

The Influence of Parental Involvement in A Child's Academic Performance: A Case of Informal Schools in Kiambiu Slums in Kamukunji Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of parental involvement on children's academic performance in informal schools within Kiambiu slums, Kamukunji Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya. Specifically, it assessed how parental engagement in school levy payment, participation in school activities, and homework supervision affect learners' academic outcomes in resource-constrained settings. A descriptive survey design was adopted, involving 59 respondents (teachers, parents, and pupils) selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and academic records and analyzed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), with reliability and validity ensured through standard procedures. The findings revealed that parental involvement has a significant positive effect on pupils' academic performance, explaining approximately 70.5% of the variation. Among the factors examined, homework supervision had the strongest influence, followed by school levy payment and participation in school activities. The results indicate that consistent parental engagement enhances learners' motivation, discipline, academic achievement, and school attendance. The study concludes that strengthening parental involvement is critical to improving educational outcomes in informal school settings. It recommends enhancing school-parent partnerships through flexible engagement strategies, improving communication between teachers and parents, and promoting support for home-based learning. Additionally, policies should be developed to facilitate parental involvement, particularly in informal settlements facing socio-economic challenges.

Keywords: *Parental involvement, academic performance, informal schools, homework supervision, school participation*

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1. Introduction

Children's education is greatly influenced by their parents and guardians. Their academic performance depends on their active involvement in school life. Although the relationship between parental influence and a child's academic achievement is well established, research has not yet examined how parental participation improves academic achievement. The provision of extracurricular enrichment activities is also correlated with parents' educational attainment. According to Davis-Kean et al. (2019), parents tend to continue their informal enrichment activities while decreasing their involvement in school-based activities as their children get older.

To ensure a fair distribution of resources, public and private schools rationally allocate their education budgets. The majority of nations offer free public basic and secondary education (World Bank, 2008). When it comes to keeping a child in school, school levies are crucial. According to UNESCO (2009), the inability to expand infrastructure due to funding constraints reduces academic performance. This is because children's poor performance in school is primarily caused by nonpayment of school levies.

There are a variety of school activities that parents should participate in to help their children perform better academically, but most parents choose to ignore them. In schools, for instance, non-majority groups are underrepresented in parent councils because some parents attend school meetings while others rarely do. While some parents attend meetings, they do not voice their concerns or opinions. In addition to teachers providing learning materials and grade-related information, parents are expected to take part in school events and activities. For this reason, "Parents who actively participate in their children's education by attending general meetings, academic days, keeping an eye on their progress, and enforcing discipline have seen their children perform better on national exams than kids whose parents are not actively involved (Anami, 2022).

Learning at home and participating in children's education are two of the best indicators of academic success. In the classroom, parental involvement with homework fosters motivation and self-confidence. Spending quality time with children, revealing strengths and shortcomings, elevating learning, and raising goals are just a few of the advantages of parents helping their children with homework.

At the same time, Dr. Selena asserts, "Higher academic achievement, improved social skills and behavior, and boosted self-confidence are all correlated with parental involvement in their child's education and with helping with homework. Since learning can be accelerated in the classroom, parents who assist with homework free up more time to focus on developing new subjects or abilities. Children and parents can spend more time on skills and subject matter through homework. Children retain information better when their parents give them relatable reasons to acquire new abilities" (Selena, 2020).

1.1 Problem statement

Although research has shown that parental participation significantly impacts a child's academic achievement, it remains unclear how parental involvement improves it. Furthermore, this research is needed because few studies have examined parental influence as both a primary socializing agent and a direct predictor of learners' sensations of self-efficacy, engagement, and intrinsic motivation. In Nairobi's eastern region, Kiambiu Slums is four kilometers from the city center and borders Buru Buru, Moi Air Base, and Uhuru Estate.

It is estimated that between 40,000 and 50,000 people live in the area. The phrase "Mbio mbio" in Swahili, which means "on the run," is the source of the name. The newest of Nairobi City County's informal settlements is Kiambiu. Their main problems are sanitary waste management, inadequate access to clean drinking water, illegal electrical connections, waste processing, and poor access roads. Maji na Ufanisi, a local non-governmental organization, is communicating with development partners and donors to address the issues facing the slum (Nairobi Community, 2017). This study aims to assess the extent to which parents' involvement influences their children's overall academic performance in urban informal settlement schools in the Kiambiu Slums of Kamukunji Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya.

1.2 Research objectives

- i. To assess how parental involvement in school levies payment influences the pupil's academic performance.
- ii. To determine how parental involvement in school activities influences a child's academic performance.
- iii. To investigate the influence of parental involvement in homework activities on the child's academic performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical review

Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory emphasizes that children actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment, particularly with parents who act as primary facilitators of learning (Piaget, 1981). Parental involvement, such as assisting with homework and engaging children in meaningful learning activities, enhances cognitive development by providing experiential learning opportunities. In the context of informal schools in Kiambiu slums, this theory suggests that parents' active participation at home can significantly support children's academic performance by reinforcing learning through everyday interactions and guidance.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory highlights the importance of social interaction and guidance from more knowledgeable individuals, such as parents, in a child's learning process (Brooks, 2011). Through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, children achieve higher levels of understanding when supported by adults or peers. Applied to this study, parental involvement in Kiambiu informal schools, through communication, guidance, and support, can enhance children's academic performance by bridging the gap between what they can do independently and what they can achieve with assistance.

Epstein's Parent Involvement Model outlines six key forms of parental involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and community collaboration (Epstein, 2001). This framework underscores the multifaceted ways parents can contribute to their children's education both at home and in school. In relation to the study, the model demonstrates that increased parental engagement in these areas, especially in resource-constrained settings like Kiambiu slums, can lead to improved academic outcomes by fostering supportive learning environments and strengthening school-family partnerships.

2.2 Empirical Review

Education is a public good. Regardless of their gender, financial situation, or level of handicap, all children should have access to education as a basic right. This is supported and validated by nations' commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls for all children to get a complete, equitable education and to continue learning throughout their lives.

Studies have shown that students' educational outcomes and well-being are affected by parental empowerment and involvement. In his article *Influence of School Levies on Pupils' Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools*, Kibiru cites a number of researchers, including Gichere (2010), who conducted a descriptive study on the reasons behind low transition rates from primary to secondary schools in Dagoretti Constituency, Kenya, and discovered that absence of school fees as a result of low parental income was the primary cause of low transition into secondary schools after primary education.

Disparities in academic achievement can be lessened when parents from all walks of life are actively involved in their kids' education. Lack of funds to pay school levies was one of the variables influencing students' transition rates from elementary to secondary schools in Taita Taveta County, according to Werunga, Musera, and Sindabi (2011), who examined these rates.

Even with the government's 2003 introduction of the Free Primary Education policy, some children are unable to attend school because parents must pay additional expenses. Two out of every ten students in Kenya are from extremely low-income families, according to the United Nations Children's Fund. Furthermore, the "Out of School Situation in Kenya" report estimates that 852 thousand children between the ages of six and seventeen were unable to attend school (Ouma, 2017).

The government's efforts to increase the number of informal schools in the country's largest slums led to an increase in enrollment from about 5,785 in 2004 to 134,344 in 2016. People who live in extreme poverty and illiteracy often have appalling living conditions, which are commonly referred to as slums in urban areas. A significant portion of Kenya's urban poor live in slums.

However, many parents are unable to purchase appropriate school uniforms for their children due to the elevated levels of poverty in Kenya's informal settlements. The likelihood of dropping out of school is higher for kids who don't wear uniforms. Poor academic achievement may result from some people's propensity to spend a lot of time at home.

A study by Njoroge (2013) examined how academic achievement in public primary schools in Kenya's Gatanga district was affected by hidden education expenses. He discovered that academic performance was impacted by caregivers who pulled their kids out of school to engage in income-generating activities. Some low-income families may decide to keep their children at home to generate more income to support their family, because youngsters between the ages of five and ten make considerable contributions to households through productive work such as housework and child care.

One of the obstacles to providing value in learning slums is the cost of purchasing educational materials. The largest issue facing students is the absence of school fees. However, there is a dearth of information regarding the proportion of parents who support their kids' enthusiasm for learning or encourage them to pursue specific fields of study. Furthermore, less is known about parental assistance with homework during adolescence because most prior research has focused on assignment assistance in the early school years. "Doctoroff et al. (2017) conducted a study titled "Doing homework together: The relation between parenting strategies, child engagement, and achievement *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* (2017)." To determine how parent-child interactions relate to reading achievement, the study examines parents' and children's participation during a language arts homework-like task.

Engagement is the term used to describe the child's behavioral, cognitive, and emotional indications of interest in the homework-like task. Since middle childhood is a crucial time for the development of academic skills and merits more empirical attention, it is the perfect time to examine how kids view homework exchanges. Additionally, he continues by stating that "adolescent reports of parent-child conflict during homework interactions and academic difficulties have been linked by researchers, but no observations were included, and similar research has not been conducted with elementary school children." There are no known studies examining the relationship between children's reading achievement and observable parenting behaviors or homework-like interactions.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the relationship between parental involvement and children’s academic performance in informal schools within Kiambiu slums, Nairobi. The research was conducted in a setting characterized by low-income households and limited access to public education, where informal schools serve as the primary learning institutions. The target population consisted of teachers, parents, and pupils from ten informal schools, with a sample of 59 respondents selected through simple random sampling to ensure adequate representation. Data were collected using questionnaires and supplemented by students’ academic records, with validity ensured through expert review and reliability confirmed using the test-retest method. Data collection followed ethical procedures, including obtaining necessary approvals and informed consent from participants. The collected data were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS to establish relationships between parental involvement and academic performance.

4. Findings

This study sought to find out the influence of parental involvement on a child’s academic performance in informal schools in Kiambiu Slums, Kamukunji Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya. The parental involvement activities under investigation were: school levy payments, involvement in school activities, and homework supervision.

4.1 Analysis of Variance

The assessment of the overall significance of the regression model used the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine whether the combined influence of the independent variables, (1) parental involvement in school levy payments, (2) involvement in school activities, and (3) parents' homework supervision, significantly explained the variation in pupils’ academic performance.

The ANOVA results were evaluated to determine whether the observed relationships in the model were statistically meaningful rather than due to random variation. A significant F-statistic indicated that the regression model provided a good fit to the data, confirming that the independent variables, when considered jointly, significantly contribute to predicting pupils’ academic performance. These results validated the model's robustness and provided a sound basis for interpreting the regression coefficients in subsequent analyses.

Table 1: Model Validity

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.667	3	.889	20.674	.000 ^b
	Residual	2.150	50	.043		
	Total	4.817	53			

a. Dependent Variable: Children’s academic performance

b Independent Variables (Constant): parental involvement in school levy payments, parental involvement in school activities, parental involvement in homework supervision.

Using the F-statistic obtained from the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test, the validity of the multiple regression was assessed. The results showed that the overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 50) = 20.674$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that the model reliably explained variation in pupils' academic performance. This significance suggests that the combined effect of the three predictor variables (parental involvement in school levy payments, participation in school activities, and homework supervision) meaningfully explained the observed differences in academic outcomes. Therefore, the regression model provided an appropriate and robust fit to the data, confirming that parental involvement, as conceptualized in this study, plays a statistically significant role in shaping learners' academic achievement.

4.2 Model Summary

The model's goodness-of-fit statistics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Model's Goodness of Fit Statistics

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.840 ^a	.705	.693	.20624

a. Predictors: (Constant), parental involvement in school levy payments, parental involvement in school activities, parental involvement in homework supervision.

The coefficient of determination, R^2 (0.705), indicated that approximately 70.5% of the variation in pupils' academic performance was explained by the combined effect of the independent variables included in the model. This demonstrates a strong explanatory power, suggesting that parental involvement in school levy payments, participation in school activities, and homework supervision collectively accounted for a substantial proportion of the differences in learners' performance. The remaining 29.5% of the variation was attributed to other factors not captured in the model and represented by the stochastic disturbance term (ϵ), which may include individual learner characteristics, teacher effectiveness, school resources, or socioeconomic influences beyond the study's scope.

4.3 Regression Coefficients

The multiple regression variable coefficients are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Variable Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	5.214	.585		8.916	.000
	Parental Involvement in School Levy Payments	0.555	.082	.456	6.768	.000
	Parental Participation in School Activities	0.429	.081	.420	5.296	.000
	Parental Involvement in Homework Supervision	0.593	.052	.556	11.404	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Pupils' Academic Performance

Pupils' Academic Performance = 5.214

Parental Involvement in school levy payments + 0.555

Parental Participation in school activities + 0.4290

Parental Involvement in homework supervision + 0.953

The results presented in Table 3 illustrate the relationship between the three areas of parental involvement and pupils' academic performance in informal schools within Kiambiu informal settlement. The regression coefficients indicate that all predictor variables are positively related to academic performance, statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, meaning that each dimension of parental involvement contributed substantially to learners' overall academic achievement.

Parental involvement in school levy payments had a positive and significant effect on pupils' academic performance, where $B = 0.555$, $\beta = 0.456$, $t = 6.768$, $p < 0.001$. This suggests that pupils whose parents consistently paid school levies performed better academically than those whose parents delayed or defaulted on school levies. Regular levy payments could likely ensure uninterrupted learning through stable classroom attendance, access to school resources, underscoring the importance of financial commitment to educational outcomes.

Parental participation in school activities also exhibited a significant positive relationship with pupils' academic performance, where $B = 0.429$, $\beta = 0.420$, $t = 5.296$, $p < 0.001$. These results implied that when parents actively engage in school activities, extracurricular events, and academic meetings, children become more motivated and disciplined, which leads to improved academic performance. The involvement of parents in school programs strengthens communication between home and school, enabling on-time intervention for academic and behavioral challenges.

At the same time, parental involvement in homework supervision had the strongest positive influence on pupils' academic performance, where $B = 0.593$, $\beta = 0.556$, $t = 11.404$, $p < 0.001$. This therefore shows that when parents consistently monitor and assist with homework, there is a substantial improvement in learners' comprehension and performance, study discipline, and overall academic achievement. The standardized beta value, $\beta = 0.556$, suggests that, among the three predictors, homework supervision was the more influential determinant of performance.

Overall, the regression results confirm that all three dimensions of parental involvement, such as school levy payments, participation in school activities, and assisting with homework, as well as supervision, play crucial and complementary roles in enhancing pupils' academic performance. The positive coefficients across all variables reinforce the conclusion that strengthening parental involvement at multiple levels yields significant educational benefits, particularly in informal settlement contexts where institutional resources are limited or unavailable.

5. Conclusion

This study finally concluded that parental involvement in the child's education had a significant and positive influence on the child's academic performance in informal settlement schools within Kiambiu slums, Kamukunji Sub-County, Nairobi County. The findings revealed that the extent to which parents engaged in school-related activities and home-based educational activities directly affected learners' academic achievement. It was evident that in areas where parents were consistently involved, pupils demonstrated higher motivation, stronger learning outcomes, and improved discipline than in areas where parents were less involved.

The study further found that timely payment of school levies was a key determinant of learners' attendance, retention, and consistent academic performance. Pupils whose parents met their levy obligations regularly remained in school throughout the term and benefited from uninterrupted learning in the institution. In contrast, those children who were frequently sent home due to non-payment experienced learning disruptions, resulting in low self-esteem and hence lower academic performance. This meant that the parents' financial commitment to school levies was not only a sign of responsibility but also a crucial factor in maintaining regular attendance and academic progress among the children.

The study revealed that participation in school activities, such as parent-teacher meetings, school events, and extracurricular activities, fostered a very strong partnership among parents, teachers, and learners. When parents regularly attend these school meetings, it strengthens communication between teachers and parents, enabling early identification of academic or behavioral challenges and timely intervention. Parental participation in school activities also created a sense of shared responsibility, motivating learners to perform better academically and take pride in their schoolwork. However, this study noted that some parents were unable to regularly participate in school-related activities due to time constraints and work-related commitments, which limited their involvement in their children's academic performance.

Moreover, this study concluded that parental involvement in homework supervision was the most consistent and influential form of support for the pupils' learning. It was noted that parents who frequently monitored or assisted their children with homework encouraged better study habits, reinforced learning, and built their children's confidence in their academic abilities. Learners who received such support from parents demonstrated improved understanding of concepts, higher test scores, and greater enthusiasm for learning. However, children who lacked parental assistance with their homework tended to show weaker performance, limited interest in their studies, and poor study habits, hence poor academic performance.

The study further concluded that any form of parental involvement in their children's education, whether financial contributions, school participation, or home academic supervision, played a central role in enhancing pupils' educational outcomes. It emphasized the sustained collaboration between parents, teachers, and school administrators as an essential aspect for improving learner achievement in informal schools. Despite the financial challenges and time-related challenges faced by many parents in the Kiambiu slums, this study revealed that even modest efforts in parental engagement yielded meaningful improvements in pupils' academic performance. The critical strategy for addressing educational disparities and fostering holistic learning among children in informal settlements is to strengthen parental involvement in the children's education.

6. Recommendations

The study's findings showed that parental involvement plays a central role in enhancing pupils' academic performance in informal settlement schools. Based on these observations, several recommendations were drawn to strengthen parent, learner, and teacher collaboration, to improve learner performance, and promote inclusive education within similar socio-economic contexts.

This study recommends that schools in informal settlements should adopt deliberate strategies to strengthen parental involvement in all aspects of the learning operations. The school administration and teachers should create a welcoming, supportive school environment that encourages parents to take an active role in school activities and academic monitoring. The

schools should always schedule parent–teacher meetings at flexible times to enable most parents to attend school activities, use channels such as text messaging or school diaries to simplify communication, and recognize the contributions that parents make. Such practices would foster a sense of partnership and ownership among parents, which, in turn, would enhance learner commitment and academic performance.

The study further recommends that schools develop flexible payment arrangements for levies and fees to ensure that no pupil is excluded from attending lessons and learning opportunities due to financial challenges. Allowing parents to pay in installments or through government subsidies and bursaries would reduce absenteeism associated with unpaid levies. Schools could also establish small welfare funds or seek partnerships with local organizations to assist families facing acute financial hardship. To address economic barriers, schools need to create a more equitable learning environment that promotes consistent attendance and academic continuity.

Teachers are encouraged to maintain continuous communication with parents regarding learners’ progress, behavior, and class performance. When there is regular feedback to parents to identify areas where their children need support and provides teachers with a clearer understanding of each learner’s home environment or circumstances. Through mutual communication, parents and teachers can coordinate efforts to reinforce learning objectives, discipline, and study routines. This study emphasized that the relationship ought to be sustained not only during academic meetings but throughout the school year, hence cultivating a culture of shared responsibility in the child’s education.

The study also recommended that parents should take a greater initiative in supporting learning activities, especially at home. Even in families where formal education levels are low, the parents can demonstrate involvement by encouraging regular study habits, supervising homework, asking questions about daily lessons, and just expressing interest in school activities. The schools should be able to guide parents in simple techniques for supporting their children’s learning without making them feel intimidated by the academic content. Promoting academic sensitization programs or brief parental workshops could help strengthen parents' confidence and capacity, leading to more consistent academic support at home.

At the policy level, this study recommended that education authorities and community-based organizations ought to design inclusive parental engagement programs tailored to the realities of informal settlement schools. Such programs are to integrate training components for teachers and parents on effective networking, communication, and learner monitoring processes. Additionally, the government and other policymakers should consider developing guidelines that formalize parental involvement as an integral component of school governance, especially in low-income urban areas where informal schools operate with minimal oversight. When these practices are institutionalized, they would help sustain partnerships between homes and schools and contribute to overall improvements in educational quality.

Finally, the study recommended developing future interventions to improve learner performance in informal settlements, considering parental involvement as a key element of school improvement strategies. The strengthening of the social bond between families and schools will not only enhance academic outcomes but also foster values of responsibility, discipline, and aspiration among children. The parents need to be recognized as active partners, not passive observers, in education. Informal settlement schools can transform into more

inclusive, resilient, and effective learning environments that nurture every child's potential, irrespective of their family background.

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