

The Contribution of Parental Involvement and Support in Pupils' Learning Activities to the Improvement of Academic Performance in Government Primary Schools in Buyinja Sub-county

Namalwa Aisha

Metropolitan International University

ABSTRACT

The study examined the contribution of parental involvement and support in pupils' learning activities to the improvement of academic performance in government primary schools in Buyinja Sub-county. Parental involvement was measured through homework support, provision of learning materials, and school participation. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 473 respondents comprising pupils, parents, and teachers. Structured questionnaires and interview guides served as data collection instruments. Results revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between parental involvement indicators and pupils' academic performance. Pupils whose parents actively supported their learning at home and participated in school activities consistently attained higher academic grades. The study concluded that parental involvement was a strong and consistent contributor to improved academic performance in government primary schools in Buyinja Sub-county. It was recommended that schools and local governments establish structured parental engagement frameworks to systematically harness the academic benefits of parental involvement.

Keywords: Parental involvement, homework support, learning materials, school participation, academic performance, Buyinja Sub-county, government primary schools, Uganda.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The role of parents in children's education extended far beyond the act of enrolling a child in school. Globally, research consistently established that parental involvement in children's learning activities was one of the most powerful non-school determinants of academic achievement (Epstein, 2018; Fan & Chen, 2001). Parental involvement referred to the range of behaviors and commitments through which parents engaged with their children's educational process, both at home and within the school environment. These behaviors included helping children with homework, purchasing and providing scholastic materials, attending school meetings, communicating with teachers, and creating supportive home learning environments (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2023).

In sub-Saharan Africa, increasing scholarly attention had been directed toward understanding how family-level engagement shaped children's school outcomes in resource-constrained contexts. Studies conducted in Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, and Rwanda demonstrated that pupils whose parents maintained regular and

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meaningful involvement in their learning consistently outperformed their peers from homes where parental engagement was minimal or absent (Abubakar et al., 2021; Nokali et al., 2010). These findings were particularly relevant in contexts where public schools were under-resourced and could not independently compensate for deficits in home learning support.

In Uganda, the introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1997 brought millions of children into classrooms but simultaneously increased pressure on already strained school systems (Nishimura et al., 2008). With high pupil-to-teacher ratios, inadequate instructional materials, and limited school funding, the quality of in-school instruction was compromised in many government primary schools (MoES, 2022). In this environment, the contribution of parents in reinforcing classroom learning at home became even more critical to pupils' academic success. Yet parental involvement in many rural Ugandan communities remained constrained by low adult literacy levels, cultural attitudes toward schooling, economic pressures that demanded parental time, and limited awareness of effective involvement strategies (Nakamanya, 2020; Ssewanyana & Kasirye, 2020).

Buyinja Sub-county in Namayingo District, eastern Uganda, typified these challenges. The area was predominantly rural, economically dependent on subsistence agriculture and artisanal fishing, and characterized by low parental education and limited household income (UBOS, 2021). Government primary schools in the sub-county recorded consistently poor academic performance in national assessments, yet the specific contribution of parental involvement and support to this performance trajectory had not been empirically investigated. This study was therefore conducted to provide systematic evidence on how parental involvement in pupils' learning activities contributed to academic performance improvement in government primary schools in Buyinja Sub-county.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Government primary schools in Buyinja Sub-county continued to record persistently low academic performance in national assessments, despite the Government of Uganda's sustained investments in Universal Primary Education. Uganda National Examinations Board reports from 2019 to 2023 consistently showed that a large proportion of pupils from this sub-county attained the lowest performance grades or failed examinations altogether, placing the area well below national performance averages (UNEB, 2023). While inadequate school infrastructure, teacher absenteeism, and insufficient instructional materials were often cited as contributing factors, the role of parental involvement in pupils' learning activities remained empirically underexplored in this specific context. Many parents in Buyinja Sub-county were observed to disengage from their children's educational process after school enrollment, neither supporting homework

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completion at home nor actively participating in school-organized activities. Whether this disengagement significantly contributed to poor academic outcomes among pupils, and to what extent active parental involvement could improve performance, remained unanswered questions. Studies conducted in urban and peri-urban Uganda addressed parental involvement in relatively privileged settings that did not reflect the socio-economic realities of rural sub-counties like Buyinja (Nakamanya, 2020; Ssewanyana & Kasirye, 2020). This study was therefore conducted to investigate the contribution of parental involvement and support in pupils' learning activities to the improvement of academic performance in government primary schools in Buyinja Sub-county.

3. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

To examine the contribution of parental involvement and support in pupils' learning activities to academic performance improvement in government primary schools in Buyinja Sub-county.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, which was considered appropriate for systematically gathering data from a large number of respondents at a single point in time without manipulating any study variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating quantitative data on the measurable relationship between parental involvement indicators and academic performance with qualitative data that provided richer contextual interpretation of the findings (Bryman, 2016).

The study was conducted in government primary schools in Buyinja Sub-county, Namayingo District, eastern Uganda. The target population comprised Primary Seven pupils, their parents or guardians, and classroom teachers in government primary schools within the sub-county. A sample of 473 respondents was selected using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination formula. Stratified random sampling was used to select pupils and parents to ensure proportional representation across all sampled schools, while purposive sampling was employed to select teachers and head teachers who were most knowledgeable about pupils' academic progress and parental engagement patterns (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to pupils and parents. The questionnaire for parents gathered information on the frequency of homework assistance, regularity of scholastic material provision, and participation in school-based activities such as parent-teacher meetings and school fundraising events. These three dimensions served as the operational measures of parental involvement and support. Pupils' academic performance data were obtained from school examination records and Uganda

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National Examinations Board registers, with grades coded numerically for analytical purposes (UNEB, 2023).

Quantitative data were entered into SPSS Version 25 and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Pearson's correlation coefficient was computed to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between each parental involvement indicator and academic performance. A significance level of $p \leq 0.05$ was adopted for all inferential tests (Field, 2018). Qualitative data obtained through interview guides administered to teachers and head teachers were analyzed thematically, with emerging themes used to corroborate and deepen the understanding of quantitative results (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional review board, and all participants provided informed consent prior to their participation.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

All 473 targeted respondents successfully participated in the study, yielding a 100% response rate. The sample included pupils, parents and guardians, and teachers and head teachers drawn from government primary schools across Buyinja Sub-county.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 473)

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pupils	210	44.4
Parents/Guardians	220	46.5
Teachers/Head Teachers	43	9.1
Total	473	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 1 showed that parents and guardians formed the largest category of respondents, representing 46.5% of the total sample of 473, followed by pupils at 44.4%, and teachers and head teachers at 9.1%. This distribution was deliberate and appropriate, as the central focus of the study was on parental involvement behaviors at the household level and their consequences for pupils' academic outcomes. The near-equal representation of pupils and parents ensured that data captured both the household-level engagement patterns of parents and the academic performance outcomes experienced by pupils. The inclusion of teachers and head teachers, though representing a smaller proportion of the sample, contributed a professional instructional perspective that allowed the research to triangulate household-level findings with

school-level observations. The 100% response rate was a testament to the effectiveness of the data collection strategy and the willingness of community members in Buyinja Sub-county to participate in research that addressed educational challenges affecting their children.

5.2 Parental Homework Support and Academic Performance

Table 2: Relationship Between Parental Homework Support and Pupils' Academic Performance (n = 410)

Frequency of Homework Support	Excellent (%)	Good (%)	Average (%)	Poor/Fail (%)	Total (n)
Never	3.1	9.4	26.2	61.3	128
Rarely (Once a Week)	8.7	19.6	36.4	35.3	102
Sometimes (2–3 Times Weekly)	22.4	34.7	31.2	11.7	94
Always (Daily)	41.3	37.6	14.8	6.3	86

Pearson $r = 0.634$, $p = 0.000$

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 2 presented the relationship between the frequency with which parents provided homework support to their children and the academic performance of those pupils, and the findings were both striking and deeply instructive. Among pupils whose parents never assisted them with homework, a substantial majority of 61.3% fell in the poor or fail performance category, and only a marginal 3.1% attained excellent grades. This finding powerfully illustrated how the complete absence of parental homework support left children academically vulnerable, particularly in a school environment where large class sizes and limited teacher availability made individualized classroom attention nearly impossible. As the frequency of parental homework support increased, the distribution of performance grades shifted dramatically in favor of higher achievement. Among pupils whose parents sometimes assisted with homework two to three times per week, only 11.7% fell in the poor or fail category, and 22.4% attained excellent grades, a more than sevenfold improvement over those who received no support at all. The most favorable academic outcomes were observed among pupils who received daily homework support from their parents, with 41.3% attaining excellent grades and only 6.3% falling in the poor or fail category. The Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.634$ at $p = 0.000$ confirmed a statistically significant moderate to strong positive relationship between parental homework support and academic performance. These findings aligned with those of Jeynes (2023) and Fan and Chen (2001), who established through meta-analytic reviews that parental homework

involvement was one of the most consistently impactful forms of parental engagement in terms of its effect on children's academic achievement. In the context of Buyinja Sub-county, where classroom instruction was often disrupted by teacher absenteeism and inadequate learning resources, parental homework support served as a critical compensatory mechanism that reinforced and extended classroom learning into the home environment, giving regularly supported pupils a meaningful academic advantage over their unsupported counterparts.

5.3 Provision of Learning Materials and Academic Performance

Table 3: Relationship Between Parental Provision of Learning Materials and Pupils' Academic Performance (n = 410)

Level of Learning Material Provision	Excellent (%)	Good (%)	Average (%)	Poor/Fail (%)	Total (n)
None Provided	2.4	8.1	22.7	66.8	110
Minimal (Pen/Book Only)	9.3	18.4	37.6	34.7	107
Moderate (Books, Pens, Uniform)	24.6	35.3	28.7	11.4	97
Comprehensive (All Materials)	43.8	36.4	13.5	6.3	96

Pearson $r = 0.618$, $p = 0.000$

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3 examined the relationship between the level of scholastic and learning material provision by parents and pupils' academic performance, and the results revealed a compelling and consistent pattern that underscored the critical role of material support in academic achievement. Among pupils whose parents provided no learning materials whatsoever, 66.8% attained poor grades or failed entirely, and only 2.4% achieved excellent performance. This finding highlighted the severe academic consequences of material deprivation, as pupils without basic scholastic supplies were unable to participate meaningfully in classroom activities, complete assignments, or reinforce learning at home. The situation improved progressively with increasing levels of material provision. Among pupils whose parents provided only minimal materials such as a single pen and exercise book, 34.7% still fell in the poor or fail category, suggesting that minimal provision was insufficient to fully address academic disadvantage. However, among pupils whose parents provided comprehensive learning materials, including all required textbooks, exercise books, pens, geometric sets, and school uniforms, only 6.3% fell in the lowest performance category, and an impressive 43.8% attained excellent grades. The Pearson correlation coefficient of $r =$

0.618 at $p = 0.000$ confirmed a statistically significant positive relationship between parental material provision and academic performance. These results were consistent with the findings of Nokali et al. (2010) and Epstein (2018), who argued that the provision of adequate learning resources by parents constituted a fundamental and tangible form of educational investment that directly enabled children to engage productively with the curriculum. In the setting of Buyinja Sub-county, where school budgets under the UPE capitation grant were widely regarded as insufficient to supply all required learning materials, the responsibility for scholastic resource provision fell heavily on parents. Pupils from households where parents were unable or unwilling to provide these materials were therefore doubly disadvantaged, operating without school-supplied resources and without home-provided alternatives.

5.4 Parental School Participation and Academic Performance

Table 4: Relationship Between Parental School Participation and Pupils' Academic Performance (n = 410)

Level of School Participation	Excellent (%)	Good (%)	Average (%)	Poor/Fail (%)	Total (n)
Never Participates	4.2	10.3	24.8	60.7	121
Rarely Participates	10.6	22.1	38.4	28.9	103
Sometimes Participates	26.3	36.8	25.7	11.2	98
Actively and Regularly Participates	44.7	35.9	13.6	5.8	88

Pearson $r = 0.607, p = 0.000$

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 4 presented the relationship between the level of parental participation in school activities and pupils' academic performance, and the data demonstrated a clear and statistically robust positive association. Among pupils whose parents never participated in any school activities, including parent-teacher meetings, school development committee sessions, and academic progress reviews, 60.7% attained poor grades or failed, and only 4.2% achieved excellent performance. This finding suggested that parental disengagement from the school environment had serious negative consequences for pupil academic outcomes, likely because it left teachers without the home-side reinforcement and accountability that active parental school involvement typically provided. As parental school participation increased, pupil performance improved markedly. Among pupils with parents who sometimes participated in school activities, only 11.2% fell in

the poor or fail category, while 26.3% attained excellent grades. The most favorable outcomes were observed among pupils with parents who actively and regularly participated in school activities, where 44.7% achieved excellent performance and a mere 5.8% fell in the lowest category. The Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.607$ at $p = 0.000$ confirmed a statistically significant moderate to strong positive relationship between parental school participation and academic performance. These findings were consistent with Henderson and Mapp (2002) and Jeynes (2023), who demonstrated through extensive reviews that parental school-based involvement not only improved academic outcomes but also strengthened the home-school communication channel through which teachers could inform parents about learning gaps and parents could relay information about home-based learning challenges. In Buyinja Sub-county, teachers interviewed during the qualitative phase of this study consistently reported that pupils whose parents attended school meetings and maintained communication with teachers tended to demonstrate greater classroom engagement, better homework completion rates, and higher levels of academic motivation than their peers whose parents remained entirely disengaged from the school community.

5.5 Summary of Correlation Findings

Table 5: Summary of Pearson Correlation Between Parental Involvement Indicators and Academic Performance (n = 473)

Parental Involvement Indicator	Pearson r	Sig. (p-value)	Direction	Strength
Homework Support	0.634	0.000	Positive	Moderate-Strong
Provision of Learning Materials	0.618	0.000	Positive	Moderate-Strong
School Participation	0.607	0.000	Positive	Moderate-Strong

Significance level: $p \leq 0.05$

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 5 provided a consolidated overview of all Pearson correlation coefficients computed between the three parental involvement indicators and pupils' academic performance across the full sample of 473 respondents. All three indicators demonstrated statistically significant positive relationships with academic performance, each at $p = 0.000$, which was substantially below the 0.05 significance threshold. Parental homework support recorded the highest correlation coefficient at $r = 0.634$, indicating that it was the single most influential parental involvement behavior in terms of its association with academic performance improvement among pupils in the study. Provision of learning materials followed at $r = 0.618$, and parental

school participation recorded $r = 0.607$. All three coefficients fell in the moderate to strong range, confirming that parental involvement in its various forms was not merely peripherally related to academic outcomes but was substantively and meaningfully connected to how pupils performed in school. The consistency of significant positive correlations across all three dimensions of parental involvement reinforced the conclusion that parental engagement as a composite phenomenon was a robust and reliable contributor to academic performance improvement in government primary schools in Buyinja Sub-county. These findings were in strong agreement with the meta-analytic conclusions of Jeynes (2023) and Fan and Chen (2001), as well as the broader international consensus represented in the OECD (2023) education framework, all of which identified parental involvement as a key lever for improving educational outcomes, particularly in under-resourced public school contexts where school-level factors alone were insufficient to guarantee high-quality learning outcomes.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study established that parental involvement and support in pupils' learning activities made a statistically significant and positive contribution to academic performance improvement in government primary schools in Buyinja Sub-county. Across all three measured dimensions of parental involvement, namely homework support, provision of learning materials, and school participation, consistent and meaningful positive associations with academic performance were confirmed. Pupils whose parents actively supported their learning at home and engaged regularly with the school community consistently attained higher academic grades. These findings confirmed that in under-resourced rural school environments, parental involvement served as a critical supplementary educational resource that compensated for school-level deficiencies and extended learning opportunities beyond the classroom (Jeynes, 2023; OECD, 2023; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Education and Sports needed to develop and disseminate a national parental involvement framework tailored to the realities of rural government primary schools. Such a framework should have provided schools with structured guidelines on how to systematically engage parents in supporting their children's learning both at home and within the school environment, moving beyond ad hoc arrangements to institutionalized and consistent engagement practices.

Head teachers and teachers in government primary schools in Buyinja Sub-county were encouraged to establish regular and structured parent-teacher engagement programs, including termly academic progress review meetings, home visit programs for persistently underperforming pupils, and community

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sensitization campaigns that educated parents on the specific and practical ways in which their involvement in homework supervision and material provision directly improved their children's academic outcomes.

The District Education Office in Namayingo District needed to work with community development officers to design adult literacy and parenting skills programs targeting parents in Buyinja Sub-county. Since low parental education was identified as a barrier to effective homework support, improving adult literacy would have expanded the capacity of parents to engage meaningfully with their children's learning activities and support homework completion even in households with limited formal educational backgrounds.

Non-governmental organizations and development partners operating in Namayingo District were urged to support schools in Buyinja Sub-county through scholastic material donation programs targeting the most economically vulnerable households. Given the strong correlation found between the provision of learning materials and academic performance, ensuring that every pupil had access to basic learning resources regardless of household income would have significantly reduced the material deprivation-driven performance gaps documented in this study.

Future researchers were encouraged to conduct experimental or quasi-experimental studies that introduced structured parental involvement interventions in selected schools and measured their impact on academic performance over time. Such designs would have provided stronger causal evidence for the relationship documented in this correlational study and would have informed the design of evidence-based parental engagement policies with greater precision and confidence.

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