

Parental Contribution to Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools at Uyui District, Tabora- Tanzania

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Abstract

The study aimed at examining the relationship between parental contribution and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Uyui district, Tabora, Tanzania. This study was anchored on the Parental Involvement Theory propounded by Epstein. Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Research Design guided the study whereby cross-sectional and phenomenology research designs were used. The target population for this study was 24 public secondary schools, 24 principals, 384 teachers, 8400 students and 2460 parents of public secondary schools at Uyui District Tanzania. Stratified random sampling was used to sample 7 schools, purposive to sample 7 head teachers, proportionate stratified to sample 196 teachers, stratified random sampling to sample 381 students and snowball sampling to sample 210 parents. This study used both qualitative and quantitative research instruments which included questionnaires, focus group discussions and interview guides. Descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean) and inferential statistics (Chi-Square) were used for analyzing quantitative data while qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis. Data was presented in frequency distribution tables, and direct quotes. All ethical considerations were strictly adhered. Findings showed that parental involvement in academics is very low. The key areas that the parents are involved in include; initiating communication with the school, assisting children with school work at home, taking part in educational activities at school, providing learning resources, attending academic clinics, volunteering in school activities, and checking daily students. Parents' involvement in academics activities influence academic performance to a great extent and has a significant influence on students' academic performance (11.221, $p=0.024$). The study recommends that; ministry of Education should formulate policies on parental involvement in academic activities, programmes for sensitizing local community leaders should be developed to change community perceptions, and schools should put in place mechanisms, programs and structures that bring parents on board to participate in their children's academic progress

Keywords- Home environment and school learning, Parent-school communication, Parental activities at home, Parental activities at school, Academic Performance

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Background to the Study

Parental involvement is known to play a large role in the academic achievement of students. Students who have parents that are involved in home-based involvement and school-based involvement tend to achieve higher academic achievement than students who have parents that are not involved in their education. Also, parents who are only involved in home-school communication tend to have little to know impact on their child's academic success. At home, parents must have high expectations for their children and promote high levels of self-efficacy. Failure to do so may result in children who have low levels of self-efficacy and responsibility (Zhang, Hsu, Kwok, Benz, Bowmann & Perrott, 2016).

Parental involvement in students' academic performance has attracted many educators and researchers in the field of education in the world. Laura (2020) investigated influence of parental involvement on student academic achievement in middle school in Spain. The findings of the study revealed parents of White students demonstrated the highest levels of communication with school and that White students had the highest levels of academic achievement compared to African American and Hispanic students. Naheed, Dahar and Lateef (2016) conducted a study on impact of parental involvement in the academic achievement of their children at secondary level in Rawalpindi district, Pakistan. Findings revealed that parental involvement has a significant impact on secondary student's achievement level. Che (2010) carried out a study in New Mexico to assess how schools involve parents. Findings established that; more than ninety-percent of the respondent principals agreed that parents are welcomed into their schools, student-parent handbooks are given out at the beginning of the school year, information about school events is distributed regularly and parents are invited to attend at least one school activity during the school year.

Mutodi and Hlanganipai (2014) examined how parental involvement in South African schools affects the academic performance of students in mathematics. The main findings were that all the parents who are highly involved with their children's education have high expectations towards their children's education and performance. Three parental involvement constructs, that is, parenting, parent –teacher communication and home and family support were found to be positively related to performance. Mwenda (2017) sought to identify the ways in which parents get involved in their lower primary pupils' homework. The study established that most parents are involved in assisting their lower primary children with homework in various ways. It also found out that illiterate parents are less involved in assisting their children with homework. Kayombo (2017) examined the role of parents' involvement in educational processes and its effects on primary school pupils' academic performance in Ilala municipality, in Dar es Salaam region. The study indicated that there were several methods used in public schools to involve parents and guardians into education processes of their school children in supporting primary school pupils' academic achievement. Kuboja (2019) assessed effect of parental

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involvement on pupils' academic achievement in Arusha urban council. The findings showed that in most cases, great number of parents were not attending school meetings and other involvements like following consistence of their children in school, buying books and school uniforms. It was also found that most parents feel uncomfortable to face the school administration to discuss their children progress due to low self-esteem syndrome. Despite the significance of parental involvement on children's academic achievement as reflected in the background of this study, parental involvement in the context of Tanzanian secondary schools still has challenges.

Statement of the Problem

In Tanzania, performance in National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) exams is the key to higher learning institutions that ultimately secure jobs and thus benefit from education. Parental contribution is expected to provide a good and conducive climate for social, intellectual and emotional development of a child, further it provides love, security, guidance and care that contributes to good academic performance. However, in Uyui district parental contribution in education activities is very low and benefits of quality education are overlooked by parents who perceive activities like helping with assignments, attending academic clinics or disciplinary meetings as not part of their responsibility a waste of time.

Over the years, continuous low academic performance in the Uyui district have raised great concern for learners, educators and other educational stakeholders. Academic performance is evaluated based on examinations given and the attainments by learners in such examinations. The academic performance in NECTA examinations by secondary schools in Uyui District has been dismal in the past five years. With the below average performance, there is need to study why academic performance has remained dismal and whether there is a relationship between parental contribution and students' academic performance. There are various studies carried out on relationship between parental involvement and students' academic performance. Similar studies have been conducted in other Districts in Tanzania. However, there exist limited study on parental involvement and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Uyui district, Tanzania. Therefore, this study sought to fill this research gap by examining the influence of parental contribution on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Uyui district, Tanzania.

Research Question

What is the relationship between parental contribution and students' academic performance in public secondary schools at Uyui District Tanzania?

Theoretical Framework

Parental involvement theory was propounded by Epstein (1992). The theory asserts that a family and the school should work jointly and share goals and mission to enhance general learning of a child. It also stresses on the need to encourage children through support in the family while the school also needs to make every child special and accepted (Epstein, 2002). The theory helps to differentiate between parent- or school-initiated parental involvement and also explains some of the contradictory research findings that have associated PI with both positive and negative outcomes. Epstein (1996) found that teachers initiated more contact when children were doing

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poorly in school, whereas parents initiated more contact if their children were doing well. Georgiou (2010) found out that child's achievement in school is related to the attributing behavior of parents. The theory has been used by other several scholars to study parental involvement and students' academic achievement (Ngussaa & Nzowa 2019).

The main concern with this model is that the dimensions are broad, combining various specific types of involvement into each dimension. According to Grant and Ray (2010), an unwelcome school atmosphere may create a barrier that discourages participation. Teachers may feel that families are not valuable resources in educating students; or that finding time in their "busy" school day is not possible. This theory asserts that most effective families and school's activities are similar and they share goals and mission. Children grow and develop in the family, school and the community. The family and the school systems seem to function and operate at different spheres of influence. However, each system has its different beliefs, practices and characteristics, and there comes a time when these separate spheres form an overlap and conduct the many activities jointly. There are some activities and practices that are carried out collaboratively by both parents and teachers. Homework is a good example of a joint activity between the family and the school. Teachers develop, give assignments and later mark them and grade the students work. The students are expected to complete the assignments at home while the parents and other caregivers are required to offer the right conducive environment, right guidance, monitor, discuss or give any other necessary assistance to students.

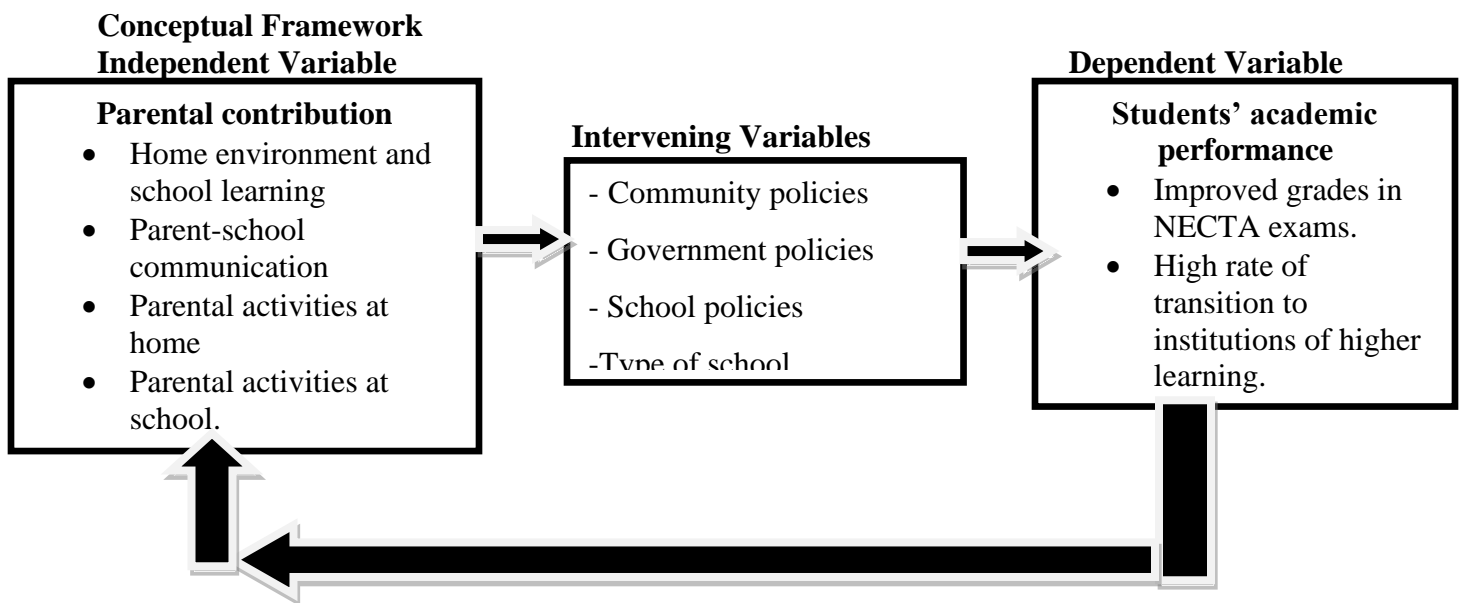


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Field Data 2023

Review of Empirical Review

Naheed, Dahar and Lateef (2016) conducted a study on impact of parental involvement in the academic achievement of their children at secondary level in Rawalpindi district. Findings revealed that parental involvement has a significant impact on secondary student's achievement level. It was concluded that parental involvement has a significant impact on secondary student's achievement level. Laura (2020) investigated the relationship between parental involvement and student academic achievement in middle schools in Chicago suburbs. The results of the study revealed parents of White students demonstrated the highest levels of communication with school and that White students had the highest levels of academic achievement compared to African American and Hispanic students. There was significant relationship between parental involvement (parents signing weekly grade reports and parents initiating calls with the school) and student academic achievement. Erlendsdóttir (2013) sought to determine whether involvement of parents results in higher academic achievement than when parents are not involved in Namibia. Findings showed that all the interviewed parents were highly involved with their children's education. The parents had high expectations towards their children's education and their future. Highly involved parents have a positive effect on their children's academic achievement.

Assefa and Sintayehu (2019) examined the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement in model primary and secondary school in Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. Findings showed that there was statistically significant positive relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement, and that students who were scored less than 50% were children whose families were less encouraged and involved. Gicobi (2017) sought to assess parental involvement in their children's education in selected public and private primary schools in Kabare Zone, Kirinyaga County, Kenya. The study found a significant relationship between parental involvements on academic performance among children enrolled in early childhood learning centres. The study recommended that parents should create time from their busy schedule to participate more in their children's education activities if they expect improved academic performance.

Koskei (2017) investigated the influence of parental involvement on academic performance of public mixed day secondary school students in Kuresoi district, Kenya. The findings revealed that parental involvement in education did not significantly influence students' academic performance in Kuresoi district. The researcher recommends that parents should not pressure their children by making too high demands that may create anxiety and fear of failure and should rather provide effective motivation. Ngussaa and Nzowa (2019) assessed the role of parental involvement on students' commitment toward learning among secondary schools in Arusha District, Tanzania. Findings showed that the rate of parental involvement was high since they made follow up on their children academic progress, they encourage them to set academic goals and objectives, they guided and counselled them on academic matters and they made follow up on academic reports. Students with highly involved parents showed high rates of commitment towards learning.

Research Design and Methodology

This study employed Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Research Design. This study employed cross-sectional and phenomenology research designs. The target population for this study was 24 public secondary schools, 24 principals, 240 teachers, 1,112 form four students and parents of public secondary schools at Uyui District Tanzania. Stratified sampling, simple random sampling and purposive sampling were used in this study.

Table 1: Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Category	Target population	Sampling procedure	Actual Sample	Percentage (%)
Principals	24	Purposive	7	30
Teachers	240	Proportionate stratified	150	62.5
Students	1112	Stratified random sampling	294	26.4
Parents	-	Snowball	70	8.5
Total	1376	-	521	-

Source: Field Data 2023

This study used both qualitative and quantitative research instruments which included questionnaires and interview guides. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and students, interview guides to collect data from principals, and focus group discussions were used to collect data from parents. The quantitative data was organized, tabulated and analyzed in tables with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 28) software. Qualitative data derived from open-ended questions was analyzed using Content Analysis Technique. On the other hand, qualitative data derived from interview guides was presented in narratives in form of direct quotes. Regarding testing hypothesis, chi-square test was used to examine the nature and strength of the relationships between the study variables.

Data Analysis, Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Nature of Parental Involvement

The researcher further sought to find out the main activities that the parents are involved as well as the extent to which parents' are involved in such activities. Findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Extent of Parental Involvement in Activities (Teachers=116)

Parental involvement activities	Very great		Great extent		Moderate extent		Little extent		Very little extent		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Initiating communication with the school	3	2.6	17	14.7	36	31.0	48	41.4	12	10.3	3.78
Assisting their children with school work at home	0	0	10	8.6	31	26.7	35	30.2	40	34.5	3.91
Taking part in educational activities at school	7	6.0	8	6.9	30	25.9	34	29.3	37	31.9	3.61
Providing learning resources	0	0	30	25.9	48	41.4	20	17.2	18	15.5	3.22
Attending academic clinics	6	5.2	34	29.3	32	27.6	39	33.6	5	4.3	3.38
Volunteering in school activities	0	0	21	18.1	17	14.7	31	26.7	47	40.5	4.20
Checking daily students' work	0	0	3	2.6	17	14.7	7	6.0	89	76.7	4.13

Source: Field Data 2023

The poor parental involvement in students' academics was also indicated through the interview with principals, as one of the principals (Principal 1) revealed that:

The parents are very reluctant when called upon by the school to take part in academics. The turn during academic clinics is very low and only a few parents manage to buy the required learning resources. The school administration makes efforts to communicate with the parents through sending memos via the students although some parents just ignore the invite. There are few parents who initiate communication with the school to make follow ups on how their children are performing and discuss with the teachers on how to improve on their children's academics. The education activities that the parents are involved in include contribution towards school buildings, and remedial tuition (Interview, April 04, 2022).

The findings imply that parents rarely initiate communication with the school and hence majority just wait for the school to initiate communication requesting parents to take part in

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academics. The parents are therefore shying off from approaching the school to find out the academic progress of their children as well as their academic needs that may need parental intervention. Parents are also reluctant to help their children with school work at home which may be attributed to low literacy levels. The parents therefore lack knowledge that would enable them to guide their children while working on their assignments. The parents also rarely participate in education activities at school. These activities may include academic clinics whereby teachers and parents meet to discuss students' academic affairs. Therefore, they miss out on getting the true picture of the academic ability of their children. Parents are making efforts to provide learning resources to their children though it is still a challenge to many parents which may be due to their poor economic status. Parents are also not willing to volunteer in school activities which may be due to busy schedules or low literacy levels and they may be afraid of embarrassment in the presence of their children. A high number of parents do not check students work daily and may not know when their children miss lessons or when they need more exercise books and prepare earlier to buy new books. Findings concur with Mwirichia (2013) the key areas of parental involvement in academics are taking part in educational activities at school; education activities at home, parent-school communication and home environment which influenced the academic performance of learners.

Table 3: Extent of Parental Involvement in Activities (Students=210)

Parental activities	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Parent check on my home work	59	28.1	58	27.3	48	22.9	30	14.3	15	7.2	1.98
Parent buy tests for me to do at home	71	33.8	52	24.8	55	26.2	9	4.3	23	11.0	1.86
Parent comes to school to discuss my academic progress with my teachers	45	21.4	41	19.5	61	29.0	47	22.4	16	7.6	3.20
Parent advises me on my career prospects	124	59.0	38	18.1	28	13.3	11	5.2	9	4.3	1.73
Parent attend school meetings and academic consultations	11	5.2	42	20.0	99	47.1	42	20.0	16	7.7	3.33
Providing me with school requirements on time	12	5.7	15	7.2	36	17.1	105	50.0	42	20.0	3.29
Informing me about the importance of education	103	49.0	54	25.7	38	18.1	8	3.8	7	3.3	1.48

Source: Field Data 2023

The students' perspective of parental involvement in academics differ with teachers' perspective. This may be attributed to the fact that students are closer to their parents and they may note some activities that may be hard for the teacher to notice. Frequent checking of students' homework enables a parent to assess whether the students understand concepts taught and literate parents may also help their children with challenging tasks hence improve on their academic performance. Tests helps students to remember what they have been taught and to do revision in readiness for exams. Therefore, parents who make the extra efforts of buying tests for their children help to improve their academic performance. Discussing students' academic progress with the teachers helps to understand students' strengths and weakness. The parents also take up the role of counselling their students on career path which may enable them to concentrate on their studies to realize their goals. Majority of the parents ignore the calls to attend school meetings and academic consultants and such parents may not know their children behavior while in the school and their academic progress. Although some parents are making efforts to provide school needs such as school uniform, exercise books and reference books, pocket money, majority are not able to provide the needs on time and lack of them may result to lack on interest in academics and hence dismal performance. Findings concurs with Mauka (2015) that majority of the parents were not attending school meetings hence could not know the academic affairs of their children. Kuboja (2019) also found that in most cases, great number of parents were not attending school meetings and other involvements like following consistence of their children in school, buying books and school uniforms.

Table 4: Teachers' Responses on Parental Involvement on Academic Performance (n=116)

Statements on parental involvement	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Parents who are highly involved have high expectations	4	3.4	6	5.2	1	0.9	29	25.0	76	65.5	3.56
Home and family support determines performance	5	4.3	7	6.0	17	14.7	32	27.6	55	47.4	3.92
Parent-school communication influences academic performance	6	5.2	11	9.5	9	7.8	26	22.4	64	55.2	3.87
Teachers and parents establish close relations	33	28.4	49	42.2	4	3.4	13	11.2	17	14.7	2.24
The parents avail educational materials	33	28.4	26	22.4	20	17.2	10	8.6	27	23.3	2.56
The parents make regular follow ups school attendance	38	32.7	41	35.3	10	8.6	9	7.8	18	15.5	1.87

Source: Field Data 2023

This is an indication that actively involved parents in their children's academics have high expectations academically and they therefore offer support necessary support to achieve the academic goals. Through communication with the school, the parent is able to know how the child is fairing at school and collaborate with the school administration to ensure that the child is disciplined and performs exceptionally well. The relationship between teachers and parents could be regarded as a distance relationship. This could be attributed to parents' failure to attend school meeting when called upon by the administrators. Findings have also shown that the parents do not initiate communication with the school hence no close relations between the teachers. Parents are not active in availing educational materials which are essential in improving students' academic achievement. This could be due to poverty or lack of knowledge on importance of learning materials such as textbooks in improving students' performance. Majority of the parents have also failed on regular follow ups on students' schools' attendance which may lead to absenteeism. Such students miss lesson and may not be unable to answer questions on some topics taught in their absence leading to failure in exams. Findings are in agreement with Ngussaa and Nzowa (2019) that parents who are actively engaged in their

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children academic affairs encourage them to set academic goals and objectives, they guide and counsel them on academic matters and they make follow up on academic reports. Students with highly involved parents show high rates of commitment towards learning.

Table 5: Students' Responses on Parental Involvement on Academic Performance (n=210)

Statements on parental involvement	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Parents who are highly involved have high expectations	4	1.9	4	1.9	13	6.2	39	18.6	148	70.5	3.57
Home and family support determines performance	16	7.6	5	2.4	24	11.4	62	29.5	103	49.0	3.55
Parent-school communication influences academic performance	12	5.7	5	2.4	29	13.8	68	32.4	96	45.7	3.74
Teachers and parents establish close relations	10	4.8	10	4.8	16	7.6	57	27.1	115	54.8	3.73
The parents avail educational materials	71	33.8	75	35.7	26	12.4	17	8.1	21	10.0	2.03
My parents make regular follow ups on account of my school attendance	56	26.7	96	45.7	32	15.2	14	6.7	12	5.7	1.87
My parents make regular visits to school	54	25.7	102	48.6	14	6.7	24	11.4	16	7.6	1.82

Source: Field Data 2023

The findings concur with the previous findings from the teachers that active participation of parents in academics helps to improve students' academic performance. Findings are also in support of Mutodi and Hlanganipai (2014) that all the parents who are highly involved with their children's education have high expectations towards their children's education and performance.

Table 6: Cross Tabulation Results

Parental involvement activities	Very high		High		Moderate		Low		Very low	
	C	%	C	%	C	%	C	%	C	%
Initiating communication with the school	3	2.6	17	14.7	36	31.0	48	41.4	12	10.3
Assisting their children with school work at home	0	0	10	8.6	31	26.7	35	30.2	40	34.5
Taking part in educational activities at school	7	6.1	8	7.0	37	32.2	34	29.6	29	25.2
Providing learning resources	30	25.9	48	41.4	32	27.6	39	33.6	34	29.3
Attending academic clinics	6	5.2	5	4.3	32	27.6	39	33.6	34	29.3
Volunteering in school activities	0	0	21	18.1	17	14.7	31	26.7	47	40.5
Checking daily students' work	0	0	9	7.8	24	20.7	26	22.4	57	49.1

Source: Field Data 2023

Findings show that providing learning resources results to higher scores in academics. The findings imply that majority of the parents provide learning materials which enables students to revise and record good performance. Other activities had low counts in relation to students' academic performance since the high scores were either on low or very exam scores.

Table 7: Chi-square Test Results

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.221 ^a	4	.024	.047	
Likelihood Ratio	10.194	4	.037	.032	
Fisher's Exact Test	9.549			.045	
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.343 ^b	1	.021	.031	.018
N of Valid Cases	208				

Source: Field Data 2023

Findings show that $X^{(1)}$ (Pearson Chi-Square) = 11.221, $p=0.024$. This implies that there is statistically significant association between parental involvement in academics and students' academic performance since the p value is less than 0.05. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis since there is statistical evidence to claim that between the areas in which parents contribute in children's education and students' academic performance in public secondary schools at Uyui District Tanzania. Findings imply that parental involvement in areas discussed in Table 10 and 11 significantly contribute to students' academic performance. If parents were to make efforts to participate in the aforementioned areas, there would be significant changes in students' grades. Findings are in agreement with Naheed, Dahar and Lateef (2016) that parental involvement has a significant impact on secondary student's achievement level. Holmes (2013) also revealed that there is a positive relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement.

Conclusions

There are various areas that parents can be involved in to improve their children academic performance. The areas are both school based and home based. School based involves initiating communication with the school, providing learning resources, and attending academic clinics. Home based involvement on the other hand include checking of students books, helping with homework, and providing a conducive environment for learning at home. The rate at which majority of the parents are involved in academics is very low and only a few parents are willing to be actively involved in academics. Involvement of parents in academics improve students' academic performance significantly.

Recommendations

Ministry of Education should formulate policies on parental involvement in academic activities. The policies would strengthen sensitization and training of parents in order to enable them to support their children's academics. Since a significant number of parents gave the main reason for not being involved in children's reading as inability to read, the government should establish adult literacy classes in Uyui district to increase literacy levels among the parents. Programmes for sensitizing local leaders should be developed. Local leaders such as the chiefs, play a

significant role in children's education. For example, they ensure that parents take their children to school. During local meetings they could encourage parents to engage in reading-related activities with their children. Parents should set study rooms which provide conducive home environment for doing home study.

The conducive home environment enhances thorough concentration during home study. Schools should put in place mechanisms, programs and structures that bring parents on board to participate in their children's academic progress. Parents should be sensitized on the importance of closely following up and monitoring of their children's academic progress. School administrators should address parents' perceptions and not only make them aware of how they can become involved in schooling, but also create opportunities for them to do so. Teachers should establish effective partnerships with parents to support learners learning. This enhances academic performance due to the attention given to the feedback from either party on the child's support. Teachers should adopt modern method of communication such as mobile phone to enhance communication. Teachers should embrace parents' school communication for improved academic performance.

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