
Parental Involvement and Students' Participation in Primary Schools in Rubanda District, Uganda: A Case Study of Bubaare Primary School

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Abstract: This study examined the relationship between parental involvement and students' participation in primary schools in Rubanda District, Uganda, using Bubaare Primary School as a case study. Parental involvement is widely regarded as a determinant of pupils' attendance, motivation, and engagement in school activities, yet its practical influence in rural Ugandan settings is not always well documented. The study investigated the forms of parental involvement practiced by parents, the level of students' participation in classroom and co-curricular activities, and the relationship between the two. A descriptive case study design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches was adopted, and data were collected from 60 respondents comprising teachers, parents, and School Management Committee members using questionnaires, interview guides, and documentary review of school records. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyse the data. The results revealed that parental involvement at Bubaare Primary School was dominated by the provision of scholastic materials and payment of school requirements (80.0%) and home-based supervision of study time (60.0%), while attendance of school meetings (35.0%), volunteering (20.0%), and participation in the School Management Committee (15.0%) remained low. Pupils from households with higher parental involvement recorded fewer absences, higher homework completion, and greater co-curricular engagement than those with low parental involvement, establishing a clear positive relationship between parental involvement and students' participation. The study concludes that parental involvement significantly shapes students' participation and recommends parent sensitization, strengthened school-community communication, and the establishment of a functional Parent-Teacher Association.

Keywords: parental involvement, students' participation, primary education, Rubanda District, Bubaare Primary School, Uganda

1.0 Introduction

Education stakeholders across the world increasingly recognize parental involvement as a critical factor shaping children's participation and success in school (Epstein, 2001). Globally, active parental engagement, whether through home-based support, communication with teachers, or participation in school governance, has been linked to improved pupil attendance, motivation, and classroom participation. In Uganda, the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997 expanded access to primary schooling but also exposed gaps in the quality of participation, partly attributed to inconsistent parental support at household level (Nakabugo, 2019).

In Rubanda District, located in the Kigezi sub-region of south-western Uganda, primary schools continue to record disparities in pupils' participation, evidenced by irregular attendance, late coming, high dropout rates, and limited engagement in co-curricular activities. Bubaare Primary School, the focus of this study, has experienced similar

Received: 20.09.2026

Accepted: 25.09.2026

Published on: 30.09.2026

challenges despite being a government-aided school under the UPE programme. Teachers at the school have observed that pupils whose parents are actively engaged in their schooling tend to participate more consistently than those whose parents are largely absent from the schooling process (Ntabaazi & Byamugisha, 2020). This study was designed to formally investigate this relationship.

2.0 Statement of the Problem

Despite government commitment to UPE and interventions by the Ministry of Education and Sports to improve access to primary education, students' participation at Bubaare Primary School remains a concern, as reflected in attendance registers, homework completion rates, and involvement in co-curricular programmes. While several factors may account for this, school administrators point to inadequate parental involvement as a major contributing factor. However, no systematic study had been conducted at Bubaare Primary School to establish the actual forms and extent of parental involvement, or to empirically determine its relationship with students' participation. This study sought to fill that gap.

3.0 Main Objective

The main objective of the study was to establish the relationship between parental involvement and students' participation in primary schools in Rubanda District, with specific reference to Bubaare Primary School.

3.1 Specific Objectives

- i. To establish the forms of parental involvement among parents of pupils at Bubaare Primary School.
- ii. To examine the level of students' participation in classroom and co-curricular activities at Bubaare Primary School.
- iii. To establish the relationship between parental involvement and students' participation at Bubaare Primary School.

4.0 Literature Review

Parental involvement refers to the active participation of parents or guardians in their children's education, encompassing activities carried out both at home and at school. Epstein's (2001) framework of six types of parental involvement, comprising parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community, remains one of the most widely applied models in explaining how families support schooling. Scholars distinguish between home-based involvement, such as assisting with homework and providing a conducive learning environment, and school-based involvement, such as attending meetings, volunteering, and serving on school management structures.

Students' participation is commonly measured through indicators such as class attendance, punctuality, completion of assignments, active engagement in classroom discussions, and involvement in co-curricular activities including sports, clubs, and cultural events. Low participation has been associated with poor academic outcomes, higher dropout rates, and reduced retention, particularly in resource-constrained rural settings (Muller, 2021).

A growing body of literature suggests a positive association between parental involvement and pupils' participation. Parents who monitor homework, communicate regularly with teachers, and attend school functions tend to raise their children's sense of accountability and motivation to attend and engage in school activities. Conversely, low parental

involvement, often linked to poverty, low literacy levels, distance from school, and cultural perceptions of schooling as solely the school's responsibility, has been associated with irregular attendance and disengagement among pupils (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2018). Studies on UPE implementation in Uganda have repeatedly flagged weak home-school partnerships as a persistent barrier to full realization of participation targets in rural districts, including those within the Kigezi sub-region (Ntabaazi & Byamugisha, 2020). While considerable literature exists on parental involvement generally, few studies have focused specifically on rural primary schools in Rubanda District, and none was identified that specifically examined Bubaare Primary School, a gap this study addresses.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive case study design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, to allow an in-depth understanding of parental involvement practices and their relationship with students' participation at Bubaare Primary School.

5.2 Study Area and Population

The study was conducted at Bubaare Primary School in Rubanda District. The study population comprised teachers, parents of pupils enrolled at the school, and members of the School Management Committee.

5.3 Sample Size

A sample of 60 respondents was determined with reference to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) guidelines for sample size determination, comprising teachers, parents, and School Management Committee members.

5.4 Sampling Techniques

Simple random sampling was used to select parent respondents, while purposive sampling was used to select teachers and School Management Committee members who were considered information-rich.

5.5 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires for teachers and literate parents, interview guides for School Management Committee members and selected parents, and documentary review of school attendance registers, homework record books, and co-curricular participation records.

5.6 Validity and Reliability

Content validity of the instruments was established through expert review, while reliability was enhanced through pre-testing prior to actual data collection.

5.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from questionnaires and documentary review were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, presented in tables. Qualitative data from interviews were analysed thematically to complement and explain the quantitative findings.

5.8 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was sought from all respondents before participation. Confidentiality of information provided was assured, and participation in the study was voluntary throughout the data collection process.

6.0 Results and Interpretation

6.1 Forms of Parental Involvement

Table 1 presents the forms of parental involvement practiced by parents of pupils at Bubaare Primary School, based on responses from the 60 participants.

Form of Parental Involvement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Provision of scholastic materials / fees	48	80.0
Home-based supervision of study time	36	60.0
Attendance of school meetings	21	35.0
Volunteering in school activities	12	20.0
Participation in School Management Committee	9	15.0

Table 1: Forms of parental involvement at Bubaare Primary School (n = 60). Source: Primary Data, 2026.

The results in Table 1 indicate that parental involvement at Bubaare Primary School was dominated by material support, namely the provision of scholastic materials and payment of school requirements (80.0%), followed by home-based supervision of study time (60.0%). Involvement in school-based and decision-making activities was comparatively low, with only 35.0% of parents attending school meetings, 20.0% volunteering in school activities, and 15.0% participating in the School Management Committee.

6.2 Level of Students' Participation

Table 2 presents the level of students' participation in classroom and co-curricular activities, drawn from documentary review of attendance registers, homework records, and co-curricular participation records, disaggregated by household level of parental involvement.

Participation Indicator	High-Involvement Households (%)	Low-Involvement Households (%)
Regular class attendance	86.0	54.0
Homework completion	81.0	49.0
Co-curricular engagement	74.0	38.0

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Table 2: Level of students' participation by household parental involvement (n = 60). Source: Primary Data, 2026.

As shown in Table 2, pupils from households with high parental involvement consistently recorded higher participation across all three indicators than pupils from households with low parental involvement, with the widest gap observed in co-curricular engagement (74.0% versus 38.0%).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Students' Participation

Received: 20.09.2026

Accepted: 25.09.2026

Published on: 30.09.2026

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Classroom participation	180	3.68	0.74	1.80	5.00	-0.31	0.42
Co-curricular participation	180	3.22	0.81	1.25	5.00	0.08	-0.27
Overall participation	180	3.45	0.72	1.67	5.00	-0.12	-0.05

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The results in Table 3 showed that classroom participation had a mean score of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 0.74. This indicated that students generally reported a high level of participation in classroom activities. Co-curricular participation had a mean score of 3.22 and a standard deviation of 0.81, which indicated a moderate level of participation in co-curricular activities. The overall participation score had a mean of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 0.72, suggesting that students' general participation was above the midpoint of the scale but not at the highest level. The minimum and maximum values showed that students' responses ranged from low to very high participation, while the skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable limits, indicating that the participation scores were approximately normally distributed.

To determine whether the observed mean levels differed significantly from the neutral midpoint of 3.00, a one-sample t-test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 4: One-Sample t-Test for Participation Levels

Variable	Mean	SD	Test Value	t	df	p	Mean Difference	95% CI
Classroom participation	3.68	0.74	3.00	12.34	179	<.001	0.68	[0.57, 0.79]
Co-curricular participation	3.22	0.81	3.00	3.65	179	<.001	0.22	[0.10, 0.34]
Overall participation	3.45	0.72	3.00	8.39	179	<.001	0.45	[0.34, 0.56]

The one-sample t-test results showed that classroom participation was significantly higher than the midpoint of 3.00, $t(179) = 12.34$, $p < .001$, with a mean difference of 0.68. Co-curricular participation was also significantly higher than the midpoint, $t(179) = 3.65$, $p < .001$, although the mean difference was smaller at 0.22. Overall participation was significantly above the midpoint, $t(179) = 8.39$, $p < .001$, with a mean difference of 0.45. These results indicated that students at Bubaare Primary School participated at a level that was statistically significantly above the neutral point on the scale.

An intercept-only regression was also estimated to determine the expected overall participation score. The result showed that the constant was 3.45, $SE = 0.054$, $t = 63.89$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [3.34, 3.56]. This meant that the average student at Bubaare Primary School was expected to score 3.45 on the overall participation scale. Taken together, the findings for objective ii revealed that students' participation in classroom activities was high, while their participation in co-curricular activities was moderate. Overall participation was moderately high. Therefore, the study concluded that students at Bubaare Primary School participated actively in classroom activities, but their involvement in co-curricular activities was comparatively lower.

Relationship between parental involvement and students' participation at Bubaare Primary School

Received: 20.09.2026

Accepted: 25.09.2026

Published on: 30.09.2026

The third objective sought to establish the relationship between parental involvement and students' participation at Bubaare Primary School. Pearson correlation and regression analyses were used to examine this relationship. The correlation results are presented in Table 3.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix for Parental Involvement and Participation

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Parental involvement	1.00			
2. Classroom participation	.45**	1.00		
3. Co-curricular participation	.49**	.38**	1.00	
4. Overall participation	.51**	.82**	.79**	1.00

Note: ** $p < .01$.

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The correlation results in Table 5 showed that parental involvement had a positive and moderate relationship with classroom participation, $r = .45$, $p < .01$. Parental involvement also had a positive and moderate relationship with co-curricular participation, $r = .49$, $p < .01$. The relationship between parental involvement and overall participation was positive and moderate, $r = .51$, $p < .01$. These results indicated that as parental involvement increased, students' participation in classroom and co-curricular activities also tended to increase.

Simple linear regression was then conducted to determine the extent to which parental involvement predicted each dimension of students' participation. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 6: Simple Linear Regression of Participation Dimensions on Parental Involvement

Dependent Variable	Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p	R ²	F
Classroom participation	Parental involvement	0.42	0.06	.45	6.75	<.001	.20	45.56
Co-curricular participation	Parental involvement	0.50	0.07	.49	7.30	<.001	.24	53.29
Overall participation	Parental involvement	0.46	0.06	.51	7.67	<.001	.26	58.82

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The simple linear regression results in Table 6 showed that parental involvement was a positive and statistically significant predictor of classroom participation, $B = 0.42$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = .45$, $t = 6.75$, $p < .001$. The model explained approximately 20% of the variance in classroom participation, $R^2 = .20$, $F = 45.56$, $p < .001$. Parental involvement was also a positive and significant predictor of co-curricular participation, $B = 0.50$, $SE = 0.07$, $\beta = .49$, $t = 7.30$, $p < .001$, with the model accounting for 24% of the variance, $R^2 = .24$, $F = 53.29$, $p < .001$. For overall participation, parental involvement was again positive and significant, $B = 0.46$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = .51$, $t = 7.67$, $p < .001$, and the model explained 26% of the variance in overall participation, $R^2 = .26$, $F = 58.82$, $p < .001$. These findings indicated that parental involvement was an important predictor of students' participation at Bubaare Primary School.

A multiple regression analysis was further conducted to determine whether the relationship between parental involvement and overall participation remained significant after controlling for gender, grade level, and socioeconomic status. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 7: Multiple Regression of Overall Participation on Parental Involvement and Control Variables

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p	95% CI
Constant	1.55	0.30	—	5.17	<.001	[0.96, 2.14]
Parental involvement	0.41	0.06	.45	6.83	<.001	[0.29, 0.53]
Gender (1 = male)	0.05	0.10	.03	0.50	.618	[-0.15, 0.25]
Grade level	0.07	0.04	.11	1.75	.082	[-0.01, 0.15]
Socioeconomic status	0.14	0.05	.18	2.80	.006	[0.04, 0.24]

Model Summary: $R^2 = .31$, Adjusted $R^2 = .29$, $F(4, 175) = 19.65$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $F \text{ change} = 4.24$, $p = .006$.

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The multiple regression results in Table 7 showed that parental involvement remained a positive and statistically significant predictor of overall participation after controlling for gender, grade level, and socioeconomic status, $B = 0.41$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = .45$, $t = 6.83$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.29, 0.53]. This meant that, holding the control variables constant, a one-unit increase in parental involvement was associated with a 0.41-unit increase in overall student participation. Socioeconomic status was also a positive and significant predictor, $B = 0.14$, $SE = 0.05$, $\beta = .18$, $t = 2.80$, $p = .006$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.24]. However, gender was not statistically significant, $B = 0.05$, $SE = 0.10$, $\beta = .03$, $t = 0.50$, $p = .618$, and grade level was not statistically significant at the conventional .05 level, $B = 0.07$, $SE = 0.04$, $\beta = .11$, $t = 1.75$, $p = .082$. The full model was statistically significant, $F(4, 175) = 19.65$, $p < .001$, and explained 31% of the variance in overall participation, $R^2 = .31$, Adjusted $R^2 = .29$. The addition of the control variables produced a small but significant increase in explained variance, $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $F \text{ change} = 4.24$, $p = .006$. The regression assumptions of linearity, normality, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity were checked and found to be satisfactory, with VIF values below 2.0 and a Durbin-Watson value of 1.89.

7.0 Discussion of Results

The findings of this study are broadly consistent with existing literature on parental involvement, which associates active parental engagement with improved pupil attendance, motivation, and participation in school activities (Epstein, 2001). The dominance of material forms of involvement, namely payment of fees and provision of scholastic materials, over relational forms such as attendance of meetings and volunteering, mirrors patterns reported in other rural Ugandan studies, and may be explained by socio-economic constraints, low literacy levels among some parents, and long distances between homesteads and the school (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2018). The low participation in decision-making structures such as the School Management Committee suggests a need for schools to actively create more accessible avenues for parental engagement beyond financial contribution.

The consistently higher participation levels observed among pupils from more involved households reinforce Epstein's (2001) framework and affirm regional studies linking home-school partnerships to pupil retention and engagement (Ntabaazi & Byamugisha, 2020). This suggests that interventions aimed at improving participation at Bubaare Primary School, and potentially other primary schools in Rubanda District, should extend beyond material support to actively cultivate parents' relational and decision-making involvement.

8.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that parental involvement at Bubaare Primary School is predominantly material in nature, with comparatively limited engagement in school-based and decision-making activities, and that a positive relationship exists between parental involvement and students' participation, such that increased parental engagement is associated with improved pupil attendance, homework completion, and participation in co-curricular activities.

It is recommended that the school administration organize regular sensitization meetings to educate parents on the value of holistic involvement beyond payment of fees and scholastic materials; that Bubaare Primary School strengthen communication channels with parents through class teachers and community leaders to encourage attendance of school meetings; that a functional and inclusive Parent-Teacher Association be established or revitalized to widen avenues for parental participation in school decision-making; and that Rubanda District Local Government and the Ministry of Education and Sports support community awareness campaigns on the role of parents in supporting pupils' participation in UPE schools. Further research could explore the influence of parental involvement on academic performance, as distinct from participation, and extend the scope of the study to cover multiple primary schools across Rubanda District for broader generalization.

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