ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583EMAS | Volume XV, Issue X, October 2026

Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Performance at Karura Secondary School, Kenya

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.51583/IJLTEMAS.2026.151000111

Received: 29 October 2026; Accepted: 03 November 2026; Published: 16 November 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examined parents' reported involvement in their children's education and its aasociation with students' reported academic grade categories at Karura Secondary School, Kenya. A quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive-correlational approach was used. The dataset contained 31 submitted parent questionnaires from a reported target group of 35 parents.These findings suggest an association in this context. The study recommended that parent teacher meetings should focus on practical strategies for supporting learning at home, including homework routines, reading, and realistic goal setting, and schools should provide varied opportunities for parents to participate, recognizing that work schedules and other responsibilities may limit attendance at school events.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Academic Performance, Karura, Student Achievement

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in education is globally recognized as a fundamental driver of learner performance, academic growth, and holistic development (Jeynes, 2017). In modern educational frameworks, including Competency-Based Curricula (CBE), learning extends far beyond the traditional classroom walls. Education is increasingly viewed as a collaborative partnership among teachers, learners, parents, and community stakeholders (World Bank, 2018).

Parental involvement encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from home-based support; such as assisting with homework, providing learning materials, and creating a conducive study environment to school-based participation, such as attending Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, monitoring academic progress, and collaborating with educators (Wilder, 2014).

Parental involvement in a child's education is positively associated with academic performance (Indimuli, 2022). Students whose parents actively engage in their education tend to achieve better academic outcomes than those whose parents are less involved. The significant impact of parental engagement has been recognized not only by educational researchers but also by policymakers, who have increasingly incorporated parental involvement strategies into formal educational policy initiatives (Adelina, 2009). Ultimately, parent-child collaboration serves as a vital foundation for a learner's academic and overall personal development.

In the United Kingdom, Jeynes (2005) established that positive parental attitudes toward education significantly boost students' academic achievement. Furthermore, increased attendance at parent-teacher meetings was linked to both higher academic marks and a reduction in behavioral issues at school. Similarly, Kim and Sherraden (2011) confirmed that positive parental attitudes correlate directly with improved student performance in Asia. Grounded in this existing body of literature, it is widely posited that parents who foster positive attitudes toward their child's school, teachers, and learning process are better positioned to positively shape their academic trajectory (David, 2022).

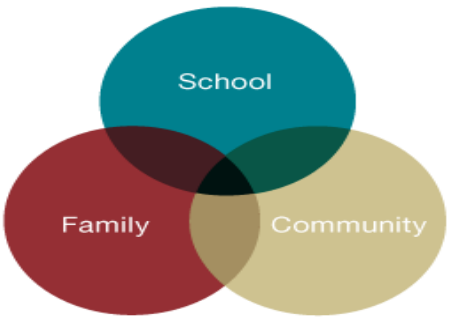
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Consequently, schools are encouraged to clearly outline specific parenting practices that foster academic success. In Asian educational contexts, parental involvement is frequently conceptualized as a continuous, two-way communication channel encompassing both home- and school-based activities, paired with a constructive attitude toward the learning environment (Fan & Chen, 2001). Academic performance itself measures student achievement across various metrics, including classroom evaluation, graduation rates, and standardized testing. In alignment with Houtenville and Conway (2008), academic performance in this context is principally measured through standardized achievement test scores.

Within Kenya, Rabok (2021) observed that parental engagement substantially enhances academic outcomes, yielding higher test scores, superior assignment completion rates, and enhanced subject mastery (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2017). Although extensive research exists on general parental involvement and educational achievement globally, empirical studies focusing specifically on the joint influence of parental attitudes and behaviors within the Kenyan context remain limited. Therefore, this study was undertaken to address this gap and promote targeted parental involvement strategies aimed at raising student achievement across Kenya.

The research is guided by Joyce Epstein's (2018) Framework of School, Family, and Community Partnerships. Epstein's model conceptualizes positive parental involvement through six primary spheres of engagement: (i) parenting, (ii) communicating, (iii) volunteering, (iv) learning at home, (v) decision-making, and (vi) collaborating with the community. This framework helps organize specific parent behaviors—such as teacher contact, home learning support, attendance at school functions, parental expectations, and monitoring school newsletters—into structured dimensions of educational partnership.

In Epstein's (2018) model, successful learning environments depend on active, reciprocal relationships among schools, families, and communities. First, the parenting dimension emphasizes that parents serve as a child's primary educators; schools support this role by providing families with information, resources, and child-development strategies. Second, communicating establishes two-way channels between home and school to keep parents fully informed of their child's academic and social progress. Third, volunteering encourages parents to participate in school events, classroom assistance, and institutional functions. Fourth, learning at home guides schools in providing parents with targeted materials, homework strategies, and educational activities to support continuous learning outside the classroom (Fan & Chen, 2001). Finally, active involvement in decision-making and community collaboration ensures that families and local organizations contribute directly to school governance and program development.



Epstein model: Figure 1

Involving parents in decision making processes, such as parent – teacher organizations (PTA), advisory councils or any other collaborative structures. Lastly, collaborating with the community, schools and community can work together to provide resources and services that support educational needs of the students, including health services, social services, and extracurricular activities (Epstein, 2018).

Epstein's model emphasizes that meaningful parental involvement goes beyond simple participation in school events and activities. It includes creating a comprehensive and sustainable partnership between schools, families, and communities to support the academic success and well-being of learners.

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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

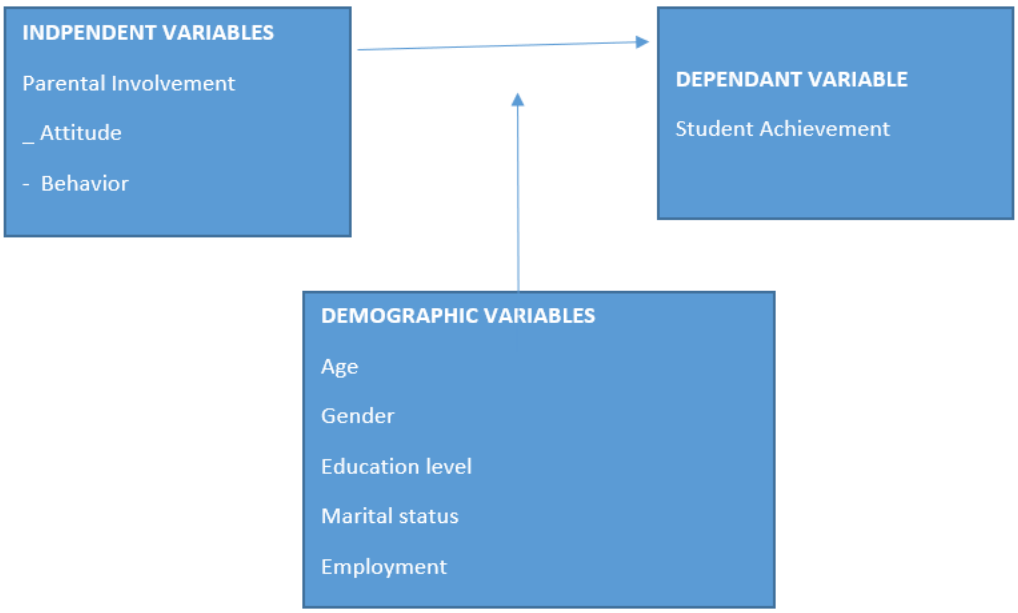


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study is informed by the research topic, the theoretical framework as well as the review of related literature.

As shown in the diagram, the independent variables which are expected to cause an effect on achievement as dependent variables.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this section is to explore existing research findings and discussions to identify gaps on parental involvement and student achievement. This literature review was drawn from journal articles, current thesis, research papers, and books to draw lessons that are applicable to the Kenyan situation on parental involvement and student achievement. Parent involvement in schools promotes student success and achievement. Schools should aim at nurturing positive relationships with families. In America studies have indicated that students whose parents are involved in school have excellent attendance and behavior, attain better grades, better social skills and adapt to the school environment. Parental involvement sets standards for students to emulate a long-term desire for learning (Fan, 2001).

Parental behaviors are the most accurate indicators of student achievement. Parents should aim at creating a home environment that encourages learning, communicates high realistic high expectations for achievement and stay involved in a learner's education at school. When the parents portray a positive behavior and attitude towards the school activities then, there is an improvement in behavior, motivation and academic performance. Parental involvement is being active, getting involved in the participation of a parent in the education of a child. Fan and Chen (2001) highlighted ways on how parents demonstrate involvement through the following ways: assisting with homework, reading with the child, discussing school events, volunteering in classroom, attending school functions e.g. parent-teacher conferences etc.

Importance of parental involvement – learners whose parents are engaged in their schooling are likely to demonstrate the following: score higher in exams, earn higher grades the tests, develop self-confidence, improve motivation in the classroom, cultivate positive classroom behavior, acquire better social skills, etc. (Fan & Chen, 2001).

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Studies have shown that parental involvement plays a positive role it helps the students to adapt better in school and improves learner's attendance, social skills and influencing positive behavior. Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, Holbein (2005) conducted a study in Europe on parent involvement and student motivation, and it revealed many benefits it offers in education from elementary to high school. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation played a part in the student's life. Another study by Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, Cox, Bradley (2003), examined the relationship between teacher's report of family involvement in school and children's social and academic competencies during kindergarten. Families' attitudes towards schools were more significant compared to families' activities with school. This clearly indicates families and schools can collaborate to provide a social resource to the children.

Naite (2021) indicated a positive impact on parental involvement on children's academic performance at school in Thailand. Twelve parents responded in the study using qualitative methods to gauge parental involvement and students' academic achievement. On the other side parental income level had an impact on the level of involvement. Other variables indicated positive correction on parental involvement, these are like educational level, age, employment and marital status of the parents. The key findings showed that learners with highly involved parents had better academic performance and higher test scores in all areas compared to learners of parents who were not involved.

Further Azad and Smiyari (2019) indicated more parental involvement have a place in learner's academic success. The findings also demonstrated a significant relationship between the parents' education and learners' language achievement. The higher the education level of the parent's, the higher the achievement.

Epstein and Salinas (2004) work tried to differentiate professional learning community and a school leaning community. A professional learning community emphasizes the teamwork of principal, teachers, and staff being involved assessing the progress of the school, while school learning community is an organized program of school, family, and community partnership associated with activities of realizing the school goals. The findings indicated positive correction between school learning community and student achievement and success. The Model of School-Family-Community Partnerships, which outlines different types of parental involvement and their impact on student achievement. The research has been influential in shaping the way schools and parents interact to support students.

Kanyoi (2025)) parental involvement is a priority for all educators to promote a successful schooling in modern students. The study indicated Kenyan parents have a positive attitude towards parental involvement programs in schools. They base their research on three themes namely, empowerment, outreach, and indigenous resources. More practical strategies were recommended to enforce parental involvement in schools. In summary, this chapter explored literature and related studies as well as previous research findings and debates to identify gaps on parental involvement and student achievement. There remains a knowledge gap in terms of how parents can be fully involved in their child's academic achievement; hence, the need for this current study.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents information on how the research was conducted. It includes the research design; methods, population, sample and sampling techniques, research instruments and their administration, data collection, treatment, analysis and interpretation.

Design

For this study, the descriptive research design, which aims to acquire information to describe an experience, situation, or population to purposely respond to questions regarding the problem of the study was utilized (McComb & Jablokow, 2022).

The researcher employed single method of quantitative methodology. Quantitative data was analysed using online survey. Google online survey was used; it is user-friendly, accessible and integrated with other goggle

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services. Goggle forms are popularity and usefulness in educational settings, and conducting research (Creswell, 2021).

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study was thirty-five parents form four high school parents at Karura secondary school thirty-one parents returned the questionnaire, in 2024. The sampling style for questionnaire respondents was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling. This sampling technique is used in research where the researcher selects specific individuals or groups for inclusion in a study based on predetermined criteria or characteristics. Participants are chosen intentionally, because they have some qualities that align with the research objectives and specific information the researcher seeks (Creswell, 2021).

Instruments

Research instrument was constructed and posted on online survey. Online survey tool was selected; questions were added to the survey in a logical order and organized into sections required. The questions were organized to ensure a flow that makes sense for respondents. The survey was previewed to check for any errors or formatting issues. The survey was distributed to the target audience through email, and social media channel. The responses were monitored as they came in, they were analyzed and a report was generated.

Validity and Reliability

The survey was tested to ensure that it works smoothly through a pilot study. The experts assessed the questionnaire to ensure that it covered required aspects of the study. Instruments validity and reliability were tested. Validity and reliability of the instruments is considered of paramount importance to reduce measurement errors that may arise during the research study. Validity refers to how accurately methods and tools used produced results that correspond to the characteristics of the target group being tested. Reliability refers to consistency, accuracy, trustworthiness, dependability or precision of research methods in reproducing results when the research is repeated under the same conditions (Creswell, 2021).

Statistical Treatment of Data

After collecting quantitative data, it is important to process the data before analysis. This is done to classify data into commonly known patterns. Questions were separated in patterns those under attitudes and behaviours. In this study, data was analyzed in a sequential, integrated and concurrent fashion. The responses were monitored as they came in, they were analyzed and a report was generated. Survey platforms reporting tools were used to analyze responses. Graphs and summaries were used to interpret the collected data effectively.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained electronically from all participants, guaranteeing voluntary participation, anonymity, and the right to withdraw without penalty.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The dataset comprises N = 31 survey participants across primary and secondary school parental groups. Demographic data captured include parent age, gender, marital status, education level, employment status, spouse education level, and the child's average academic performance. Table 1 provides complete frequency distributions and baseline stratifications.

Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents (N = 31)

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Demographic	Variable Category /	Subgroup Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	16	51.61%
	Female	15	48.39%
Marital Status	Married	26	83.87%
	Single	5	16.13%
Parental Education level	Bachelors	13	41.94%
	Masters	5	16.13%
	Doctoral (PhD)	4	12.90%
	Primary Sch	3	9.68%
	Certificate	2	6.45%
	Diploma	3	9.68%
	Others	1	3.23%
Employment Status	Full-time Employed	22	70.97%
	Not Employed	6	19.35%
	Part-time Employed	3	9.68%
Child Academic Performance	Mostly B's	18	58.06%
	Mostly C's	5	16.13%
	Mostly A's	5	16.13%
	Mostly D's	3	9.68%

Table 1 : Demographic variables

Item-Specific Frequencies, Mean, and Standard Deviation

INVOLVEMENT Indicate the perception of parental involvement using the following parameters: Key: 1= Strongly Agree 2= Agree 3= Disagree 4= strongly disagree

No.	Parental-involvement statement	Mean	SD
1	8. Communicating with child's teacher is an enjoyable experience	1.61	0.76
2	9. I expect my child to finish school	1.26	0.68
3	10. I am disappointed when my child does not get As or Bs	2.03	0.95
4	11. Parent /teacher conferences are a waste of time	2.94	1.15
5	12. Assisting my child with homework in crucial	1.45	0.68
6	13. Parents should not be asked to volunteer at school	2.61	0.95
7	14. Its important to encourage my child and enables him/her to succeed	1.39	0.72
8	15. Its important to be active in the school PTA organization	1.48	0.57
9	16. I expect my child to finish and graduate from the school	1.32	0.54
10	17. Too much emphasis is on school work and grades	1.74	0.82
11	18. My child is equipped with life skills to handle different situations	2.03	0.60
12	19. I am satisfied with the level of my Education	2.10	0.94
13	20. My child is aware that I expect good grades	1.48	0.68
14	21. it is the responsibility of the school to ensure that homework is done not the parent	2.58	1.03
15	22. My Childs education is very important	1.35	0.71
16	23. My best memories are school related	2.00	0.93
17	24. My view of school affects my child's view of the school	2.13	0.92
18	25. Its important to my child to see that am involved with the schools functions	1.48	0.68
19	26. High school was difficult for me	2.68	0.87
20	27. My child's experiences in school are similar to my past experience	2.90	0.94
21	28. The amount of time I spend with my child has no impact on his/her success in school	3.03	0.95

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22	29. My child must get a grade of B average or better in order to be be successful in life	2.68	0.91
23	30. My child observes and emulate my reading skills	2.13	0.67
24	31. I read the school newsletter frequently	2.16	0.86
25	32. I reward my child for good grades	2.10	0.94
26	33. I talk negatively about the school in the presence of my child	3.16	1.04
27	34. I talk with my child about current jobs/ professions of his/her interest	1.77	0.84
28	35. I frequently contact the teacher if my child has a problem	1.68	0.83
29	36. I allow my child to focus more on extra curriculum activities than homework	2.84	0.90

Table 2: Frequencies, Mean, and Standard Deviation

To evaluate relationships between parental involvement subscales, bivariate Pearson correlation coefficients (r) and exact two-tailed significance values (p-values) were computed (N = 31, df = 29).

Inter-Construct Pearson Correlation Matrix with Exact Significance Values (N = 31)

Construct Subscale	**(1) Comm.**	**(2) Expect.**	**(3) Home**	**(4) Beliefs**
(1) School Communication	—	r = 0.183	r = 0.784∗∗∗	r = 0.464∗∗
		(p = 0.324)	(p < 0.001)	(p = 0.009)
(2) Academic Expectations	r = 0.183	—	r = 0.170	r = −0.135
	(p = 0.324)		p = 0.361)	(p = 0.468)
(3) Home Learning Support	r = 0.784∗∗∗	r = 0.170	—	r = 0.431∗
	(p < 0.001)	(p = 0.361)		(p = 0.016)
(4) Parental School Beliefs	r = 0.464∗∗	r = −0.135	r = 0.431∗	—
	(p = 0.009)	(p = 0.468)	(p = 0.016)	

Note: Two-tailed significance levels: ∗p < 0.05, ∗∗p < 0.01, ∗∗∗p < 0.001. Sample size N = 31

Table 3: Correlation matrix.

Communication & Home Support: A strong, statistically significant positive correlation (r = 0.784, p <

0.001), demonstrating that parents who maintain active communication with schools are also highly engaged in home learning activities.

Communication & School Beliefs: A moderate, statistically significant positive correlation (r = 0.464, p =

0.009), indicating positive personal school memories foster higher school communication.

Home Support & School Beliefs: A moderate, statistically significant positive correlation (r = 0.431, p = 0.016).

Inferential Statistical

Summary Table of Core Inferential Results

Analysis	Sample Size (N)	Metric / Test Stat	Value	Sig. (p-value)	Empirical Conclusion
Scale Reliability	$N = 31$(28 items)	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	0.842	—	High internal consistency and measurement accuracy.
Gender Difference (t-test)	Males (16), Females (14)	Independent t -statistic	-0.278	0.783	No significant difference in involvement between genders.
Involvement vs. Grades	$N_{\text{valid}} = 26$	Pearson Correlation (r)	-0.428	0.029*	Higher parental involvement significantly boosts academic grades.

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Statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$level.

Table 4: Inferential

Inferential Hypothesis Tests & Demographic Determinants Inferential statistical tests—including independent samples t-tests, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Chi-square (χ 2) tests of independence—were conducted to test whether demographic factors significantly impact overall parental involvement scores or student grades (N = 31).

Parental Level of Education exerts a statistically significant primary main effect on parental involvement (F(6, 24) = 6.140, p = 0.0005). Post-hoc group comparison reveals that parents with primary school education (M = 2.368, SD = 0.345) reported distinct involvement profiles compared to those holding Master's (M = 2.200, SD = 0.089) or PhD degrees (M = 2.121, SD = 0.107). The empirical results confirm that parental education is a primary demographic predictor of parental involvement (F(6, 24) = 6.140, p = 0.0005). Furthermore, school communication and home support demonstrate strong construct alignment (r = 0.784, p < 0.001). Researchers utilizing this survey instrument should take note of subscale reliability profiles (α = 0.478 − 0.540) and scale sample size considerations (N = 31).

Parental Involvement & Perceptions

High Educational Aspirations: Parents strongly agree that encouraging their children is essential for success ($\mu = 1.35$) and hold high expectations for school completion ($\mu = 1.48$). Home Facilitation vs. School Involvement: While 82% of parents recognize homework assistance as crucial ($\mu = 1.61$), participation in organized school structures—such as PTA activities ($\mu = 2.38$) and volunteering ($\mu = 2.65$)—is noticeably lower, indicating a preference for home-based support over direct institutional engagement. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant moderate inverse relationship ($_{r = -0.428, p = 0.029}$)

between parental involvement scores and learner performance Interpretation: Because higher performance ranks were coded numerically lower (e.g., A/B grade categories), the negative correlation indicates that increased parental involvement directly translates to higher academic achievement in students. Active parental monitoring, reinforcement of reading habits, prompt problem-solving with teachers, and active attendance at school functions create a supportive home learning environment that enhances student focus and motivation (David, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

The findings demonstrate high parental academic expectations and strong home-based encouragement, which positively correlate with pupil achievement. However, active institutional engagement (such as PTA participation and school volunteering) remains secondary for many parents, often constrained by full-time employment commitments. On the institutional side, while traditional teaching materials and interactive question and answer methodologies are well established, significant gaps persist in digital literacy integration, adaptive assessment tools, and inclusive learning resources for special needs education (Kanyoi, 2025).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The first recommendation was to strengthen Home-School Collaboration. School administrations should implement flexible, hybrid PTA engagements and communication channels to enable full-time working parents to participate actively in school governance and activities.

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