

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC
LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NYANDARUA WEST SUB-COUNTY,
NYANDARUA COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to establish the extent to which parents are involved in the education of children in public lower primary schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County. The study was guided by four objectives; to establish the indicators of parental involvement in the children's education in public lower primary schools, to examine how communication influences children education in public lower primary schools, to determine how home environment influences children's education in public lower primary schools and to investigate parental provision of teaching and learning resources in the education of their children. The study revealed that there was parental involvement in the education of children in lower primary public schools through communication with teachers, especially during meetings on children's performance, and regular follow-up. However, some parents had a negative attitude towards the education of their children and were involved to a limited extent in supporting their children with homework.

Key Words: Lower Primary, Parents, Communication, Learning Resources,

1.1 Background to the Study

The education of children is thought by many parents as the sole responsibility of the schools that their children go to, however, research shows that parents' role in educating their children is

important too. For example, a study conducted in U.S.A by Topping & Wolfendale(1985), found out those children who read regularly in the company of their parents at home performed better than those who did not. A study by **Mathew** (2000) in California primary schools found out that parents' involvement was positively related to academic achievement while factors such as teachers' quality had an impact on learner's performance too. In Nigeria, a study conducted showed that parent's involvement in children learning at home makes them (children) get a higher grade. Much of the research conducted globally on the relationship between parental involvement and children education has assessed parental involvement by counting the number of parents who attend meetings and conferences (Baker, 2001).

In Nyandarua County, parental involvement is now a requirement by the County Education Office. The Sub-County office and schools' administration have put pressure on parents with an aim of ensuring they are fully engaged with the education of their children. According to UNESCO (2005), the most important influence on learning originates from within the family environment, and the quality of education offered at the primary schools. Family-school collaboration or linkages are increasingly and widely viewed as an essential component of strategies to improve educational outcomes for learners. The premise that strong family-school linkages improve educational outcomes of children has acquired almost axiomatic status (Forbes & Sime, 2016). Researches that have been done on the association between parents' involvement in their children's schooling show the importance to students themselves, their schools and parents as well (UNESCO, 2005). Parental involvement in the education of their children is increasingly seen as an essential backup to children's learning in both early childhood education programs and throughout the school years (Halle, 2012). There are many definitions of "parent involvement," but in this study, the term is defined as parents' efforts to promote the

healthy development and learning of their children through activities. This can be achieved when educators in child care centres and schools encourage effective parent involvement all through primary school to the early grades. This is the main contributor to positive academic outcomes of children (Halle, 2012). In a variety of other home and community activities, parents' involvement has also been linked to young children's learning. Growth in language and literacy skills of children is related to broad measures of community-based parental involvement that include visits to the library or bookstore and measures of home-based parental involvement that include playing alphabet games, telling stories, and helping children with art activities (Trivette, 2012). In one study, a broad measure of home-based parent involvement that included reading to children, asking about primary school, and providing space for educational activities, predicted Head Start children's learning behaviours: attention, persistence, and motivation, vocabulary skills, and positive behaviour (Ramani, 2008). Young children often face an uphill path for the rest of their school years when they fall behind in developing these skills. For example, upon school entry, children who have weak language skills are more likely to struggle while learning to read and have weak reading skills through to third grade. This greatly hampers children's learning capabilities across the curriculum in later grades. While high-quality teaching in primary school and the early grades is essential, parents can also play a vital role in helping children acquire basic competencies that help in improving school success (Trivette, 2010).

Underachievement in lower primary schools or failure to reach a satisfactory level of literacy and numeracy in Kenya is a major problem and it is caused by various factors such as poor parental involvement as reported by research on learners' underachievement in tests and exams sat every term. Academic performance in Nyandarua County has remained very low for a very long time,

with the more successful children being those who are attended to at home during formative years. In addition to this, these children (who are attended to) graduate and go on to college more often, commit fewer crimes and earn higher wages once they enter the workforce (Balogun, 2005). This makes a performance at the lower primary level very crucial for it forms a base for other learning.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Insufficient parental involvement may lead to poor education performance of the child, with parents often faced with unique obstacles that hinder them from meeting the needs of learners. Some parents may lack enough time for various reasons, others work away from home meaning they hardly get time to be with their children with their children left under the caregiver who can never fully accomplish what should be done by the biological parent. If the children's needs are not attended to, there is a likelihood of children not performing well. This could hinder a child's success due to lack of adequate support during early years. There is scanty and inclusive empirical data about parents' involvement and education of their children in lower public primary schools in Nyandarua County in general and specifically in Nyandarua West Sub-county. This study sought to establish the degree to which parents are involved in their children's education in lower public primary schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County Kenya.

1.3 Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives

- i. To establish the indicators of parental involvement in the education of their children
- ii. To examine how communication influences children's education
- iii. To determine how home environment could influence children's education

- iv. To investigate the parental provision of teaching and learning resources in the education of their children.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Parental Attitude towards Children's Education

When parents have a positive attitude towards education they prepare their children for the transition to formal education. They also participate in their children's schooling and this has a positive effect on their children's academic outcome (Smith, 1990). When parents have a positive attitude towards education, basic skills such as socialization and readiness to learn are primarily developed in the home environment. Parents make an irreplaceable contribution to their children's development while active involvement in their children's lives leads to success later in their lives. A study by Epstein (1993) confirms that parent's attitude towards education has an economic impact on child's attitude, attendance and academic performance. A study by Samal & Patnaik, (2012) realized the strong influence the parent's attitude towards education has on the child. He noted where parents are interested in education, they offer help and encouragement. However, a good number of children from homes where parents seem to neglect their potential role and have negative attitude can still continue to perform well in school.

2.1.2 Socio-Economic Status of Parents

Often, the social economic status (SES) is measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. It is conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. Low social – economic status and its correlates like lower education and poverty affect our society as a whole. According to **Fuligni & Yoshikwa (2002)** for insistence; American born families have a lower emphasis on the success of education regardless of their country of origin, compared to immigrant parents with the same ethnic and socio-economic background. This is so because the

act of immigration influences parental goals and behaviour toward their children by supplying the need to make them do well in school (**Fullgni, 1997**). Socioeconomic status of some immigrant families plays an important role in the academic performance of their children. Research has that learners from parents having high education levels and occupational status are much more successful than those from parents having lower socioeconomic (Fulgini, 1977). Parent with well-paying jobs know how to recognize the child's own academic achievement. Thus the economic and educational position of these families has a powerful impact on their children success in school. Some parents believe that education is the most important way for their children to improve their status in life and depends on success in school. Hence they encourage their children to try and overcome the difficulties they may face in school and benefit from the educational opportunities. According to Fuligni (2001), school success is viewed by some parents as one of the most important ways that they can support and honour their families. Meaning family duties and obligations are factors that affect learner's motivation toward schooling. As indicated by research, children from lowest households and communities develop academic skills slowly compared to children from higher socioeconomic status groups (**Morgon, et al., 2009**). Parent from low socioeconomic status may be unable to afford resources like books, computers, to create positive literacy environment (**Orr, 2003**). Schools in low socioeconomic status communities suffer from high levels of unemployment, migration of the best-qualified teacher and low educational **achievement (Muiji, Harms, Chapman, Stoll & Russ 2009)**. Children from these schools acquire language skills slowly, exhibit delayed letter recognition and phonological awareness and are at risk for reading difficulties. Children with high SES background are likely to be proficient on tasks of addition, subtraction, ordinal sequencing and math word problem than children with the low social background (**Coley, 2002**).

2.1.5 Parental Provision of Teaching / Learning Resources

According to UNESCO, Education Digest (2005) participation rate of children learning with disabilities in pre-school units in German and Japan is above 80 percent, while in Africa and the Middle East it is below 20 percent. A study done by **Huebler** (2009) showed that the enrolment of Child learning with disabilities in early childhood education worldwide has decreased in some countries such as the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Low enrollment rate values were also observed in Central, South and East Asia. Enrolment tends to vary due to the huge differences in the level of parental income worldwide. This affects the participation of disabled in class, school and at home. According to **Kochung** (2003), disabled require specifically designed educational resources and materials, both at the individual and school levels based on the nature and extent of disability. However, the high cost of the required unique equipment for disabled is a hindrance to the participation of disabled in ECDE. Kochung, (2003) further indicated that there was the inadequate provision of suitable T/LRs for special children. This has made it complicated for parents with special children to access teachers that are well-matched to the desires of special children. In addition, the Government of Kenya (GoK) has allocated funds to every learner in primary schools and units. This capitation has not been extended to ECDE, resulting in the poor participation of special children. The capitation provided by parents is inadequate for the purchase of T/LRs for special children in early years. This confines the participation of special children in the class, school and outside school set up. T/LRs and school facilities are an important and integral factor that facilitates a child's participation in ECDE.

In order to create and maintain a stimulating learning environment, adequate T/LRs are essential resources should be supplied. Parents play a bigger role in providing textbooks, exercise books, pencils, playing materials, teaching aids and specialized equipment to boost the participation of

special children (Kochung, 2003). In cases where parents are not able to provide the required teaching and learning resources for children with special needs, participation is weak (Bondioli, 2000). Such a situation results in the lowered potential for the affected children to master necessary skills in the learning process. Studies by Olateju (1998) conducted in Ghana and Uganda indicated that lack of resources was positively correlated to pupil's performance. Well-equipped classrooms are resources that are the greatest challenge faced by parents and education authorities including head teachers that have a bearing on quantitative growth and quality of education and pupils' performance. These studies revealed evidence of a relationship between the availability of resources and academic performance in the schools. Eshiwani, (1987) found that in all levels of learning availability of resources such as classrooms, desks, chairs had a positive relationship to quality education. Availability of these facilities contributed to appropriate learning environment hence enabling students to perform well in examinations hence provision of quality education (Earthman, 2006). The Population Council and the Government of Kenya (1997) in a study that established the effects of the material inputs on the performance of single-sex and mixed primary schools revealed different types of materials and resources in a typical primary as being textbooks, library, laboratory, playing fields and science rooms. Examination of the material inputs in selected schools showed that single-sex schools were comparatively better equipped than the mixed schools. The shortage of necessary material inputs in mixed schools was identified as a factor that predicated pupils' academic performance (Population Council and Government of Kenya, 1997).

It is the responsibility of the government to provide funds for instructional related materials for early childhood development and education in order to enhance the teaching and learning processes and thus improve the performance of the learners. Estimates show that about 1 million

school-children need of textbooks, whose cost would be Kshs. 1,960.6 million, but only for which only 3% is provided. As a consequence, lack of sufficient instructional materials is a hindrance to many children from regularly attending school, and who ultimately end up giving up on education. Despite this acute shortage of learning materials which is recognized by the Ministry of Education, over 90% of the government's recurrent education expenditure goes to pay teachers' salaries, with only 1% allocated textbooks (Abagi, 1997) which is apparently an inefficient allocation of resources. When the government fails to provide adequate instructional materials to the children, the burden is shifted to parents. This implies that there is need to examine the viability of Government funding of instructional materials (Okwach, 1997).

3.1 Research Design

The design for this study was cross-sectional survey. Using the cross-sectional survey, the study assessed the indicators of parental involvement, parental-school communication, the parental creation of a conducive home environment and parents' provision appropriate learning and teaching resources.

3.2 Location of the Study

The study was undertaken in Nyandarua West Sub-County, Nyandarua County, with the county being one of seven sub-counties in Nyandarua County. The study focused on public lower schools in the sub-county. The sub-county has 42 public lower primary schools. The respondents were head teachers, parents, children, and public lower primary teachers of the sample schools.

3.3 Target Population

The target population was 2468 as shown in Table 3:1 included 42 primary schools, hence a total of 42 head -teachers, 126 lower primary school teachers, 1300 lower primary school pupils and

approximately 1000 parents of all the sampled schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County (District Education Office Returns).

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The researcher used stratified sampling method and simple random sampling method to acquire the study sample. Stratified sampling is a method where the population is made up of sub-groups or strata. The sampling size was determined by Table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population as shown in Appendix VI. The total sample was 333. It was proportionately allocated to different subgroup as below.

Category	Population	Sample
Head teachers	42	6
Lower Primary school Teachers	126	17
Lower Primary school Pupils	1300	175
Lower Primary school Parents	1000	135
Total	2468	333

3.5 Research Instruments

The researcher used questionnaire, interview schedule and focused group discussion as tools for collecting data from head teachers, lower primary school teachers, children and parents. The Questionnaires were developed for the teachers and head teachers. The questionnaires had sections focusing on the research objectives. They had open-ended and close-ended questions. Questionnaires were distributed to the sample schools and given to head teachers and lower

primary teachers. The researcher and the assistant collected them after two weeks which gave the respondents adequate time to fill in.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

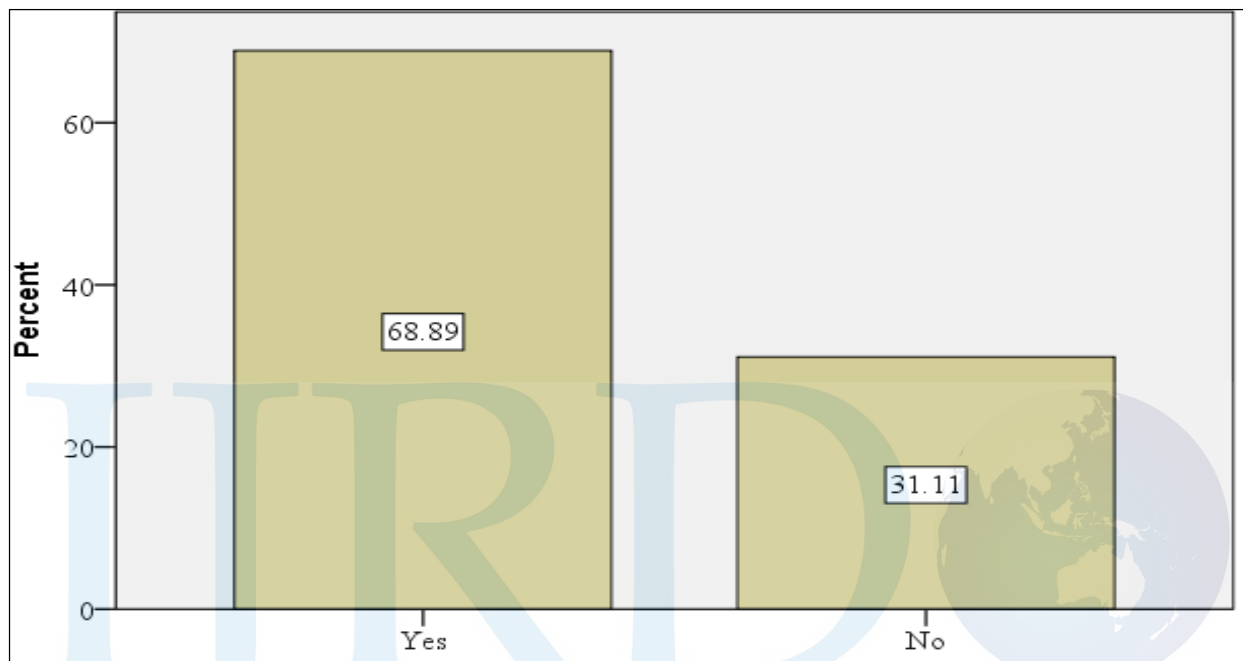
The researcher booked appointments with head teachers of schools to agree on when to administer the questionnaires. On a material day, the researcher created rapport with the respondents and administer the questionnaires to the respondents. The questionnaires were collected immediately they are filled for analysis. The researcher arranged when to meet the parents for focus group discussion and when to present interview schedule for the children. The researcher looked for two research assistants to help in data collection due to time and scope of the study. The interview was used to collect information relevant to the objectives. The researcher met the parents with the assistance of the head teacher.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis follows after the data has been collected. The research yielded both qualitative and quantitative data from the structured and the unstructured items. Coding was done for the structured items. The analysis of the coded data was done using analytical computer package Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 and Microsoft Office Excel 2010. Quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used in which descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages were applied to summarize quantitative data

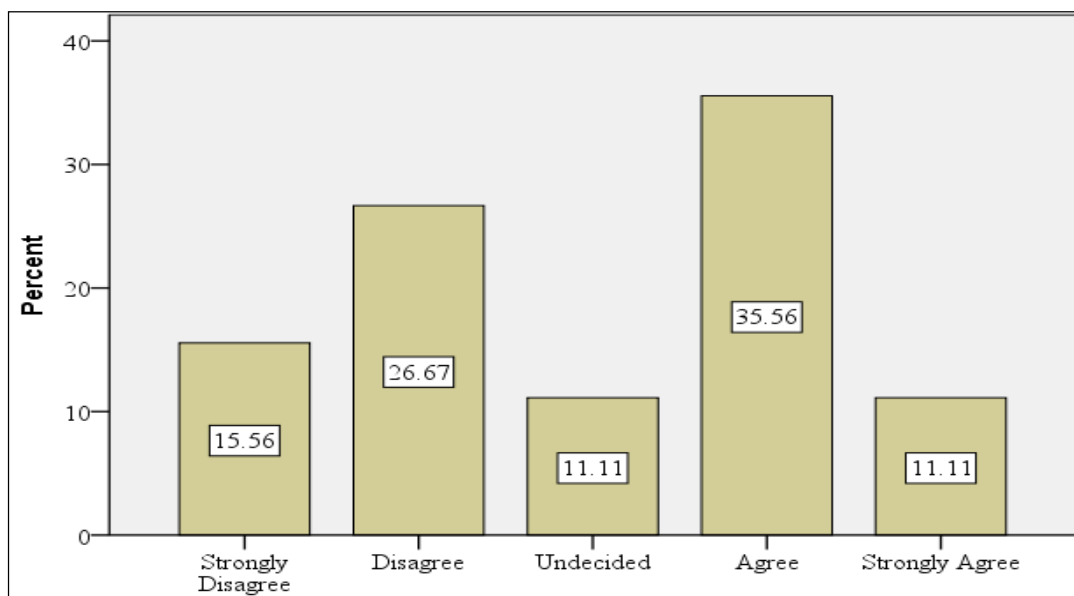
4.1 Research Findings

4.1.1 Parents Are Interested and Cooperative when they Discuss Children Progress With the Teachers



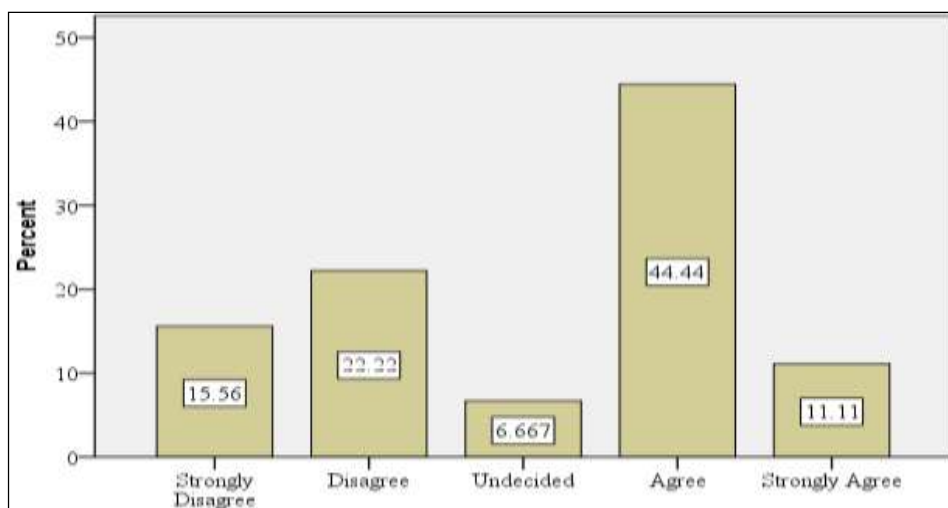
The findings showed that majority (68.89%) agreed that parents in the school were interested and were cooperative when they discussed children's progress with the teachers. The remaining 31.11% disagreed. This implies that the parents in the school were responsible and had the desire to know their children's progress. Parents' interest in the progress of their child is an important indicator of parents' participation.

4.1.2 Parents follow up on their Children's Education



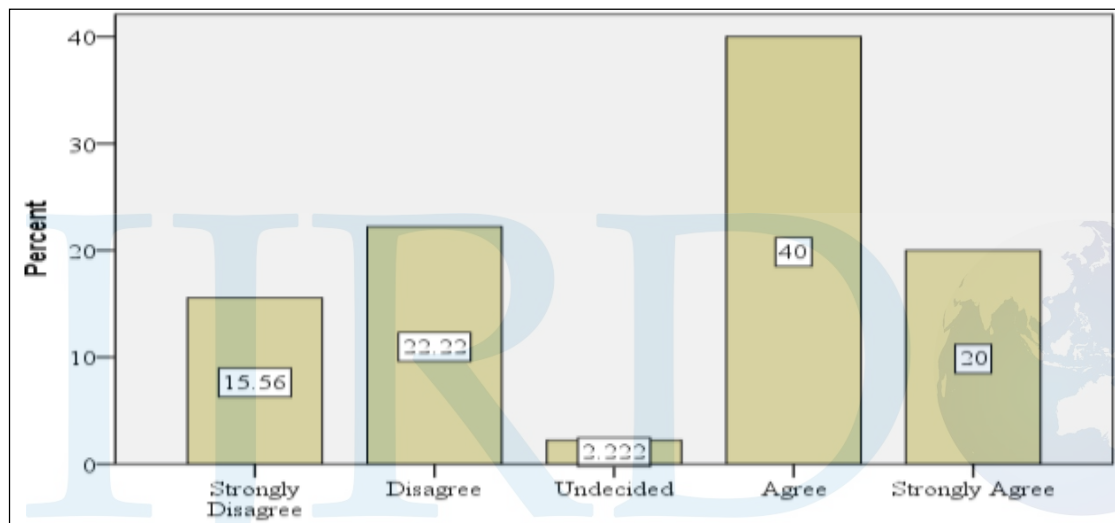
The majority of respondents (46.67%) agreed that parents follow up about their children's education. Pupils were interviewed and 59.3% responded that their parents asked them about their school work. Asking about their homework indicated that parents were actively participating the education of their children. This shows that many parents were interested in their children's education and therefore they kept following up.

4.1.3 Some Parents seem to have Negative Expectations of their Children's Education



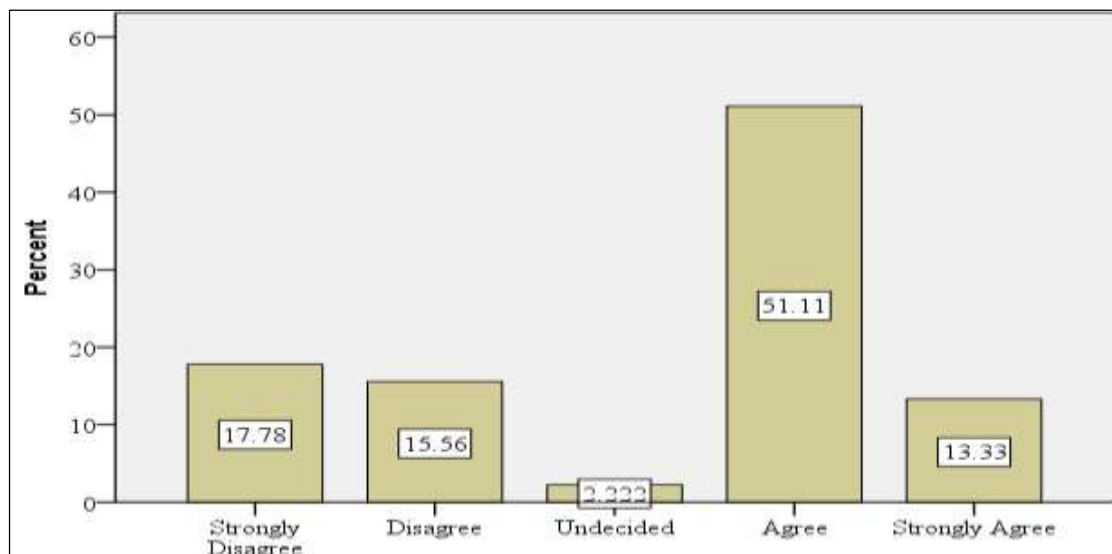
The Figure 4.8 shows that slightly more than half (55.55%) of the respondents agreed that some parents have negative expectations of their children's education while another 37.78% disagreed. This suggests that a good number of parents had negative expectations of their children's education.

4.1.4 Parents from Low Social Economic Status are not fully involved in their Children's Education



The findings showed that majority (60%) of the respondents agreed that parents from low economic status were not fully involved in their children's education while 37.78% disagreed. This means that to a significant extent, parents with low income are not fully involved in their children's education.

4.1.5 Poor Parents are less concerned about their Children's Poor Performance



Majority of the respondents (64.44%) agreed that poor parents were less concerned about their children's poor performance while 33.34% disagreed. This implies that to a significant extent, the majority of the respondents believe that parents who live at poverty level are less concerned about their children's poor performance. Parents of students living above the poverty line were more likely to be involved than parents of students living at or below the poverty line on all measures of involvement.

4.1.6 To What Extent Do Parents Support their Children's Education

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Great Extent	44	30.99
Little Extent	79	55.63
Less Extent	19	13.38
Total	142	100

Results showed that a slight majority (55.63%) of the respondents thought that parents supported their children's education to a little extent. Pupils were interviewed and 64.7% responded that they provided for materials needed for school work. This implies that to a significant extent, parents support their children's education was limited.

4.1.7 How Often Do Parents Help Check Their Child's School Work?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Always	13	9.15
Rarely	123	86.62
Never	6	4.23
Total	142	100

Majority of the respondents (86.62%) indicated that rarely did parents help check their children's school work. Responses from the pupils showed that parents helped children with homework only when the pupils asked for help. The parents cited lack of confidence mostly based on the subject in hand (for example, difficulties with languages). Other parents cited lack of time to assist due to home chores.

4.1.8 Parents Provide for Children to Learn at Home

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	22	15.49
Disagree	48	33.80
Undecided	6	4.23

Agree	60	42.25
Strongly Agree	6	4.23
Total	142	100

The results above show that about half of the respondents (49.29%) disagreed that parents of the school provided for resources for children to learn at home while 46.48% agreed. This means that some parents provided resources for children to learn at home while almost an equal percent did not. This suggests that there is a need for parents to be encouraged to provide materials at home in order to improve the performance of their children in education in the study area.

5.1 Conclusions

The study established that more than half of the respondents agreed that parents in the school were both interested and cooperative on discussing children progress with the teachers. This implies that the parents in the school were responsible and motivated to know their children's academic progress. On whether parents followed up their children's progress, 46.67% of the respondents agreed while 59.3% pupils responded that their parents ask them about their school work. This means that most of the parents were concerned about their children's education and therefore they're following up on it. The study also found that most of the respondents (55.55%) agreed that some parents had negative expectations of their children's education while another 37.78% disagreed. This suggests that a good number of parents had negative expectations of their children's education. It was also found that more than half (60%) of the respondents agreed that parents from low economic status were not fully involved in their children's education. This means that to a significant extent, parents with low income were not fully involved in their children's education. The study also found that more than half (64.44%) of the respondents agreed that poor parents were less concerned about their children's poor performance. The other

33.34% disagreed. This implies that to a significant extent, the majority of parents who live at poverty level were less concerned about their children's poor performance.

The study also established that the majority (86.62%) of the respondents stated that rarely did parents help check their children's school work. This means that most parents rarely helped check their children's school work. It was found that about 80% agreed that parents rarely helped their children with homework. On whether parental support and encouragement about school work was important for academic progress, 91.85% of the respondents agreed. This implies that parental support and encouragement about schoolwork is important for the children's learning. The study further presented that slightly more than half of the respondents agreed that parents provided an appropriate environment for their children to study while 35.6% disagreed. Pupils were interviewed and slightly more than half responded that their parents provided them with the appropriate environment to read at home. This suggests that majority of the parents provide an appropriate environment for their children to study.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions thereof, the study recommends that parents who are not involved in the education of their children should be sensitized to do by both the education officials and by the teachers while those who are involved should be encouraged to continue doing so. School management should strengthen administrative structures that could promote parents' supporting roles and that would remove any barriers to this supportive relationship. For example, teachers could give homework and assignments that explicitly require parents' involvement. Education policymakers should formulate policy frameworks that boost parents' involvement in the education of their children. Parents should be involved with their children's homework. In addition, both the Government and the parents should put more effort in ensuring

they provide teaching and learning materials at home. Teachers and education officers should help parents develop a positive attitude towards the education of their children. The study further recommends that the Government should seek to empower parents economically in order to improve education for lower primary public school children. This can be achieved by developing a multi-sectoral approach that looks at other facets of the social-economic life of the parents.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

The study recommends the following for further research:

- i. A replica of the study in other sub-counties, counties and the nation
- ii. The role of parents in children's learning process and outcome
- iii. A cross-sectional survey on the influence of different stakeholders on the access to education to primary school children
- iv. The influence of poverty on the success of free primary school education in Kenya.

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