

# Influence of Parental Involvement in Students' Learning Activities on Students' Participation in Public Day Secondary Schools in Makueni County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the parental involvement in students' learning activities on students' participation in public day secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya. Concurrent research design of mixed methods methodology was used for the study. 250 principals, 380 Form 4 class teachers, 250 PA chair persons and 108 area chiefs formed target population. The sample size included 50 principals, 76 class teachers, 50 PA chairpersons and 20 chiefs, making a total of 196 research participants. Questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis were the research tools. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The quantitative data was presented using frequency tables and graphs while qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented using narratives and appropriate verbatim quotes. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine association /correlation between parental involvement in students' learning activities and students' participation in public day secondary schools in Makueni County. Bivariate regression analysis was used to show the influence of parental involvement in students' learning activities on the students' participation in public day secondary schools in Makueni County. The study established that parental involvement in students' learning activities positively and significantly influenced students' participation in public day secondary schools in Makueni County. The study recommended that the school administrators should organize more frequent academic clinics and PTA meetings where parents and guardians can enquire and track the learning progress of their children. Also school administrators to cultivate a strong culture where parents/ guardians visit or contact schools to follow upon their children's progress.

**Key words:** parental involvement, Students' Participation, Public day Secondary Schools, Makueni County, Kenya.

## INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in students' learning activities can be defined in relation to a number of different parental behaviours including; attendance of PTA meetings, consultations and communication with teachers and participation in academic workshops of their children (Jensen & Minke 2017). In United Kingdom, the number of parents who routinely support their children's education has significantly increased (Peters et al, 2008). Magando (2016) concluded that when educators take initiative to foster collaboration among different stake holders, even for a short period of time there is improvement in quality of education. Galindo (2012) concluded that learners, who had their parents committed and involved in their learning activities, had higher educational expectations and performed well in reading and mathematical activities at the end of learning course. Onyedikachim and Ezekiel-Hart (2021) noted that enhanced parental involvement in educational process increased completion rates, led to realization of better school attendance besides increasing students' motivation to be self-driven in their academic pursuit. Garcia et al (2019) argued that parental involvement is

among the major factors that contributed to students' participation and attainment in academics. Hartas (2015) showed that in OECD countries nearly all the parents were reported to routinely visit their children.

Singh & Mbokodi (2004) conducted a study on Black Parental Involvement in Education. From the study, majority of the teachers pointed out that the expected collaboration between parents and the school on general educational issues was far from satisfactory. 75% of the teachers specifically stated that parents' ignorance was to be blamed for the schools' lack of success. Three of the teachers who were strongly vocal about parents' ignorance states that, education in the historically African schools would never succeed because parents' distance themselves when it comes to education.

Kibali (2016) findings on parental involvement showed that most parents scored below the mean, 13% of parents were reported to have been involved in their children's progress once a year while 87% were reported to have been involved at least 2-3 times a year. Orange et al (2022) study findings, revealed that a larger proportion of the parents/ guardians were rarely involved in their children's school activities, did not volunteer at school or provide sufficient learning resource, did not enlist as members of school committee and associations and did not engage in communication with the teachers to inquire concerning their children's progress in school as well as their wellbeing and this led to dropouts of the students.

Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in Kenya was officially launched by President Mwai Kibaki in 2008. This was done because after introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003, many primary graduates could not get access to secondary education mainly due to fees. FDSE programme was launched so that the learners who enroll in form 1 participate wholly in education and graduate after 4 years. However, the case is totally different in Makueni County. The data obtained from Makueni County Education Office between the years 2016 -2021 (Table 1.1) shows that; In 2019, a total of 4,891 students did not complete form 4 accounting for 16.94% of students who either dropped out or repeated. In 2020 a total of 3,731 students did not complete form 4 accounting for 12.98% of students who either dropped out or repeated. Also in 2021, a total of 3,674 students did not complete form 4 accounting for 12.38% of students who either dropped out or repeated. In Makueni County, most households are poor (KNBS Makueni County, 2020) and hence parental involvement in students' learning activities play a big role in students' participation in secondary schools.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study was guided by the following specific objective;

- (i) To establish the influence of parental involvement in students' learning activities on students' participation in public day secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted concurrent research design of Mixed Methods research methodology. The study targeted 250 public day secondary schools and 108 locations (KNBS MAKUENI COUNTY, 2020). Therefore, 250 principals, 380 form 4 class teachers (2022), 250 PTA chair persons and 108 area chiefs were targeted. Random sampling was used to sample; 50 principals, 76 form 4 class teachers (2022), 50 PA chairperson and 20 area chiefs making a total of 196 research participants. Questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis were the research tools.

## RESULTS

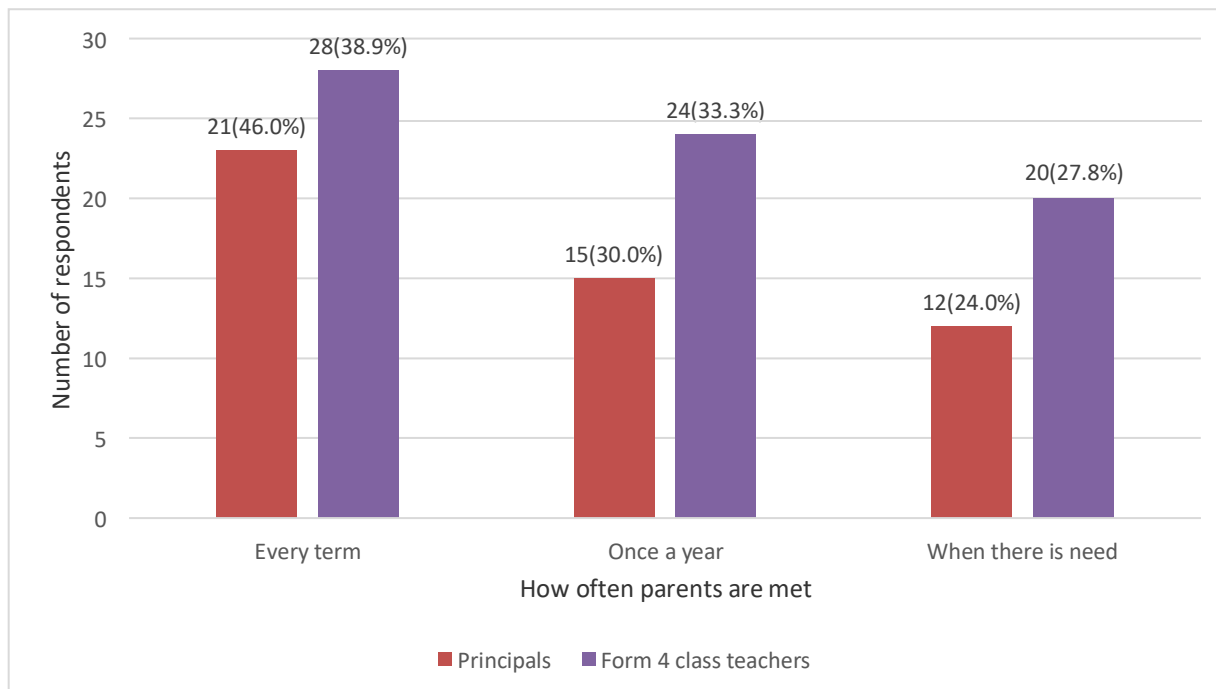
### Parental Involvement in Students' Learning Activities

The study sought to establish the influence of parental involvement in students' learning activities on students' participation in public day secondary schools in Makueni County. Towards achieving this objective, the level of parental involvement in students' learning activities in the sampled was first determined.

## Teachers’ Frequency of Meeting Parents to Discuss Issues on Students’ Learning Activities

The principals and Form 4 class teachers were asked to indicate how often they met with parents to discuss school matters concerning the learning activities of students. The responses are provided in figure1

Figure 1 How Often Teachers Meet Parents to Discuss Students’ Learning Activities



Source (Researcher, 2024)

The findings presented in Figure 1 showed that a larger proportion of the principals (46.0%) indicated that they met with parents every term to discuss school matters concerning students’ learning activities. The others, 30.0% and 24.0% stated that they met these parents once a year and where there was need respectively. Looking at the Form 4 class teachers’ responses, 38.9% noted that the parents were met every term, 33.3% stated once a year while the rest, 27.8% reported that the parents were met whenever there was a need.

From the interviews with the PA chairpersons, 40.0% of them stated that PTA meetings in their schools were held every term, 28.0% asserted that such meetings were held once in a year while the rest, 32.0%, reported that these meetings were organized when a need arose. Regarding academic clinics, slightly more than half of the PA chairpersons, 52.0%, indicated that the clinics were held when there was need while 18.0% and 34.0% of the chairpersons observed that academic clinics were held every term and once in a year respectively. The majority of the PA chairpersons, 82.0%, argued that parents in their schools did not make consultations with teachers about their children’s progress. The arguments posed by some of the PA chairpersons were as follows: -“No, parents usually come to school when called by school administration” PA Chairperson 4 ... “Not at all. Parents have left everything to teachers” PA Chairperson 21... “Not at all. Once parents enroll their children, they sit to wait for results” PA Chairperson 26 ... “No, most parents are not concerned about their children’s education” PA Chairperson 28 ... “Not at all. They only remember school when called by school administration or child is send home” PA Chairperson 36 ... “Not at all. Even when students are sent home for fees, some do not come” PA Chairperson 49

The PA chairpersons who noted that parents in their schools rarely consulted teachers regarding their children’s progress argued that parents made the consultations only during Academic or Parents’ Day. The very few parents who consulted about their children’s progress as highlighted by PA chairpersons 10, 17, 19 and 34 had class teachers’ contacts through which they made calls and enquired about children’s progress and general welfare. On the basis of the above findings, it can be said that the administrations of public day secondary schools in Makueni County provided parents with platforms through which they could engage and

discuss issues on their children’s learning activities with teachers. The study observed that the frequency with which teachers met parents to discuss matters touching on students’ learning activities varied across these schools where some schools organized such meetings after every term, others once a year while others organized the meetings whenever a need arose. It was evident that while academic clinics and PTA meetings had been considerably emphasized, consultations with teachers were not widely embraced by parents.

**Percentage of Parents Who Attend School Meetings**

The study also assessed the average percentage of parents who attended school meetings organized to discuss students’ learning activities. This was one of the ways of assessing the level of parental involvement in students’ learning activities. The principals’ views are given in Table 1

Table 1 Principals’ Responses on the Average Percentage of Parents Who Attend School Meetings

School Meetings	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
PTA meeting	50	30	100	71.6	18.233
Academic clinics	50	25	99	69.9	18.903
Consultations with teachers	50	2	100	46.1	30.091
Valid N (listwise)	50				

Source (Researcher, 2024)

The results outlined in Table 1 showed that on average, 71.6%, 69.9% and 46.1% of parents attended PTA meetings, academic clinics and consultations with teachers in the sampled public day secondary schools in Makueni County respectively. The findings, based on the principals’ responses revealed that parents’ attendance of PTA meetings and academic clinics was higher when compared to consultations with teachers on students’ learning activities. Table 2 contains results pertaining to Form 4 class teachers’ responses on the average percentage of parents who attended school meetings organized to discuss students’ learning activities.

Table 2 Form 4 Class Teachers’ Responses on the Average Percentage of Parents Who Attend School Meetings

School Meetings	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
PTA meeting	72	25	100	69.7	18.312
Academic clinics	72	20	99	67.2	18.153
Consultations with teachers	72	2	95	37.0	23.487
Valid N (listwise)	72				

Source (Researcher, 2024)

It was established, as shown in Table 2, that on average, the sampled Form 4 class teachers reported that 69.7%, 67.2% and 37.0% of parents attended PTA meetings, academic clinics and consultations with teachers regarding students’ learning activities in their schools respectively. Their responses were consistent with the principals’ observations that parents’ attendance of PTA meetings and academic clinics was significantly higher when compared to consultations with teachers. Majority of the interviewed PA chairpersons, 38 (76.0%), observed that parents in their schools responded well to PTA meetings where many reported attendance rates of more than 70%. The few who reported poor attendance decreed that about 30%, 40% or less

than 50% of the parents attended such meetings when called upon. In reference to the latter findings, one of the PA chairpersons argued that some parents never stepped in school after their children reported to Form 1. With regards to academic clinics, 12 (60.0%) of the interviewed PA chairpersons observed that parents’ attendance was good (mostly over 60%) while the rest held a contrary opinion. Furthermore, the majority of the interviewed PA chairpersons, 82.0%, noted that parents in their schools did not make deliberate efforts to consult with teachers regarding their children’s progress unless when called by the school administration. Some of the chiefs argued that: - *“Most of them do not participate; they ignore what is going on in school.”* CH2 ... *“No, most of them are very ignorant about their children’s learning activities”* CH4 ... *“Very minimal consultations, parents have left everything about schools to teachers”* CH11... *“To a very small extend. They have to be forced, majority of them”* CH15

From the above findings, it can be argued that most of the parents in the public day secondary schools in Makueni County participated in their students’ learning activities by attending PTA meetings and academic clinics organized by the school administration. Since the parents who took the personal initiative to consult teachers on their children’s progress were few, it can be inferred that the degree of parental involvement in students’ learning activities for the said schools hinged largely on the push from school administration.

### Measures of Parental Involvement in Students’ Learning Activities

The principals and Form 4 class teachers further reacted to four items in the parental involvement in students’ learning activities construct by stating the extent in which they agreed or disagreed with the statements based on a five-point Likert scale. The principals’ responses are provided in Table 3

Table 3 Principals’ Responses on Measures of Parental Involvement in Students’ Learning Activities

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
Most parents attend academic clinics	4.00%	14.00%	8.00%	64.00%	10.00%	3.620	0.987
Most parents attend PTA meetings	10.00%	16.00%	10.00%	54.00%	10.00%	3.380	1.176
Most parents consult teachers on matters concerning their children’s education	8.00%	34.00%	16.00%	36.00%	6.00%	2.980	1.134
Some parents visit school frequently to know about the progress of their children in learning activities	14.00%	32.00%	14.00%	40.00%	0.00%	2.800	1.125
<b>Composite Mean and Standard Deviation</b>						<b>3.195</b>	<b>0.840</b>
<b>Valid N=50</b>							

Source (Researcher, 2024)

The findings outlined in Table 3 revealed that on average, the principals agreed that most parents in their schools attended academic clinics as demonstrated by the mean of responses of 3.620. Alternatively, the principals on average held a neutral view concerning whether most parents attended PTA meetings and also

consulted teachers on matters concerning their children’s education as illustrated by the means of responses of 3.380 and 2.980 respectively. On average, the principals as well held a neutral view regarding whether some parents visited school frequently to know about the progress of their children in learning activities given the mean of responses of 2.800. The overall mean of 3.195 meant that on average, the principals held a neutral view regarding the statements presented on parental involvement in students’ learning activities. The findings in general showed that parental involvement in students’ learning in the sampled public day secondary schools in Makueni County was average even though attendance of academic clinics was the most emphasized. The Form 4 class teachers’ reaction to the four (items) in the parental involvement in students’ learning activities construct is depicted by the findings presented in Table4

Table 4 Form 4 Class Teachers’ Responses on Measures of Parental Involvement in Students’ Learning Activities

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
Most parents attend academic clinics	2.80%	13.90%	6.90%	69.40%	6.90%	3.639	0.909
Most parents attend PTA meetings	4.20%	20.80%	11.10%	55.60%	8.30%	3.431	1.046
Most parents consult teachers on matters concerning their children’s education	16.70%	44.40%	16.70%	18.10%	4.20%	2.486	1.100
Some parents visit school frequently to know about the progress of their children in learning activities	26.40%	45.80%	9.70%	18.10%	0.00%	2.194	1.030
<b>Composite Mean and Standard Deviation</b>						<b>2.938</b>	<b>0.709</b>
<b>Valid N=50</b>							

Source (Researcher, 2024)

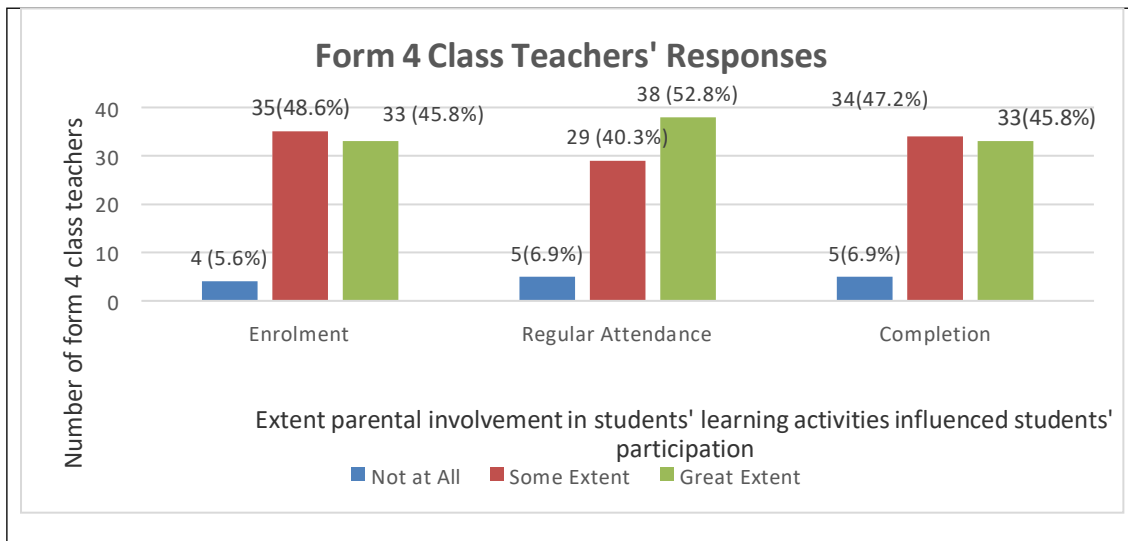
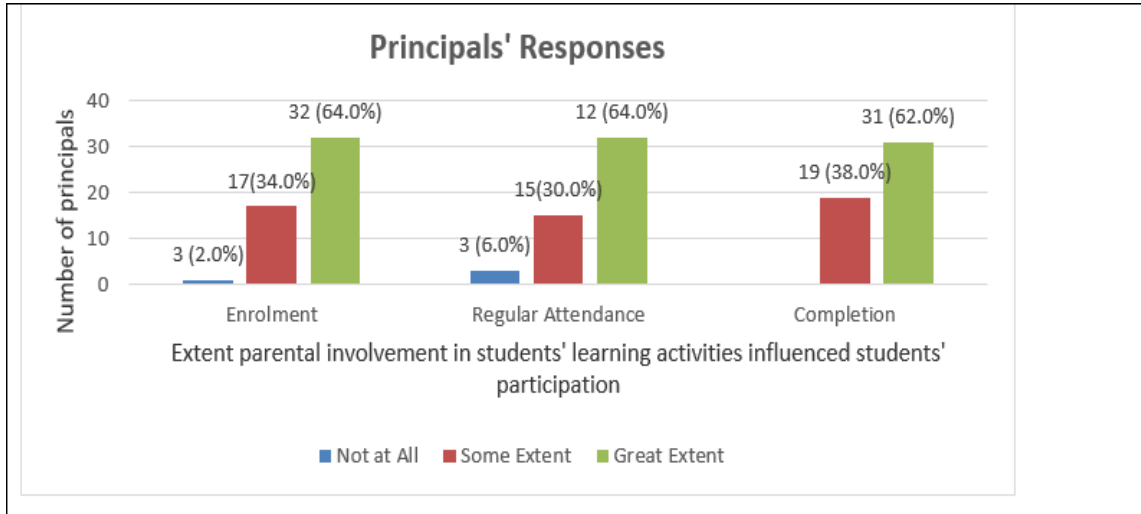
As shown in Table 3, the study established that on average, the Form 4 class teachers agreed that most parents attended academic clinics as shown by 3.639. On the other hand, these class teachers held a neutral view regarding whether most parents attended PTA meetings given a mean of responses of 3.431. The Form 4 class teachers further disagreed that most parents consulted teachers on matters concerning their children’s education and that some parents visited school frequently to know about the progress of their children in learning activities as supported by means of responses of 2.486 and 2.194 respectively. The composite mean value of responses of 2.938 for the construct suggested that on average, the Form 4 class teachers had a neutral view as it pertained to the statements presented on parental involvement in students’ learning activities. The overall mean value also suggested that on average, parental involvement in students’ learning activities in the sampled schools in Makueni County was moderate where parents gave greater priority to academic clinics and paid very little attention to visiting school frequently to know about their children’s progress in learning activities.

### Perceived Link between Parental Involvement in Students’ Learning Activities and Students’ Participation

The study further sought the general views of the respondents pertaining to the link between parental

involvement in students’ learning activities and students’ participation in the public day secondary schools in Makueni County. Figure 2 showed the extent parental involvement in students’ learning activities influenced students’ enrolment, regular school attendance and completion of studies from the perspective of the principals and Form 4 class teachers.

Figure 2 Parental Involvement in Students’ Learning Activities and Enrolment, Regular School Attendance and Completion of Studies



Source (Researcher,2024)

The study based on the findings presented in Figure 2 found that over 60.0% of the principals argued that parental involvement in students’ learning activities to a great extent influenced students’ enrolment in school, their regular school attendance as well as the completion of studies. On the other hand, the larger proportion of the Form 4 class teachers, 48.6% and 47.2% indicated that parental involvement in students’ learning activities to some extent influenced student enrolment and completion of studies in the public day secondary schools in Makueni County respectively. More than half of the Form 4 class teachers, 52.8%, asserted that parental involvement in students’ learning activities to a great extent influenced regular school attendance in these schools. Analysis of the responses from the interviewed area chiefs revealed that 17 (85.0%) of them observed that in deed, there were some students who terminated school before completing Form 4 due to lack of parental involvement in their learning activities. From the above findings, it can be argued that parental involvement in

students' learning activities had a certain influence on students' participation in the public day secondary schools in Makueni County.

## DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Parental Involvement in Students' Learning Activities and Students' Participation

The study noted that the administrations of public day secondary schools in Makueni County organized meetings where teachers met with parents to discuss issues that pertained to students' learning activities. This meant that parents in these schools had platforms or opportunities through which they could participate in their children's learning activities such as attendance of PTA meetings, consultations and communication with teachers and participation in academic workshops of their children. The frequency with which these meetings were held was varied across schools where the larger proportion of these schools organized such meetings every term while in the other cases, these meetings were held once a year or whenever a need arose. These findings concurred with Kibali (2016) that majority of the parents (87%) were involved in their children's academic progress 2-3 times a year and 13% were involved ones a year.

The study observed that the most embraced platforms through which parents could discuss issues touching on their children's learning activities with teachers were academic clinics and PTA meetings while consultations with teachers were the least embraced by parents. This observation was affirmed by the greater percentage of parents who attended academic clinics and PTA meetings in these schools when compared to the percentage that took the personal initiative to consult teachers on their children's learning progress. For that reason, the study concluded that parental involvement in students' learning activities in the public day secondary schools in Makueni County was largely steered by the schools' administrations rather than the parents themselves. This argument is founded on the finding that most parents only remembered about school and their children's progress whenever called by school administration or when the children were sent home. The above findings mirrored the observation made in the study by Orange et al (2022) which showed that most parents did not engage in communication with the school to inquire about their children's academic progress and wellbeing leading to dropout cases. The findings also concurred with Signh and Mbokodi (2004) findings that the expected collaboration between parents and the school on educational issues was far from satisfactory. The findings however, differ from the finding of Hartas (2015) which showed that in OECD countries nearly all the parents were reported to routinely visit their children's schools to enquire of their progress and often conversed with their children about how they are doing in school and other topics relevant to school life.

The study found out that on average, the level of parental involvement in students' learning activities in the public day secondary schools in Makueni County could be considered moderate. The study also noted that generally, parental involvement in students' learning activities had a certain influence on students' enrolment, regular school attendance and their completion of studies. The correlation analysis showed that parental involvement in students' learning activities and students' participation in public day secondary schools in Makueni County were positively, strongly and significantly correlated. The regression analysis further showed that students' participation in these schools was positively and significantly influenced by parental involvement in students' learning activities. It was thus inferred that with increased parental involvement in students' learning activities, students' participation in public day secondary schools in Makueni County would significantly be enhanced.

These findings were in agreement with the conclusion made by Onyedikachim & Ezekiel-Hart (2021) that enhanced parental involvement in educational process increased completion rates, led to realization of better school attendance besides increasing students' motivation to be self-driven in their academic pursuit. The findings also supported Garcia et al (2019) argument that parental involvement is among the major factors that contributed students' participation and attainment in academics. Hence, parent involvement in terms of being aware of and involvement in children's schoolwork and a commitment to consistent communication with educators about students' progress were fundamental in students' participation in school learning activities.



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## RECOMMENDATION

The study recommended that the school administrators should organize more frequent academic clinics and PTA meetings where parents and guardians can enquire and track the learning progress of their children. Also school administrators to cultivate a strong culture where parents/ guardians visit or contact schools to follow upon their children's progress.

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