



AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT CONTRIBUTION ON THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN TANZANIA

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Abstract:

Parental involvement is very important in student's learning and academic progress in primary schools. However, the combined impact of various factors, including poverty, illiteracy in some families, lack of time, language, and lack of knowledge about the curriculum, especially among the parents, makes their effective involvement in their children's education challenging. This study utilized the social capital theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu and the community participation theory by Sherry Arnstein to have a clear understanding of the study. The combination of the two theories provided an understanding of parental involvement in primary school education in the study area. The study employed a descriptive research design that used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The targeted population consisted of public primary school students, teachers, head teachers, ward education officers, and school-going students' parents. Questionnaires, interview guides and documentary reviews were used to collect information about parental involvement in public primary schools. Qualitative data was analyzed mainly through thematic analysis, and SPSS software was used to analyze the quantitative data. Simple statistics have been presented in tables and figures to depict the frequencies, percentages and means in relation to the findings of the study. The study found that parental involvement contributes much to the lives of schools. Without it, it could be hard to run the school's activities. This is because the schools are better managed

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through the collective efforts of both teachers and parents, as well as other educational stakeholders in the community. Therefore, the government should educate parents about the necessity of their involvement in schools so as to be ready to take responsibility for supporting their children in different ways.

Keywords: academic performance, parental involvement, parental support, primary schools' academic performance

1. Introduction

Parents are among the most vital people in the lives of their children. They are said to be the first teachers of their children, for they teach and encourage them to do various things. They can be involved in helping the children improve their schoolwork, providing encouragement, and arranging for appropriate study time and space. Durisic and Bunijevac (2017) state that the major reason for such involvement is to help students succeed in school. Similarly, Jafarov (2015) explains that parental involvement is an investment in the children's education.

The professionals' perspectives may be quite different from the parents' perspectives when it comes to parental involvement in schools. Teachers can be less willing to involve parents in curriculum issues and decision-making for various issues (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). Nevertheless, the level of parental involvement in schools is associated with the students' improved academic success (Jafarov, 2015). Children whose parents are actively involved in their schooling have been found to profit better than the ones whose parents are passively involved (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

From these points of view, there is a strong relationship between parental involvement and primary school academic performance. Many scholars believe that it is crucial for parents to feel that they are involved in the education processes of their children. Likewise, it is important for children to feel that their parents are well involved in what they do outside their homes, particularly in schools. Indeed, children may have more beliefs and trust in their parents than teachers who are potentially not part of their families. Parents are the most influential to children, and they are the first to format the children's minds (Jafarov, 2015). Therefore, the interaction between teachers and parents in the students' learning process will create good spirits for students, who will believe that parents are part and parcel of the teachers.

In America, Park and Holloway (2018), quoting Epstein (1995), explain that parental school involvement may be grouped into six groups that include: maintaining regular two-way communication with schools, volunteering to support school activities, helping children to learn at home, participating in school decision making, collaborating with the community and parenting to create conducive home environment for children. In this case, parental involvement is not only buying school uniforms and the like but also volunteering to help out with school activities. Apart from that, parents can serve as advisers for the school management. Watson, Lawson & McNeal (2012) point out that

American parental involvement in the prosperity of the students has long been the concern of public officials. Family involvement in the welfare of children in both health and education has been there for decades. In the United States, however, parents of school-going children began to become involved in school matters only at the beginning of the twentieth century (Tekin, 2014).

In the Asian continent, researchers explain parental involvement in children's education as the activities that parents do in the education sector which are considered worthy of the educational attainments of their children. Salac and Florida (2022) argue that the concept of parental involvement is not new at all. It has already been around since schooling started. However, not everyone is conscious of how parental support or involvement in many ways affects the success of the children's education. Parental involvement involves many techniques that lead to students' success. In addition, Rafiq Fatima, Sohail, Saleem, & Khan (2013) state that the more the parents involve themselves in the process of providing education to their children and the more the children get better in their academic achievement, the more they become the productive and responsible citizens of the society.

Factors such as poverty, illiteracy in some families, lack of time, language, and lack of curriculum knowledge among the parents challenge their effective involvement in their children's education. In addition, many school-going children have to participate with their parents in activities that contribute to their families' income. These include small businesses, farming and animal husbandry. All these activities may hinder the parents from taking into consideration the importance of education to their children. They may thus not see the need to effectively involve themselves with school activities or even be close to their children academically. All they care about is their children performing productive activities in their homes (Kimaro & Machumu, 2015). Despite these challenges, Yonson (2016) and Sumarsono, Imro, Wiyono, & Arifin (2016) assert that the provision of quality education anywhere is a shared responsibility among three entities, which are the parents, the community and the government. These three elements, with their importance, have a great responsibility to ensure the realization of the quality of education and hence improve the schools' academic performance (Sumarsono *et al.*, 2016). Indeed, students' academic performance is one of the determinants of quality education (Halala & Seni, 2022). Thus, Cano, Cape, Cardosa, Miot, Pitogo, and Quinio (2016) emphasize that the schools' and homes' efforts should mutually work in offering help to the student's school academic success.

In Tanzania, parents of school-going children, like any other parents in other countries in the world, wish that their children receive the best education. They usually make selections based on their knowledge and experience in education. Despite all these, poor academic performance has remained one of the challenges facing the education sector (Kahangwa & Kafanabo, 2023). This means that, among other things, the proportion of parental involvement in enhancing their children's academic performance is still low (Seni & Onyango, 2021; Kagosi, Mandila, & Koda 2021). In fact, some parents still feel that the sole responsibility for their children's education is in the hands of

teachers and the government alone. Nevertheless, as it is widely recognized, students' academic performance can be raised when the government and the teachers have the full support of the parents as well as of the community. It is expected that parents play a big role not only in the promotion of the children's academic achievement but also in the improvement of school effectiveness in various other aspects (Sumarsono *et al.*, 2016).

Many studies have explored the issue of parental involvement's critical yet underappreciated role in improving academic performance in Tanzania's primary schools. Despite the recognized benefits of parental participation, various barriers such as poverty, illiteracy, limited time, and a lack of understanding of the curriculum hinder effective engagement. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the contribution of parental involvement on the school's academic performance, identify the forms of involvement, highlight the significance of this involvement for educational success, investigate the involvement challenges and propose strategies to improve parental participation in primary schools.

The study was meant to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how fostering stronger parent-school partnerships can enhance school management and boost students' outcomes, as well as highlight the importance of the audience's role in this process. The findings were also expected to be valuable for educators, policymakers and communities striving to improve the quality of primary education in Tanzania.

2. Methodology

2.1 Area of the Study

The study was conducted in the Igunga District Council in Tabora region, Tanzania. The district is resided by people from different places in Tanzania such as from Singida, Shinyanga, Mwanza, Kagera and Kilimanjaro regions. The selection of the Igunga District as the study area was therefore based on its richness in cultural diversity from different ethnic groups whose findings would represent different parts of the country. Apart from that, the nature of social and economic activities of the area, that is, farming and a large scale of animal husbandry, raised some concerns about the parents' understanding and readiness when it comes to their involvement in school matters and students' academic performance. The study was carried out in two wards, namely Igunga ward, which is located in the urban setting with three selected primary schools. The other ward was Mbutu ward, which is situated in a rural area with three purposely selected villages: Mbutu, Ganyawa and Bukama, and each village has one school.

2.2 Research Design and Approach

This study employed a descriptive research design to provide an in-depth description of the situation at hand. The study, on the other hand, made use of the mixed research approach, that is, the use of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study. This was purposely done in order to get a wider and deeper insight into the

research problem and overcome the weaknesses that might occur through employing a single research approach.

2.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

In this study, the researcher purposely selected 2 Wards, one ward from the urban setting and the other from a rural setting. In each Ward, three public primary schools were also purposely selected to make a total of 6 public primary schools representing both the central and the peripheral areas. The study covered only public primary schools because private primary schools, to some extent, are working well in academic performance, which is why it attracts some economically well-off parents to take their children to those schools, expecting them to succeed academically. The study also involved 2 Ward Education Officers, six head teachers, eighteen teachers, twenty-four parents, and one hundred and eight primary school students.

In this study, the researcher utilized two types of sampling techniques, namely, simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. The simple random sampling technique helped to obtain the sample without biases as it provided equal opportunities for selection for each individual in the population (Cresswell, 2014). The technique was used to select students and teachers for the questionnaire survey. A simple random sampling technique was also used to select the sample schools, that is, the primary schools from the urban and rural settings categories.

The purposive sampling technique was targeted to select the ward education officers, head teachers and the parents of the school-going students in the respective schools. This is because they were responsible for the supervision and monitoring of the teaching and learning processes. Also, they were selected because they were expected to provide detailed relevant information, they possessed enough working experience, and they held important educational administrative positions in their respective areas.

2.4 Data Collection Methods

In this study, data was collected through different methods. The following were the methods which were used:

2.4.1 Key Informants Interviews

The key informant interview was used to collect realistic data from parents of students studying in primary schools, head teachers, and ward education officers. The study used semi-structured questions because they were flexible, and in-depth information was gathered by using open-ended questions, from which the researcher gained a clear and detailed understanding of the issue under study.

2.4.2 Questionnaire Survey

The prepared questionnaires contained open-ended and close-ended questions. Questionnaires were administered to teachers and students in order to get more time to digest the questions and provide appropriate answers. The method was useful for

collecting information for a large number of respondents in a relatively reasonable period of time.

2.4.3 Documentary Review

The documentary review method was employed to obtain information from various documents, such as the minutes of school meetings and school academic reports, to see the trends in the issue under study.

2.5. Data Analysis

In this study, qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to analyze the data. Qualitative data was analyzed manually using thematic analysis to account for what was found in the field. In this case, quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS software and presented in tables and figures depicting the frequencies, means, and percentages.

3. Results

3.1 The Forms of Parental Involvement and Contribution in the Primary Schools

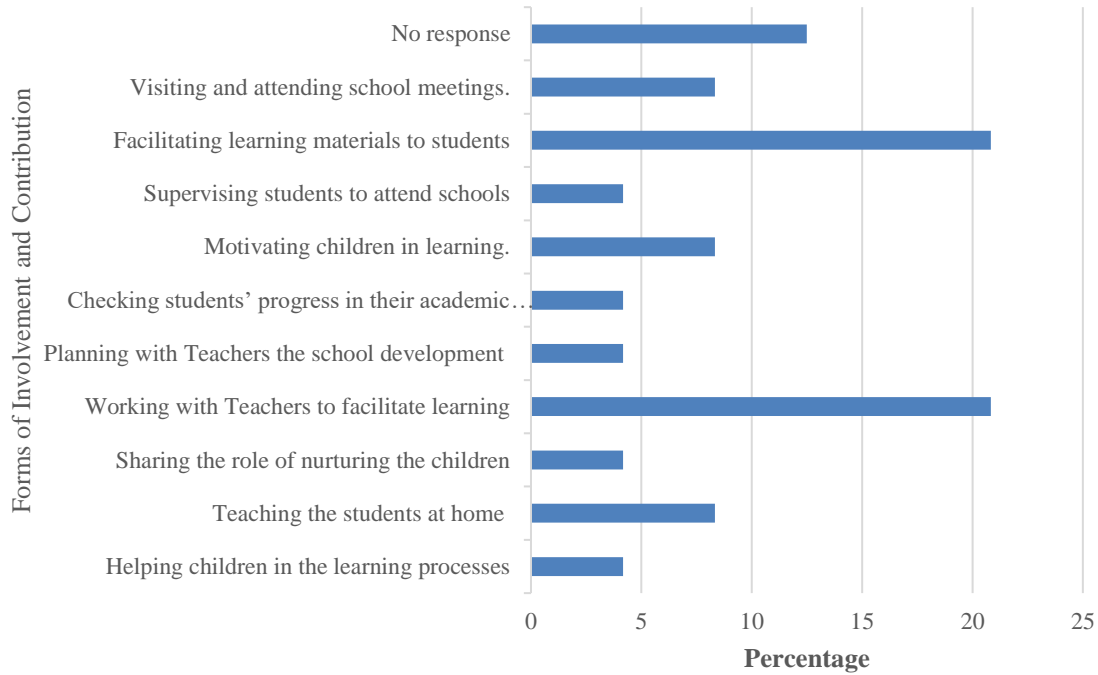
The objective was guided by the theory of community participation, which was developed by Sherry Arnstein in the year 1969, and it attempts to present the concept of citizens' participation (Nombo, 2021). The study revealed that parental involvement in the primary school level contributed to motivating students in their learning process, enhancing school academic performance, instructing children about the school lessons, increasing school performance, encouraging students to put more effort into their studies, supporting the learning materials, being close with children and counselling them, working together with teachers aiming to achieve the desired educational goals, visiting and attending to school meetings and being involved in the decision making in matters related to the schools' and students wellbeing's. Data show that 1 (4.17%) of the parents agreed to help their children in their learning processes, 2 (8.33%) of them taught their children at home, 1 (4.17%) of the parents agreed that they helped in the role of nurturing the children, 5 (20.83%) reported to work together with the teachers to facilitate school learning, 1 (4.17%) used to plan together with the teachers about school development, 1 (4.17%) used to check the children's academic progress, 2 (8.33%) of them agreed to motivate students in to put more efforts in learning, 1 (4.17%) supervised students to attend school, 5 (20.83%) provided school learning materials to their children, 2 (8.33%) of them reported to visit schools and attend school meetings. In comparison, 3 (12.50%) of the respondents showed no response. From this observation, there are various responses to the contribution of parental involvement in primary schools' academic performance.

Based on these data, many respondents, amounting to about 42%, responded to each of the responses in numbers 4 and 9. This means that many parents worked together

with the teachers to facilitate school learning, and they also provided some school learning materials to their children.

An analysis of the responses in these aspects is summarized in Figure 1:

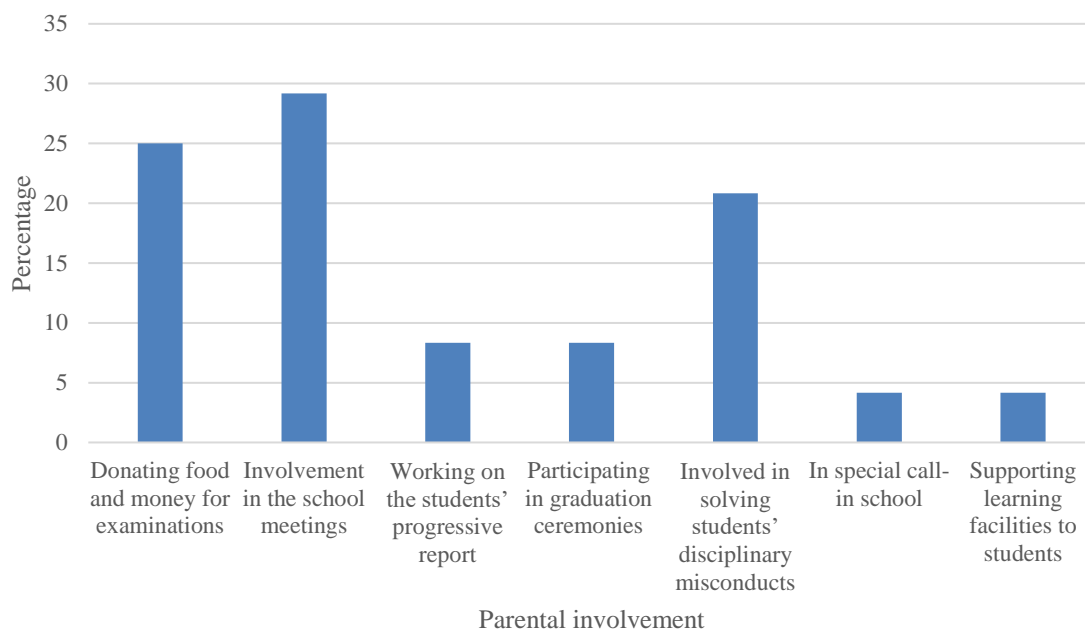
Figure 1: Forms of Parent’s Involvement and Contributions in the Primary Schools Academic Performance (PSAP)



Source: Field Data (2024).

On the other hand, when the researcher wanted to know from the teachers the ways in which the parents were involved in school matters, they responded as follows: Also, the information about this issue was collected from the teachers. The findings show that 25% of them said that parents donated food and money for the school’s academic activities such as examinations, 20.17% agreed that some parents attended school meetings, 8.33% agreed that parents received and worked on the students’ progressive reports and also that the parents participated in preparing the graduation ceremonies for their children, 20.83% of the teachers said that the parents participated in solving the disciplinary problems of the students whereas 4.17% of the parents were reported to attend special calls from the schools and that they also bought some school learning facilities for their children. So, it can be seen that as the parents report it, teachers also confirmed that some parents participated in some school matters in various ways. Hereunder, Figure 2 summarizes these data.

Figure 2: Teachers' Responses on Forms and Contribution PI in School Matters



Source: Field Data (2024).

The head teachers from one of the primary schools further argued about the contribution of parental involvement in the primary schools' academic performance. The head teacher insisted that parental involvement is essential in schools by saying the following:

“Parental involvement contributes much in the schools' activities. Without parental involvement in schools, it could be hard to effectively run the school activities. This is because the schools are managed through the collective efforts of both the teachers and parents including other educational stakeholders in the community. In other words, it may be difficult for the schools to satisfactorily achieve their goals without involving the parents.” (Source: Interview with the head teacher in school A, May 2024).

The same point was supported by one of the ward education officers in the study area, who contributed by saying as follows:

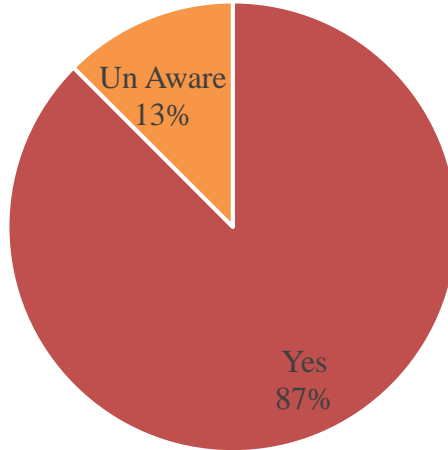
“School activities are well performed through the collaboration between schools' parental involvement at both the home and school environment, which plays a crucial role in enhancing the schools' and students' academic performance, which is the ultimate goal of the whole process.” (Source: Interview with WEO, May 2024).

3.2 The Importance of the Parental Involvement in the Schools

When the parents were asked through interviews about the importance of parental involvement in primary schools' academic performance, from the study, 87% of parents responded with a 'yes' response, none of them responded 'no', and 13 % of the parents

responded that they were unaware of that parental involvement contributed to the primary schools' academic performance. The data thus suggests that many parents were aware that parental involvement contributed to the primary schools' academic performance. These data are summarized as follows in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Parents' Responses on the Importance of Parental Involvement in the Schools



Source: Field Data (2024).

In addition, from the research data, it is shown that 17 (94.4%) of the teachers responded "yes" and 1 (5.6%) of them responded "no" on the question of whether there was a need of the parents to be involved in the school's academic improvement. This means that teachers generally agreed that parental involvement was important in the primary schools' academic performance. The hereunder Table 1 summarizes this caption.

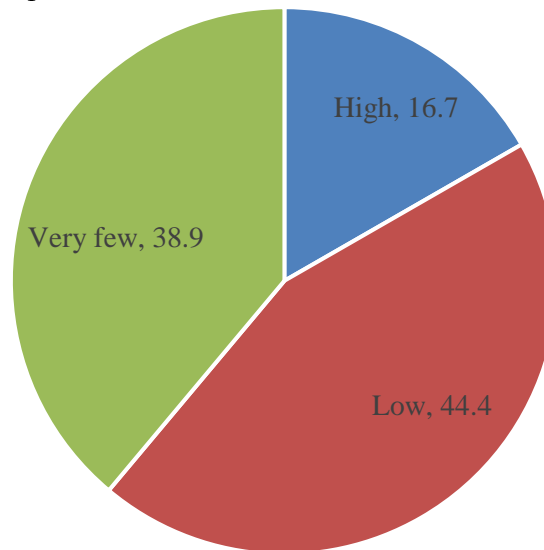
Table 1: Teachers' Responses on the Importance of Parental Involvement in the Schools

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	17	94.4
No	1	5.6
Total	18	100.0

Source: Field Data (2024).

Also, the teachers were then asked to approximate the levels of parental involvement in the students' learning processes whose responses are as indicated that 16.7% of the teachers opined the level of parental involvement to be high, 44.4% viewed it to be low, whereas 38.9% of them responded that it is was very few parents who involved themselves in the students' learning processes. Hence, the general picture is that parental involvement in the student's learning processes was moderately low. This means that most of the parents were not fully involved in their primary school children's learning processes. Figure 4 summarizes these data.

Figure 4: Teachers Responses on the Levels of PI in the Students' Learning Processes



Source: Field Data (2024).

3.3 Challenges in Parental Involvement in Primary Schools

The researcher interviewed the respondents about the challenges in parental involvement in primary schools, and they provided various responses. One of the parents with a primary school child argued as follows:

“School administrations lack faithfulness with the money collected for school projects and programmes. When they collect money, there is close cooperation between leaders and parents. Nevertheless, after the money collection, there is silence. No report is provided to parents, which hinders and brings a barrier between the school and parents, who are important education stakeholders.” (Interview with a parent, May 2024)

This point was supported by another parent who said the following:

“We [parents] are valued by school management when it comes to the issues of contributions, but after that, nobody is bothered about us. Also, no feedback is ever given concerning the contributions. This is quite a wrong way of handling organizational matters concerning school management.” (Interview with a parent, May 2024)

However, one of the head teachers contrarily insisted that:

“There is little awareness to parents about school matters, which is caused by the misunderstanding of the policy of fee-free education as a roadmap of daily school supervision. Sometimes, this is a result of a lack of education in general. The education stakeholders should work on educating parents so that they can be well sensitized about the school matter and their responsibilities to the children.” (Interview with head teacher May, 2024).

Also, Ward education officer contributed to the ongoing argument as follows:

"Some parents do not attend meetings effectively, and if they attend the school meetings, they are unwilling to play a part in decision-making. This is because they feel that they have nothing valuable to contribute to the ongoing discussion of the agenda." (Interview with a ward education officer, May 2024).

In addition, one of the parents explained the following:

"Sometimes, we parents are less involved in the school's decision-making. We feel that the work of educating is only in the hands of the teachers who are trained professionally to teach. However, school management should involve parents because they are key stakeholders in the education sector. Ignoring them may result in poor academic performance in schools. Therefore, parents need to be involved properly in decision making and planning of different projects and even in the school's academic programmes." (Interview with a parent, May 2024)

The challenges in the parental involvement in the school's academic performance are further highlighted by another parent who shared that:

"Lack of school meetings is a great problem because meetings are one of the means of communication between the schools and the parents. Lack of communication will create gaps between the schools and the parents; therefore, nothing better will be achieved in schools. For example, in students' misconducts or in disciplinary acts, if a parent is not informed of student improper behaviours and desirable behaviours to students, the issue will not be addressed properly and effectively." (Interview with parents, May 2024).

Then, one of the head teachers gave the following argument in relation to the challenges of parental involvement.

"Many parents do not involve themselves in school decision-making because they do not attend the meetings effectively. This causes them to miss some meetings which may decide some important things for the schools' welfare. As a result, parents fail to implement the resolutions decided upon during the legal school meetings. Therefore, even if the parents may be busy with their other activities, they must try as much as possible to attend school meetings because they have an important part to play in the management of the schools." (Interview with head teachers, May 2024)

Another head teacher, on discussing the ongoing argument, had the following to share:

“The society expects that parents should work together with the schools for school policy implementation, but in reality, parents have practically been against this because they do not comply with what has been emphasized by the school leaders. In other words, parents have been a source to weaken the school’s effort towards the good school’s academic performance.” (Interview with head teacher, May 2024)

Based on these findings, schools and parents should not end up complaining; instead, they should work together as partners in order to achieve the set goals and achieve high academic performance.

Furthermore, the information shows that 5 (20.8%) of the parents agreed to the number 1 response, 2 (8.5%) of them agreed to the number 2 and 3 responses, respectively, 4 (16.7%) agreed to the number 4 response, 6 (25.0%) agreed to the number 5 response, 3 (12.5%) agreed to the number 6 response while 1 (4.2%) of the parents agreed to both number 7 and 8 responses. Therefore, the above analysis indicates that an average of 15 (62.5%) respondents agreed that there is a lack of faithfulness in school money usage in the projects and programmes initiated. There are too many schools’ contributions from the parents despite the existence of the fee-free education policy and less parental involvement in the students’ disciplinary misconduct.

Table 2 indicates the challenges facing parents’ involvement in primary schools.

Table 2: Challenges Facing Parental Involvement in Primary Schools

S/N	Parental Involvement	N	%
1.	Lack of faithfulness in school money usage.	5	20.8
2.	School committees work alone.	2	8.3
3.	Parents are rarely involved and lack of feedback.	2	8.3
4.	Lack of involvement in the students’ disciplinary issues.	4	16.7
5.	Many school contributions from the parents.	6	25.0
6.	Lack of money reports.	3	12.5
7.	Late involvement on the children’s disciplinary issues.	1	4.2
8.	No response.	1	4.2
	Total	24	100.00

Source: Field Data (2024).

Also, one of the challenges in parental involvement in primary schools is that there is an ineffective academic performance in the study area. The students, as well as the school, have not shown good academic performance. Data show that in 2020, the Mean of Academic Performance Result (M.A.P.R) is 92.7%, failure students were 3%, drop out of students is at the 5.3%, the gender of the students leading in school dropout is female by 66.7%. The gender of students leading to failure is female for 75%. In 2021, the M.A.P.R of students was 73.3%, the failure of students was 24.7%, the dropout of students was 6.43%, the gender of students leading the school dropout was female by 60%, and the gender of students leading to the failure was female by 54.5%. In the year 2022, the M.A.P.R. of students was 88.6%, the failure of students was 11.3%, the dropout of students was 3%, the gender of students leading for failure was males by 66.7%, and the

gender of students leading in failure was the females by 56.5%. In the year 2023, the M.A.P.R of students was 93%, the failure of students was 7.0%, drop out of students was 7.10%, the gender of students leading in school dropout was females by 54.5%, and the gender of students leading in failure was also females by 79.9%. Therefore, female students were leading in both school dropping outs and failures in four different years, is 2020 to 2023. This implies that the challenges in parental involvement in the schools' academic performance have a negative impact on the female students.

The following Table 3 hereunder summarizes the data of ineffectiveness academic performance analysis of one of the wards in the study area and presents data such as the data of failure, dropping out and the like.

Table 3: One of the Ward's Academic Performance in the S.T.D. VII National Examination Results 2020 - 2023

Year	M.A.P.R. (%)	Failure (%)	Drop Out (%)	Leading Gender to Drop Out (%)	Leading Gender to Failure (%)
2020	92.7	7.3	5.03	Female - 66.7	Female - 75
2021	73.3	24.7	6.43	Female - 60	Female - 54.5
2022	88.6	11.3	3.0	Male - 66.7	Female - 56.5
2023	93.0	7.0	7.10	Female - 54.5	Female - 79.9

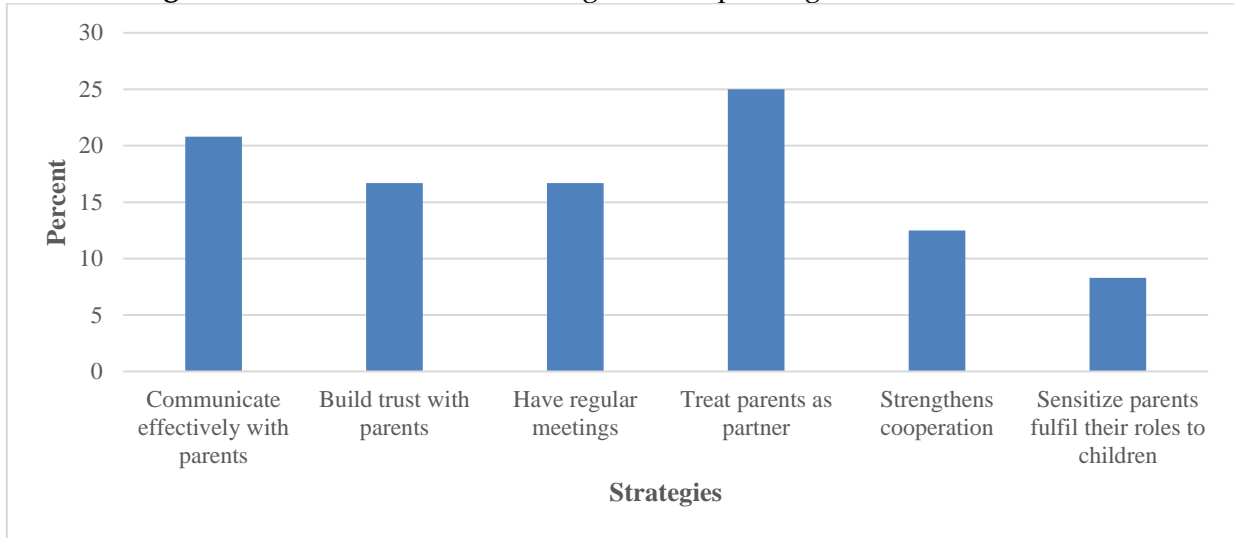
Source: Field Data (2024).

3.4 Perceived Strategies to Improve/ Attract Parental Involvement in Primary Schools

It is important to assess the parents and the teacher's views about parental involvement in the children's education and identify potential areas for strengthening and expanding their partnerships. In this way, the government, parents, teachers and students should work jointly towards one common goal in order to obtain good performance and achieve high students' academic results.

The respondents had perceived strategies for improving parental involvement in primary schools. When the parents were asked about what should be done so as to improve parental involvement in primary schools, they provided various opinions as indicates that 5 (20.8%) of parents opined to number one. 4(16.7%) of parents opined to number two. 4 (16.7%) of parents opined to number three. 6 (25%) of parents opined to number four. 3 (12.5%) of parents opined to number five. 2 (8.3%) of parents opined to number six. From these data many parents opined to number 4 and 1 respectively. This shows that most parents (about 46%) perceived that teachers should treat parents as partners and communicate at the same level as parents. Hereunder, Figure 4 is a summary of these data.

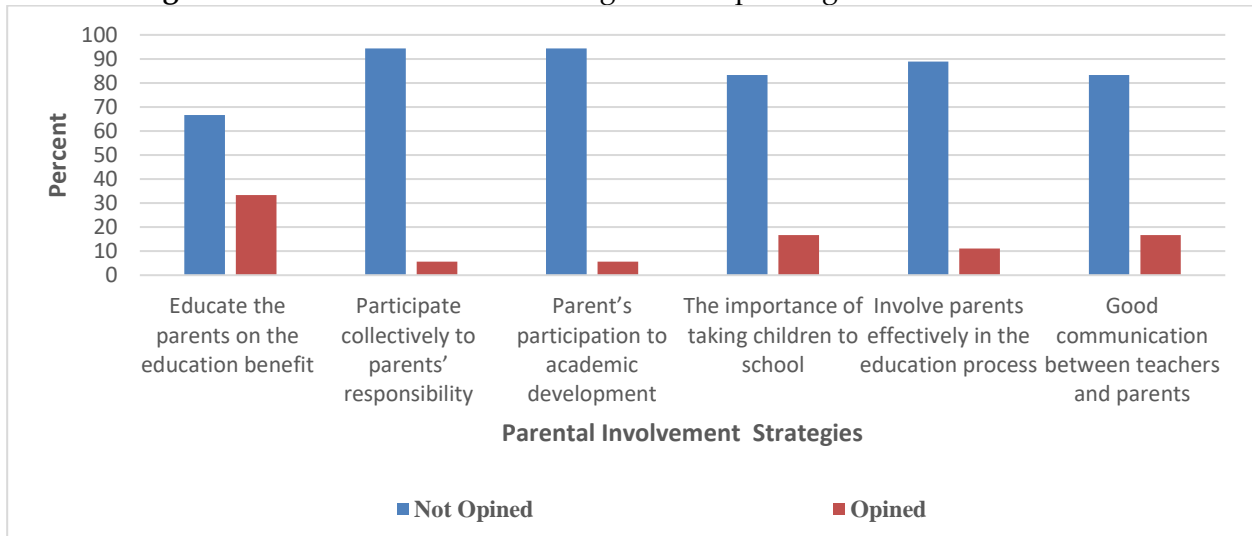
Figure 4: Parents' Perceived Strategies on Improving Parental Involvement



Source: Field Data (2024).

However, the following are the most common opinions on what needs to be done so as to improve parental involvement in primary schools. 33.3% of teachers opined to number one, 5.6% of teachers opined to number two, 5.6% of teachers opined to number three, 16.7% of teachers opined to number four, 11.1% of teachers opined to number five and 16.7% of teachers opined to number six. From these data, many teachers responded to the numbers 1, 4 and 6 responses, which are to educate the parents on the education benefits to their children as well as to sensitize parents on the importance of taking children to school and good communication between teachers and parents. Figure 5 below summarizes the teachers' opinions on what to be done so as to improve parental involvement in primary schools.

Figure 5: Teachers' Perceived Strategies on Improving Parental Involvement

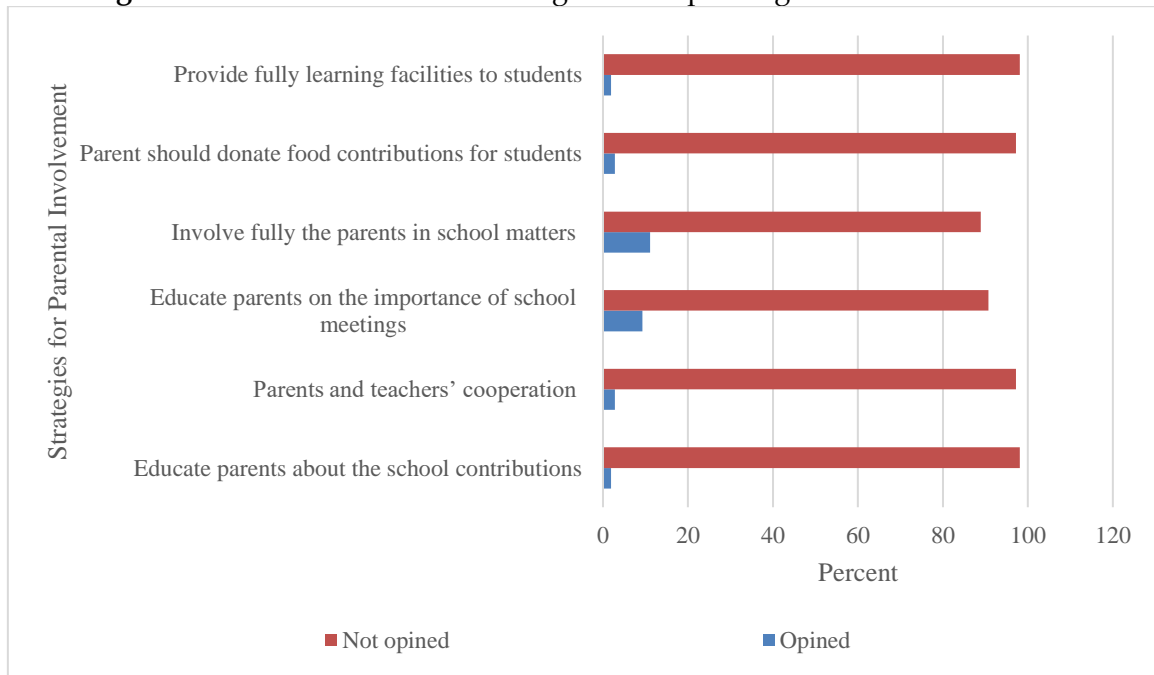


Source: Field Data (2024).

Also, the study indicates that 2 (1.9%) of students opined on number one, 3 (2.8%) of students opined on number two, 10 (9.3%) students opined on number three, 12 (11.1%) of students opined on number four, 3 (2.8%) students opined on number five, whereas 2 (1.9%) of students opined to number six. Based on these data, many students who opined to responses number 4 and 3, respectively, which are: involve fully the parents in school matters and educate parents on the importance of school meetings

Figure 6 below analyses, in short, the students' opinions on what needs to be done so as to improve parental involvement.

Figure 6: Students' Perceived Strategies on Improving Parental Involvement



Source: Field Data (2024).

On the other hand, a ward education officer also had the following to say in relation to this:

“The government and all education stakeholders need to educate parents about the importance of education to their children. Many parents are unaware of the importance of education in general, and that is why they do not fully support the learning materials for their children.” (Source: Interview with the WEO, May 2024).

One of the head teachers gave the following argument in relation to this:

“The government needs to work together with other agencies to educate parents and support their children in acquiring education. Parents must invest to the education of their children so as to benefit from them. So, the work of educating the parents should be a shared responsibility of both the government and all education stakeholders.” (Interview with head teacher, May 2024)

In relation to this, another head teacher was quoted giving the following comments:

"All the education stakeholders need to sensitize the parents to understand the fee-free education policy so as to be aware of their roles in supporting children in their learning process while they are schooling. The fee-free education policy seems not to be understood by parents of school-going children." (Interview with the head teacher May, 2024)

4. Discussion

4.1 Perceptions of Parental Involvement in the Primary School

The findings show that the respondents had great awareness of the concept of parental involvement based on the different answers that they provided. Respondents explained the concept of parental involvement in different ways. However, most of the answers seemed to mean helping children with buying school uniforms, buying learning materials, attending school activities and collaborating with teachers in solving the students' disciplinary misconducts.

Similarly, the study by Merryness & Rupia (2022) revealed that parents were involved in school meetings and were involved in solving the students' disciplinary misconduct. This means that the school administration should involve the parents in the school meetings to make decisions together on school plans and address the challenges such as students' misconduct.

Indeed, students are not likely to do better in schools if their disciplines are not monitored (Merryness & Rupia, 2022). Frances (2021) also says that the active involvement of the parents and guardians of the children in all the programmes and projects of the schools inspires and encourages the school administrators, teachers, non-teaching personnel and, most of all, the students to do their best in schools.

Again, Seni and Onyango (2021) argue that parental involvement entails helping children with their homework, purchasing school uniforms, buying learning resources for the children, communicating with the schools, attending school activities that are relevant to the improvement of school performance in various aspects and having high expectations for the children's progress.

However, Kagosi *et al.* (2021) study found that there are still some parents who do not regularly attend school meetings or make follow-ups on their children's education. All the stakeholders should bear in mind that parental involvement in the school's decision-making gives them a sense of responsibility for their children's learning.

4.2 The Importance of the Parental Involvement in the Primary Schools' Matters

The current research findings show that many parents were working together with teachers and were providing learning materials to students in order to get good school academic performance. This implies that parents were willing to help their children in learning so as to perform well academically. Therefore, parents contributed much in

motivating students in their learning processes, increasing school performance, encouraging students to put more effort into their studies, supporting them with the learning materials, being close to the children and counselling them as well as visiting and attending the school meetings. Based on these findings, the parents should further work with the schools with the aim of achieving better school academic achievement. This is because there is a positive relationship between parental involvement in their children's education and schools' academic achievement.

These findings concur with those of Mwakililo and Mgaya (2021), who conducted a study on the influence of parental involvement on student's academic achievement in community secondary schools in Tanzania: A case of Mbeya City. The research revealed that there was a strong and positive relationship between parents' involvement in school affairs and students' academic achievement. The study made it clear that students whose parents were more involved in their education had better chances of improving their academic achievement than those whose parents were less involved.

Furthermore, Kimaro and Machumu (2015) researched the impact of parental involvement in school activities on the academic achievements of primary school children in Arusha City. The study revealed a significant and positive relationship between parental involvement in the schooling of their children and their academic achievement.

In addition, the study found that parents were involved in making monetary and non-monetary contributions such as food and money for examinations. Such contributions, for example, helped to provide regular meals for their children at school as well as help in the schools' academic activities such as funding internal examinations and other stationery costs.

In this direction, Mwakililo and Mgaya (2021) found that school lunch is extremely important since a hungry child cannot learn better. So, parents are responsible for improving students' educational outcomes by ensuring that they get proper meals at school.

From an Asian perspective, Rafiq *et al.* (2013) also found that parental involvement had a significant effect on the academic performance of their children. Salac and Florida (2022) again support this idea that school-going children do better in school when their parents are involved in their academic lives and that parental involvement plays a great role in positively influencing the academic performance of the learners.

Furthermore, the study findings indicate that both teachers and parents explain that parental involvement is essential for the better future of the lives of the children. The implication of this is that parents and teachers were aware of the necessity of parental involvement in primary schools. This means that parental involvement also helps the children to succeed in their future lives and thus be fruitful to their parents as well as to society in general.

This idea is in line with the findings of Kagosi *et al.* (2021) that even though the role of a parent in their children's education evolves as children get older, it is important to remember that parents remain role models. Their attitudes towards education can both

inspire children and empower them as they go through their own life journeys. This is because parental involvement equips their children with the knowledge and skills that will help them to be productive in their social lives (Yonson, 2016).

4.3 Challenges in the Parental Involvement in Primary Schools

The findings of this study indicated that the school administrators lacked faithfulness on the schools' collected money to initiate projects and programmes as complained by the parents. This implies that some school administrators misuse the money collected from the parents. This discourages the parents from further making school contributions. The results reveal that some school administrators misappropriate the collected money and deviate it to other expenditures. The upper levels of leadership should better supervise the collected monetary resources for the purpose of creating a sense of trust among the educational stakeholders in the school management.

Furthermore, the research findings show that in primary schools, there were many contributions required from the parents, such as food and money for examinations. This implies that the fee-free education policy is lacking something in its implementation in primary schools. This makes the schools impose some unnecessary contributions to supplement the school budgets. The introduction of too many school contributions to parents consequently sounds like a disturbance and raises complaints with the school-going children's parents. It also sounds like a complete misinterpretation of the fee-free policy among the parents, teachers and educational administrators.

This might sound slightly contrary to the findings by Sumarsono *et al.* (2016), who found that the schools really need help or parental participation in the financial aspect for the survival of the schools. The argument is that if parents are not involved in the contributions, the schools may fail to run or achieve their academic programmes effectively and efficiently.

Moreover, the findings portray that there is less parental involvement in solving the students' disciplinary misconduct. This implicates the parents as leaving this responsibility to the teachers. This is a wrong attitude. If all the parents avoid this responsibility, solving students' misconduct is not only the responsibility of the teachers; parents should shoulder this responsibility equally. In agreeing with this finding, Masabo, Muchopa, and Kuoth (2017) they have revealed in their research that most parents left everything to teachers to take care of their children.

This concurs with Ochora, Odongo and Aroka (2016), who showed that parents are not as actively involved as required and even those who are involved, their involvement is limited to the finances', facilities' provision and meeting attendance. According to them, parents have not involved themselves properly in schools and also even too little involvement, still they are not more used in contributions. This should be well examined because some parents complain that they are not involved effectively by teachers despite the government policy through the education and training policy which insists that parents should be actively involved in the education of their children (URT, 2014). It is like what Magwa and Mugari (2017) explained if parents are not informed

about their involvement roles and expectations of school for them, they cannot effectively participate in school activities. In addition, Magwa and Mugari (2017) went on to explain that many parents want to become involved, but they lack the open communication lines required by the school management or are not really encouraged to do so.

In line with this idea, Rohtak (2021) argued that parental illiteracy reduces parental involvement in their children's education. Parents who do not have a college education feel that they will not be able to contribute to the education of their children, for they never received higher education. Also, the poverty of some parents prevents them from getting involved in the education of their children because they have to work for many hours so as to earn money for their families.

From the above discussion, on the other hand, parents may not be involved by the school administration. This is in line with Rohtak (2021), who stated that complaints about the lack of parental involvement can not only be placed on parents, but the teachers and the school management also bear the responsibility. This is because sometimes teachers do not have time to meet with parents, they lack the right way to talk to them, and they fear over-parental involvement. This point is supported by Magwa and Mugari (2017), who stated that teachers need to take into account the way they relate to the parents with learners and solve the attitude, which is the barrier to parental involvement's success in schools.

In addition, the findings show that female students were leading in dropping out of school and failing in four consecutive years (2020 to 2023). This implies that female students performed poorly in academics more than male students. This means that female students are left behind by their parents as well as society in general because one can ask why such a situation has been shared only with them. Maybe the school administrators have not taken any measures to mitigate this challenge.

Moreover, the findings indicated that the cultural traditions have been a disadvantage to some students because their parents convinced them to perform poorly in their final examinations so as to remain home. Hence, for girls to get married, their parents can get the dowries. On the other hand, boys are targeted to add to manpower in their productive economic activities, such as agricultural activities, including taking care of cattle. Therefore, some of the parents' culture and traditions are barriers to the children's education. This means that the parents are against the government's effort to enable students to acquire educational opportunities. Such attitude is explained by Rohtak (2021), who asserted that cultural variation affects parental involvement in education. From this perspective, it is a call to all educational stakeholders to address such issues so that all students can acquire education, which is their fundamental right.

In this case, Kahangwa and Kafanabo (2023) claim that poor academic performance has remained one of the challenges facing the education sector in different countries, including Tanzania. Also, this research finding can be related to Mwakililo and Mgya (2021), who found that a student's academic achievement is associated with parental involvement in school matters where the child is studying. Even then, there are some barriers that hinder effective parental involvement in school activities.

This finding, to some extent, concurs with Rafiq *et al.* (2013), who explain that parental involvement in their children's education has been significantly linked with the quality of education and academic achievement of children. It may further contribute to reducing the mass level failure of students in examinations, which may indirectly cause waste of parents' resources as well as public expenditure for education in schools. This means that if parents involve themselves effectively in school matters, the number of students who fail the national examinations will be reduced.

4.4 Perceived Strategies to Improve/ Attract Parental Involvement in the Primary Schools

The study revealed that teachers as well as schools, should treat parents as partners. This implies that both of them depend on each other in order to cause good academic performance for the schools as well as students. One part is left behind, and the other endangers the whole process of enabling students to perform better in the learning process. This means that without parental involvement in schools, it could be hard to run the school activities effectively.

These findings concur with Yonson (2016), who recommended that parents, the community, and other stakeholders be valued in schools. In the same vein, Masabo, Muchopa and Kuoth (2017) asserted that parents should respect and be friends with teachers so that they can help their children closely.

The study found that, to some extent, effective communication with parents or guardians is lacking. The implication of this is that parents are not well involved and informed in school matters. This means that the communication between the schools and the parents is lacking. Lack of communication creates gaps between the schools and the parents; therefore, nothing better will be achieved in schools.

In the same argument, Magwa and Mugari (217) explained that many parents want to become involved, but the lack of open communication lines required discourages them. From this caption, the lack of communication between home and school leads to less parents' involvement. In discussing the point of communication, Durisic and Bunijevac (2017) went beyond by asserting that a school website is an additional mode of communication with parents and families. The form of communication can include conferences with every parent at least once a year, language translators to assist families as needed, and regular schedules of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications.

Moreover, the findings indicated that the parents are not aware of the educational benefits for their children. Due to some cultural traditions, some parents dare to convince their children to perform poorly in their final examinations so as to remain home, hence for girls to get married and the parents to gain dowry and for boys to get man powers in their productive economic activities such as agricultural activities including taking care of cattle. This implies that some parents have barriers to their children's education. This means that the parents are against the government's effort to enable students to acquire school opportunities so as to get an education which is useful to them. Such attitude is

explained by Rohtak (2021), who asserted that cultural variation affects parental involvement in education. Mwakililo & Mgaya, (2021), Yonson (2016) and Kimaro & Machumu, (2015) further underpin that parents should be aware that they are an important part of their children's academic achievement. From this perspective, it is a call to all educational stakeholders to sensitize the benefit of education in life.

In addition, the research findings indicate that school administrators do not fully involve the parents in school matters. This implies that schools, to some extent, fail to involve parents in school activities. This means that school administrators need to involve the parents in school matters. Some of the parents do not attend school meetings effectively. This is so risky because through attending the school meetings, parents get input from others, hence making essential decisions on school plans as well as addressing the challenges in schools.

These findings concur with Kagosi, *et al.* (2021), whose study found that the majority of parents were not regularly attending school meetings to follow up on their children's education. So, the government, through the Ministry of Education and Training and other education stakeholders, need to organize and provide seminars as well as workshops to parents as well as school administrators so as to sensitize them about their involvement in school matters.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This study found out that there is a positive relationship between parental involvement and primary schools' academic performance. Parental involvement in primary schools contributes much to motivating students in their learning process, enhancing school academic performance, instructing children about the school lessons, increasing school performance, encouraging students to put more effort into their studies, supporting the students with the learning materials, being close to children and counselling them, working together with teachers as well as visiting and attending to school meetings to get involved in deciding various school issues. Nevertheless, there are still some parents who are not well involved in the educational issues of their children in any way.

5.2 Recommendations

Therefore, the government and other educational stakeholders need to put more effort into a wider partnership between the schools and the parents. This will increase the platform for the parents and the community at large to make their due contributions to enhance the provision of quality education in school. Also, the school administrations should fully involve the parents in school meetings in order to make them participate in the schools' decision-making regarding various issues for better academic performance. In addition, the government, through the educational ministry, should remind teachers by sensitizing them about the role of parental involvement in different ways, such as conducting workshops, seminars and even brochures provision etc. so as to enable them

to be aware that they cannot work alone to improve the schools' academic performance. They need to work together with the parents because educational provision and enhancing the schools' academic performance is a shared activity between the schools, the community collective efforts, parents and other different education stakeholders.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest in all processes and study aspects.

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