

Effects of Parental Involvement on Students' Learning at-Public Primary School in Tigray, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the impact of parental involvement on students' learning as perceived by students and teachers at one Public Primary School in Tigray-Ethiopia. The study aimed to investigate how parental involvement affects students' learning. A qualitative approach was used, involving in-depth interviews with six participants (four students and two teachers) and a document review. These participants were selected using purposive and convenient sampling techniques to gain a deeper understanding of the issue. The study used a case study to explore students' and teachers' perspectives on the impact of parental involvement on learning. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The results suggested that a close relationship between students and families, and parental support have a positive effect on students' learning. The study concluded that there is a positive correlation between parental involvement and students' learning. To strengthen the school-parent relationship and parental involvement, study recommends that the school implement different parental involvement strategies, including inviting parents to understand the school environment and working with parents to understand their children's learning needs.

KEYWORDS: Parental involvement, students' learning, effect, public primary school

Background of the Study

The academic achievement of all students is a shared responsibility among the school, parents, and the community. Parents' involvement in their children's education is crucial for their academic success. A recent study conducted in Kenya by Wairimu et al. (2016) highlights the positive impact of parental involvement on students' test scores, motivation, self-confidence, and classroom behavior. Parental involvement benefits students and is important for parents and schools.

Parental involvement has many advantages that go beyond academic achievement. According to a study conducted by Hornby and Witte (2010), parental involvement has multifaceted benefits for students, parents, and teachers. It helps improve students' attitudes, behavior, and school attendance. For parents, it leads to increased confidence and satisfaction. For teachers, it improves the parent-teacher relationship, teacher morale, and the overall school climate. Everyone benefits when parents take an active role in their child's education.

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Parental involvement includes a wide range of actions, such as communicating with schools, supporting learning activities at home, and taking part in school events. It also involves parents dedicating resources such as materials, money, knowledge, and time to their children's academic pursuits. Parental involvement refers to any behavior by parents that directly or indirectly affects their children's learning. Different scholars have categorized parental involvement in various ways. For example, Esther (1995) classified it based on home discussion and school participation, while Gordon (1997) proposed three models - parent impact, school impact, and community impact - to help understand parental involvement.

In this study, the researcher used six typologies of parental involvement, as classified by Epstein (1995). These six components are: (a) creating a home environment that encourages learning, (b) facilitating communication between the school and home, (c) helping the school and supporting students, (d) promoting learning at home, (e) taking part in school decision-making processes, and (f) collaborating with other stakeholders (such as students, school staff, and community). In this research, I have focused on three main categories: parenting, communication, and learning at home. Each component offers unique benefits for students and contributes to their academic success. These six forms of parental involvement illustrate the actions that take place in educational and home settings as well as the communication between family members and educators.

It is crucial to foster a strong partnership between parents and schools to accomplish the educational objectives and aspirations of the school (Sapungan-&-Sapungan, 2014). Schools should actively promote parental engagement and encourage parents to make meaningful contributions to their children's education. Initiatives should be taken to enhance parental participation in their children's learning, and parents be regarded as an essential component of the school community. When properly nurtured and established, parental involvement holds the potential to enhance education accessibility, retention, and quality.

Despite the evidence showing that community participation, including parental involvement, has a direct impact on the success and improved performance of education, there is no well-organized system by the government of Ethiopia for the establishment of parental involvement in schools.

This qualitative research focuses on the role of parents in their children's learning and how students and teachers perceive this involvement affecting students' academic performance. The study aims to examine the relationship between students and their parents, as well as to investigate the impact that parents' involvement can have on students' learning. While existing research acknowledges that parental involvement is more prevalent than ever in primary and secondary schools, there is very little information regarding the effect this increased involvement has on students themselves. As a result, the researcher was prompted to explore how teachers and students perceive parents' involvement in student learning and its relationship to academic performance.

The researcher was particularly interested in the perspectives of students and teachers, seeking to understand how parental involvement affected students and how they perceived this to help in their academic success. The study's results are to provide valuable insights for teachers, parents, and school leaders on how to enhance the role of parents in students' learning. Moreover, the study may raise awareness among teachers, parents, and school leaders of the mechanisms of parental involvement, its importance and implications for students' success, and provide plausible recommendations.

Statement of the Problem

The role of parental involvement in their children's education is a widely discussed issue globally. Parents play a crucial role in their children's lives, and their participation in their education can significantly affect their academic success. While the quality of the school and teachers is important, parental involvement is equally critical. Academic success is a complex construct influenced by the school, community, and family (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004), and parental involvement plays a significant role in this.

The importance of parental involvement in schools is acknowledged throughout the literature (see, e.g., Brajša-Žganec et al., 2019; Llego, 2022; Liu et al., 2020). Research suggests parental involvement enhances satisfaction for both parents and students in their school experience, fostering a supportive learning environment that leads to improved grades and attendance (Wilder, 2023). Moreover, research evidences showed that when parents engage with their children's schools-through activities like communicating with teachers, volunteering, attending meetings, and participating in events-students tend to perform better academically (Brajša-Žganec et al., 2019).

Despite its significance, studies have found limited parental participation in their children's education. In Ethiopia, reports and policy documents emphasize community involvement in education, but studies have revealed insufficient parental involvement in helping children with homework and working with schools (Hagos- & Van Wyk, 2021; Mekonen, 2017). On the other hand, a study by Motshusi et al. (2024) reveals that a lack of parental involvement can harm students' education, resulting in lower grades, decreased motivation, frequent absences, and behavioral problems.

Although previous research has shown that parental involvement in schools is more prevalent than ever, there is very little information available on the effects that this increased involvement has on student achievement in the Tigray region. Anecdotal evidence and personal experience as a school principal and teacher in the region have revealed that some parents are willing to help their children's learning, including assisting with homework, but may not know how to assist the school in general and with students' work in particular. Additionally, parents may not know how to become involved in school activities. Therefore, parents may require support and guidance from the school. School leaders and teachers also need support on how to involve parents in students' learning.

The researcher identified certain gaps and decided to conduct a study on how parental involvement impacts students' learning. This study aims to fill a gap in existing research and provide valuable information to parents, teachers, and educators about the extent of parental involvement and its effect on students' academic performance. The main goal of this study is to investigate how parental involvement in their child's school or learning influences the academic performance. Therefore, the researcher aimed to gather the perspectives of students and teachers to comprehend how parental involvement affects students' learning. Additionally, the study aims to suggest implications for the school community being examined. To accomplish the study's objectives, the researcher formulated the primary question: "How does parental involvement in public primary schools affect students' learning?" and developed sub-questions to explore this further.

The Purpose Statement

This research seeks to explore the effect of parental involvement in primary school on students' learning, as perceived by both students and teachers. The study involved interviewing four eighth-grade students to understand their relationship with their parents, the level of parental

involvement in their learning, and how this involvement affected their academic performance. In addition, two teachers were interviewed to provide their perspectives on the influence of parental involvement on students' learning.

It is important to note that this research used qualitative methodology, which means that the findings cannot be universally applied to establish general best practices for student academic performance. However, the study's results provide valuable personal accounts that may be beneficial in supporting the success of other students, parents, and schools.

Research Questions

The main goal of this qualitative study is to investigate how parental involvement in public primary schools impacts students' learning. The study will be guided by the main research question: "How does parental involvement affect students' learning in public primary schools?" along with several sub-questions.

Research Sub-Questions

1. What are the different ways parents get involved in their children's education?
2. How do students perceive the effect of parents' involvement on their learning?
3. How do teachers view the role of parental involvement in their students' education?

Research Site

The setting for this study was an Urban (pseudonym) Public Primary School, which is located in the northern direction of Mekelle city administration. The school was established in 1987 and offers education from 1st to 8th grade. As of fall 2019/20, there were 3,131 students enrolled in the school, of which 1,616 were female students. The school has 59 teachers. There are twenty-eight classrooms in the school, with an average of 70-80 students per classroom. Due to the high number of students, the school operates in two shifts.

Methodology

Design and Method

The research design for this study was a case study as it was interested in a particular school, namely Urban Public Primary School, and the participants were eighth-grade students and their teachers. According to Yin (2009), a case study is a form of empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomena within their real-life context. To get an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system, the researcher selected a single case study approach for this study (Babbie-& Mouton, 2001). This study was a single-case study since the participants interviewed were all within the bounded system of an Urban Public Primary School, including the eighth-grade students and their teachers. The research aimed to understand how the amount of parental involvement affected student's experience during their schooling.

The method used in this study was a qualitative approach that involved interviewing. While this approach has fixed and predetermined rules, it is also open and more flexible (Brown & Dowling, 1998), making it appropriate when a researcher aims to gain a deeper understanding of individuals' experiences in their natural settings. Qualitative research is suitable for this study

since it can represent the views and perspectives of participants (Yin, 2009). The main aim of qualitative research is to describe and comprehend human behavior rather than explain it (Babbie- & Mouton, 2001). For these reasons, the researcher used a qualitative approach to explore how students and teachers understand the effects of parental involvement on students' learning.

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

I conducted a qualitative study at an Urban Public Primary School, focusing on eighth-grade students and accessible teachers. I used purposeful and convenience sampling techniques to select individuals who could offer valuable insights into the research problem. Purposeful sampling helped me select participants to understand the perceptions of the students and teachers about parental involvement (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, I used convenience sampling to select participants who were easily accessible and from whom data could be collected without difficulty (Creswell, 2013). The convenience sampling of volunteer teachers at the public primary school was identified as the participants in this study (Lodico et al., 2010). While purposeful sampling helped the researcher choose individuals and sites, convenience sampling enabled the selection of easily accessible participants for data collection.

The researcher selected four students and two teachers from the target population who were interested in improving parental involvement to boost students' learning. This small sample allowed the researcher to work with a more manageable group of students and teachers (Lodico et al., 2010).

The main instrument used for the study was the interview. Interviews are purposeful conversations that take place between two or more people to get information about a specific topic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). An interview protocol was created to address the research questions, along with a qualitative document analysis. The interview protocol was developed by the researcher and reviewed by an outside person with experience in interviewing to avoid any conflict of interest. To create the interview protocol, the researcher aligned the interview questions with the research questions, which were based on the literature review. The primary aim of the study was to explore the world from the participants' perspective and construct an understanding of how they make sense of their experiences related to parents' involvement in students' learning. The researcher was immersed-in the natural setting of the participants and gained an insider or "emic" view of them (Babbie- & Mouton, 2001).

Interviews were semi-structured to facilitate a rich dialogue that provided insight into the views and experiences of the participants to answer the research questions. For the semi-structured interview process, four primary school students and two teachers were selected to get relevant and rich data that clearly express their perspectives. The participants included two high-achieving students and two average-performing students, out of which three were female. The selection was based on their academic performance, using the students' grade reports as a source. The study aimed to get a variety of perspectives, and the sex composition of the participants was also considered while selecting them. In qualitative research, the sample size is usually small, as it allows working with a more manageable group of students and teachers (Lodico et al., 2010). Hence, generalization from the sample to the whole is not possible. The aim of qualitative research is to understand and illustrate the experiences of individuals. As stated by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), qualitative researchers look at the findings of each research as a small part of a bigger picture.

The researcher recruited students to take part in interviews, and three students agreed to participate. However, one female student declined to be involved for undisclosed reasons. As a result, another student replaced the fourth participant through chain sampling. The researcher

recruited all teacher participants and participated in the interviews. The interviews were informal and non-directive to help the participants feel at ease and talk freely about their experiences, feelings, and points of view (Bogdan &-Biklen, 1998).

All interviews with student participants were conducted at their convenience after obtaining permission from their parents and teachers. Two student participants preferred the interview at their school, while the other two were interviewed in their homes, where they were comfortable. The teacher participants were interviewed in their schools.

The audio-recorded interviews lasted for about 25 to 35 minutes. To protect the identity of each participant, a pseudonym was given to them and they were only referred to by it. Tigrigna was the language used for the interviews, as it allowed the participants to express their views in detail on the topic under study. After the interview, the researcher translated it into English and transcribed it. Data collection started in the first week of November 2021 and was completed by November 23, 2021.

The interview protocol was arranged in a sequence that began with an introduction, followed by opening questions, content questions, and probes, and concluded by thanking the interviewee for their time and cooperation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The interview questions comprised three categories, including the extent of a description of parents' involvement in students' learning, questions about students' relationships with their parents, and how students and teachers perceived this involvement to help students' learning.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis involved organizing data into manageable units that could be fully examined, synthesized, and scrutinized (Bogdan &-Biklen, 2007). Prior to data analysis, the researcher manually transcribed audio recordings immediately upon completion of each interview. The researcher in this study used thematic analysis, as described by Ritchie and Lewis (2003). Thematic analysis involves organizing data based on key themes, concepts, and emergent categories. To begin, the analyst must gain an overview of the data set and become thoroughly familiar with it. Once data collection is complete, it is best to use open coding (Neuman, 2003). As described by Creswell (2013), coding is an inductive process of making sense of the data by narrowing it into themes. Open coding entails carefully reviewing the data to identify themes and ideas, and then sorting and grouping them under a smaller number of broader categories, or "main themes." The researcher then analyzes the data got to approach precision by reviewing it repeatedly and cross-checking it.

Interpretation involves analyzing qualitative data obtained from students' and teachers' perceptions of the impact of parental involvement on students' learning. Researchers then compare their findings with existing literature to determine consistency (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). By using the qualitative data analysis process, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the data and interpret its meaning in writing (Bogdan &-Biklen, 2007; Lodico et al., 2010).

Validity and Reliability

According to Golafshani (2003), validity and reliability are two factors that any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analyzing results, and judging the quality of the study. This study employed various techniques to ensure its validity. The first technique was the use of triangulation or multiple methods of data collection and analysis, which strengthen both reliability and internal validity (Babbie-& Mouton, 2001; Merriam & Tisdell,

2015). The second technique involved an external auditor who reviewed the transcripts for accuracy. The auditor checked the accuracy of transcription, the relationship between the research questions and the data, and the researcher's codes and themes to ensure that the themes found were indeed present in the collected data. Furthermore, the researcher reported the data collection and analysis strategies used in this study to provide a clear and accurate picture of the methods used.

To ensure the reliability of the data collection, the researcher conducted face-to-face open-ended interviews and obtained audio recordings of all interviews with the participants' permission. Subsequently, the researcher transcribed all audio recordings and included lengthy excerpts of the data in the report (Silverman, 2001). Moreover, to promote the reliability and validity of the research, the researcher used member checking with the transcripts to ensure that the participants' perspectives and ideas were accurately represented. The utilization of document analysis of the school and head teachers' student files enhanced the reliability of the findings.

Research Ethics

As a researcher, it is essential to uphold ethical standards and responsibilities, even when research subjects may not be aware of these ethical considerations (Neuman, 2003). When conducting research involving students and teachers, it is imperative to prioritize their willingness to participate, as well as their anonymity and confidentiality (Babbie, 2020). In this study, all participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher explained this to them verbally before conducting qualitative research interviews. To ensure their anonymity, the researcher used pseudonyms instead of real names. Additionally, the researcher will keep the recordings and notes strictly confidential.

Furthermore, ethical measures were taken to ensure the study was conducted in a responsible manner. The school principal and parents of the participating students gave permission for the study to take place. Additionally, permission was received from the participants to record the interview process (Brown & Dowling, 1998). The researcher also explained all aspects of the study to the participants and obtained their consent willingly.

Results, Discussions, and Interpretation

Participants Description

Four eighth-grade students were selected to participate in a semi-structured interview process. They were all taught by the same teacher, consisting of three females and one male. To ensure a diverse group, two high-performing and two average-performing students were selected. In addition, two teachers were also included in the study.

As they progressed through their schooling, each student had similar relationships with their parents, but perceived their parents' involvement in different ways. This part of the study will explore how the students and teachers perceived parents' involvement in their education, and how that involvement affected the students' academic performance.

To keep their identities confidential, each participant chose a pseudonym. The following provides detailed information on each student participant, including their family background, as well as the qualifications and work experience of the teacher participants.

Student Participant

Below is a brief overview of the participants in my study. In order to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for both the students and teachers.

My first participant is Zufan. I met her at her home, where the interview was conducted. She is 14 years old. Both of her parents graduated from college, although they came from a poor background. Her father is an employee of One Share Company. She has a close relationship with her mother, as her father was absent for several days due to fieldwork. She has one older brother and two younger sisters. She has been a student there since 2016 and has been one of the best academic performers in her class for the last four consecutive years.

Hirut is my second participant. She is 15 years old and lives with her parents. I met her at her home, where the interview was conducted. Neither of her parents graduated from college or secondary school, but they can read and write. Her father is a businessman, and her mother is a housewife. Hirut has one elder sister and two younger brothers. Her elder sister is a university student. Hirut enjoys a close relationship with her parents. She has been a student there since fifth grade and is an average-ranked student in her class. She is a close friend of Zufan.

My third participant is Rigbe. She is 14 years old and has one elder sister who is in 12th grade. I met her at her home, where the interview was conducted. Moreover, she has three younger sisters and a brother. Her father can read and write, but her mother is illiterate. Rigbe has been one of the best-performing students in her class. She has been a student there since third grade and enjoys a close relationship with her mother because her father is mostly out of town for business activities.

Senay is my fourth participant. He is 13 years old. His parents got divorced when he was a young child, and he now lives with his mother, who is a secondary school graduate and engages in business activities. He has a close relationship with his mother. Senay and I met at my home, where the interview was conducted, and he has been a student there for the last two years.

Teacher Participants

Meaza is the first teacher participant. She has served as a primary school teacher for around 40 years in various schools. She graduated from university with a Bachelor's Degree and has been at her current school for 5 years. In addition to her teaching jobs, Meaza has been involved in various school activities, including being a department head, head teacher, coach for novice teachers, committee head, and more. Meaza has taught three of the student participants and was the head teacher for one of them.

The second participant is Birhan, who has been a primary school teacher for 28 years. She graduated from university with a Bachelor's Degree and this is her first year at this school. Similar to Meaza, Birhan has been involved in various school activities, including being a department head, head teacher, and club coordinator. Birhan has taught two of the student participants and was the head teacher for two others.

The interviews were a valuable and rewarding experience, and the researcher is grateful to all the participants for sharing their experiences. The researcher has done his best to treat their stories with respect and courtesy. Without the participants, this study would not have been possible.

Findings and-Discussions

In this section, the researcher presents and discusses the themes and findings derived from the collected data. Verbatim transcription was used for the audio recordings of the six interview participants. The term “verbatim transcription” describes the process of reproducing spoken information word for word in writing, with the written words precisely matching the audio-recorded words (Poland, 1995).

The findings include anecdotal explanations that describe the themes and emergent sub-themes as expressed by students and teachers. Participants were asked questions to generate their opinions and ideas on parent involvement and its effect on students' learning. Four themes and nine sub-themes were identified to examine the effect of parental involvement on students' learning, including: 1. Parenting (student-parent relationship, parental support, and follow-up), 2. Communicating (parent-child relationship, home-school communication, parent's school visit, and teacher's home visit), 3. Learning at home (homework activities), and 4. Parental support and student success (motivation, academic performance). These sub-themes were based on the questions posed in the interview and the issues raised by the participants during the interview process. The interview guides were not strictly dependent on the research questions and served as a starting point for the dialogue. This section will present results based on the research questions and describe emerging themes.

Research Question: How does parental involvement affect students' learning in public primary schools? There are three sub-research questions.

Table 1
Sub-research Questions, Themes and Sub-themes

SN	Sub-research questions	Themes	Sub-themes
1	What are the different ways parents get involved in their children's education?	Parenting	Parental support Parent follow-up
		Communicating	Parent-child relationship Home-school communication Parent school visits Teacher home visits
		Learning at home	Home learning Barriers to involvement
2	How do students perceive the effect of parents' involvement on their learning?	Parental support and students' success	Motivation for education Academic performance
3	How do teachers view the role of parental involvement in their students' education?		

S-RQ 1: What are the different ways parents get involved in their children's education?

Students and teachers were questioned about what they understand about parent involvement and its effect on students' learning. Themes that emerged were parenting, communicating, and learning at home.

Theme 1: Parenting

The following text discusses the different forms of parental involvement in education, ranging from day-to-day support to active participation in school activities. Successful parenting practices can benefit students and schools alike. During the study, student participants reported that their parents were fulfilling their responsibilities by providing them with the necessary educational materials and encouraging them to do better in their education.

All of the student participants confirmed that their parents were fulfilling their parental responsibilities. They provided their children with basic educational materials and encouraged them to perform better in their studies. For example, Rigbe stated, "My father provides me with everything I need for my education."

Teachers also have a vital role to play in supporting parents in their parenting roles, such as informing them how to follow up on their children's learning and helping them to understand how to support their children with completing homework. However, this is not enough to fully realize the benefits of parental involvement.

The teacher participants were asked to explain what parental involvement meant to them. They described it as the support that parents provide to their children and the relationship between the school and parents through the Parent Teacher and Students Association (PTSA). They also mentioned that financial support from parents was considered parental involvement. However, the teachers were not aware of the different types of parental involvement, such as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborative work, which were explained by Epstein et al. (2018).

The study found that parents have a strong concern for their children's education and make efforts to provide them with the necessary materials, regardless of their socioeconomic status and educational background. This is consistent with the literature that indicates parents tried their best to provide their children with available educational materials for their education (Erdener-&-Knoepfel 2018; Wulandary-&-Herlisa, 2018; Hagos-&-Van Wyk, 2021). Moreover, it was observed that when parents participate in school activities, their children tend to perform better academically and behaviorally.

Parents' Support and Follow-up. Parental support entails both direct and indirect involvement in a student's learning. Indirect parental involvement could include providing their children with basic needs such as food, health and hygiene, guidance and supervision. All participants agreed that when parents are involved in their child's education, students are motivated to perform better in the classroom. Zufan shared that her parents' support and follow-up helped her improve her academic performance.-Meaza stressed the importance of parental support and follow-up for academic and behavioral improvement in students. Birhan also highlighted the impact of parental involvement on student learning:

While I was checking the class work of my students, I noticed that one of them did not have an exercise book or textbook for three months straight, from November to January. I decided to invite the student's parent to discuss the issue. The student's mother came to see me and we talked about the problem. She felt sad and explained that she always provided her child with the necessary educational materials on time, but due to her daily routines, she was unable to monitor her child's learning. However, she assured me that going forward, she would make sure to come to school weekly and provide her child with all the necessary educational materials. As a result of her efforts, her child has improved significantly in both academics and discipline. (Nov.2021)

All participants in the study recognized the importance of supporting and following up on a child's learning outside of school. In addition to improving academically, the respondent stated that students whose parents are involved also behave well and have positive relationships with both their teachers and classmates. This finding is consistent with recent studies (see, e.g., Gross et al., 2020; Jabar et al., 2021; Kirksey et al., 2022) parental involvement in their children's education improves students' academic performance, classroom engagement, self-esteem, confidence, and behavior. Furthermore, Casey (2022) found that students with engaged parents tend to exhibit improved attendance and behavior, achieve higher academic performance, display enhanced social skills, and adapt more effectively to the school environment. This suggests that the more parental support a student receives, the better their educational outcomes. However, due to large class sizes and a lack of parental awareness, some students may not receive the necessary support and follow-up on a daily basis.

Theme 2: Communicating

Effective communication between parents and teachers is crucial when it comes to a child's academic progress, behavior, and school programs. It involves designing and implementing two-way communication channels that ensure parents are consistently informed about their child's progress. To promote parental involvement, schools must provide regular and continuous updates to parents.

All the teachers were asked during a face-to-face interview about the specific strategies they used to involve parents in their children's learning. They all unanimously agreed that they used monthly meetings and invited parents into school when their children displayed deviant behaviors. Although the monthly meetings were not conducted regularly, they were an opportunity for parents to express their views and have discussion with teachers and school leaders and. The student participants reported that their parents communicated with the school during the monthly meetings and semester school days, but no communication book was used by their school. Both teacher participants mentioned that the telephone, particularly the mobile phone, is one of the communication means used by teachers to contact parents. In connection with this, Rigbe said, "Our homeroom teacher called on a student's parent on a mobile phone if anything happens to their children." Zufan and Senay's views are also similar in this regard. These findings are consistent with a study conducted by Monfrance et al. (2024) which reveals that the level of parental involvement and communication with teachers differs depending on the type of school and teachers' views, suggesting that some schools may not be using effective strategies to enhance engagement.

Effective communication between school staff and families is crucial for discussing school activities, monitoring children's progress, and addressing other school-related matters. To achieve the benefits of parental involvement, it is essential to establish an open and positive relationship between the school and parents. Therefore, schools can benefit greatly from clear and continuous communication with families.

Based on the findings presented above, it is evident that communication between the school and parents is weak. The school solely relies on monthly meetings as its communication strategy, which has proven to be ineffective in practice. Adequate communication between schools and parents is crucial in fostering parental involvement in school activities, but the potential benefits are yet to be fully realized. Moreover, the school's efforts to improve communication with parents are not encouraging.

Parent-child Relationship. Effective parent-child relationships were often linked to discussions about intimate relationships among the participants. Participants shared their

perspectives on the matter. During a study, the student participants were asked to describe their relationships with their families. The responses varied, with some expressing closer relationships with their parents, different ways of communication, and varied levels of support provided by their parents. For instance, Senay's mother is an active participant in his life; she not only helps him with his academics but also with his social well-being.

During a conversation with Hirut, it became evident that her parents have established a daily routine to help her reach her full potential and improve her academic performance. Hirut mentioned that her parents' support is not one-sided, as both her mother and father are supportive of her academic progress. Zufan added that her relationship with her parents extends beyond just homework, as she discusses her daily routine, the challenges she faces, and how she has succeeded in her education with them.

All student participants reported having positive relationships with their families. Both teachers and students agreed that strong parental relationships positively impact academic and behavioral performance in the classroom.

Based on the findings, it is evident that both students and teachers have positive views regarding the relationship between students and their parents. Furthermore, in all student interviews, it was apparent that they had a strong relationship with their families. This close bond between students and their parents can be a crucial factor in their academic success and overall social well-being.

Parent Visit. The relationship between parents and their children's education is a crucial factor for academic success. Schools can offer support to parents by providing guidance on how to assist their children with their studies and communicate with the school regarding their academic progress and behavior.

Concerning parent visits to school, three of the student participants confirmed that their parents did not visit the school unless they were invited by the school. For instance, one of the respondents named Rigbe mentioned, "My parents did not go to school because I did not commit any disciplinary problem." She further added that only students with disciplinary issues were required to bring their parents. Only one participant named Hirut explained that her father visits the school at least once a month to inquire about her performance and overall behavior.

Consistent with this finding, the teacher interviewees mentioned that most parents did not have the habit of visiting our school when their children were first enrolled. They also said that some parents were not interested in coming to school even when they were invited. Parents were invited to school on a semester basis to discuss school matters and to see their children's performance. However, only a small number of parents attended these meetings. Furthermore, the majority of the parents who did attend were those of high-ranking students. The document review of the school meeting minutes and attendance also showed low parent attendance during the meetings. The teachers' documents did not provide details of the students' overall progress, and the school did not use a fixed format of communication.

All the teachers involved in the study unanimously agreed that parental visits to the school have a positive influence on students' participation in the classroom. According to one of the teachers, Meaza, the low attendance and lack of school visits by parents can be attributed to "low socioeconomic status, lack of education, and lack of time as they focus on fulfilling their subsistence."

The teachers mentioned that the parents are hesitant to come to school and have discussions with them. Some parents also refuse to accept the feedback given by the teachers about their children's behavior. Birhan mentioned that there were even conflicts with some parents. The teachers also explained that their heavy workload prevents them from continually reaching out to

parents. However, Epstein et al.(2018) stressed that schools should take the initiative in creating and executing comprehensive partnership programs, as the six forms of involvement that necessitate active efforts from the school to foster opportunities and encourage parental engagement.

The advantages of parents visiting schools can be quite rewarding, as it allows them to actively engage with and share information about their children. Personally, I have fond memories of visiting my children's school and gaining valuable insights into the school's activities and, more importantly, my children's progress. The parents are not visiting their children's school for various reasons, such as a lack of time, low socio-economic status, lack of awareness, and insufficient invitations from the school. It is crucial for schools to actively engage parents by organizing events to ensure their full involvement, as students' academic success is influenced by the collaboration of students, schools, and families. Therefore, effective cooperation among these three parties is necessary to improve students' performance.

Teacher Visit. Home visits by teachers are an effective way to build strong home-school relationships, providing valuable opportunities for parents and teachers to connect. These visits allow teachers to develop a deeper understanding of and a healthy relationship with the parents, enabling them to address the child's academic and learning needs.

However, none of the students had the opportunity to be visited by their teachers, according to teacher participants. Instead of home visits, teachers often use telephone communication to inform parents about their children's behavior, such as absenteeism and coming to class without educational materials. This is mainly due to a lack of experience in parental involvement and heavy workloads. This finding is inconsistent with a study that suggests home visits should not only be for children with problems, but for every child in the school.

Theme 3: Learning atHome

Engaging in activities to promote learning at home provides parents with insights into their children's classroom experiences and offers guidance on how to support them with their homework and academic expectations. According to Epstein et al. (2018), learning at home entails collaborating with families to facilitate their involvement in their children's learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-related tasks.

In my discussions with students, they unanimously emphasized the crucial role of family support in homework. They highlighted that their older siblings often assisted them with their homework, as their families view it as an opportunity for the children to reinforce what they have learnt at school. According to the teachers I spoke with, the school does not currently offer additional activities for families beyond students' homework. When asked about their families' awareness of their schooling, the students explained that family support in the form of learning at home holds great significance. They also mentioned that their parents prioritize their school activities over other household tasks and routine activities.

When home learning activities are thoughtfully designed and effectively implemented, we can anticipate an improvement in students' performance. Therefore, it is crucial for the school community to reach out to parents, provide them with guidance, and involve them in understanding the significance of their participation in their children's academic success.

HomeworkActivities and Studying. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), home-based activities encompass monitoring a child's schoolwork and progress, engaging in discussions about school-related matters, and providing assistance with homework. In many developing nations, parents who have missed out on a basic education may struggle to offer effective academic support to their children. Implementing activities to promote learning at home

equips parents with insights into their children's classroom activities and how to aid them with their homework.

Regarding parental concerns about their children's homework, when asked about the degree of parental involvement, the student participant noted that their elder siblings assist them with homework and studying. All student participants mentioned discussing their homework with their classmates. Additionally, two participants, Zufan and Rigbe, highlighted that they always seek help from their elders when facing challenges with their homework.

When it comes to his homework, Senay mentioned that his mother takes that very seriously: “She makes me do it first when I get home.” Senay explained his mother is always willing to help him and gives her full attention when helping him: “She checks my homework... and she keeps checking it regularly.” Zufan also mentioned that “My parents help me with my homework at home, particularly my father if he is at Mekelle. They ask me about my daily activities... and they help me when I ask.”

During discussions about how they prepare for school, all participants mentioned that they always prepared early. For example, Hirut consistently read and checked her homework and notes before going to school and found it beneficial. She believed that being prepared before class motivated her to participate actively in class discussions.

The teachers mentioned that parents were not supportive of their children's homework and other assignments. They were unable to monitor whether the students were completing their homework due to the large class sizes. The teachers believed that for the daily sessions to be effective and have the desired impact on the students, parents needed to follow up with their children. The participants also agreed that parents play an important role in their children's learning at home. According to Belaić (2021), literature confirms the positive links between parental involvement and various positive student outcomes, including academic achievement and behavior. Both students and teachers believe that when parents and other elders help, students perform better in school. This support can encourage and motivate students to do their best in their education.

Challenges to Parental Involvement

Research findings indicated that certain parents lacked formal education, limiting their ability to assist their children with homework due to limited reading and writing skills. Teachers also observed that parents' low education levels posed challenges in supporting their children with schoolwork. Additionally, a significant number of students' parents were identified as having low socioeconomic status, which hindered their involvement in their children's education, particularly in engaging with the school community. However, other family members, such as older siblings, expressed a willingness to help students with homework at home. It is essential to emphasize that the limited parental involvement in homework was attributed to educational and time constraints, rather than neglect. Meaza, a participant in the study, noted that parental involvement at her school is primarily limited to specific activities, such as parent days held each semester and inviting parents when their children misbehave. This finding echoes a study by (Molla et al., 2019), most parents participated in classes only after their poorly behaving and low-performing children had moved out; teachers also engaged in discussions with the parents of students who exhibited behavioral issues and academic struggles. She also highlighted the school's limited knowledge of effectively involving parents. Teachers stressed that these challenges should not be overlooked as factors contributing to low parental involvement in students' learning. Importantly, it was

emphasized that parental involvement does not necessarily require educational qualifications or higher economic status.

S-RQ2& 3: The effect of parents' involvement on students learning?

Students and teachers described the effect of parental involvement on students' learning. The themes and subsequent themes that emerged were parental support and student success, motivation to learn, and academic performance.

Theme 4: Parental Support and Students' Success

The academic success of students may not solely depend on the quality of the school and its teachers, but rather on the level of parental involvement in their children's lives. This is a significant concern for educators, parents, researchers, and society as a whole, as a student's academic success is a complex concept influenced by the school, community, and family (Epstein et al., 2018). Given this importance, participants were asked about how their family involvement impacts their motivation to learn and academic performance.

Motivation for Education. Parental involvement in students' education not only improves academic achievement but also enhances students' motivation and positive behavior. When families offer support and encouragement, children are more likely to actively participate in setting educational goals and planning their learning experiences (Epstein et al., 2018).

In conversations about their daily routine, the participants noted that after returning from school, they would have lunch, do their homework, and review their notes. They stressed that their parents didn't pressure them to engage in home activities while they were studying. The participants collectively emphasized family support and academic progress as crucial factors driving their motivation for schooling. For example, Zufan and Rigbe expressed their aspiration to excel in school and make their parents proud by performing well on tests and achieving good grades. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Casey, 2022), students with engaged parents tend to have improved attendance and behavior, achieve higher academic performance, exhibit enhanced social skills, and adapt more effectively to the school environment.

When families are actively involved in their children's academic pursuits, children may perceive their families as advocates, leading to increased self-confidence and motivation in their learning. Moreover, when children recognize that their parents are interested in their education, they are more eager to excel in school. With the support and encouragement of families, improved academic performance in students can be anticipated.

Academic Performance. Research has shown that parental involvement in the home environment significantly contributes to students' academic success. Evidence suggests that community participation in education, particularly parental involvement, directly correlates with improved academic performance.

During interviews with student participants, all of them expressed that their family's involvement has been instrumental in their learning. They attributed their current improved academic performance to the support they received from their families.

For instance, Hirut and Rigbe mentioned that their elder siblings' support had notably enhanced their language skills, leading to a greater appreciation for English as a subject and improved academic scores. This was a stark contrast to their situation three years ago. Zufan also highlighted that her parents' support had resulted in improved performance across all subjects. When asked to further elaborate on how their parents aid their learning, the participants emphasized

the positive impact of their parents' support on their academic progress. Hirut provided a more detailed insight into this matter:

Before I came to this school four years ago, I was academically weak and I disliked the English subject. Thanks to the support of my parents and my elder brother, I have become an average student, and I now like English more than other subjects. Previously, I used to prepare for exams just a few days before, but now, due to the follow-up from my parents and brother, I have a daily study schedule, which I enjoy. (Nov. 2021)

Her description suggests that family support, particularly input from her brother significantly contributed to her improved academic performance.

Other instances also showed that Rigbe's parents are not educated enough to help her with homework. However, she explained, "my father encourages me to become a competent student and provides me with basic reference materials, a dictionary, and even uploads educational movies on his mobile." Rigbe also mentioned that she loves the English subject: "...now I love English because I am good at it and my performance has improved." Regarding their academic rank, all participants, except one, showed improvement from year to year.

Meaza explained that students whose parents are involved in school activities, regardless of their income or educational background, are more likely to improve their performance. She added, "...we can easily identify these students who received parental support." Birhan also reiterated that educational and economic background is not an essential factor for parental involvement in school activities. She added that there are high-performing students even with uneducated parents. "For me, what matters is their follow-up and commitment." This finding is consistent with a review conducted by Kraft and Mapp (2019), the review emphasizes that the advantages of parental involvement are apparent across different socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Moreover, the crucial element is the collaborative relationship between home and school.

The research findings show that students and teachers hold similar views, confirming the importance of parental involvement for students' learning and improved academic performance. Furthermore, these results have shown that parents' involvement in students' learning yield effective results in terms of student engagement, motivation and overall academic achievement/progress.

Conclusions and Implications

The research findings indicate a strong correlation between parental involvement and student learning. Active parental participation through parenting, assisting with home learning, and maintaining consistent communication with the school positively impacts students' academic achievement. However, it is important to note that these findings may not be applicable/relevant to all primary school contexts. The study's results are encouraging, showing that parental involvement is beneficial regardless of parents' socioeconomic status or educational background. Moreover, active parental engagement with the school can enhance students' motivation and academic performance. In conclusion, when parents actively support their children's education and engage with the school, it leads to improved student performance. Similarly, when schools actively promote parental involvement, parents are more likely to participate in school activities and support their children's learning.

Implication for Policy and Practice

Based on the research findings and consideration of international literature, the following steps could be taken by the school authorities, teachers, teacher educators, and policymakers to enhance parental involvement in students' learning.

First, in order to improve the relationship between parents and schools, school authorities should implement various policies to educate parents about the benefits of their involvement in their children's education. For example, they can introduce a communication book that includes students' academic progress reports and behavior. This will allow parents to track and support their children's progress, ultimately strengthening the relationship between the school and parents. When both teachers and parents have a clear understanding of their roles in the learning process and maintain a positive relationship, parental involvement becomes more effective.

Second, many parents only communicate with their child's school when disciplinary issues arise or when the school reaches out to them. This can result in a weak relationship between the school and the parents, ultimately impacting the student's learning outcomes. To strengthen this relationship, schools need to take steps to invite parents to understand the school environment and its policies while also making an effort to understand the parents' interest. Moreover, schools should provide parents with specific information about how their involvement can positively impact their child's educational journey. By improving the school-parent relationship, we can help ensure that students receive the support they need to excel.

Third, extensive work with families and communities has demonstrated a positive impact on students' academic performance. Therefore, the school, in collaboration with the Bureau of Education, should arrange training programs for teachers and school leaders. These programs should focus on educating teachers and school leaders about the significance of parental involvement in the educational process, enabling them to effectively engage with parents. It is essential to incorporate this important topic into the professional development programs for teachers and school leaders to enhance their ability to collaborate with parents and improve student outcomes.

Fourth, further research could examine how to establish stronger school-parent relationships that emphasize the importance of collaboration between parents and teachers to ensure student success.

Finally, schools, in collaboration with the Education Bureau and universities/teacher's college, should organize awareness workshops and training sessions for parents. These workshops guide parents on how to get involved in their child's education, the skills required for effective parental involvement, and the various benefits of being an engaged parent. By providing training opportunities such as workshops and seminars, parents can better understand their role in their child's education and become more effective in supporting their learning. These training opportunities must be customized to the specific needs and interests of parents.

Limitation

This study has limitations because it was only conducted in one primary school, so the findings may not apply to all school situations.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Mulugeta-Tsegay from Mekelle University for his encouragement and valuable support. I truly appreciate his guidance and

assistance. Moreover, I extend my thanks to Dr. Rafael Mitchell and Malica Scott from Bristol University for their valuable support in editing this article and providing technical support. Finally, I thank the teachers and students who dedicated their time and effort to participate in this research. Without their participation, this study would not have been possible.

Funding Details

No financial support was obtained for the preparation of this manuscript and/or authorship of this article.

Disclosure Statement

The author declared-no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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