

# Home and School Based Parental Involvement as Predictors of Access and Retention in Public Primary Schools in Kajiado County, Kenya

Kerei K. Beatrice, Nangithia Robert and Mwai M. Joseph

School of Education and Social Sciences, Department of Education, Umma University, P. O. 713, Kajiado, Kenya

## Abstract

Parental involvement in children's education has consistently been associated with improved academic performance. Despite government efforts to provide free primary education, many public schools in Kenya still faces challenges related to access and retention. The issue is more pronounced in regions like Kajiado county where socio-economic and cultural dynamics, including nomadic pastoralist lifestyles, can affect children's schooling. This study therefore, sought to investigate home and school based parental involvement as predictors of access and retention in public primary schools in Kajiado County, Kenya. The study was guided by Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement Model. Using a descriptive survey design, the study collected data from 10 schools, targeting 100 teachers. The Krejcie and Morgan Table from 1970 was utilized to determine a sample size of 80 respondents, who were selected through simple random sampling techniques. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire, which was first piloted to assess its validity and reliability. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that parental financial contributions, involvement in learning, provision of resources and participation in academic activities affects pupils access and retention. The study recommends several strategies to improve access and retention in Kajiado County public primary schools.

**Keywords:** Parental involvement, education, pupils, predictors, access, retention

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**Correspondence:** [bkerei@umma.ac.ke](mailto:bkerei@umma.ac.ke)

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## Introduction

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated that parental involvement is a key factor linked to improved academic performance in children (David, 2022; Topor et al., 2010; Mahuro & Hungi, 2016; Rafiq et al., 2013). This relationship is particularly significant in primary education, where foundational skills and positive attitudes toward learning are established. Early parental engagement not only enhances academic performance but also promotes self-confidence and motivation in children, setting the stage for lifelong learning. Avnet et al. (2019) found that home-based parental involvement positively impacted elementary students' academic performance. Similarly, Posey-Maddox and Haley-Lock (2020) reported its benefits for students' psychological development and time management. Keizer et al. (2022) report indicated how personalized parental support enhances academic success, regardless of socioeconomic status. Paul et al. (2021) showed that students without parental support are more likely to drop out. Understanding the effects of limited parental involvement on among pastoralist communities is key.

In Kenya, the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 aimed to increase access to education and reduce

barriers that prevent children from attending school (Muyanga et al., 2010; Ngugi et al., 2015; Orodho, 2014). While the policy has led to a significant increase in enrollment rates, challenges remain in ensuring that children not only access education but also remain in school and succeed academically. Research studies conducted in Kenya showed that when parents actively participate in their children's education, students are more likely to stay in school and perform better academically. Mudibo (2016) study evaluated the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic attainment in secondary schools located in Magarini Sub-County, Kilifi County. This research highlighted key aspects of parental involvement, including parents' beliefs in their children's abilities, close monitoring of academic progress, students' perceptions of their parents' engagement and the frequency of parental attendance at school activities. The findings revealed that increased parental involvement significantly improves students' self-efficacy, which in turn leads to improved academic achievement. A study by Koskei (2014) in Kuresoi sub-county investigated whether a relationship between the academic performance of secondary school students and parental involvement exists. The study found out that parental involvement has no significant influence

on the academic performance of secondary school students. This study however established that target setting and homework supervision was positively influencing academic achievement.

Retention of children in school among pastoralist communities in Kenya has been a persistent challenge due to a combination of socio-cultural, economic, and environmental factors (Munyalo, 2020; Hussein, 2016; Kipkemboi, 2021). Pastoralist communities traditionally rely on livestock rearing, which often requires families to move in search of water and grazing lands. This nomadic lifestyle disrupts consistent school attendance, making it difficult for children to remain in school. According to Krätli and Dyer (2009), the mobility of pastoralist communities, compounded by the remoteness of schools, is a significant barrier to education. Children frequently drop out as they are needed to help with herding, further limiting their time in school. Many pastoralist families face financial constraints and are unable to afford school fees, uniforms and other associated costs of education (Ng'asike, 2014). This financial burden, coupled with the need for children to contribute to household labor, often leads to early dropouts, especially among boys, while girls are more likely to be married off early due to cultural practices (Kratli, 2001). Early marriage, in turn, exacerbates the gender disparity in education, with girls being particularly vulnerable to dropping out. Further, in many pastoralist communities, formal education is not prioritized, as traditional skills such as herding are seen as more essential for survival (Kipuri & Ridgewell, 2008). Despite government efforts to provide free primary education, many public schools among pastoralist communities in

Kenya face challenges related to access and retention as documented by Munene and Ruto (2015), Kipkemboi (2021), Hussein (2016) and Koskei, Itegi and Muchanje, (2020). Hence, this study investigated the influence of home and school-based parental involvement on access and retention in public primary schools in Kajiado County, Kenya. It specifically examines four key areas: parental payment of school levies, assistance with assignments, provision of learning materials, and attendance at school academic meeting.

## Theoretical Framework

### Epstein's framework of six types of involvement

This study was guided by Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement which was established by Epstein in 1987. Epstein and Sanders (2000) identify six types of parental involvement in education. The first is parenting, where parents provide basic needs like nutrition, housing, and safety, ensuring a supportive home environment for learning. The second is communication, which involves interactions between parents and schools, sharing information through meetings, emails, report cards, or phone calls. The third is volunteering, where parents contribute to school activities or programs without compensation, such as attending school events. The fourth type is learning at home, where parents help with homework or discuss school-related matters to support their child's education. The fifth is decision-making, where parents are involved in school policy and management decisions. Lastly, community collaboration refers to utilizing community resources to enhance children's

education. Epstein (2011) suggests strategies like interactive homework and volunteer programs to foster both home-based and school-based parental involvement. The researcher will use this theory to describe the impacts of school-based and home-based parent involvement on the access and retention of children in school among pastoralist in Kajiado County.

## Methodology

The study was conducted in Kajiado County, located between longitudes 36°5' and 37°5' East and latitudes 10°0' and 30°0' South, covering an area of 21,900.9 square kilometers (County Government of Kajiado, 2013). The study employed descriptive research design which aims to systematically obtain information to describe a phenomenon, situation or population (Rahi, 2017; Kim et al., 2017). The target population was 100 teachers from 10 public primary schools located in Kajiado East and Kajiado Central. The study purposively selected Kajiado East and Central constituencies for sampling, as these areas are predominantly inhabited by pastoralists in Kajiado County. The Krejcie and Morgan Table from 1970 was utilized to determine a sample size of 80 respondents. Teachers were selected through simple random sampling to ensure an unbiased representation. Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire, which underwent a pilot test to evaluate both its validity and reliability. Content validity was established by consulting with supervisors ensuring that they adequately represented the constructs being studied and their feedback was used to refine the questions, ensuring clarity, relevance and appropriateness. Reliability, on the other

hand, was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha to confirm that the instrument produced stable and reliable data. The calculate Cronbach alpha value of 0.863 was obtained indicating that instrument was reliable. According to Taber (2018) a score of 0.8 and above is acceptable to consider the instrument as reliable. The quantitative data was sorted and coded using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. The data was cleaned and both descriptive and inferential statistics were carried out. Descriptive statistics in form of frequency tables were generated using SPSS to profile the respondent characteristics.

## Results and Discussion

### Response rate

Response rate was calculated by dividing the total number of valid or usable questionnaires returned by research assistants by the total number of administered (Kaplowitz, Hadlock & Levine, 2004). The response rate of this study in presented in table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Response rate of the sample population

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Response	70	88
Non-Response	10	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Author (2024)*

The study achieved a response rate of 88%, which, according to Vudzijena (2017), is sufficient for analysis as rates above 70% are considered adequate. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) note that a high response rate enhances the validity and usefulness of the results. The high response was attributed to well-trained

research assistants and clear, well-designed questions.

### Demographic characteristics

The study sought to find out the demographic information of the

respondents which were age, gender and level of education. This was important since it forms the foundation under which the study can fairly adopt in deriving conclusions.

**Table 2:** Demographic information for teachers

Demographic info	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	38	54
	Female	32	46
What is your age	Below 20 years	14	20
	21-30 years	13	18
	31-40 years	23	33
	41-50 years	18	26
	Above 51 years	2	3
Highest level of education	Master's Degree	1	1
	Bachelor's Degree	3	4
	Diploma	18	26
	Certificate	34	49
	Others	14	20

Source: Author (2024)

The demographic data from Table 2 indicates that the majority of teachers were male (54%), while females made up 46%. This gender distribution is consistent with David (2022) findings in Yatta Sub-County, where a similar study on parental involvement in students' academic achievement indicated that 42.3% of the teachers were male, while 57.7% were female, showing slight regional variations. Regarding age distribution, 33% of the teachers were between 31-40 years old, 26% were aged 41-50, and just 3% were over 51 years, which is comparable to David's (2022) findings, where 34.2% of teachers fell within the 30-39 age range and 31.5% were between 40-49 years. Only a small proportion of teachers in both studies were over 50 years. Educational qualifications, the highest percentage of teachers (49%) held a certificate, followed by 26% with a diploma, and 20% had other

qualifications. Only 4% of the teachers had a Bachelor's degree and 1% had a Master's degree.

### Parental payment of school levies and pupil access and retention in public primary schools

Table 2 provides an analysis of the relationship between parental payment of school levies and its impact on pupil access and retention in public primary schools. Respondents gave their responses in a scale of 1-5.

Table 2 displays the respondents' views on the relationship between parental payment of school levies and pupil access and retention in public primary schools. Respondents agreed that pupils from families facing financial constraints are more likely to experience difficulties in accessing education (M=3.7,

SD=0.31). In a similar study Ogur (2014) reported that lack or low parental income

affects payment of school levies thus influencing students' participation.

**Table 2:** Parental payment of school levies and pupil access and retention in public primary schools

S/N	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Pupils from families facing financial constraints are more likely to experience difficulties in accessing education	3.7	0.31
2	Higher school levies disproportionately influence students from low-income households	3.5	0.35
3	The socio-cultural context significantly influences parental attitudes towards school levies	3.8	0.40
4	There need for more equitable policies to address the challenges faced by families with different cultural and economic backgrounds	3.7	0.19

*Source: Author (2024)*

Teachers also agreed that higher school levies disproportionately influence students from low-income households (M=3.5, SD=0.35) and that the socio-cultural context significantly influence parental attitudes towards school levies (M=3.8, SD=0.40). The findings align with those of Nawose (2016), who examined the factors influencing primary school pupils' performance in nomadic pastoral communities in Turkana East District, Kenya. Nawose identified poverty and parental attitudes, among other factors, as key barriers to nomads' participation in formal education. Tarraga Garcia et al. (2018) also investigated the relationship between the academic achievement of primary school students and home-based family involvement and revealed that students whose parents were working and had a stable financial income performed better than those without employed parents. Further, they also agreed that there need for more equitable policies to address the challenges faced by families

with different cultural and economic backgrounds (M=3.7, SD=0.19).

#### **Parental assistance in assignments**

The study also evaluated the parental assistance in assignments and pupil access and retention in public primary schools. Table 3 present a summarize teachers view.

The results in table 3 indicate that majority of teachers agreed that parental assistance in assignments improves pupils' overall academic performance (M=3.6; SD=0.21). Respondents also agreed that active parental involvement in homework is positively correlated with better pupil retention (M=3.7; SD = 0.23). Furthermore, teachers agreed that parental involvement in assignments significantly influence student access (M= 3.6SD = 0.19). Also, teachers agreed that parental assistance with assignments encourages pupils to develop a positive attitude towards school (M= 3.7, SD = 0.22). The findings are consistent with those of Lara and Saracostti (2019), who

found that increased parental involvement significantly improved students' performance, particularly in reading and writing. Similarly, Lambert et al. (2022)

reported that parental involvement had a positive impact on academic outcomes, as demonstrated by higher scores in math, science, and reading.

**Table 3:** Parental assistance in assignments and pupil access and retention in public primary schools

S/N	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Parental assistance in assignments improves pupils' overall academic performance.	3.6	0.21
2	Active parental involvement in homework is positively correlated with better pupil retention.	3.7	0.23
3	Parental involvement in assignments significantly influence student access	3.6	0.19
4	Parental assistance with assignments encourages pupils to develop a positive attitude towards school.	3.7	0.22

Source: Author (2024)

#### Parental provision of learning materials

Teachers were further asked to rate the following statements on parental provision of learning materials and pupil access and retention in public primary schools. Respondents gave their responses in a scale of 1-5 which were summarized and presented in table 4 below.

**Table 4:** Parental provision of learning materials and pupil access and retention in public primary schools

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1 Active parental provision of learning materials positively influences pupil retention	3.6	0.19
2 There is a positive correlation between parental provision of learning materials and increased pupil access	3.7	0.21
3 Students who have access to materials provided by their parents show greater engagement and participation in classroom activities	3.5	0.18

Source: Author (2024)

According to table 4, majority of respondents agreed that active parental provision of learning materials positively influence pupil retention (M=3.6, SD=0.19). Studies have shown that when

parents actively provide learning resources such as textbooks, stationery, and educational tools, students are more likely to attend school consistently and complete their studies. For example,

Echaune et al. (2015) found that children who have access to necessary learning materials from their parents exhibit higher retention rates, as these resources reduce the barriers to attending school regularly. Teachers also agreed that students with parental support in acquiring learning materials are more likely to complete their homework on time ( $M=3.7$ ,  $SD=0.21$ ). Additionally, the finding that students with access to parental-provided materials are more engaged and active in classroom activities ( $M=3.5$ ,  $SD=0.18$ ) resonates with the work of Fan and Chen (2001), who found that parental provision of academic

resources significantly boosts students' motivation and participation in school activities. Access to appropriate materials equips students with the tools they need to better engage with learning content, thereby improving classroom performance and retention.

### Parental attendance of school academic meetings

The study further evaluated the influence of parental attendance of school academic meetings and pupil access and retention in public primary schools. Table 5 presents teachers summarized response.

**Table 5:** Parental attendance of school academic meetings and pupil access and retention in public primary schools

S/N	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Active parental participation in academic meetings positively influence pupils access	3.6	0.19
2	Parental attendance at school academic meetings improves pupil retention in school.	3.7	0.21
3	Pupils whose parents attend school academic meetings tend to perform better academically.	3.6	0.18
4	Parents who attend academic meetings are more likely to support their child's regular school attendance	3.7	0.21

Source: Author (2024)

The findings presented in Table 5 reveal that respondents agreed with the positive impact of parental attendance at school academic meetings on pupil access and retention. They agreed that Active parental participation in academic meetings positively influence pupils access ( $M=3.6$ ,  $SD=0.19$ ). Similarly, they agreed that parental attendance at school academic meetings improves pupil retention in school ( $M=3.7$ ,  $SD=0.21$ ) and also agreed that pupils whose parents attend school academic meetings tend to

perform better academically ( $M=3.6$ ,  $SD=0.18$ ). Furthermore, they agreed that parents who attend academic meetings are more likely to support their child's regular school attendance ( $M=3.7$ ,  $SD=0.21$ ). Concurring with these current study findings, Ntekane (2018) established that parents who participated in different school activities were keen on how their children performed in schools, contributing to increased motivation among students who may endeavor to succeed academically.

## Conclusion

From the findings it is evident that financial burden associated with school levies acts as a substantial barrier to access, particularly for families facing economic challenges. Pupils from households with limited financial resources encounter difficulties in meeting these financial obligations, leading to disparities in enrollment rates across the county. The study also established that parental assistance in assignments positively impacts access to education, particularly for pupils from households with active parental engagement. Students who receive consistent support from their parents in completing assignments tend to demonstrate increased interest in learning, contributing to higher enrollment rates across the county. Further, the study establishes that the provision of learning materials by parents positively impacts access to education. Pupils from households where parents actively contribute to the availability of learning materials, such as textbooks, stationery, and educational resources, demonstrate increased readiness to engage in learning activities, thereby contributing to higher enrollment rates across Kajiado County. Finally, parental attendance at school academic meeting positively impacts access to education. Pupils whose parents actively participate in these academic clinics demonstrate heightened interest in learning, resulting in increased enrollment rates across Kajiado County.

## Recommendations

The study recommends several strategies to improve access and retention in Kajiado County public primary schools.

These include schools and ministry of Education reviewing school levy policies to alleviate financial burdens on parents and introducing support programs like scholarships. Community-based learning material libraries and resource mobilization should be promoted by Ministry of Education to ensure all students have access to necessary learning materials. Additionally, regular academic meetings should be held, with incentives to encourage parental attendance. Lastly, further studies should explore cultural factors influencing parental involvement and long-term retention outcomes.

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