsibility.

Kenyan research revealed mixed patterns. Mutwiri (2015) found that both head teacher leadership and parental involvement significantly improved academic performance in Meru County primary schools. Research by Kibaara and Ndirangu (2014) on the influence of parental support on the academic performance of their children in public secondary schools located in Nyeri County uncovered substantial levels of parental involvement in school activities and supervision of homework. Moreover, most parents expressed a firm conviction in the advantages of their participation for both teachers and their children's educational advancement. However, Kararwa (2019) observed low parental turnout at school meetings in North Imenti sub-county, highlighting implementation challenges despite legislative frameworks supporting parental involvement through the Basic Education Act (2012).

3. Methodology

This investigation utilized an integrated mixed-methods framework incorporating both descriptive and correlational methodologies to analyze the impact of parental engagement on learner participation within Meru County's secondary educational institutions. The target population comprised 1,903 participants from public secondary schools, including principals, Parent Association chairpersons, Constituency Development Fund managers, class teachers, and student leaders. Using Yamane's formula (1967), a sample size of 331 respondents was determined through stratified random sampling for representation across school categories and purposive sampling for key informants. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with principals and Parent Association chairpersons, self-report questionnaires using seven-point Likert scales administered to teachers and student leaders, and focus group discussions with student leaders. Reliability was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.885 for teachers and 0.883 for student leaders, while content validity was established through expert review and pilot testing. Ethical approval was obtained from Chuka University Institutional Review Board, with informed consent from all participants. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 27.0 for descriptive statistics and chi-square tests, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis with 89% inter-rater reliability.

4. Results and Discussion

The study sought to establish the effectiveness of parental involvement on students' participation in schooling in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya. Parental involvement was assessed based on payment of school fees, provision of learning resources, attendance of academic activities such as academic clinics and career days, supervision of homework, fundraising, and managing student discipline. This section presents findings on the objective based on descriptive, inferential, and qualitative findings and a discussion on each.

4.1 Response Rate

The investigation attained a participation rate of 96.7% (319 from 331 targeted respondents), with representation spanning school heads (87%), Parent Association leaders (87%), CDF coordinators (100%), classroom educators (99%), and student representatives (97%). This response rate was deemed more than ideal for the purpose of the study as posited by Mugenda and Mugenda (2009).

Table 1: Response Rate

Respondent	Sample	Responses	Percentage
Principals	15	13	87%
PA chairpersons	15	13	87%
Class teachers	149	147	99%
Student leaders	149	144	97%
CDF fund managers	3	3	100%
Total	331	319	96.7%

4.2 Reliability Results

Internal consistency analysis confirmed acceptable reliability levels for all measurement scales, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70 recommended for social science research.

Table 2: Reliability Results

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Reliability Level
Parental Involvement (Teachers)	0.885	7	High
Parental Involvement (Students)	0.883	7	High
Student Participation	0.891	6	High

4.3 Descriptive and Qualitative Findings per Variable

The extent of parental involvement was assessed using a set of seven Likert-scaled statements. The Cronbach alpha for elements of parental involvement for class teachers was 0.885 while that of student leader was 0.883 making both relatively high and acceptable. Table 3 presents data obtained from class teachers.

Table 3: Parental Involvement (Class Teachers)

Parents in our school are actively involved in;	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
1. Payment of school fees in time	25.2	47.6	4.1	17.7	5.4	100.0
2. Provision of all required learning resources	23.8	47.6	3.4	15.6	9.5	100.0
3. Attendance at academic clinics	27.9	41.5	6.1	13.6	10.9	100.0
4. Attendance at school's career days	38.1	40.8	2.0	10.9	8.2	100.0
5. Supervising student homework /assignments	27.9	41.5	5.4	17.0	8.2	100.0
6. Raising funds for resources such as classrooms, school buses, etc.	25.5	23.1	12.2	32.0	6.2	100.0
7. Helping the school manage students' discipline issues	23.8	44.9	2.0	21.1	8.2	100.0

Data obtained from class teachers show that less than a quarter (23%) indicated that parents are actively involved in the payment of school fees on time. Parental Attendance of academic clinics (24.5%), attendance of school's career days (19.1%), while about a quarter (25.1%) of parents actively provide all required learning resources. Similarly, about a quarter (25%) indicated that parents actively participate in supervising students' homework /assignments. More than a third confirmed that parents actively participate in raising funds for resources such as classrooms and school buses (38.2%), while less than a third (29.3%) indicated that they actively participate in helping the school manage students' discipline issues. Findings therefore show that only a quarter of the sampled class teachers (26.36%) confirmed active levels of parents' involvement in school activities. Table 4 presents views of student leaders on the same research items.

Table 4: Parental Involvement (Student Leaders)

Parents in our school are actively involved in;	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
1. Payment of school fees in time	16.1	42.5	9.2	26.4	5.8	100.0
2. Provision of all required learning resources	14.9	47.1	5.9	21.8	10.3	100.0
3. Attendance at academic clinics	20.7	41.4	6.9	21.8	9.2	100.0
4. Attendance at school's career days	31.0	34.5	8.0	18.5	8.0	100.0
5. Supervising student homework /assignments	26.4	28.7	11.5	20.7	12.7	100.0
6. Raising funds for resources such as classrooms, school buses, etc.	19.5	26.4	4.6	26.4	23.1	100.0
7. Helping the school to manage students' discipline issues	21.8	32.2	10.4	26.4	9.2	100.0

Data obtained from student leaders show that less than a third (32.2%) were of the view that parents are actively involved in the payment of school fees on time, while 31.0% indicated that parents provided all required learning resources. Similarly, 31.0% attended academic clinics, while 26.5% attended the school's career days. Findings also indicated that about a third (33.4%) of the parents actively participated in supervising student homework /assignments. More than a third confirmed that parents actively participate in helping the school to manage students' discipline issues (35.6%), with slightly less than half indicating that parents actively participate in raising funds for resources such as classrooms and school buses (49.5%). Findings therefore show that more than a third of the student leaders sampled (34.33%) confirmed parents' active involvement in school activities, while majority of the leaders felt that parents were not actively involved in enhancing students' participation in schooling. This compares favorably to class teachers' observation that indicated parents' active participation at only 26.36%.

4.4 Inferential Analysis

The study thus sought to assess the effectiveness of parental involvement in facilitating student participation in schooling. Quantitative data obtained on aspects of parental involvement were cross-tabulated against aspects of students' participation. Table 5 presents findings on crosstabulation while Table 6 presents its Chi-square interpretation.

Table 5: Parental Involvement and Students' Participation (Cross Tabulation)

			Parental involvement		
			Low	High	Total
Student participation	Low	f	73	10	83
		%	49.7%	6.8%	56.5%
	High	F	43	21	64
		%	29.3%	14.3%	43.5%
	Total	F	116	31	147
		%	78.9%	21.1%	100.0%

Results from cross tabulation showed that fewer class teachers (43.5%) reported high student participation in schooling, fewer respondents (14.3%) indicated high parental involvement compared to those with a low level of involvement (29.3%). With regard to parental involvement, fewer teachers (21.1%) indicated a high level of involvement compared to those who reported a low level of involvement (78.9%). Table 6 presents an inferential interpretation of this observation.

Table 6: Parental Involvement and Students' Participation (Chi-Square Analysis)

	Value	Df	Ass Sig.	Exact Sig,	CC
Pearson Chi-Square	9.362 ^a	1	0.002		0.245
Continuity Correction	8.156	1	0.004		
Likelihood Ratio	9.374	1	0.002		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.002	
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.299	1	0.002		
N of Valid Cases	147				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 20.52.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Chi square results, $X^2(1) = 9.362$, $p = 0.002$, showed that parental involvement significantly influences student participation in schooling. Contingency Coefficient measure of Association (CC) illustrated that 24.5% of the total variance in student participation could be attributed to parental involvement. Findings, therefore mean that parental involvement is effective in facilitating student participation in schooling.

4.5 Qualitative Findings

The study also sought to establish the perspective of school principals, parents' representatives, and a group of student leaders on the extent of parental involvement in enhancing learner participation in schooling through interviews and focus group discussions. The focus was on various aspects of parental engagement, including fee payment, provision of learning resources, attendance at academic activities like academic clinics and career days, participation in fundraising for school infrastructure, and involvement in managing student discipline issues. The interviewees had a mix of views, some indicating a high extent of parental involvement while others indicated the reverse. Interviewees observed that:

Respondent P1: *"Parental participation is very good in my school. We involve them in parents' meetings to exchange ideas and inform them on school policies and strategies."*

Respondent PAC3: *"The level of parental participation is wanting given that most parents attend to their requests under threat of punishment of their children, or to avoid their children being sent home."*

Respondent FGD04: *"There is low engagement amongst Parents. They have to be coerced to attend parents' meetings."*

Information obtained shows that most of the interviewees observed a low level of parental involvement, some interviewees indicating that aspects of parental involvement in their institutions could be due to pressure and not parents' realization of its significance to their children's participation and ultimately educational outcomes. Regarding specific aspects of participation, such as fee payment, interviewees observed that.

Respondent P4 and P11: *"There is poor participation for the majority. Most parents rely on bursaries. Others wait until students are sent home to make payments."*

Respondent P3 and P12: *"The Majority of parents are reluctant. Parents only pay fees/levies when coerced. A lot of late fee payments and accumulated fee balances. Most parents have accrued fee balances."*

Respondent FGD 13 & 15: *"Effort is made by roughly half of the parents. Parents mostly comply when we are sent home to get the fees. The majority rely on the CDF to help clear fees."*

Respondent FGD 41-49: *"Most parents will make an effort to pay fees without prompting. Very few rely on CDF, and a small percentage (10%) have challenges responding to payment requests."*

Respondent FGD 51 & 54: *"Very few parents rely on bursaries. Most pay fees on time. Parents respond to fees and other levies when well guided."*

Findings show that even though timely payment of school fees is a significant aspect of parental involvement that directly impacts the operational efficiency of educational institutions and the continuity of students' learning experiences, there is a general reluctance of many parents to respond promptly. Specifically, the study revealed widespread late payments and over-reliance on external bursaries. It was observed that parents from some schools, especially in county and sub-county schools relied heavily on bursaries to make payments of fees, with their counterparts in extra county and national schools being more proactive and not relying on bursaries. Most payments from parents were said to only be made under threat of their children being sent home for school fees.

On the question of provision of learning resources, interviewees observed that:

Respondent P5: *"A few supports the learners with materials. Others expect the school to provide all learning materials. Others provide materials only when learners are sent home."*

Respondent P10: *"The Majority of parents support all requests for learning materials. Only a few may be unable to comply immediately with such requests."*

Respondent PAC4: *"Few parents and community members provide. Believe the school and MOE should provide these materials."*

Respondent FGD 41: *"Parents are supportive. Some support buying revision materials."*

Respondent FGD 11: *"Most parents don't support the purchase of learning materials/resources. E.g., calculators, mathematical sets, and students must be sent home. Some of us purchase required materials with our own money."*

Findings show that even though provision of learning resources such as revision books, calculators, and other materials is another critical area where parental support can significantly enhance student participation in schooling. Majority of the respondents felt that parents did not contribute effectively in supplying these essential educational tools without coercion, with a few from the national and extra county schools showing some appreciable level of compliance from parents. The study also sought to assess the extent to which parents are involved in academic activities, considering its significance in enhancing student participation in schooling and ultimately academic performance. In response, interviewees indicated:

Respondent P1: *"Average attendance. The majority attend when the function is mandatory."*

Respondent P10: *"Some are active in attendance. Others take advantage of visiting their children. Others attend due to fear of the repercussions/consequences."*

Respondent PAC3: *"Poor attendance. Students are compelled to be accompanied by parents in the morning. Otherwise, the parents don't attend."*

Respondent FGD 9, 13, & 32: *"Parents are not willing and are coerced to attend by fear to avoid the consequences of having students sent home."*

Respondent FGD 58: *"Most parents attend. Proactively keep the students and teachers on their toes. Set performance targets and reward their achievement by both teachers and students. Do follow-ups to ensure targets are met."*

Results obtained show that most respondents felt that attendance patterns and the motivations behind parental participation in these clinics were low, with a few parents being actively participative. It was observed that most parents only showed up to prevent their children from being sent home. However, a few parents, especially from the national schools, were very proactive in attending the clinics and made an effort to monitor the performance of their children. They also kept tabs on performance targets set and offered rewards to both teachers and students for meeting the targets. Academic clinics provide an essential forum for parents to engage with teachers regarding their children's academic progress and challenges. The study also sought to establish the extent to which parents get involved in career days to assist their children in making the right career choice. In response, it was observed that:

Respondent P2: *"Career days are not regularly done. No volunteers."*

Respondent P8: *"Normally done once per term. Parents attend if informed on time. Attendance is usually low."*

Respondent P10: *"Attendance of career days is generally good, with parents taking the forefront in running the event. Some parents offer to come and give career talks or get people from their networks to attend."*

Respondent PAC5: *"Attendance of career days is generally poor; we tried twice, only a few parents responded."*

Respondent FGD 56: *"Career days are well attended. Efforts are made by parents to educate their children on the correlation between their career choices and subject choices and performance in school."*

Respondent FGD 8: *"This is not applicable in our school; career talks are done by parents while the students are at home."*

The study therefore established that while Career days are notably important in helping students understand the link between their academic performance and future career choices, there were varying degrees of attendance, with some of the respondents of the focus groups not even understanding the concept of career days. Most respondents from county and sub-county schools had not experienced career days, and the few that had said they occurred between once or twice per month. On the other hand, parents of students in national and extra-county schools were very proactive in attending the career days. They went the extra mile of facilitating some of the events and sourcing speakers to speak during the actual events.

The study further attempted to establish the extent to which parents get involved in assisting schools to secure funds. In response, interviewees noted that:

Respondent P10: *"The Majority of Parents support. Though payments are made when apportioned to each parent and made as part of the school levies."*

Respondent P2: *"Participation is fairly good, e.g., partnership in dorm constructions by Fairtrade, a tea farmers' organization in the area."*

Respondent P6: *"There have been no major initiatives requiring contributions from parents for a few years."*

Respondent FGD 17: *"There has been no fundraising during the four years I have been in school."*

Respondent FGD 57: *"Parents are responsive to such contributions. They have contributed to building the dorm. Contributions channeled as part of the school fees, e.g., 2k (two thousand shillings) contribution per student, which must be paid to get clearance."*

Respondent FGD 37: *"Parents/alumni partially participated in the construction of the multipurpose hall. Parents contributed to the repair of school infrastructure damaged after the various students' strikes."*

Respondent FGD 7: *"Fair participation, especially in classroom construction and completion of the laboratory through fundraising. We recently had a fundraiser to complete our laboratory, and some parents participated."*

Information obtained shows that interviewees consider fundraising efforts essential for the development and maintenance of school infrastructure. Parents as significant stakeholders are expected to play their part to support the development of the school. Findings indicated minimal voluntary participation, with most of the participation being based on coercion. Principals indicated being forced to settle on a figure and ask each parent to pay, and include the amount in the fee demands for a particular period. Those that do not pay, the amount is rolled over to subsequent terms as unpaid fees areas, thus ensuring that the payments are made. In other instances, parents have partnered with the school's Alumni to construct major infrastructure in the schools.

The study also sought to establish the extent to which parents get involved in their children's discipline issues. Interviewees observed that:

Respondent P7: *"Parents are cooperative, apart from a few who may want to defend their children."*

Respondent P10: *"Parents respond, though a few are not willing. Other parents support their children. May sometimes gang up against the school on matters of discipline. We have cases pending in court lodged against the school by parents of students who were punished for taking part in a strike a few years back."*

Respondent FGD 7: *"Some parents participate while other parents don't respond and opt to transfer their children. For example, Parents of hardcore criminals opt to transfer their children to other schools when they are summoned to attend disciplinary hearings. "*

Respondent FGD 13: *"Parents are mostly responsive. However, most parents respond under threat of the student's expulsion from school if they do not attend the disciplinary meetings."*

Respondent FGD 15: *"Most parents are not responsive. Parents will lie to the institution, especially on matters of drugs and serious disciplinary cases."*

Respondent FGD 53: *"A few parents will side with their children against the school on the punishments given. A few parents opt to pursue legal action against the institution."*

Information obtained shows that parental involvement in managing student discipline is vital for maintaining a conducive learning environment. However, respondents noted a reluctance in parental involvement in managing student discipline, and for those who participated, the motives were not based on ensuring the best interests of the students. There was a case of parents being proactively hostile towards the school in cases of disciplining the students, as shown in their responses.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

This investigation aimed to determine the impact of parental engagement on learner participation within educational activities in Meru County, Kenya. The study also sought to establish the perspective of school principals, parents' representatives, and a group of student leaders on the extent of parental involvement in enhancing learner participation in schooling through interviews and focus group discussions. Quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to seek answers to the study questions. Parental involvement in terms of fee payment, information obtained from class teachers, shows that less than a quarter of them (23.1%) indicated that in their school, parents are actively involved in payment of school fees on time. This was confirmed by less than a third of the sampled student leaders (32.2%), implying a low

level of parental involvement in student participation in schooling based on fee payment. Qualitative data sought from principals, PA representatives, and other stakeholders illustrated a widespread late payment and over-reliance on bursaries. Findings also indicated that parents from some categories of schools, especially in county and sub-county schools, relied heavily on bursaries to make fee payments, while their counterparts in extra-county and national schools were more proactive and did not rely on bursaries. Most payments from parents were said to only be made under threat of their children being sent home for school fees. Findings therefore imply minimal parental involvement in the payment of fees for their children. The study findings are in line with Rowe and Perry (2020), who in a study in Australia observed significant disparities among public schools, indicating that high-SES schools receive more than four times the income from parent contributions compared to low-SES schools. This discrepancy in parent financial contributions reflects a structural inequality that advantages socially privileged students and schools, potentially perpetuating and exacerbating the social segregation of schools. The study concludes with recommendations for policy adjustments to address these inequalities and promote more equitable funding distribution across public schools in Australia.

Parental involvement in student participation in terms of attendance at academic clinics and career days, information obtained from class teachers showed that about a quarter of them (24.5%) indicated that in their school, parents actively academic clinics. This was confirmed by less than a third of the sampled student leaders (31.0%), implying a low level of parental involvement in student participation based on attendance at academic clinics. Qualitative data sought showed that most interviewees felt that attendance patterns and the motivations behind parental participation in these clinics were low, with a few parents being actively participative. Findings indicated that most parents only showed up to prevent their children from being sent home. However, a few parents, especially from the national schools, were very proactive in attending the clinics and tried to monitor the performance of their children. Findings therefore illustrate reluctance of most parents to be actively involved in facilitating academic clinics despite their significance. It was established that while career days are notably important in helping students understand the link between their academic performance and future career choices, many respondents noted varying degrees of attendance, with some of the respondents of the focus groups not even understanding the concept of career days. Most respondents from county and sub-county schools had not experienced career days, and the few that had said they occurred between once or twice per month. A related study by Yonson (2016) established that at the secondary level, parent involvement was high across academics, co-curricular activities, and PTA membership across all educational stages, demonstrating their willingness to actively back their children and engage in various school-related activities. Lema (2022) observed limited parental involvement in community secondary schools in Tanzania due to factors such as poor communication with school administration and negligence of school matters among parents identified as barriers.

The study also sought to establish the extent of parental involvement in students' participation in schooling based on the provision of learning resources. Data obtained from class teachers showed that only about a quarter (25.1%) indicated that parents in their schools actively provide all required learning resources. This was corroborated by slightly less than a third of the sampled students (32.1%), implying a low level of active parental involvement in student participation based on the provision of learning resources. Qualitative data show that even though the provision of learning resources such as textbooks, calculators, and revision materials is another critical area where parental support can significantly enhance student participation in

schooling. A majority of the respondents felt that parents did not contribute effectively in supplying these essential educational tools without coercion, with a few from the national and extra county schools showing some appreciable level of compliance from parents. Findings therefore generally show below-average extent of parental involvement in student participation based on the provision of learning resources. The study findings are in line with a study conducted by Lema (2022) in Tanzania to assess parental involvement in their children's education in selected secondary schools within the Ukerewe District Council. The study that aimed to understand challenges and propose enhancement strategies revealed that parents perceived school involvement primarily as the responsibility of teachers and students, contributing mainly to fundraising activities, with limited engagement in academic matters such as checking assignments and school reports.

Study findings generally illustrated low levels of parental involvement in supporting their children's education. Descriptive findings illustrated minimal parental involvement in their children's learning. Specifically, findings showed that only about a quarter of the sampled class teachers (26.36%) confirmed parents' active involvement in school activities. This was corroborated by more than a third of the sampled student leaders (34.33%) who said that their parents are actively involved in school activities. Inferential analysis through Chi square results, $\chi^2(1) = 9.362$, $p = 0.002$, showed that parental involvement significantly influences student participation in schooling. Contingency Coefficient measure of Association (CC) illustrated that 24.5% of the total variance in student participation could be attributed to parental involvement. Findings, therefore, mean that parental involvement is effective in facilitating student participation in schooling. It means that quality parental involvement in their children's education would imply optimal participation. Research consistently shows a positive relationship between the involvement of parents and academic achievement, as actively engaged parents contribute to a nurturing learning environment and heightened student motivation (Gulua, 2020). Better communication and relationship-building between parents, educators, and students are facilitated through parental engagement, leading to transparent channels of communication and cooperative relationships (Forster & Van de Werfhorst, 2020). Efforts to promote parental involvement now extend beyond traditional boundaries to include crisis response and community-centered strategies that address immediate issues while fostering long-term resilience (Mishra, 2020).

5. Conclusion

This research endeavored to assess the influence of parental engagement on learner involvement in educational processes within Meru County, Kenya. The objectives sought to establish the effectiveness of school levy payments on student participation, establish the effectiveness of parental involvement in school activities in relation to student participation, and establish how learner academic support by parents affects student participation in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya. Quantitative and qualitative data collected recorded a below average level of parental involvement. Inferential analysis through chi-square results showed that parental involvement significantly influences student participation in schooling, implying that parental involvement is effective in facilitating students' participation in schooling. It can therefore be concluded that, though parental involvement is effective in facilitating students' participation in schooling, its effectiveness in enhancing learner participation in schooling is generally low in Meru County.

6. Recommendations

The study recommended that concerted efforts should be put in place to ensure that:

1. The schools' Board of Management in collaboration with school management should put strategies to enhance parental involvement. Specific areas of focus could include regular communication strategies with parents through newsletters, social media platforms, parent-teacher meetings, and workshops to educate them on the importance of their involvement in their children's education.
2. The schools' Boards of Management, in collaboration with other stakeholders, should strive to enhance the level of parental involvement in their students' schooling. This may be through the introduction of activities that require attendance of both parents and the students through active participation in PTAs, Attending School Events, providing opportunities for parents to volunteer as assistant teachers, guidance and counselling officers, mentors, and encouraging participation in extracurricular activities.
3. Parents should be encouraged to provide more academic support to their students through stocking the library, providing formalized tutoring services, providing mentoring and counselling services, and other support as required by the students.

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