Journal of Popular Education in Africa: **ISSN 2523-2800 (online)**
October, November & December 2025, Volume 9, Number 10, 11 & 12
Citation: Nyamu, C. K; Ndiga, B & Awino, J. O. (2025). The Influence of Parental Communication with Teachers on Learners' Academic Performance in Public Primary Schools in Wajir East Sub-County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 159 – 173.

The Influence of Parental Communication with Teachers on Learners' Academic Performance in Public Primary Schools in Wajir East Sub-County, Kenya

By

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of parental communication with teachers on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Wajir East Sub-County, Kenya. The research was anchored on Epstein Theory of comprehensive school performance model. Concurrent mixed methods research design was used. The target population comprised 13 primary schools, 13 head teachers, 312 teachers, 256 learners, 13 parents, and one Sub-County Director of Education. The study employed simple random sampling to select 4 primary schools and purposive sampling to include the 4 head teachers of the selected schools. Census sampling was used to include all 65 teachers of the selected schools. Proportionate simple random sampling was applied to select 156 learners. Purposive sampling was applied to include 4 parent representatives and the Sub-County Director of Education. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers, in-depth interview guide for head teachers, parents and the sub county director. Focus group discussion guide was used for leaners. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics which were processed using Statistical Package for Social Science Version 29 and presented using bar graphs, tables, and pie charts. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis and presented in the form of themes, narratives, and direct quotations. The findings of the study revealed that parental communication with teachers significantly influences learners' academic performance. Effective communication between parents and teachers through meetings, calls, and messaging enhances progress monitoring, motivation, and assessment scores. Limited parental engagement and communication limits resource allocation, discipline, and learner outcomes. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education should enhance parental involvement in rural schools by promoting community awareness, mobile communication tools, flexible meetings, inclusive governance, and training programs to support homework and volunteering, fostering stronger school home partnerships and improving learner performance.

Keywords: Kenya, Influence, Parental Communication, Teachers, Learners, Academic, Performance, Schools

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1. Introduction

Parental involvement in education has long been recognized as a crucial factor influencing learners' academic achievement and overall educational outcomes. In recent years, research has increasingly focused on understanding the specific ways in which parental involvement impacts learners' success, particularly in the context of primary education in diverse socio-cultural settings such as Wajir East Sub-County, Wajir County- Kenya (Wanjala & Hussein, 2017).

Parental involvement can take many different forms, including supporting learning activities at home, communicating with the school, and participating in school events (Lara & Saracostti, 2019). Levels of parental involvement in education vary from one parent to the other and the impact of this on academic performance need to be studied. Parental involvement programs aim to strengthen home-school relations with the objectives of improving academic performance or education outcomes (Barrea-Osoro, 2021). Most programs focus on the marginalized and disadvantaged parents or ethnic minority families. For example, the Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-school Youngsters platform (HIPPY) in which a number of parents and caregivers receive parental classes. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that such classes contribute to school participation and improved communication between parents and the school (UNICEF, 2020). Parents play an important role by assisting the teachers in developing learners' academic performance, potential and monitoring the quality of teaching strategies. The same research observes that parents play a pivotal role in learners' education; that parental involvement in learners' education boosts well-being and confidence and is important for academic progression.

Globally, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) has emphasized the importance of parental involvement in its Education for All (EFA) initiative and subsequent Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2022). This was done by highlighting the involvement of parents as key investors ensuring worldwide quality education for children. The significance of parental involvement was clearly emphasized and delineated in the No Child Left Behind Act. More specifically, schools were instructed to engage families in education of their children and encourage the participation of parents in regular, two-way communications involving student academic achievement and various school activities.

Due to the pressure from administration applied by partially tying funding of schools to successful parental involvement programs, and adoption of multiple reforms that incorporate parental involvement as one of their integral parts, schools across the United States have been working on designing and implementing various parental involvement initiatives in the hope of improving student academic performance (Wilder, 2023). In USA, Paulynice (2020) argued that low parental involvement has been found to be a complex problem that impacts negatively on learners' achievement levels as well as affecting

education reforms. Many school leaders still find it challenging to get parents involved in their meetings and parental programmes that have been organized by the school.

A study conducted in Australia indicated that positive impacts of parental involvement on student academic outcomes have not only been recognized by school administrators and teachers, but also by policy-makers who have interwoven different aspects of parental involvement in new educational initiatives and reforms (Pinguart et al., 2020). The major notion of parent involvement is that parents know what they want for their children and thereby should be involved in the school's activities. However, these parental involvements are limited to middle class families, and this is due to their financial status hence affecting their academic performance. For example, in Turkish context, parental involvement in their learner's education is scarce but in some schools for young learners' parental involvement takes place mostly in fundraising and volunteer activities relating to school maintenance (Utami, 2022).

In Norway, Schmid and Garrels (2021) highlighted the importance of parents getting involved in school events, as this type of parental commitment is associated with learners' educational achievement, engagement, and motivation. However, high parental expectations may enhance learner motivation and expectations, boost the learner's academic self-efficacy, foster other dimensions of parental involvement in schooling (for example, the extent and quality of homework support or communication with teachers), and increase students' accomplishments by influencing teachers' perceptions and evaluations of the learner. On the other hand, overly high parental expectations may be experienced as pressure and, thus, undermine achievement motivation and be a cause of achievement-related mental health problems (Eriksen, 2021).

Parents play a crucial role in their learner's education and their involvement is generally associated with improved academic performance. However, a significant issue in South African schools is the lack of effective parental engagement, which contributes to high failure rates among learners (Ndwandwe, 2023). Some parents in South Africa have a tendency of moving back when it comes to school governance. This is because they maintain that teachers have the necessary skills to lead the school without their support. This is a wrong idea because a school can run smoothly with both teachers and the parents as the clients. Local and international research has shown that the education level of parents and the social-economic status have an influence upon the involvement of parents in schools (Sibanda, 2021). However, the implementation of South African Schools Act. No 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) presented parents with a newfound possibility of actively being involved in their learner's education and in school governance through mandatory parent representation on school-governing bodies (Sibanda, 2021). The current researcher believes that when parents are actively involved in learning process, this may improve academic performance. The study sought to make the readers aware that not only teachers but also parents should be involved in school learning activities for the learners to fill the above gap.

In Tanzania, it has been reported that public schools and some of the private schools in the country, including those in Dar es Salam, Morogoro and Kagera, perform poorly in national examinations. Among the reasons cited include lack of discipline, drug use, misbehavior among students and low parental involvement in their learners schooling (Omari et al., 2023). Studies on parental involvement on their children's schooling were mostly concentrated on specific topics such as the contribution of parents to the academic performance of learners in schools, factors which hinder involvement of parents in learner's

education and impact of parental involvement learner discipline in school (Omari et al., 2023). The current study clearly highlights that parents are involved in their academic exercises by discussing school events and activities which can also include volunteering their time at school by attending meetings and reviewing learners' assignments. Levels of parental involvement in education vary from one parent to the other and the impact of this on academic performance need to be studied. Parental involvement programs aim to strengthen home-school relations with the objectives of improving academic performance or education outcomes. Most programs focus on the marginalized and disadvantaged parents or ethnic minority families (Barrea-Osoro, 2021).

In Kenya parental involvement is very important because parents are considered to be the first teachers in the learner's life. Moreover, the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) emphasizes the role of parents as very essential to their learner's education and are so much involved in their learning process. The aim of CBC is to equip learners with attitudes, skills, and values that may enable them to solve everyday problems and to flourish in the competitive fast-paced global economy associated with the shifting technological demands and advancements in the 21st century (Mwang'ombe 2021). One tool of CBC to achieve this goal is continuous formative assessments rather than the summative high-stake exams of the previous system; making it a competency-based rather than an exam-performance-based education system (Imana, 2020).

In the CBC, assessment methods are designed to measure a learner's understanding of core competencies. These assessments differ from traditional exams in that they focus on real-world applications of knowledge and skills. Competency-based assessment includes project-based assignments, practical demonstrations and continuous evaluations. Competency based curriculum engages learners with hands-on activities and therefore is skill based and exposes learners to real-world experience (Mwang'ombe 2021). According to Indimuli (2022), learners' ability to comprehend improves tremendously when parents assist them from home, which is reflected in positive academic performance, where test scores in examinations remarkably improve. Further, parental involvement is linked to the academic progress of a learner through engagement in diverse activities such as assisting the learners in undertaking assignments, attending the learner's school mentorship programs, connecting between teachers and learners, and attending teacher-parent meetings.

Educators need to work closely with the parents and the wider community in order to ensure a better academic performance which can only happen with the involvement of the parents. Education is a shared responsibility and all stakeholders need to understand and appreciate what is being done and what is required of them to make meaningful contributions to the process (Njeru et al., 2023). Moreover, family has the first influence on the learner and it remains one of the most significant aspects of growth for them. Parental involvement in learner's education has positive outcomes as the parents gain knowledge about the school activities and therefore, their engagement in their academic performance serves as a motivator that bridges the gap between home and school.

A study by Dingili et al. (2023) examined a study in Kaimosi region in Kenya which mainly investigated more about the CBC activities that call for parental involvement, how parents feel about this expectation, how instructors view CBC, and the difficulties they encountered in implementing it. Fifty-six people made up the study's sample size. Findings did not adequately justify the great challenge facing CBC implementation due to a lack of parental support or provision of learning materials, but they did inform the researcher on the duty of parents to work as co-educators with teachers and providers of learning materials for

practical subjects. The prohibitive cost of these materials is unquestionably a contributing factor to these difficulties experienced by families. The researcher believes that parents need to be sensitized through community awareness programme and media campaigns to know their roles and responsibilities which would curb resistance to change by stakeholders.

Moreover, communication, collaboration and constructive feedback due to ongoing formative assessments has improved in schools as a result of CBC. Since CBC is learner centered, teachers are just facilitators of the learning process and through learning activities, learners can communicate and collaborate with their peers effectively. This has resulted to increased productivity, learner engagement and self-efficacy. Amunga et al. (2020) notes that one of the best achievements of CBC is the amplification of learners' engagement because of them owning the learning process. Teachers are also able to give learners constant feedback since they have assessment rubrics to guide them in formative assessments. These rubrics can gauge whether the learner has exceeded, met or not met the learning expectations. Nevertheless, there is the expectation of parental involvement in learning activities which is to be in partnership, while also complementing the effort of teachers hence providing the opportunity to engage and empower parents so they can contribute to the learning outcomes of their children (Piliyesi et al., 2020).

The new Kenyan curriculum emphasizes that the role of parents is essential to learners' education and to the successful implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). Parental involvement is a critical factor in supporting academic success, yet there is an alarming decline in parental engagement in primary schools' academic performance in Wajir East Sub-County (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2019). The same report highlights that while learners require consistent parental support in their learning process, many parents in this region remain unfamiliar with curriculum requirements, and schools often struggle to provide the curriculum leadership needed to encourage meaningful parental engagement.

Wajir East Sub-County presents a unique context for examining this issue. The sub-county is located in a predominantly pastoralist region of northern Kenya, characterized by challenging socio-economic conditions, including high poverty levels, limited infrastructure, and recurrent droughts, all of which affect school attendance and performance. Education in this region faces systemic challenges, including teacher shortages, inadequate learning facilities, and low literacy levels among adults, which further limit parents' ability to support their children's education effectively. Cultural dynamics also play a significant role; traditional nomadic lifestyles and deeply rooted cultural practices often deprioritize formal education, particularly for girls, leading to persistent gender disparities in school enrollment and performance. These conditions create a unique educational environment that demands targeted investigation into the role of parental involvement in improving learning outcomes.

The primary reason for this study was to examine the influence of parental involvement on learners' academic performance in Wajir East Sub-County. Previous studies by Amunga et al. (2020) and Mwarari et al. (2020) identified weak parental engagement in children's education, particularly under the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in this region. According to these scholars, limited involvement is attributed to several factors, including inadequate parental sensitization on their role in the new curriculum, lack of skills and knowledge to support learners at home, insufficient instructional resources such as printers and cameras, and competing household or economic responsibilities that limit parental participation. In addition, negative attitudes towards involvement in take-home assignments persist, as many parents do not view such tasks as their responsibility.

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The knowledge gap lies in the limited understanding of how parental involvement in communication with teachers specifically influences learners' academic performance within the unique socio-economic and cultural realities of Wajir East Sub-County. While existing studies emphasize the global and national importance of parental engagement in education, they do not adequately address pastoralist contexts such as Wajir East. Recent findings by Utami (2022) further highlight the declining parental involvement, compounded by parents' unfamiliarity with curriculum requirements. This situation underscores the urgent need for a context-specific study to guide interventions that can strengthen parental involvement and improve educational outcomes in the region.

2. Statement of the Problem

Parental involvement is widely recognized as one of the most significant factors influencing learners' academic success and overall school improvement (Schmid & Garrels, 2021). Ideally, parents actively support their children's learning, engage with teachers, and participate in school decision-making, thereby fostering an environment that promotes achievement. However, in Wajir East Sub-County, this ideal remains far from reality. The region faces unique socio-economic challenges, including high poverty levels, nomadic lifestyles, low adult literacy, and limited educational resources, all of which hinder meaningful parental engagement. Many parents remain unfamiliar with the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) requirements and struggle to support their children's education, contributing to persistent low performance in primary schools.

The academic performance of learners in public primary schools is a critical indicator of educational effectiveness and future success. Despite various interventions, many learners continue to underperform. In theory, parental involvement is crucial for enhancing academic outcomes through regular communication with teachers, homework supervision, participation in school events, and provision of learning resources (Koskei, 2014; Odhiambo, 2020). However, in Wajir East, such involvement is often limited. Parents, particularly those from nomadic families, face cultural and geographical challenges that restrict active participation (Mutava, Ndanu, & Wambiya, 2023).

A study by Noor (2021) linked poor learner performance to the nomadic lifestyle, where children spend much time herding cattle, disrupting consistent schooling. This situation undermines both academic achievement and socio-economic development. Limited research on this issue underscores the need for the present study, which examined the influence of parental communication with teachers on learners' academic performance in Wajir East Sub-County, Kenya.

2.1 Objective of the Study

i. To examine the influence of parental involvement in communication with teachers on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Wajir East Sub-County, Kenya.

2.2 Research Question

i. How does parental involvement in communication with teachers influence learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Wajir East Sub- County, Kenya?

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3. Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Epstein's theory of parental involvement, which identifies six types of involvement. These interactions provide a framework for classifying behaviors, responsibilities, and actions performed by school personnel, families, and community members, all working together to enhance student achievement. The theory operates within the concept of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein et al., 2009). It proposes that learners' academic development is shaped by three interconnected environments: the family, the school, and the community. Epstein (2018) explains that these overlapping spheres represent the dynamic relationships among the three contexts, which jointly influence learners' growth.

The theory highlights six key forms of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. These areas stress that families and communities should not only remain informed but also actively participate in promoting learners' progress within schools. Collaboration, therefore, becomes a vital element in organizing and strengthening the education system. Parenting, in particular, encompasses providing health, housing, and a supportive home environment, as well as developing parental skills for effective parent–learner relationships. It also includes offering information to schools that helps teachers better understand and support learners (Epstein et al., 2009).

4. Influence of Parental Communication on Learners' Academic Performance

Parental communication has a big role in maintaining relationships between families, especially the relationship between parents, children and teachers. By having a good way of communication, it can have the same mind set in achieving educational goals. The parent - teacher relationship has been identified as essential in learning progress.

In their 2020 report, UNICEF and SEAMEO examined the influence of parental involvement on academic performance in the Philippines, highlighting significant findings on the relationship between parental support and student achievement through effective communication from both parties (UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2020). The study, titled SEA-PLM 2019 national report: Philippines, utilized a comprehensive methodology that included assessing student performance in reading, writing, and mathematics, and correlating these outcomes with levels of parental engagement in academic activities. The findings revealed that Grade 5 students whose parents were more actively involved in their educational activities scored higher in academic assessments, with Filipino students displaying the largest disparity in test scores between those with highly engaged parents and those with less engaged parents among the six participating SEA-PLM countries. Despite these findings, the report identified a critical gap: while parents are involved in school activities through roles such as Teachers -Parents Association (PTA) members or representatives on school governing councils, their contributions are primarily limited to resource mobilization and volunteer work rather than substantive educational support.

This limited recognition of parents as integral partners in education underscores a need for more effective engagement strategies to enhance their role in supporting children's academic success (UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2020). The revealed study used only grade 5 learners to give general results. It also indicates that parents were not involved on the learner's educational performance. The study was done in a different geographical area. It is for this reason that this study investigated the influence of parental involvement on learners'

academic performance in public schools in Wajir East Sub- County Wajir, Kenya to fill the above gaps.

The study by Ariani et al. (2022) titled "Implementing online integrated character education and parental engagement on local cultural values cultivation" was conducted in Asia, specifically in Indonesia. The research evaluated the effectiveness of an online integrated character education program and parental engagement strategies across various regions within Indonesia, aiming to cultivate local cultural values among learners. The study used a quasi-experimental design with a control group to assess the impact of the intervention. The study found out that increased parental involvement was associated with more positive outcomes in students' cultural education. Parents who actively engaged in the program contributed to reinforcing the values taught. Though with the above results, the study used Quasi-experimental design with a control group, while the current study used mixed method approach in order to have valid results. Geographically, the study was done in Asia, specifically in Indonesia where the educational system and context is totally different from Kenyan system. Therefore, this study was carried out in Kenya, specifically in Wajir East -Sub-County to close the geographical, cultural and geographical gap.

In USA, a study was carried out by Jaynes (2022) titled "Relational aspects of parental involvement to support educational outcomes: Parental communication, expectations, and participation for student success" The researcher focuses on how factors like parent-child communication, cultural and parental expectations, and interactions with teachers impact educational outcomes. The study uses Meta- analysis approach which involves aggregating and analyzing data from multiple research studies to draw broader conclusions about the impact of relationship-based factors on educational outcomes.

The study found out that effective and supportive communication between parents and children is linked to improved academic performance, motivation, and overall student engagement. It also found out that positive and frequent communication between parents and teachers fosters a collaborative educational environment, addressing students' needs more effectively and supporting their academic progress. Since the study used Meta-analysis method, it creates a gap for it primarily focuses on quantitative data and may not capture the nuances of participants' experiences or the contextual factors influencing the results. The current study used a mixed methods approach which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, providing both statistical rigor and deep contextual insights. This helped in understanding the 'why' and "how" behind observed patterns. The study was also done in a different geographical area, the study excluded the opinion of teachers and children making the study limited and prone to bias. This study was done in Wajir East Sub- County Wajir county- Kenya to fill the gap by taking into account teacher- and learner dimension which were excluded.

Study conducted in Zambia by Simwebela et al. (2020) titled ": Parental involvement and learners' performance in rural basic schools of Zambia. Employing a quantitative methodology, the researchers used surveys to gather data from parents and teachers in rural Zambian schools. Parental perceptions of the quality of home-school communication was examined to explore whether it was a factor contributing to the improved academic performance of the learners whose parents participated in the intervention.

Communication between teachers and parents could be helpful to improve the learners' academic performance. In the above study, both teachers and parents who were interviewed acknowledged that communication between home and the rural Zambian schools surveyed was very low and was largely through the participation of parents in parent–teacher

association (PTA) meetings. The findings indicated that higher levels of parental involvement were positively associated with improved learner performance, highlighting the crucial role that active parental participation plays in educational success. Despite these insights, the study identified several gaps, including the need for more qualitative research to explore the underlying reasons behind the observed correlations and the potential variations in parental involvement across different rural communities. To fill out the identified gaps, the current study used mixed method approach, and made recommendations on how parent's communication and involvement can be done in schools. Additionally, while the study focused primarily on Grade six learners, this study included public primary school learners across multiple grades to address this gap. The study revealed a geographical gap since it was carried out in Zambia thereby, there is need to carry out a study in Wajir East Sub-County Wajir County Kenya.

In Kenya Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) is based on learners demonstrating the ability to apply the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they acquire as they progress through their education. The new Kenyan curriculum emphasizes that the role of the parents is essential to the children's education and in the success of the curriculum implementation. The study by Amunga et al. (2020) in Kamenga, Kenya, aimed to explore various aspects of the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) implementation. The general objective was to examine the activities requiring parental involvement, gauge parents' opinions on these expectations, understand teachers' perceptions of CBC, and identify the challenges faced during its implementation. The research utilized an exploratory design and was based on Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, including surveys with 56 participants.

Data were gathered through open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews, and the analysis was conducted thematically. The results indicated that while parents were expected to collaborate with teachers and supply materials for practical sessions, they were hesitant to fulfill these roles. Teachers recognized the increased engagement in learning due to CBC but faced challenges such as insufficient materials, lack of parental support, time constraints, curriculum issues like teacher preparation and professional development, and large class sizes. The study recommends the need for maintaining manageable class sizes, and the requirement for more government funding and staffing improvements.

The study also highlighted the need for increased parental awareness about their role in CBC. The above study concentrated more on challenges faced by teachers and parents in implementing the CBC and on how they can be addressed, however, the current study sought to close the gaps by investigating how parental communication influence academic performance. In addition, the study was conducted in Sabatia Sub- County Kakamega County which is a different location from the current study's location. To address the geographical gap, this study was carried out in Wajir East Sub- County, Wajir County Kenya.

Noor (2021) investigated the impact of parental support on the academic performance of public secondary school students from nomadic families in Wajir County, Kenya. Utilizing a descriptive research design, the study targeted a population of 12 principals, 24 teachers, 480 parents, and 480 students, with a final sample of 160 respondents, including 4 principals, 96 Form 3 students, 12 teachers, and 48 parents and the data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed that parental involvement in terms of school fee payment and both home and school-related support significantly influenced students' academic performance.

The study also highlighted that the implemented school strategies effectively enhanced parental support. The research concluded that parental support has a considerable

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impact on the academic success of students from nomadic families and recommended implementing further measures to improve parental engagement in education. The study identifies a gap in the specific focus on parental support in this unique context, suggesting that more targeted strategies are needed to boost educational outcomes for these students. The study used descriptive research design while the current study employed concurrent mixed approach with an approach of concurrent design. Besides, the study was carried out in Wajir County in general while the current study was conducted in Wajir specifically Wajir East Sub-County Wajir County.

5. Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach using a convergent parallel design. Both cross-sectional and phenomenological research designs were integrated. The targeted population comprised of 101 principals, 2,455 teachers, 560 teacher trainees, and 11 sub-county directors. Stratified, simple random, systematic sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select approximately 437 participants, comprising of 15 principals, 333 teachers and 84 teacher trainees. Data collection instruments included questionnaires, in-depth interview guides, document analysis guide, and observation check-list. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson Correlation) which were processed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29. Quantitative data was presented on tables using frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data was thematically analyzed and presented in form of narratives and direct quotes.

6. Research Findings

6.1. Influence of Parental Involvement in Communication with Teachers on Learners' Academic Performance

The researcher sought to assess respondents' views on the influence of parental involvement in communication with teachers on learners' academic performance in public primary schools. Thus, participants were asked to indicate their responses using a five-point Likert scale. As shown in Table 1, the scale consisted of: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

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Table 1: Influence of Parental Communication on Learners' Academic Performance (n=61)

	SA		A		UD		D		SD	
Statements	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Parental engagement through communication has a positive impact on my students' academic performance.	14	23.0	38	62.3	1	1.6	6	9.8	2	3.3
Parents of my students regularly communicate with me about their child's academic progress.	10	16.4	4	6.6	00	00	44	72.2	3	4.9
Through school meetings, I receive timely feedback from parents regarding their child's learning challenges or needs.	30	49.2	16	26.2	6	9.8	8	13.1	1	1.6
Frequent communication with parents through school visits leads to improved learner motivation and classroom performance.	10	16.4	34	55.7	3	4.9	2	3.3	12	19.7
Parents attend class meetings with subject teachers to discuss students' grades	1	1.6	11	18.0	00	00	7	11.5	42	66.8
Parents respond promptly when I reach out to discuss their child's academic issues.	6	9.8	3	4.9	2	3.3	4	6.6	46	75.4

Source: Field Data 2025

As shown in Tableb1, the findings revealed that most of the teachers (62.3%) agreed that parental engagement through communication has a positive impact on their students' academic performance, while only 3.3% of the teachers strongly disagreed. These findings suggest a strong pedagogical consensus: timely, two-way contact with families helps reinforce instruction, track progress, and address difficulties early. In Wajir East, where mobility, language, and connectivity can complicate outreach, this endorsement implies teachers see communication as one of the most feasible levers available to raise achievement. The small dissenting group likely reflects barriers rather than disbelief in the principle: inconsistent attendance at meetings, limited phone access, or parents' low confidence in engaging with schoolwork may blunt perceived impact.

Head teachers in the study explained that using clear communication methods, such as class WhatsApp groups, SMS reminders in Kiswahili, and homework diaries, helps parents support their children better. This leads to more homework being completed, fewer missed tests, and quicker help when learning gaps appear. They also noted that when communication is regular and gives clear instructions, teachers see more tasks completed and better assessment scores in reading and math. A PTA chair added that many parents are busy with pastoral work or small businesses, so the timing, format, and language of meetings affect how many can attend. Simple solutions, like changing meeting times, keeping PTA meetings short

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and focused, using radio announcements, and having parent mentors for hard-to-reach families, were seen as good ways to increase involvement and keep learning goals in mind at home.

Awuonda (2018), in Makadara, Nairobi, reported a positive and significant relationship between parental involvement and achievement, explicitly noting gains when homework supervision and parent–child learning interactions are encouraged. A study by Mugumya (2023) in Uganda emphasized that higher parental engagement increases children's participation in learning activities, even under difficult conditions, underscoring communication's role in sustaining academic routines. The author further noted that parental communication (through meetings, phone contact, and message books) was positively linked to primary pupils' academic performance, alongside homework support and mentorship activities.

The study revealed that 72.2% of teachers disagreed that "parents regularly communicate about academic progress" (with only 16.4% agreeing) points to weak home, school links, especially routine, two-way updates about learning. In Wajir and partially nomadic context, limited phone access, low parental literacy, seasonal mobility, and time poverty often depress parent–teacher contact, even when parents value schooling. It must be noted that when communication improves, via meetings, homework supervision, or simple check-ins, attendance, motivation, and scores tend to rise.

One head teacher explained that there are structural barriers to regular communication, such as parents moving with their livestock, the long distances between home and school, and the need for children to help with household work. They added that parents tend to communicate more when there are discipline or fee issues, but rarely discuss academic progress, reflecting the same concerns raised by teachers. Learners in the focus group discussions reported that their parents checked homework irregularly and provided little help with reading or numeracy. Responses to an open-ended question revealed that when parents did ask about school or look through exercise books, pupils felt motivated to work harder, which often led to improved academic achievement.

The findings indicate a significant consensus among teachers (49.2%) that school meetings facilitate timely parental feedback on students' learning challenges, enhancing academic performance. Only 1.6% strongly disagreed, suggesting minimal opposition. This underscores the value of parental involvement through structured communication channels.one of the head teachers echoed this sentiment:

> School meetings are vital platforms where parents share valuable insights into their children's needs, strengths, and challenges. This exchange of information enables teachers to understand learners better and tailor academic and emotional support more effectively, fostering stronger partnerships that ultimately enhance student performance and well-being (Head Teacher A, 15/7/2025).

Another head teacher noted, "Regular feedback from parents during meetings helps us address learning gaps promptly." These quotes highlight the practical impact of parental engagement in addressing learners' needs in Wajir East's public primary schools. In line with these findings, a study by Mchia (2024) in Tanzania found that when parents, particularly those with higher levels of education, engaged more actively in their children's schooling

(e.g., meeting with teachers, supporting homework), they were able to identify and address learning challenges promptly, leading to improved student performance.

The findings indicate that most teachers (55.7%) recognize the value of frequent communication with parents, particularly through school visits, in enhancing learner motivation and classroom performance. This suggests that active school–home collaboration positively influences academic engagement. Only 4.9% remained undecided, reflecting near-universal agreement. As the PTA chairperson noted:

> When teachers and parents meet regularly, we better understand each child's needs, and learners feel more supported both at home and in school. This encouragement pushes them to work harder and improves their results (PTA chairperson A, 17/07/2025).

Such collaboration reinforces shared responsibility in improving educational outcomes in public primary schools. Choge and Edabu (2023) found parental communication significantly predicts primary pupils' performance in Kesses, Kenya ($p < .05$). Their evidence aligns with teachers' views: regular school–home contact, including meetings and visits, strengthens motivation, identifies gaps early, and improves classroom outcomes and achievement.

The findings show that most teachers (66.8%) strongly disagreed that parents attend class meetings with subject teachers to discuss students' grades, while only 18% agreed. This suggests limited parental participation in academic progress discussions, potentially weakening timely interventions for struggling learners. In focus group discussions, students reported that "when parents do not meet teachers, they do not know our weak subjects, and we do not get help at home." The PTA chairperson emphasized, "If more parents attended class meetings, they would understand where their children excel and struggle. This knowledge would help them support learning at home, boosting both confidence and performance." These findings point to a need to strengthen parent–teacher meetings as such could bridge communication gaps and improve leaning outcomes in Wajir East's public primary schools.

The findings reveal that a significant majority of teachers (75.4%) strongly disagreed with the statement that parents respond promptly when teachers reach out to discuss academic issues of their children, while only a small proportion (3.3%) were undecided. This indicates a notable gap in timely parental responsiveness, which is critical for addressing learning challenges before they escalate. Delayed or absent parental follow-up can hinder the implementation of targeted support strategies, negatively affecting learners' academic progress.

During focus group discussions, students expressed concern that such delays affect their learning continuity. One student remarked, "When teachers call parents and they don't come quickly, problems continue. Sometimes we keep failing the same subject because help comes too late." This perspective underscores the urgency of prompt parental engagement in reinforcing teacher interventions at home. The PTA chairperson similarly acknowledged the issue and emphasized the shared responsibility between school and home:

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> Parents must treat a call from school as urgent. If they come immediately, they can work with teachers to solve problems faster. Waiting too long means the child's struggles grow and performance drops (PTA chairperson B, 18/07/2025).

These findings align with findings of a study by Vera et al. (2018), which showed that active and timely parental involvement fosters better academic outcomes by allowing for immediate corrective measures. In the context of Wajir East's public primary schools, building a culture of responsiveness requires strengthening communication channels, creating awareness about the importance of timely engagement, and addressing potential structural barriers such as distance, work commitments, or lack of understanding of school processes. By fostering prompt parent–teacher interactions, schools can create an environment where learners feel supported both at home and in the classroom, ensuring that academic challenges are addressed swiftly and effectively.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study, based on the findings concluded that parental involvement significantly influences learners' academic performance. Effective communication between parents and teachers through meetings, calls, and messaging enhances progress monitoring, motivation, and assessment scores. However, parental involvement was found to be minimal, limiting its potential to improve resource allocation, discipline, and learner outcomes.

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should enhance parental involvement in rural schools by promoting community awareness, mobile communication tools, flexible meetings, inclusive governance, and training programs to support homework and volunteering, fostering stronger school home partnerships and improving learner performance.

Citation: Nyamu, C. K; Ndiga, B & Awino, J. O. (2025). The Influence of Parental Communication with Teachers on Learners' Academic Performance in Public Primary Schools in Wajir East Sub-County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 159 – 173.

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