

Parental Involvement and Academic Performance in Classroom Tasks Among Learners with Learning Disabilities in Integrated Secondary Schools in Kakamega County, Kenya

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Abstract- Parental involvement is recognized as a critical factor influencing academic performance among learners with learning disabilities who require additional support in educational settings. This study aimed to establish the extent to which parental involvement influences performance of classroom tasks by learners with learning disabilities in integrated secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya. A descriptive survey design was employed involving 84 respondents comprising 12 principals and 72 teachers from 12 integrated secondary schools. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study revealed significant positive relationships between parental involvement and academic performance, with 90.3% of teachers agreeing that parents are frequently informed about their children's strengths and weaknesses, and 94.4% acknowledging that parental involvement is vital for integrated schooling. Additionally, 91.7% of principals agreed that parents participate in school decisions through Parents Teachers Associations, while 90.3% of teachers agreed that parents and teachers should acknowledge the critical importance of each other's participation. However, 75% of principals noted that families provide minimal emotional and physical support, leaving burden on teachers. The study concludes that while parental involvement significantly influences academic performance among learners with learning disabilities, there exists a gap between recognition of its importance and actual implementation, necessitating enhanced collaboration frameworks and support systems to optimize educational outcomes in integrated secondary schools.

Indexed Terms- Parental Involvement, Academic Performance, Learning Disabilities, Classroom Tasks

I. INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in education has been consistently identified as one of the most significant predictors of academic success across diverse educational contexts and populations (Wilder, 2014). For learners with learning disabilities, parental involvement becomes even more critical as these students often require additional support, advocacy, and specialized interventions to achieve their full academic potential (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

In Kenya, the education system has undergone significant reforms aimed at promoting inclusive education and ensuring that learners with disabilities receive quality education alongside their typical peers (Republic of Kenya, 2018). The implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum and the establishment of integrated secondary schools represent major steps toward achieving educational equity. However, the success of these initiatives largely depends on the active participation of parents and families in supporting their children's educational journey.

Research from developed countries demonstrates that parental involvement significantly improves academic outcomes for learners with learning disabilities through enhanced communication with teachers, advocacy for appropriate accommodations, and provision of consistent support at home (Kim & Hill, 2015). However, the extent and nature of parental involvement vary considerably based on factors such

as socio-economic status, cultural background, and understanding of disability issues.

In the Kenyan context, families supporting children with learning disabilities face unique challenges including limited resources, inadequate understanding of disabilities, and insufficient support systems (Kiprotich & Mburu, 2021). Despite the recognized importance of parental involvement, limited research has specifically examined its influence on classroom task performance among learners with learning disabilities in Kenya's integrated secondary schools. This study therefore aimed to establish the extent to which parental involvement influences performance of classroom tasks by learners with learning disabilities in integrated secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework of Parental Involvement

Epstein's framework of parental involvement identifies six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein et al., 2019). This comprehensive model provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how different forms of parental engagement contribute to student success. For learners with learning disabilities, each dimension of involvement requires specific adaptations and enhanced coordination between families and schools.

2.2 Parental Involvement and Academic Outcomes

Extensive research demonstrates positive correlations between parental involvement and academic achievement across diverse populations (Fan & Chen, 2001). Meta-analyses reveal that parental involvement has moderate to strong effects on student academic performance, with effect sizes ranging from 0.25 to 0.60 depending on the type of involvement and outcome measures (Jeynes, 2017). For learners with learning disabilities, these effects are often amplified due to the additional support needs and the critical role of parent advocacy.

2.3 Communication and Home-School Collaboration

Effective communication between parents and teachers serves as a cornerstone of successful

educational partnerships, particularly for learners with learning disabilities (Blue-Banning et al., 2004). Regular information sharing about student strengths, challenges, and progress enables coordinated support strategies that enhance classroom performance. Collaborative approaches that position parents as equal partners in educational decision-making have shown significant promise in improving outcomes for learners with learning disabilities (Burke & Goldman, 2015).

2.4 Cultural and Contextual Factors

Parental involvement patterns vary significantly across cultural contexts, with implications for educational outcomes (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004). In African contexts, traditional family structures, economic constraints, and limited understanding of disability issues may influence the nature and extent of parental involvement (Engelbrecht & Green, 2018). Understanding these contextual factors is essential for developing culturally responsive approaches to parent engagement.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Setting

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the extent to which parental involvement influences performance of classroom tasks by learners with learning disabilities. The study was conducted in Kakamega County, Western Kenya, specifically targeting integrated secondary schools in five sub-counties: Likuyani, Lugari, Matungu, Mumias East, and Mumias West.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprised principals and teachers from 12 integrated secondary schools approved by the Ministry of Education. All 12 principals were purposively selected to ensure complete representation, while 72 teachers (20% of 360 total teachers) were selected through simple random sampling, following Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) guidelines.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Structured questionnaires were developed for both principals and teachers, incorporating Likert scale responses and open-ended questions. Content validity

was established through expert review, while reliability was assessed through a pilot study in Bungoma County with Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.75. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25, employing descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate and Demographics

The study achieved excellent response rates with 100% participation from principals (12/12) and 98.6% from teachers (71/72). Among principals, 66.7% were male and 33.3% female, with 50% aged 40-49 years and 75% holding bachelor's degrees. Only 25% had specialized training in Special Needs Education. For teachers, 33.8% were male and 66.2% female, with 93% holding bachelor's degrees and 22.5% having SNE training.

4.2 Communication and Information Sharing

The study revealed strong emphasis on communication between parents and teachers regarding learners with learning disabilities. Among teachers, 15 (21.1%) strongly agreed and 50 (70.4%) agreed that parents are frequently informed about their children's strengths and weaknesses, representing a 91.5% agreement rate. Additionally, 10 teachers (14.1%) strongly agreed and 55 (77.5%) agreed that parents and teachers should acknowledge the critical importance of each other's participation in the life of the learner, achieving a 91.6% agreement rate.

These findings indicate strong recognition of the critical importance of regular communication in supporting learners with learning disabilities, aligning with research emphasizing the vital role of information sharing (Sheridan et al., 2017).

4.3 Parental Participation in School Governance

Results indicated substantial parental participation in school governance structures. Three principals (25%) strongly agreed and 8 (66.7%) agreed that parents participate in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs), representing a 91.7% agreement rate. Furthermore, 2 principals (16.7%) strongly agreed and 9 (75%) agreed that when communities care about

their schools, the schools perform better, achieving a 91.7% agreement rate.

These findings suggest effective formal mechanisms for parent engagement in school leadership and recognition of community impact on educational success.

4.4 Home-Based Learning Support and Academic Outcomes

Teachers strongly endorsed the relationship between parental involvement and academic outcomes. Nine teachers (12.7%) strongly agreed and 57 (80.3%) agreed that parents and community involvement correlate to higher academic progress and school improvement, representing a 93% agreement rate. Additionally, 10 teachers (14.1%) strongly agreed and 52 (73.2%) agreed that parents influence children's achievement through active involvement in learning while at home, achieving an 87.3% agreement rate.

Regarding home learning activities, 1 principal (8.3%) strongly agreed and 8 (66.7%) agreed that families are involved with their children in learning activities at home including homework and curriculum-linked activities. These findings align with international research demonstrating positive correlations between parental involvement and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2017).

4.5 Challenges in Parental Support

A concerning finding emerged regarding the adequacy of parental support. Two principals (16.7%) strongly agreed and 7 (58.3%) agreed that most families give minimal or no emotional and physical support for their children with learning disabilities while at school and in class, leaving the burden to teachers. This 75% agreement rate indicates significant gaps between theoretical recognition of parental involvement importance and actual implementation.

Despite these challenges, there was strong recognition of parental involvement's vital role. Fifteen teachers (21.1%) strongly agreed and 53 (74.6%) agreed that the involvement of parents of learners with learning disability is a vital factor in integrated and inclusive schooling, achieving a 95.7% agreement rate. This finding highlights the disconnect between recognition of importance and actual support provision.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

The results demonstrate a complex relationship between parental involvement and academic performance among learners with learning disabilities. While there is strong theoretical recognition of parental involvement's importance, significant implementation challenges persist. The high agreement rates regarding communication (91.5%), governance participation (91.7%), and home support (87.3%) indicate positive attitudes and some effective practices.

However, the finding that 75% of principals perceive families as providing minimal support suggests substantial room for improvement. This gap between recognition and implementation reflects common challenges identified in international literature, including resource constraints, knowledge limitations, and systemic barriers (Burke & Goldman, 2015). The strong agreement on communication patterns aligns with research emphasizing the critical role of information sharing in supporting learners with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

This study provides compelling evidence that parental involvement significantly influences academic performance in classroom tasks among learners with learning disabilities in integrated secondary schools. The research reveals strong theoretical recognition among educators regarding the importance of parental involvement, with over 90% agreement rates across multiple dimensions including communication, governance participation, and home-based support.

Key conclusions include that effective communication between parents and teachers is well-established, with parents regularly informed about their children's strengths and weaknesses. Formal mechanisms for parental participation in school governance through PTAs are functioning effectively, providing platforms for collaborative decision-making. There is strong recognition that parental involvement correlates with improved academic progress and school performance, and home-based learning activities are acknowledged as critical factors influencing classroom performance. However, a significant implementation gap exists between theoretical recognition and actual support

provision, with many families providing minimal emotional and physical support for their children with learning disabilities. Despite challenges, parental involvement is unanimously recognized as vital for successful integrated and inclusive schooling. The study concludes that while the foundation for effective parental involvement exists in integrated secondary schools, significant efforts are needed to bridge the gap between recognition and implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Education should develop comprehensive guidelines for parental involvement in integrated schools, establish training programs for parents of children with learning disabilities, and create resource centers providing families with information and support services. Schools should implement structured parent education programs focusing on understanding learning disabilities and effective support strategies, establish regular communication schedules ensuring consistent information sharing, and develop clear roles for parents in supporting classroom tasks.
2. Communities should establish parent resource centers providing information about learning disabilities, develop mentorship programs pairing experienced parents with newcomers, and implement awareness campaigns reducing stigma. Teachers and administrators should receive training on effective parent engagement strategies, cultural sensitivity in working with diverse families, and collaborative approaches to supporting learners with disabilities.

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