

Effect of Parental Engagement on Students' Performance in Bugesera District, Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

Parental engagement has been described to be a cornerstone in the performance of students at all levels of education. In Rwanda, secondary school performance has been a concern for quite several years and records indicate that Bugesera District has been among the poorly performing Districts in secondary national examinations. The overall objective of this work was to investigate the effect of parent engagement in the performance of their children whereas the specific objectives of this research were to identify the effect of communication between parents, teachers, and learners on students' performance (ii) to highlight the contribution of home-based learning support on students' performance and (iii) to explore the implication of participation of parents in school related school related activities on students' performance. This research utilized a descriptive research design survey. The target population was 240 consisting of the school executive council members, school leaders, teachers, and students from which a sample of 69 subjects was selected to participate in this research including 5 school leaders, 5 teachers, 10 executive committee members, and 49 students from 5 schools of 5 sectors of Bugesera District. They were sampled with the use of simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Guided interviews and questionnaires were used as data collection tools. In this research, questionnaires constituted quantitative data collection tools administered to students. These data were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and were presented with the use of tables and graphs. Qualitative data were collected with the use of interviews administered to head teachers, teachers, and School Executive Council (SEC) members and were analyzed thematically. The findings of this study have shown that communication between schools, parents, and learners is less effective. The reason is that schools tend to only communicate to parents only financial-related matters instead of focusing on students' effective learning and performance. It was also found that parents pay less attention to home-based learning activities requiring children's revision or completing homework assignments. The findings again indicated that students' performance was found relatively higher for children whose parents participate in school activities. This study, therefore, concludes that parents should be engaged in communication, school activities, and home based learning with the purpose of mainly improving students' performance before any other school-related affairs. The school leaders, teachers, and SEC members are key to revolutionize parent involvement practices and increasing mobilization and engaging activities for parents to acknowledge their role in the improvement of the children learning from school and their homes. Hence, it recommends that responsible agencies should ensure that school executive councils are functional and help mitigate issues hindering proper communication and collaboration between parents and schools; so that in the end, desired students' performance can be attained.

Keywords: parental engagement, students' performance, Bugesera District, Rwanda

INTRODUCTION

Students' achievement is one of the major components as well as a measure of the effectiveness of the education system (Utodi, 2014). Parent engagement has played a big role in supporting the development of their children through good parenting at home and the progress of their education at school, regardless of

government policies. (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Epstein (1987), in her theory on parent engagement, had crafted four types of parent engagement and cited them as “(i) *basic obligations*, (ii) *school-home communications*, (iii) *parent engagement at school*, and (iv) *parent’ participation in home learning activities*”. Epstein’s interpretation of this issue is from the perceptions of schools and her research is concerned with actions taken by both schools and teachers to encourage more active parental engagement (Walker et al., 2011).

Additionally, Nyarko (2011) exalted Epstein’s work by creating six stages, or categories of school-related parental engagement cited as “(i) *assisting parents in child-rearing skills*, (ii) *school-parent communication*, (iii) *involving parents in school volunteer opportunities*, (iv) *involving parents in home-based learning*, (v) *involving parents in school decision-making*, and (vi) *school-community collaborations*”. Mutodi, (2014) topped in all the previous theories with a considerable typology document with the content about stages of parent engagement.

Therefore, parental engagement in students’ performance has been marked, as a very important contributor to their achievement (Akanksha, 2010). According to Tornblad and Widell (2013), there is a clear contribution of the home environment and school setting in the advancement of children in secondary schools.

Thus, effective communication and collaboration between secondary schools, families and the entire society can lead to children’s success in secondary schools. Research proved that the success of student is an outcome of favorable school and home environments (Nyarko, 2011). This was anchored to the fact that the best successful schools have put in place strategies to strengthen parent school liaison such as consistent collaboration, cooperation, and interaction among parents, teachers, and students. For example, Muola, (2010) reported that in the United States of America, students whose parents have engaged in their education, engagement have chances to obtain higher marks in their classes and can go up to tertiary education.

In Bangladesh, Chowa, and Osei-Akoto, (2012) revealed that secondary schools can succeed as because of interaction established between students, teaching staff, and parents. Consequently, children can obtain higher grades due to the conducive home learning conditions (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Furthermore, the advantage of the tight interaction between teachers and students, parents is the trustworthiness climate established between them.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, it is very much common that several children fail to obtain the required grade and hence forced to redo the class. For instance, a study conducted in Namibia by Gudlaug, (2010) exalted that parents and guardians were aware of the role of their engagement in education-related activities of their children but their engagement was minimum.

A study conducted by Erlendsdóttir, (2010) revealed a crisis in the performance of secondary students and among other factors was the lack of parental engagement. In effect, it was reported that only 25% of primary leavers obtained division one in 2003 (Guaung, 2003).

In Kenya, several strategies have been introduced and adopted including establishing committees of parents, associations that join teachers and parents named PTA, and school board of governors; all these with the intent to strengthen parental engagement and consequently impact on students learning and performance (Agustinho, 2012).

In Rwanda, the issues of poor performance attracted the attention of Ntawiha et al., (2020) whose study highlighted that among the factors that determine students’ performance in public secondary schools of Rwanda include the school status, the size of the family, parents’ education background, parent involvement in school activities, parents’ economic stand and students’ prior performance.

The research recommended the need for improvement of parental background in order to increase the performance of their children. The present study is unique in the sense that it is set to explore the extent to which parental engagement would be connected to students' performance in secondary education.

Objective of the paper

The main objective of this research is to assess the effects of parental engagement on students' performance in Bugesera District.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This research used a theory of parent engagement on students' performance developed by J Epstein through the framework of six types of parent involvement that describe six essential dimensions of youth, family, and community engagement and partnership in schools, which focused on parent-school communications, parent home-based support to their children and parents' participation in school-related activities and their effect on students' academic performance (Epstein, 2009). Joyce Epstein and her colleagues, noted in Tobias' (2020) review of the literature of his dissertation, suggested that parent involvement and community engagement should go beyond school and home, inviting a partnership between homes, schools, and communities. School, family, and community exercise a lot of influence on student's development and academic performance is highly enhanced when these three envisage to work collaboratively toward shared goals (Tobias, 2020).

Effect of communication between parents, teachers and learners on students' performance

According to the personal engagement process, parental engagement can be expressed as "Should I have to be involved in my child's education?" (Mc Neal, 2012).

Communication between parents, teachers and learners is one of the Epstein Theory of six dimensions suggested for effective parent involvement. In fact, parental commitment for helping their children's school work plays a role in developing parents' beliefs about whether their engagement in assisting their children's education will help children's achievement in school work or not. Parental commitment can also be expressed as "Will my engagement promote my children's success in school?" (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2010).

The question to deal within this research is "Do parents perceive that the school and their child want them to be involved?" as Epstein theory suggested, general invitation and demands can be provoked by children and their schools. Parents' decisions can be affected by their children when they have built a strong relationship. Invitations from school prove similar impact on the parent's decision as school has a level of influence and authority on the children. In addition, invitations, demands and opportunities may include child's perception of school with an inviting environment through the teacher's open and helping behaviors.

Epstein recommended in her theory that parents-schools communication would be carried out via multiple ways such as emails, conferences, phone calls and many others. In this regard, schools provide parents with written notes and flyers about key events and activities scheduled on school calendars. On their side, parents provide teachers with information about their child's health and educational background for the school to be aware on the way to cater for them. A school website is an additional mode of communication with parents and families. (Altschul, 2011). However, Mattingly et al., (2002) noted that schools have not been able to completely engage parents to such level of cooperation. For example, at the conferences, there was no literature provided in a second language nor interpreters were placed for parents whose primary language is not English.

This phenomenon has informed that academic leaders need to host parents as vital stake holders with in the educational system and encourage team work and collaboration.

The contribution of home-based learning support on students' performance

Home-based parental engagement is another Epstein theory dimension, and it refers to parents engaging in their children educational activities away from school events. This type of engagement has presented some examples which include reading for children or engaging in principal academic activities with children as well as general activities such as attending educational events (Lee & Bowen, 2006). This type of engagement serves as a model to children that along with their everyday learning experiences, they can be involved in outside of school activities. It also shows to children that learning is part of their everyday life. Previous studies have indicated that home-based parental engagement positively influences student academic achievement (Fan, 2001). Further studies showed that when students are learning from home and receive support from their parents, it boosts their performance back in school (Shumow & Miller, 2001; Porumbu & Necsoi, 2013). Additionally, according to Gregg, Macmillan, parents' aspirations, and encouragements for children are the most important parental value and behavioral element in children's key stage of development to increase scores and class attainment (Gutman & Akerman, 2008).

Further reports indicate that parent's gender is associated with the level of parents' engagement in their children education (Cabus et al., 2016) and show that mothers are practical to get engaged in their children's academic affairs than fathers, thus marital status affects parent involvement in children's education. (Osei-Akoto et al., 2012)

However, on one hand, often the school administrations do not easily get in touch of how parents engage in their children's learning and obviously undermine this type of engagement and consequently do not respond appropriately. On the other hand, various studies have shown that active parental engagement in their children's education decreases as the children become older. Henderson and Mapp, (2002). Venerande, (2013) concurs with the above findings and suggests a significant difference in terms of self-concept, task value and parental engagement between children in primary school and those in secondary school. These findings also revealed that as the children grow older, parental engagement declined but also affected children's performance at school.

Implication of Parents' Participation in school-related activities and Structures on students' Performance

Semke, and Sheridan, (2012) imply that school-related parental engagement refers to the extent to which parents attend school-related events such as attending conferences, school family nights, and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) events.

Parents determine their engagement according to the knowledge or skills they possess. This means that parents are likely to become involved if they think they have skills to help their children. The younger the child, the higher the level of parental involvement (Epstein, et al., 2009). This implies that parents hesitate to become involved unless they do believe they have adequate knowledge or skills that can help their children. On top of that, time and energy constitute together another factor that can determine the level of parental engagement. The perceptions of available time and energy impact parental decisions about their engagement, especially for parents who cannot negotiate their work hours and do not have alternative support. (Semke & Sheridan, 2012). Moreover, family life context can influence parents' decision about their engagement in their children's education and studies indicate that parents living in poverty have a low level of parental involvement in their children's academic performance than those living out of poverty (Ho, 2009)

Volunteering in school related activities is essential on the side of parents. Parent's voluntary participation

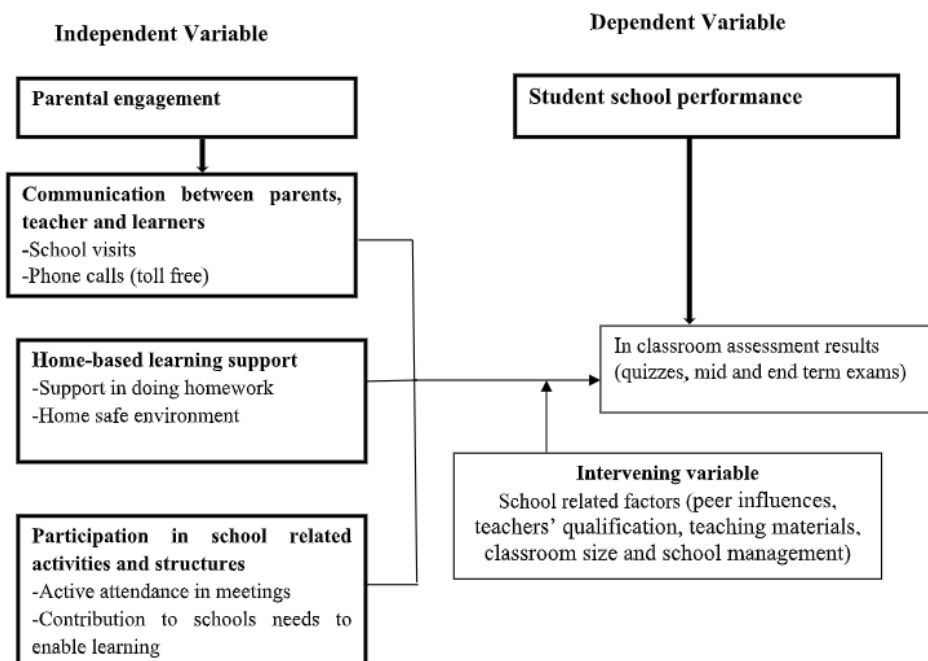
in school activities has significance to parent engagement because they are willing to offer help and support to school programs and activities voluntarily. There are three basic channels through which parents can volunteer in school activities. *First*, they may volunteer for school or classroom activities by helping teachers and administrators as tutors or as assistants. *Second*, they may volunteer for the school events such as fundraising for an event or promoting a school in the community. *thirdly*, they may volunteer as members of the audience, attending school programs or performances.

Consequently, parental engagement strengthens school collaboration with the community to support schools, students, and their families in return. Among other actions that strengthen school community/families' relationships and create many different practices of partnership include releasing information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, and social support and services; relevant information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including holiday recreational and social programs for students. Each of these actions contributes differently to students' performance, parents' engagement, teaching practices and the school climate. In addition, parents' degree of engagement is likely to be affected by the school itself. If teachers appear to care about the welfare of the child and develop effective means of communicating with families, parents are more willing and able to become involved in their children's schooling (Tornblad & Widell, 2013).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This conceptual framework of the study shows how the variables of the study are linked to each other. Its major goal is to give a reminder about the interrelatedness of the relationship between parental engagement and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Rwanda the case of Bugesera District.

Figure 2.1. Conceptual framework



According to Epstein theory of Parent Involvement and Community Engagement (PICE), students' performance is determined by the combination of efforts of parents, school and community. The Figure 2.1 above shows the relationship between parents' engagement and students' academic performance whereby students' school performance as dependent variable is related to the independent variable which is parent engagement. According to the figure above, the better classroom achievements depend on parents' engagement through communicating with teachers, assisting students in homework, and participation in school related activities. The figure also shows the extraneous variable which is school related factors such

as environment that may affect students' academic performance. These include peer influences, and teachers' qualification, teaching material, classroom size and school management and play a role in influencing students' academic performance. However, if these variables are not controlled, they may interfere with the results of the study. The researcher controls the effect of the intervening variables by purposively selecting schools in BUGESERA District to be the subject of the study. According to Amin,(2005) is one of the ways to attempt to control many intervening variables at the same time.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the description survey as research design to determine the effects of parental engagement on students' performance in Bugesera District, Rwanda. Orodho, (2005) noted that a descriptive research design works as an effective way of assessing educational programs as they operate in a social context. According to Krishna swami, (2001), this design serves as a fact- finding research that involves collecting data directly from subjects at a specific time. This design was thought to be useful for this research since the latter was conducted in a setting that required direct answers from respondents along with the investigation without manipulating the variables. The design also allowed the participants to describe and provide their opinions regarding the variables being studied in detail.

This design was considered relevant to the researcher since he collected, analyzed, and reported information as it was acquired from the field without manipulation of the variables. The process involved the administration of questionnaires to a sample of students and interview guide to head teacher, teachers and School Executive council (SEC) representatives to collect information about their opinions pertaining to the effect of parental engagement on student performance to the schools located in Bugesera District Eastern Province of Rwanda.

The population in this research included secondary head teachers, students, parents'/ school committee members from the selected secondary schools of selected sectors of Bugesera District which made the number of 69 respondents representing the whole population from the target schools. Interview and questionnaires were utilized to collect the information that fed the findings of this research.

Data Presentation, Analysis, And Interpretation

Communication between parents, school and learners

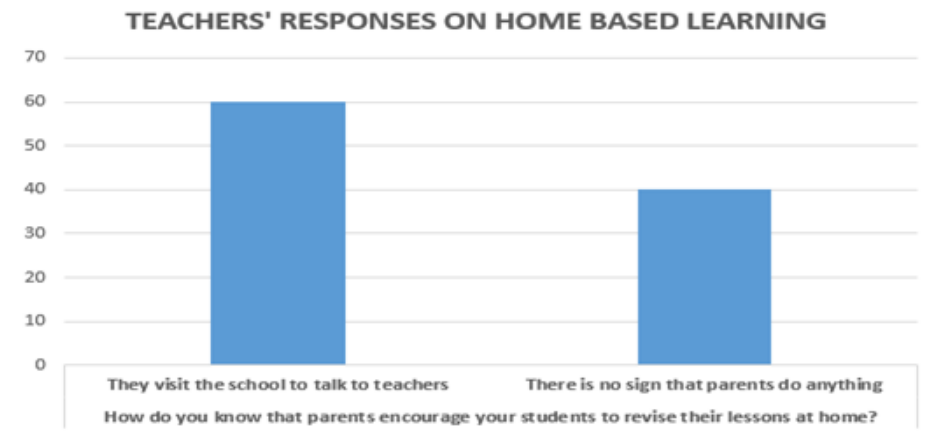
Respondents were asked their views about communication between parents, schools and learners and 80% have demonstrated the awareness of the number of parents who have sent their children to study at the schools they were leading. Eighty-one percent of respondents demonstrated phone calls to be the most useful and the easiest tool of communication followed by school/family visits rated at 6% and the use of notebooks at 4%. Some respondents courageously mentioned, and I quote *"The use of phone calls is the easiest channel to reach most of the parents and in return, parents are happy to use phone calls to link up with the school administration than any other means of communication"*. It was noted that though the channels of communication have been established, the topics of interest during the use the channels of communication differ from the schools versus parents.

Eighty percent of the respondents revealed that parents communicate to the school mainly to advocate for school fees or while their children have misbehaved and are invited to attend the resolutions for indiscipline cases but the follow up on their children's performance is noted to be missing in the inquiries from parents. It was also noted by 60% of the respondents that schools concentrate on the use of phone calls with less consideration that all the parents of the students do not possess mobile phones, thus reduce the parents access to information about their children from teachers which also reduce their involvement in their children's education. It was also found that 70% of the parents congratulate their children on their performance, 40% provide their children with words of encouragement to keep it up and 20% provide gifts

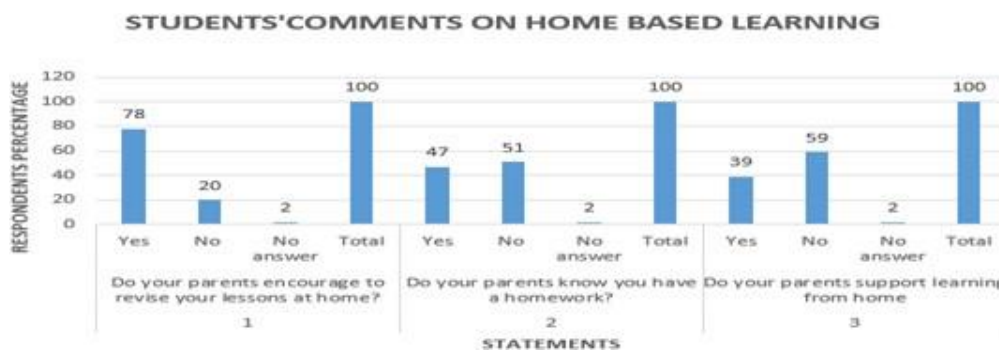
for having succeeded in their classes.

Parent home-based activities to support their children’s learning

Eighty percent of the school leaders have revealed that parents visit the school to talk to the teachers about what they found about their children’s learning at home. Sixty percent have mentioned that students (number not known) testify their parents’ support, parents sign in their notebooks for homework, and phone calls to communicate challenges that their children face during home learning activities.



Sixty percent of the teachers revealed that they received information about how parents support their children only when they have opportunity to be visited by parents at school and discuss about their learners’ performance. Forty percent of the teachers’ witness that they could not track any sign of parental involvement in home-based learning activities.

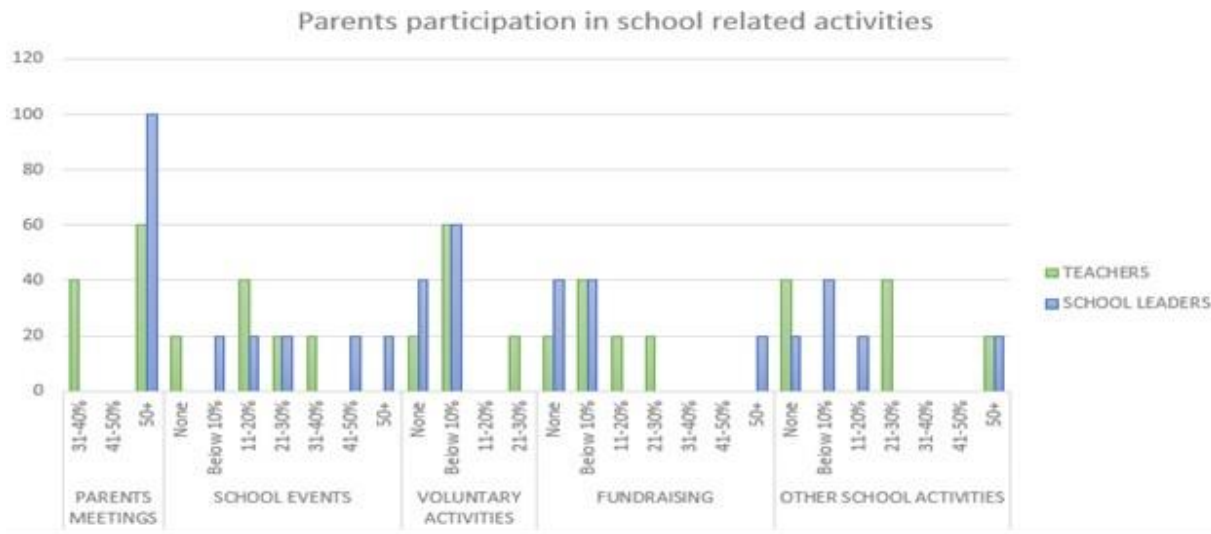


Seventy-eighty percent of the students confirm that their parents encourage them to revise lessons when they are at home while 20% proved to receive no reminder from parents to revise their lessons. Forty-seven percent of the students confirm that their parents are interested in inquiring if they have brought homework for either support or for challenging them less than 51% have revealed that their parents are not aware of when they have brought homework since they do inquire for it while. It was found that 59% denied that their parents provide support during home based learning, and only 39% have confirmed receiving support from parents namely in doing homework (35%), availing free room for self-study (22%), availing free time for learning at home (18%), coaching (14%) and availing all needed equipment for home based-learning (10%).

On the side of parents, the findings indicate that 100% of the SEC encourage their children to revise their lessons when they are at home, 90% attest that they have information on when their children have homework to complete at home and 100% of the same respondents affirm that they provide the support needed to their children when they do home based-learning such as availing an appropriate room for home learning (50%), help in doing homework (40%), availing appropriate materials to use during home based

learning (80%), availing and allowing free time for home based learning (50%) and coaching (10%). The SEC responses have left the researcher with unanswered questions.

Parents participation in school related activities



A hundred percent of the school leaders and 60% of the teachers confirm that parents who attend school meetings, at least once during the past academic year are counted over 50% of the total parents who have students in secondary school. They revealed that parents who attend the school events are below fifty percent. Twenty percent of the head teachers asserted to have hosted below 10% of the parents of secondary students attending the school events, 40% of the teachers and 20% of the head teachers have assisted to 11-20% of the parents' attendance in the school events, 20% of both school leaders and teachers confirmed that the school events are attended by 21-30% of the parents of secondary students. Twenty percent of the teachers assumed that these events are attended by 31-40% of the parents while 20% of the head teachers assume that parents attended school events at 41-50%. Only 20% of the head teachers have asserted that the school events are attended by more than 50% of the parents of the students of secondary section. Parents who volunteer for the school-related activities such as hygiene of the school premises, gardening and greening the school, school rehabilitation, desk reparation, cooking for students, vary between 0 and 30%. The majority of the respondents (60%) have revealed that even those who attempt to volunteer are below 10% of the total parents. To some extent, 20% of the teachers and 40% of the school leaders confirmed to have never hosted a single parent volunteering for the latter detailed school activities during the past academic year 2021-2022. For different reasons, schools organize fundraising activities which is another source of school funding to accomplish their mission.

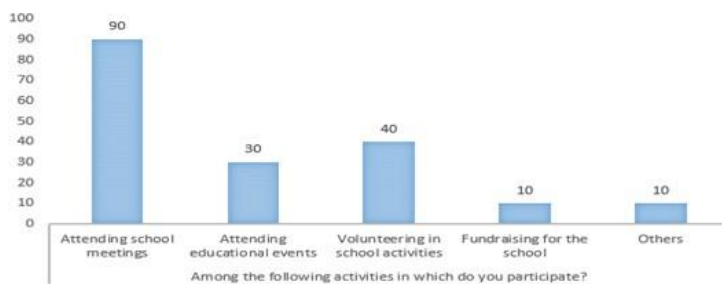
Forty percent of both teachers and school leaders have assisted to below 10% of the parents of secondary students taking part in the organized fundraising activities. Other sources indicate that parents do not commit to these events due to the fact that the government of Rwanda invests many funds in education reducing the load of school fees and other school needs from the parents' shoulders since it has introduced free universal education for both primary and secondary education to support the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of allowing all children to access free education. (ESSP, 2018-2024)

Meantime, some parents participate in other school activities which are randomly happening at school such as taking the school message to the local leaders, supporting the school accountant in recovery of the parents' contributions, coordination some church services etc. 20% of both school leaders and teachers have asserted that this kind of activities are generally engaging more than 50% of the parents of the secondary students. 40% of the teachers affirmed 21-30% of the parents, 20% of the school leaders confirmed between 11 and 20%, 40% of the school leaders confirmed below 10% of the parents of secondary section students to be part of other activities in their schools.

However, 40% of the teachers and 20% of the school leaders have never hosted parents of the students of secondary section in other school activities.

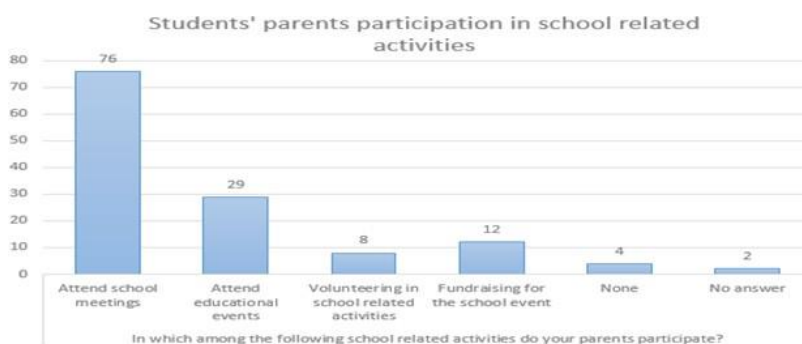
Other perspectives from teachers, school leaders and others neighboring schools mentioned that some of the schools have less engaging activities and connections between school administrators and parents are counted at minimum. This completes the assumption that the environment, parents’ daily occupation, parents’ level of education and families’ socio status also play a key factor in reducing the parents’ commitment in participating in such school activities! If schools of Bugesera district had adopted Epstein’s Framework of parent involvement, family, community, and school partnerships mainly the third type which is volunteering whereby parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought, the situation would have changed the other way hence school improvement and students’ performance increased, (Epstein et al., 1997).

On the other hand, 90% of the SEC members attend school meetings. On one side, this may sound obvious since they are the ones who plan, organize and conduct most of the school general meetings but on the other side, we may consider other factors and aspects of daily life environment that may interrupt their consistent availability towards the school activities among others commitment to their own businesses and family issues as indicated in the next descriptions.



Apart from school general assemblies, the findings have revealed that only 30% of SEC members participate in educational and other school events such as ceremonies and festivities. They also revealed that 40% of the SEC members volunteer for the school related activities, only 10% of the SEC members participate in fundraising activities and only 10% of the SEC members participate in other school related activities. These findings have left the researcher with thoughts that the SEC too have not been too close to the schools in all planned activities. It was not yet clear of the main reasons though considered that the current ministerial order regulating the school administration in Rwanda has appointed them as the executive committee leading the school which transfers major responsibilities of the school governance and decision making into their hands.

The findings revealed that 76% of the parents of the student respondents have attended the school meetings during the past academic year at least one time. Only 29% of the students’ respondents asserted that their parents attended educational events at their schools during the past academic year, 8% of them confirmed that their parents volunteered for school activities, 12% infer that their parents have taken part in fundraising for schools’ activities



Four percent have not provided answers to this question and 2% affirmed that none of their parents have been part of any of the above school activities. This research has indicated the school meetings as the major activity that parents attend at high percentage while the rest of the school activities did not receive many parents' appreciative attendance. Trying to dig into this matter, the researcher investigated the reasons that motivate the attendance in school meetings and found out that parents like attending school meetings because many school decisions are taken by the school general assemblies and have impact on every parent. Parents attend these meetings for a purpose of taking part in discussions about the decisions taken during these meetings.

Students' performance

Sixty percent of teachers and forty percent of the school leaders responded that none of the students whose parents participate in school activities has ever been absent at school for more than a week except when they are deeply sick. And forty percent of both head teachers and teachers assert that students whose parents participate in school activities who have been absent at school for more than a week are counted below 10%.

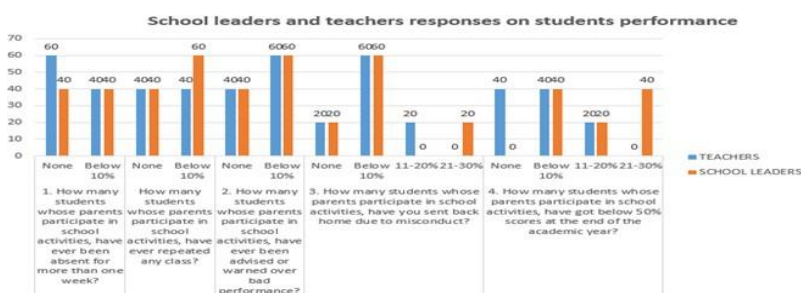
The findings show 60% of the school leaders and 40% of the teachers confirmed that students whose parents participate in school activities once repeat class are below 10%. Forty percent of both teachers and school leaders have declared that none of the students whose parents participate in school activities has ever repeated class. Sixty percent of the school leaders and teachers have asserted that students whose parents participate in school activities and who have been advised or warned over low performance are counted below 10%. The remaining 40% of the school leaders and teachers confirmed that none of these students whose parents participate in school activities in school activities has been advised or warned over low performance.

The school leaders and teachers have also provided feedback on the question seeking to know students whose parents participate in school activities have ever been sent back home because of misconduct and 60% of them responded that such students are counted below 10% while 20% declared that none of such students has been sent back home due to misconduct. However, 20% of the school leaders confirmed to have sent back 21-30 students whose parents participate in school activities due to misconduct.

The findings indicated that 40% of the teachers asserted that none of the students whose parents participate in school activities scored below 50% during the past academic year. Meantime school leaders and teachers who participate in this research released information at 40% that students whose parents participate in school-related activities, who scored below 50% during the past academic year are counted below 10%.

Moreover, 20% of both teachers and school leaders assume that those students whose parents participate in school activities, who scored below 50% during the past academic year have fallen between 11 and 20%. The remaining 40% of the school leaders are on the point that between 21 and 30% of the students whose parents participate in school activities scored below 50%.

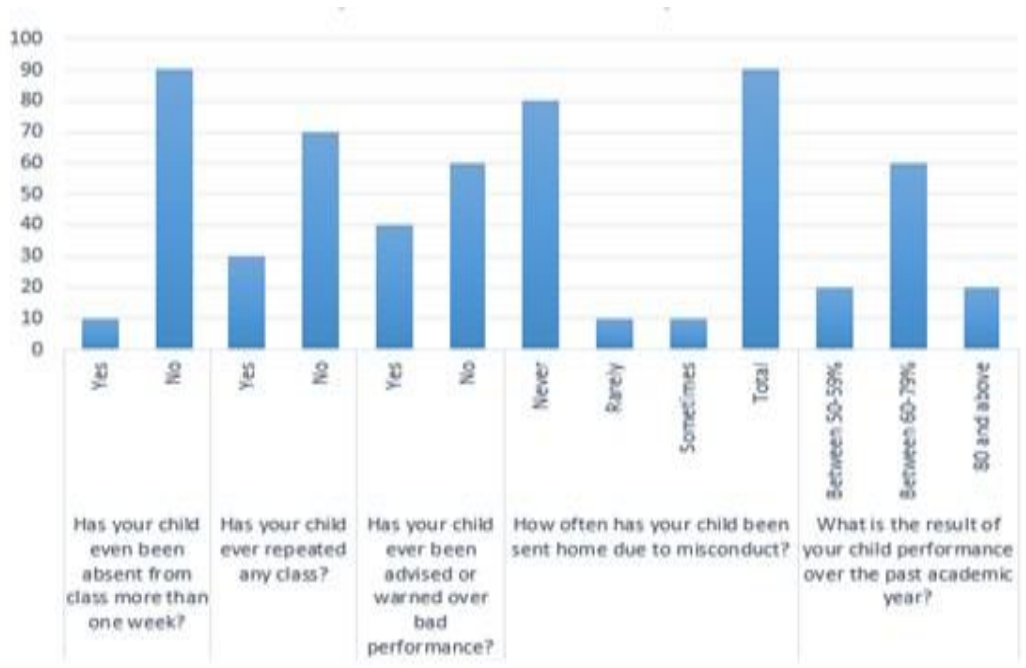
The estimation of the school leaders and teachers looked sensitive since the percentages given are higher compared to the way normally parents who commit to school-related activities support their children's performance as different studies put it out.



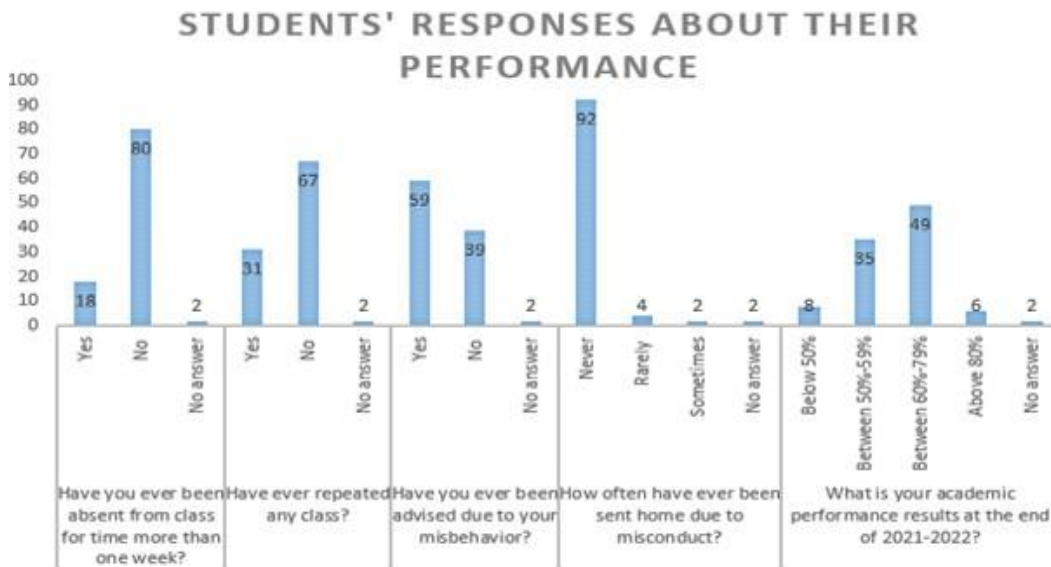
Source: Primary field data, 2022

From this perspective, one could enquire what happens to students whose parents do spend little time about school of their children in secondary than when children are still in primary or pre-primary. These views will coincide with some literature which asserted that active parental engagement in their children’s education decreases as the children become older. For instance, according to Shaver and Walls as cited in Henderson & Mapp, (2002), parents of elementary school children are more likely to be involved with their children’s education than parents of children in secondary school.

SEC’ responses on students’ performance



Ninety percent of the SEC members confirmed that their children have never been absent at in their classrooms for above one week for any reason. Only 10% revealed that their children have been absent from school for more than one week and gave reasonable causes including sickness. On the side of repetition, seventy percent of the SEC confirmed that their children so far have never repeated any class while 30% of them asserted that their children have repeated one class. Sixty percent of the SEC revealed that their children have never been advised or warned over low performance by the school leaders and / or teachers. The remaining 40% of the SEC have put out that their parents have been advised or warned over low performance. The findings indicated that 80% of the SEC have disclosed that none of their children has been sent back home due to misconduct, 10% revealed that their children were rarely sent home due to misconduct and 10% of the SEC confirmed that their children sometimes have been sent back home due to misconduct. Lastly, 60% confirmed that their children have performed between 60 and 79% as the end of the past academic year, 20% confirmed above 80% as performance of their children and the remaining 20% asserted that their children have performed between 50 and 59% as the end of the past academic year. None of the students whose parents are SEC member has got below 50% in their performance during the past year. The above findings have left the researcher with the thoughts that SEC members invest much energy in following up their children’s performance given that none of their children get lower marks below 50%. It is an indication that Epstein theory’s first dimension “parenting” is being well implemented in secondary schools of Bugesera, (Epstein et al., 2009). This also brought a thought that most of the SEC members are at least secondary attendants who have the positive mind towards the school importance on the students. This confirms what has been stated in a literature that parents’ education influences their learners’ achievements whereby parents with university degree express lack of time for parental involvement (Baecck, 2010). But those with low levels of education lack self-confident enough to contact teachers and their knowledge limitations prevent them from helping their children with homework or other school-related issues (Peña, 2000).



Source: Primary field data, 2022

Eighty percent of the students confirmed that they have never been absent from school for more than one week. 18% of them declared that they have been absent for more than one week due to serious reasons such as sickness or heavy need for home activities. It was found out that 67% of the students confirmed that they have never repeated any class up the level they were at the time of investigation. 31% of them witnessed that they have repeated one class in the previous levels. Meantime, 59% of the students who participated in this research disclosed that they have been advised or warned over low performance, thirty-nine percent of them have never been advised or warned over low classroom performance. Moreover 92% of the students have released confirmations that they have never been sent back home due to misconduct.

Only 4% of the student respondents have been rarely sent back due to misconduct and 2% declared that sometimes they have been sent back home to bring their parents due to their misbehavior at school! Lastly, it was found that students who participated in this research, 49% among them have gotten between 60 and 79% of the marks at the end of the past academic year, 35% of them have gotten between 50 and 59% of the end of year performance while 8% of them got below 50% and only 6% of them have gotten above 80% at the end of the past academic year. However, 2% of the student respondents were not able to provide information these series of question on their own.

The student responses have left the researcher with insight that secondary students have been lacking much support from their parents considered that the responses from SEC who apparently spare some time for their children are comparatively higher than the ones provided by the students themselves. The students also affirmed to the researcher informally that they invest their own efforts to perform well with less dependence on their parents' support. "It is firmly our duty to focus on developing our performance since our parents do not have time to support us. Actually we think of our future and predict what will happen if we reluctantly spend our energy on our studies" said one of the students.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The findings provided responses in line with research objectives as follows:

Communication between parents, school and students

The respondents were asked to provide their views on communication between parents, school, and students.

The results showed that in general all the parties communicated between them using different channels, but

the focus of the communication is far different from improving students' performance.

It was found that some school leaders and teachers hesitate to know how precise the number of parents who have students in their schools and classroom. From this perspective, it looks difficult to build relationship with people whom you don't know. It was also observed that the channels used to communicate with parents by teachers and school leaders were dominated by phone calls and considered the location of the schools, the socio status of the population in the school communities and the parents' occupations, those who have access to phone cells may be a small number compared to the number of parents whose children attend the selected schools. This situation makes the assumption that this communication between parents and schools has not reached the level that it could affect the students' performance positively. Thinking of the parents who visit the schools per term, it was found that more than 60% of the respondents confirmed that these parents are no more than 30% who at least visited the schools once.

Home based learning

The school leaders and teachers' responses vis a vis home based learning showed that they could not decipher very well if parents play their role in supporting students during home based learning. 60% of the school leaders revealed that the students themselves witnessed that parents offered their support but it was difficult to identify which support provided and how many students supported and who did not receive support and it was found that the schools have not established mechanisms to identify how parents support their children. On the side of teachers, the same scenario occurred whereby 60% could have a glimpse of parents' support to their children at home while 40% of them declared that they never had a single sign that parents support in home based activities. However, the SEC witnessed that they support their children by allowing time for doing homework and other relevant home learning activities but they could not identify exactly which kind of support they give once the child is challenged during homework or other related activities so that they improve performance when they go back to school.

Parents participation in school activities

The following school related activities were selected to be part of the research: parents' meetings, school events, voluntary activities, fundraising, and the respondents were requested to provide the parents position on every activity. The findings indicated that parents' participation in school related activities were mainly observed on their attendance in school meetings at above 70% due to the fact that all important school decisions are taken there.

Apart from school meetings, the remaining activities have been ranked below 30% by almost all the respondents. This gives the researcher the insight that parents are not fully engaged by the school and their awareness of the activities in which they could invest their support is limited to parents' meetings.

CONCLUSIONS

The research was conducted to find out the effect of parent involvement on students' performance in Bugesera District. The respondent-participants in the research were composed of 5 school leaders, 5 teachers, 10 SEC, and 49 students at secondary schools of Bugesera District and each of the respondents provided their responses to the questionnaires and interviews. As conclusion, parents should be engaged in communication, school activities and home-based learning with the purpose of mainly improving students' performance before any other school related affairs.

The school leaders, teachers, SEC members are key to revolutionize parent involvement practices and increase mobilization and engaging activities for parents to acknowledge their role in improvement of the children learning both at school and home which affect their performance at school as it has been proven that parents who invest time and place value on their children's education will have children who are more

successful in school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings to this study lead to the formulation of the following recommendations to various institutions including policy makers (MINEDUC and its agencies), practitioners (Head teachers and teachers), stakeholders (local government, communities and parents)

Policy makers

1. The central government through the Ministry of Education and the education agencies such as REB, RTB should make thorough follow up of the implementation of education policies and take action where the education implementers are facing challenges especially in regards with role and responsibilities of each party in school life
2. Policy makers should, in the formulation of the policies, focus on the environmental context and include the stakeholders' thoughts since the policy is applied in their premises. When some text in the policy does match with the reality on the ground, it shocks the procedures in the implementation of the policy.

Practitioners

1. School leaders should play their key role in increasing communications with parents via various channels and reach more parents even those who do not have cell phones to increase their participation in their children's learning.
2. School leaders and teachers should increase home based learning activities and put in place mechanisms of monitoring the parents' behaviors during home based learning activities to follow up increase parents support in home-based learning activities
3. The school leaders and teachers should put in place mobilization strategies that encourage parents to participate in available school related activities and open the school doors to welcome parents who are willing to support the schools in any way.
4. Class teachers should increase their contact with the parents of their students and talk to them mainly about the children's performance and discuss the ways to support them and the role that a parent is required to play.

Stakeholders

1. SEC as the parents' representatives should increase their participation in school related activities and encourage their colleague parents to do the same.
2. The parents and the communities should be participative in the opportunities created by the schools to seek their involvement through which they would be aware of their roles and responsibilities in the increase of their children's performance.
3. The recommendations go to other stakeholders in education starting from the government local leaders, development partners, church owners and communities to support the school to own the parents and their support for the increase of their performance that is based on their students' performance.

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