Influence of Parent-teacher Communication on Academic Performance of Pupils in Public Primary Schools in Ainabkoi Sub-county, Kenya

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Abstract This paper is an outcome of a study that was conducted to find out the extent to which communication between parents and teachers influence pupils' academic performance in public primary schools in Ainabkoi Sub County, Kenya. Communication as portrayed in this paper can take the form of conferences/ meeting, telephoning writing notes, and face to face dialogue between parents and teachers. Founded on the theory of six types of parental involvement by Joyce Epstein's, the study adopted ex-post facto research design. A target population of 2404 Class 8 pupils and 61 class teachers was considered from which 331 class eight pupils were selected using stratified simple random sampling technique. Census approach was employed for the class teachers. Questionnaire and interview schedule were used to collect data. Quantitative data was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in form of percentages, means and chi-square while qualitative data was analyzed using thematic framework. There was a positive and significant relationship between parent-teacher communication ($X^2=10.087$; $p=0.039$) and academic performance. Parent-teacher communication is therefore a positive predictor of pupils' academic performance in primary schools. Such communication should be enhanced to make better the academic performance of pupils in the final examinations.

Keywords Ainabkoi, Parent, Teacher, Pupil, Communication, Academic Performance

1. Introduction

The No Child Left behind Act (Tittle 1 part A) of the US Government emphasized the significance of parental involvement in children's academics instructing schools to

engage in regular two-way communication involving student academic achievement and various school activities [1]. Due to the pressure from administration applied by partially funding schools for successful parental involvement programs [2] and adoption of multiple reforms that incorporate parental involvement as one of their integral parts, schools across the United States have been working on designing and implementing various parental involvement initiatives in hope of improving student academic performance.

In Nigeria, Fajoju, Aluede, and Ojugo [3] correlate parental involvement to academic achievement of primary using ex-post facto research design. In their study, they establish a significant influence of parents being involved and often communicating with teachers on the pupils' academic achievements. However, they attribute this influence to only affecting three core subjects hence; Mathematics, English Language and Science. The involvement of parents getting in their children's school work through frequent communication with the teachers was therefore highly recommended.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

Epstein's model (2002) as cited in Bower and Griffin [4] described how children learn and develop through three overlapping "spheres of influence." These were: Family, school and the community. These three spheres form partnership to best meet the needs of the child. Epstein defines six types of involvement based on the relationship between family, school and the community: parenting skills, communication, volunteering, learning at home, and decision making as well as collaborating with the community. Epstein emphasized that all of these six types of involvement must be included to have successful partnership. Pupils who have support from the parents at home show better performance at school, while students

lacking support were struggling [4].

Activities that require the minimum involvement should best describe type 1. Type 1 activities include parents ensuring that students attend school and are ready to learn [5]. Epstein's second type includes all forms of communication between the school and parents [6]. According to El Nokali et al. [7] parents best support their children's educational success by having home and school communication. The theory therefore provides a caring educational environment and illustrates how this environment can improve academic excellence, good communication and productive interactions.

The model indicates that frequent parental contacts, engagements, and interactions with their children would build healthy behaviors, reduce aggression through discussion, and uplift their self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence in all their endeavors hence shaping them historically for a hopeful future.

2. Literature Review

The government of Kenya has remained committed to providing quality education and training for all Kenyans and it views education as a human right. In 1990, the government committed itself to The Education for All (EFA) initiatives that were discussed at UNESCO World Conference at Jomtien, Thailand. Various strategies have since been put in place to achieve these goals. For example, in 2003 the government of Kenya re-introduced free and compulsory education in pursuit of Universal Education for All attained in 2015. In the Vision 2030, Kenya will provide a globally competitive quality Education, through training and research for development. The overall goal for 2012 was to reduce illiteracy by increasing access to education, improving the transition rate from primary to secondary and raising the quality and relevance of education [8].

Chemagosi [9] conducted a study to investigate the influence of parental involvement on academic performance of pre-school children in Emgwen division, Nandi Central District, Kenya. Majority of the respondents sometimes communicated with their pre-school children about their school progress. It was established that children whose parents communicate with, perform better in academics than those whose parents do not. The study concluded that only a few parents' responses showed high aspiration on their children's academic achievement. Thus, the study recommends that parents should be sensitized on the importance of pre-school children education so as to understand their role and involvement in the children's academic performance. Every school should be mandated to organize general parents' meetings to enable the parents to meet teachers and discuss problems affecting their children's academic performance. These parents therefore should be advised on the need to motivate their children to

work harder.

Cultivating the teacher-parent relationship is also considered vital to the development of team work [10]. Unfortunately, many teachers are not specifically trained in the skills they need, to communicate effectively with parents [11]. School communication practices are so fundamental to involving families in the education process. Therefore teacher preparation and professional development programs should actively promote the development of communication skills for teachers [12]. Teachers strive to establish partnerships with parents to support student learning. Strong communication is fundamental to this partnership and to building a sense of community between home and school. In these changing times, teachers must therefore continue to develop and expand their skills in order to maximize effective communication with parents. Good communication between parents and teachers has many benefits. When parents and teachers share information, children learn more and parents and teachers feel more supported. Good communication can help create positive feelings between teachers and parents.

According to Nistler and Angela as cited in McNeil and Patin [13], communication is the major reason for lack of parental involvement, especially the lack of clear straight forward and helpful information. Epstein and Sheldon [14] found that most communication that occurs between parents and school is often from school to parents. Such communication only takes place in situations where pupils of those parents have behavioral or learning problems or with parents who have shown interest in helping their children [15].

According to Quezada, Alexandrowicz and Molina [16] the relationships between parents and teachers take a deep understanding, time, vigilance, and desire by both parties to bring together the families, schools and community as whole. They all identify needs and most importantly, the abundance of both soft and hard resources to support the one unifying mission for all – that involves, support for the pupils aspirations through successful education.

Parental involvement in the academic performance of their children has observably ripped good results. An improvement in the class average performance for Adukrom Methodist Primary School pupils in Ghana was seen to have improved from 68% to 79% with majority of teachers attributing this improvement to parental participation in the children activities at school. The fact that parents kept contact with the teachers in school as concerns their children academics was a boost to most of the children putting in more efforts to achieve better results [17]. Mante1, Awereh and Opare [17] concluded that teachers' partnership with parents was influential in leading to better pupil's performance in classroom.

A study conducted in USA, sought to evaluate the efficacy of teacher communication with parents and students as a means of increasing student engagement [18].

It estimated the causal effect of teacher communication by conducting a randomized field experiment in which children were assigned to receive a daily phone call from home and a text/written message during a mandatory summer school program. It was found out that frequent teacher-parent communication immediately increased student engagement as measured by homework completion rates, on-task behavior and class participation. On average, teacher-parent communication increased the odds ratio; students completed their homework by 42% and decreased instances in which teachers had to redirect students' attention to the task at hand by 25%.

Class participation rates among 6th grade students increased by 49%, while communication appeared to have a small negative effect on 9th grade students' willingness to participate. Drawing upon surveys and interviews with participating teachers and students, there were three primary mechanisms through which communication likely affected engagement: stronger teacher-student relationships, expanded parental involvement, and increased student motivation.

Bridgemohan, Wyk and Staden [19] suggested that improved communication between the school and the home strengthens social networks, enables access to information and material, allows parents to appreciate their own essential roles and personal efficacy and motivates them to continue their own education. Similarly, it enhances the contact with other parents experiencing comparable problems, which is beneficial. On the side of teachers, they observed that teachers feel more positive about teaching the school in which there is effective communication. Schools and teachers know that good communication with parents is an important part of their job. Teachers therefore need to know about the children's families, language, and culture in order to help them learn.

Parents benefit because they learn more about what goes on in school and can encourage learning at home. Most importantly, children benefit through improved communication because contact between families and school helps children learn and succeed. However, parent-teacher communication can also be difficult, especially when parents feel uncomfortable in school, can't speak English well, or come from different cultural backgrounds than teachers. Fortunately, both parents and teachers have developed ways to make communication easier. Some parents might have had a bad experience in school when they were children. Other parents might have not felt welcomed by the school or teacher. Nevertheless, there are things that can be done to help overcome these barriers [12]. Letsholo [15] observed that concerning a survey done in United States, most parents did not communicate with the school during the year and neither did they have a meeting or conference with teachers over the year.

Communication serves as the medium of information sharing between two or among many involved parties.

Epstein's [20] parental involvement framework communication between the three overlapping spheres plays a fundamental role towards student's achieving optimal learning outcomes. A case study conducted by Mahuro and Hungu [21] on parental participation in Iganga and Mayuge district in Uganda revealed that parental involvement such as providing conducive environment at home, checking student's progress record and school random visits significantly increased student's numeracy and literacy by 6 and 15 units of measure. This finding was concurrent with a research done by Abuya et al. [22] in Kenya which showed that parental participation by engaging and creating an open communication with teenage school going children significantly improved their learning outcomes. Teenage children became more aspired in education, developed open communication and were able to make critical decisions.

In a recent study, Siebert, Wei, Wong and Zhou [23] in examining student feedback based on parent-teacher communication, found that having bi-weekly pupil feedbacks using a special schoolwork scorecard behavior of the pupils led to an improvement mathematics performance by the pupils and further communication of the same by teachers to the parents further large mathematics ripped benefits for the young left-behind children. This is because they worked harder to achieve better results knowing that the same would be communicated to their parents [23].

From the foregoing discourse, the authors developed this study to establish the extent to which parent-teacher communication influence academic performance among pupils. The study was based on the hypothesis that:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between parent-teacher communication and academic performance of pupils in public primary schools.

3. Materials and Methods

The study adopted ex-post facto design as the independent variable could not be manipulated. A target population of 2404 Class 8 pupils and 61 class teachers in Ainabkoi Sub-county was considered for the study. This population size was obtained from the County Education Office as per the October 2018 records. The study targeted primary school teachers who were selected because they are change agents for quality teaching and learning. They are the custodians of knowledge for pupils on behalf of parents.

3.1. Sample Size Determination

A sample is a small portion of a target population [24]. Kothari, adds that the size of the sample should neither be excessively too large nor too small and generally it must be optimum. The sample size of the pupils was obtained

through stratified simple random sampling technique to select 331 pupils. The pupils' stratum was based on their gender that is male and female. Census approach was employed in which all the 61 class teachers were involved in the study. Table 1 presents the sample distribution of respondents comprising of sample size.

Table1. Sample Distribution

Category of Respondents	Population	Sample Size
Class Teachers	61	61
Pupil	2404	331
Total	2465	392

Source: Field Data (2018)

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The study employed questionnaires to collect data from pupils and interview schedule for the teachers' data. Interviews allowed the authors to clarify and elaborate the purpose of the study to the respondents to enable them give useful information. According to Kothari [24], data analysis is the process of bringing order and meaning to raw information hence this study analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data. Data analysis for quantitative data was done by both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics in the form of frequencies, percentages, standard deviation, and chi square, to test the hypothesis. The significance tests were done at 95% confidence level. Qualitative data on the other hand was analyzed using the thematic framework. According to Benard [25] thematic framework is a way of organizing or defining history to identify and place sites, persons and events in context. In this study the focus was on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the themes as stipulated in the study objective. Coding was used to represent themes and linked to raw data analysis. The results were presented in line with the obtained study

themes.

4. Results and Discussion

The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of teachers-parents communication on the pupils' academic performance in public primary schools. A set of four items were formulated to test the pupil's agreement on their parents and teacher communication and how it affected their performance in school. The statements were anchored on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from 1-Strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly agree. Descriptive measures included frequencies, means and standard deviations. The pertinent results are presented in Table 2.

In order to achieve the stated objective, the authors sought information on whether the parents communicated to the class teacher on weekly basis to know the progress and performance of their children. The findings ($M=3.64$; $SD=1.29$) indicated that majority of the parents visited the schools to check their children's academic performance. The findings were consistent with a case study conducted by Mahuro and Hungu [21] on parental participation in Iganga and Mayuge district in Uganda which showed that parental involvement such as providing conducive environment at home, checking student's progress record and random visits significantly increased student's numeracy and literacy by 6 and 15 units of measure respectively.

This finding was also concurrent with a research done by Abuya et al. [22] in Kenya which revealed that parental participation by engaging and creating an open communication platform with their teenage school going children had a significant improvement on their learning outcomes. Teenage children became more aspired in education, developed open communication and were able to make critical decisions.

Table 2. Parent-Teachers Communication and Pupils' Academic Performance

Statements	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
My parent/guardian communicate to the my class teacher on weekly basis to know the progress and performance of my performance	330	1.00	5.00	3.64	1.29
My parent/guardian communicate with school administration to be informed on schedule for parents meeting	330	1.00	5.00	3.32	1.27
My parent/guardian communicate with the deputy head teacher to know my discipline while in school	330	1.00	5.00	3.26	1.20
My parent/guardian communicate to the school administration to know the recommended books they need to buy for me	330	1.00	5.00	2.99	1.38
Valid N (Listwise)	330	1.00	5.00	3.18	1.29

Source: Field Data (2018)

The findings reiterated a class teacher who said that:

Most of the parents in the school visit to check on their children's educational progress and more so when they have poor academic performance. The school also organizes clinical supervision on class eight pupils in which the parents, teachers and the pupils are advised on the activities that could help them perform better in their education. This has greatly improved our school performance over the years.

However the findings contradicted another class teacher's in another school who said:

In this school parents show less concern for their children's academic performance especially on provision of basic needs. Majority of the pupils in my class come to school without the necessary learning materials such as books, pens and even clean school uniforms which is a sign of neglect by the parents. Even when the parents are summoned to come to school they hardly come. This has greatly affected the children's academic performance.

It is clear from the qualitative findings that while some parents showed support for their children's academic performance through advisory communications with the teachers, the provision of learning resources for the pupils by the parents still remained a big challenge that teachers faced in helping the poorly performing pupils. The findings supported Letsholo's [15] survey which was conducted in USA and observed that most parents did not communicate with the school during the year and also did not have a meeting or conference with teachers over the year.

The study also sought to investigate whether the parent/guardian communicated with school administration to be informed on schedule for parents meeting. The findings ($M=3.32$; $SD=1.27$) implied that majority of the parents communicated with the school management on intended meetings to check on their children's performance. Importantly, the authors also investigated whether the parent/guardian communicated with the deputy head teacher to inquire about the discipline of their child while in school. The pupils agreed as indicated by ($M=3.26$; $SD=1.20$) that their parents communicated with the school deputy head teachers to check on their discipline.

A class teacher in one of the sampled schools agreed with the students' sentiments:

Most of the parents come to school to check on their children indiscipline cases when called upon.

This finding corroborates with Wanja's [26] findings on the role played by parents in resolving their children's indiscipline cases at school. It was found that parents used different parenting styles/practices to resolve discipline problems of their children and this included them turning up whenever they were called upon by the school [26].

The study also sought to investigate whether the parent/guardian communicate to the school administration to know the recommended books their children needed to

be bought for. Pupils perceived that parents who are literate usually make school visits to check on their children's academic progress and this is an important factor in predicting their academic performance. To check if there existed a significant difference on the statistics presented above, a chi square was computed at (0.05) significance level. The results are presented in Table 3.

Decision rule: If p- value is less than or equal to 0.05 reject the null hypothesis. If p- value is greater than 0.05 do not reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.087	4	.039
Likelihood Ratio	9.634	4	.047
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.740	1	.187
N of Valid Cases	330		

Source: Field Data (2018)

The null hypothesis tested is that parent-teacher communication has no significant relationship on pupils' academic performance. The results show that the values are $\chi^2=10.087$, $df=4$ and $p=0.039$ which is less than the level of significance 0.05. The findings therefore manifested a positive and significant relationship between parent teacher communication and pupils' academic performance in Ainabkoi Sub County. Cultivating the teacher-parent relationship is also considered vital to the development of team work [10]. Unfortunately, many teachers are not specifically trained in the skills they need to communicate effectively with parents [11].

School communication practices are so fundamental to involving families in the education process. Teacher preparation and professional development programs should actively promote the development of good communication skills for teachers [12]. Teachers strive to establish partnerships with parents to support student learning. Strong communication is fundamental to this partnership and to building a sense of communion between home and school. In these changing times, teachers must continue to develop and expand their skills in order to maximize effective communication with parents. Good communication between parents and teachers has many benefits. When parents and teachers share information, children learn more and parents and teachers feel more supported. Good communication can help create positive feelings between teachers and parents.

The findings supported Kraft, Matthew and Shaun's [12] study in USA, on the efficacy of teacher communication with parents and students as a means of increasing student engagement. The study found out that frequent teacher-parent communication immediately increased student engagement as measured by homework completion rates, on-task behavior and class participation. On average, teacher-parent communication increased the odds ratio

upon which students completed their homework by 42% and decreased instances in which teachers had to redirect students' attention to the task at hand by 25%.

The findings also supported Bridgemohan, Wyk and Staden's [19] study which suggested that improved communication between the school and the home strengthened the social networks, enabled access to information and material and allowed parents to appreciate their own essential roles and personal efficacy to their children education. The study also observed that teachers felt more positive about teaching the school in which there is effective communication.

5. Conclusions

There was a positive and significant relationship between parent-teacher communication and pupils' academic performance in Ainabkoi Sub County. The findings demonstrated that parents checking on their pupils' progressive work, scheduling for meetings with the class teachers and sorting indiscipline cases with the deputy head teachers had a positive influence on the pupils' academic performance.

6. Recommendations

Parents and teachers should create partnerships centered on the pupils' learning, a common understanding of how parents best support their children's education and how teachers could regularly communicate with parents about learning goals of their children.

The school Principals should put in place initiatives and development activities for parental involvement through parent-teacher meetings in which they discuss progress of the pupils and how best to improve where there is failure.

Teachers should ensure they maintain and keep track of the pupils and communicate their performance to the parents whenever need be. Maintaining teacher – parents' communication is important for the development of any pupils and this should be kept key by all teachers. Sending weekly reports on the progress of the pupils to the parents is one of the strategies that teachers could engage parents to ensure their participation in the pupils' academic performance.

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