Teacher–Parent Collaboration in Educational Support of Learners with Visual Impairments in Early Grades in Kilifi County, Kenya

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1026EDU0693

Received: 19 October 2026; Accepted: 24 October 2026; Published: 03 November 2026

ABSTRACT

Teacher–parent collaboration is a critical component in enhancing educational outcomes for learners with visual impairments (LVI), particularly in early grades where foundational skills are developed. This study explored the essence of teacher-parent collaboration to benefit Grade One to Three LVI in the Kilifi County, Kenya. The research design was qualitative descriptive research based on the theory of parental involvement by Epstein. A sample population size of 26 respondents consisting of teachers and parents in two schools that provide special education services was used. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data, which were analyzed thematically. Results showed that teamwork is achieved via communication, meetings and home-based learning. Parents are also involved in supporting learners by providing learning environments and helping with day to day activities, but they also have problems like poverty, lack of knowledge and resources. Other limitations facing teachers are poor training, insufficient assistive technologies as well as poor institutional support. The research concludes that both teachers and parents are committed to the study, but structural and social economic barriers impede successful cooperation. The study suggests the need to reinforce inclusive education policies, training of teachers, empowerment of parents by capacity-building programs and enhancing access to assistive resources.

Keywords: Teacher–Parent Collaboration, Visual Impairment, Inclusive Education, Parental Involvement, Early Grades

INTRODUCTION

Teacher-parent collaboration is important in enhancing the learning of learners with visual impairments (LVI) especially in the early childhood learning where the basis of literacy, numeracy and social skills are developed. At this level, both home and school environment should provide steady guidance to enhance the learning experiences and foster independence in learners. It has been shown in research that parental involvement in a meaningful way leads to better academic performance, better social growth and learner motivation (Tofail and Khan, 2024; Walker *et al*., 2022). In the case of LVI, such a collaboration is even more urgent, since they frequently need personalized teaching strategies, support tools and constant reinforcement outside of the classroom environment (Bogale, 2024). Good collaborations between parents and teachers thus guarantee that learners acquire comprehensive support depending on their individual learning requirements.

Parental involvement is a universal concept that is multidimensional in nature and encompasses both communication between parents and teachers, as well as involvement in the school related activities and home based learning assistance. All those dimensions contribute to the academic success of a learner and his or her well-being (Yáñez-Cancino *et al*., 2024). Nevertheless, parental involvement does not work in every situation and it depends on cultural beliefs, socioeconomic status and institutional frameworks (Wilder, 2023). The systemic factors, which parents in most developing nations, including Kenya, face, include insufficient information, insufficient training in helping children with special needs and inadequate school materials (Le Fanu *et al*., 2022). Such obstacles may undermine the effectiveness of teacher-parent cooperation and minimize its possible influence on learner performance.

Parental involvement has been reported to have a positive impact on the achievement of learners and their school involvement in the Kenyan context, especially in the early grades, where parental guidance is a major factor (Anami *et al*., 2022). Nevertheless, parents of LVI have unique and compounded challenges, which impede their

active participation. These are financial constraints that restrict funding to assistive technology like braille materials and mobility aids and lack of knowledge concerning the specialized instructional strategi-

es (Jelagat, 2026). Moreover, other parents might have social stigmatization or feel ineffective in helping their children with learning requirements. These obstacles do not only influence the degree of parental engagement but also put a strain on cooperation with educators, which eventually has an influence on the academic development of LVI.

Although the importance of inclusive education policies and practices has been increased, little empirical study has been conducted that specifically addresses the topic of teacher-parent collaboration in helping LVI in lower grade classes. The majority of literature on the topic discusses general parental involvement, but it does not consider the specific dynamics of visual impairment in sufficient detail. This knowledge gap supports the necessity of context-specific research that will help understand how collaboration takes place, what strategies both teachers and parents use and which challenges they face. As such, this research was aimed to explore the teacher-parent collaboration in Kilifi County, Kenya and to come up with insights that will guide policy, practice and improve educational outcomes of LVI.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Engagement Methods for Parental Involvement

The strategies of teacher engagement play a central role in ensuring meaningful cooperation with parents of LVI. Competent interaction is based on the regular communication, mutual respect and responsibility to the learner outcomes. According to Epstein (1991), parental participation is improved through structured channels of communication, including regular meetings, progress reports and visits to the home. Also, collaborative methods where parents are included in the decision-making processes make them feel that they own and are committed to the education of the learner. The exchange of information, especially the information about individualized education plans, allows parents to support learning at home. All of these strategies will lead to better academic and social results of LVI (Walker *et al*., 2022; Yáñez-Cancino *et al*., 2024).

Technology integration has also altered the interaction between teachers and parents especially in situations whereby physical contact is minimal. The use of digital tools like messaging apps, video calls and online learning portals provides real-time feedback and communication (Istiyanto *et al*., 2026). In developed settings such as Canada, the teacher and vision specialist's partnerships give parents practical skills to support learners (Berger *et al*., 2021). In a similar manner, structured parent support groups in Singapore are also sources of emotional and informational resources, which increase engagement. Yet, in most African countries, such as Kenya, such strategies are not implemented due to limited access to technology, teacher training, lack of resources, etc. (Afolabi *et al*., 2023).

Parental Support Strategies

Parents are most crucial in aiding LVI by using various strategies which are not limited to classroom. Home-based learning tasks, including assistance with homework, helping with daily routines and reinforcing teacher instructions, have a considerable positive effect on the outcomes of learners (Oranga *et al*., 2022). The emotional support is also necessary and it will contribute to the development of confidence and resilience in learners with visual challenges. Another important role is advocacy where the parents tend to serve as the linking bridge between schools and providers of such services so as to have their children adequately supported. Parents have been found to be empowered through training programs that enhance their competence by providing skills in communication, mobility training and use of assistive devices (Al Shami & Nashwan, 2025).

Early intervention programs also empower parents through the provision of systematic support in regard to helping them to support developmental and educational needs at a tender age (Jones *et al*., 2021). These programs improve the capacity of parents to have effective learning encounters and to change teaching approaches to meet the needs of their children. Nevertheless, parental involvement is usually predisposed by socioeconomic and cultural variables. Parents with low income might not have opportunities and resources to get training and have limited abilities to offer efficient support (Sharma *et al*., 2023). Also, the level of parental engagement can be

influenced by cultural beliefs and societal attitudes towards disability and some groups of people might display stigma or other misunderstandings regarding visual impairments (Oppong *et al*., 2022).

Challenges in Home-Based Support

The parents of LVI face a lot of difficulties that interfere with their capacity of offering effective home-based support. Emotional stress is one of the most prevalent problems because parents usually cannot handle the requirements of raising a child with special needs. Fiscal restrictions also contribute to these struggles, restricting access to necessary resources including assistive technologies, special learning materials and professional support services. Braille machines and screen readers are also expensive and unavailable to many families due to their high costs in low-income environments (Jimenez *et al*., 2022). These obstacles have a great influence on the quality of support, which can be offered by parents at home.

Other issues in the Kenyan scenario are the lack of awareness and training of parents on effective support strategies of LVI (Anyango & Okello, 2023). Not all parents have the required skills to help with the academic activities or even make effective use of the assistive technologies. A role of poverty and social stigma is also considerable because some parents might feel not accepted or supported in their communities (Adongo, 2024). The challenges underscore the importance of specific interventions such as parental training and sensitization programs in the community so as to improve home-based support of LVI.

Challenges in School-Based Collaboration

Teachers face significant barriers in the building and sustaining of positive working relationships with parents of LVI. The volume of work usually does not allow much time of meaningful interactivity with parents and the lack of special needs education training makes teachers less confident and competent in meeting the needs of different learners as Anteneh and Anteneh (2024) noted. Also, the teaching process is complicated by the absence of institutional support, such as the lack of teaching materials and assistive technologies. Such difficulties make it difficult to build effective collaboration between parents and teachers, which eventually influences the results of learners.

Cultural differences and barriers to communication are also critical in restraining collaboration. There might be misunderstandings between teachers and parents because of the differences in language, expectations and perceptions of education (Berger *et al*., 2023). In Kenya, educators complain that they struggle to adjust their instructional plans and involve parents in the educational process because of the lack of professional development opportunities (Njeru *et al*., 2024). Moreover, institutional problems like insufficient financing and inefficient policy execution are still hampering successful cooperation. These challenges need elaborate solutions such as training of teachers, revising of policies and investing more in inclusive education

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design, as it is especially appropriate to investigate complex social phenomena in natural environments (Jobir, 2024). This method enabled the researcher to gain deep, in-depth information on teacher-parent collaboration in aiding LVI, with a personal experience, perceptions and challenges. The research, by extracting the stories of participants, shed light on the methods used by teachers and parents in improving the educational performance of Grade One to Three LVI. The study took place in Kenya in Kilifi County, Kibarani Integrated Day and Boarding School and Sahajanand Special School. These schools were chosen because they have special programs in LVI and the specific challenges of resource limitation mean that the findings would describe the real experiences in this particular educational environment.

A census sampling method was applied to sample a total of 26 participants who included 18 parents/guardians, six teachers and two head-teachers. Purposive inclusion made sure that the participants had a direct experience with LVI education, which made it easy to gather relevant and comprehensive data. The use of semi-structured interviews as the major data gathering tool allowed flexibility in probing and clarification of responses without going off track of the study objectives. The 30-45 minutes interviews were held in cozy and personal environments to facilitate openness of participants. Thematic analysis was performed, which allowed identifying patterns, repetitive themes and connections between teacher engagement, parental support strategies and

challenges related to them. The research design had ethical standards that were followed strictly

during the study such as voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality and this guaranteed integrity and credibility of the research findings.

Of the 18 parents/guardians, 8 were drawn from Kibarani Integrated Day and Boarding School and 10 from Sahajanand Special School; the six teachers comprised 2 and 4 from the two schools respectively, while one head-teacher was interviewed at each school (see Table 1).

RESULTS

Response Rate and Demographics

The study successfully achieved a 100% response rate and all the 26 respondents, where 18 parents and 8 teachers including the head-teachers, participated in the semi-structured interviews. This full response made sure that the data was the views of all the intended stakeholders who were involved in the education of LVI in Grades One to Three. Demographics showed that most participants who took part in the study were mothers (n=14), with four fathers participating, which is a traditional caregiving role in rural Kilifi County. The parents were mostly primary-level educated or less and teachers were diploma or bachelor-educated in education with different degrees of in-service training in inclusive education. The majority of the participants resided in rural and low socioeconomic regions, which affected the characteristics of the parental engagement and the limitations faced in helping LVI. Table 1 summarizes the distribution of participants by school site, clarifying the institutional settings from which the data were drawn.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by School

School	Parents/Guardians	Teachers	Head-teachers	Total
Kibarani Integrated Day and Boarding School	8	2	1	11
Sahajanand Special School	10	4	1	15
Total	**18**	**6**	**2**	**26**

Teacher Engagement Methods: Meetings

The researchers discovered that the interactions between teachers and parents were mainly in the format of frequent meetings. Teachers noted that they would have scheduled parent-teacher meetings during which they would discuss the academic development of learners, discuss difficulties and jointly establish learning objectives. Through these meetings, teachers got a platform to make observations concerning the performance of the child in the classroom, discuss individual learning plans and learn about home-based interventions. Teachers emphasized that face-to-face communication contributed to building trust and improving parental awareness of the educational needs of their child. Meetings were also used as arenas where expectations and roles were clarified and accountability fostered between the teachers and parents. One of the teachers explained, that they make sure that parents know not only the curriculum but also the particular strategies that the child needs to learn. This was especially useful in dealing with the literacy and mobility skills of learners with visual impairment.

Teacher Engagement Methods: Phone Communication

Besides meetings, teachers also used phone communication as a versatile approach to continuing their cooperation with parents. This method was especially beneficial to families living in isolated places when commuting to school might take a lot of time and might be expensive. Teachers frequently placed phone calls to update, talk about difficulties and give advice on how to assist learning activities at home. Parents appreciated the instantaneous nature of phone interaction that enabled them to get prompt guidance on the supervision of homework, orientation and mobility activities and braille training. Teachers also acknowledged that phone communication proved to be successful in emergency situations or when a quick intervention was needed, which

meant that a learner would not be left alone even when he is not during a meeting. This strategy helped to maintain constant interaction, strengthening the school-home collaboration.

Teacher Engagement Methods: School Visits

Another intervention as practiced by teachers was school visits where parents were invited to see classroom practice or even learning with their child. These visits assisted parents to know the method of teaching, use of tactile learning materials and teaching of braille. They also helped to give the parents a chance to talk with teachers about the progress directly within the real learning environment of the child. According to several parents, observing classroom teaching boosted their self-confidence to help their child at home. Educators stressed that such visits provided the opportunity to solve problems together as there could be issues observed in the classroom that could be discussed together. School visits served as an addition to the meetings and phone communication, which helped them acquire firsthand experience and strengthen parent and teacher relationships and the support system of LVI.

Parental Support Strategies: Home-Based Learning

The parents were also actively involved in the learning support at home through a variety of strategies, including homework control, braille literacy and development of an organized learning routine. A large number of parents claimed that they would create quiet areas in their homes with minimal distractions in order to increase the attention and concentration of their children. Others stressed on practical daily activities to support the orientation, mobility and independent living skills. Emotional support proved to be a major aspect of parental involvement with parents being supportive by motivating perseverance, applauding successes and offering encouragement when faced with difficult learning activities. One of the parents said, “I ensure that my child does his/her practice of braille daily and I sit with the children to help and motivate them not to be in dismay”. Such strategies reveal the importance of parents in the continuity of learning beyond the school.

Regarding assistive materials, braille instruction and tactile learning materials were used mainly in the classroom, although schools also reported limited stocks. At home, parents relied on tactile books, audio equipment, touch-based toys, large-print books and magnifiers, supplemented by self-made low-cost aids from locally available materials, as costlier braille equipment was largely beyond the reach of households. Specifically, slate and stylus were used at home for personal writing practice, Perkins braillers in classrooms for Braille instruction, abacuses at home and in class for arithmetic and tactile maps in classrooms to teach geography and spatial orientation.

Parental Support Strategies: Collaboration and Communication

In addition to direct learning activities, parents were involved in collaborative practices with teachers to improve the educational outcomes. They were in constant touch about assignments, behavioral issues and progress. Other parents shared resources in the form of tactile materials or teaching aids locally available and still other parents were directly involved in school activities or volunteer programs. The mutual cooperation helped to support classroom learning at home and close gaps in knowledge and resources. According to parents, participation in decision-making, which also includes consultation on individualized education plans, enabled them to represent their children in a more effective way. This collaboration led to building trust in the joint knowledge of learning objectives, the ability to be consistent in expectations and the holistic growth of learners, which is why it is important to appreciate the importance of systematic parent-teacher cooperation.

Challenges Faced by Parents

Parents had noted a number of limitations to LVI despite the high levels of commitment. One of the main obstacles became poverty, which restricted access to assistive technologies, special learning resources and transportation to visit the school. Some parents did not have the full access to the information in the form of a braille text and could not effectively conduct instructions due to low literacy levels. There were time limitations especially to parents who were involved in subsistence farming or informal jobs, which decreased the number of hours they could have to support education. Moreover, the absence of understanding regarding the special learning needs of visually impaired children posed a real challenge in the way effective interventions are applied. A number of parents have complained that they felt unprepared to offer the best possible support as they lacked

training or mentoring and therefore they could not do much to help. These issues highlight the importance of the capacity-building interventions in parents.

Challenges Faced by Teachers

Teachers indicated that they could only work effectively with parents when they lacked proper training in the inclusive education practices and special approaches to the visual impairment. Their accessibility to assistive technologies and learning materials in schools was also limited, which made it even harder to assist learners. The teachers did not have the time to engage parents individually as much due to heavy workloads, big classes and administration. The support of the institutions was not very uniform and some schools did not have a well-organized system of communication and instructions on how parents were involved. Parental involvement was sometimes restricted by cultural beliefs and language barriers, which complicated collaboration. Teachers also focused on the fact that professional development, the provision of resources and institutional policies that can lead to organized interaction would greatly increase their ability to collaborate with parents to support LVI.

DISCUSSION

The results emphasize the importance of teacher parent collaboration in facilitating LVI. Home visits, WhatsApp groups, workshops and scheduled meetings are some of the strategies that were used by teachers to involve parents. Through these engagements, advice on the use of assistive devices, mobility and learning habits was offered, which created a collaboration between school and home. Regular communication enabled parents to reinforce classroom activities, track the progress of their children and add to IEPs. This kind of cooperation lessens the loneliness of parents and instills confidence in the assistance of learning. Teacher-parent collaborations helped in not only facilitating academic achievement and socio-emotional growth in low-income settings but also helped in closing resource gaps with the school, family and community collaborating to achieve the learning outcomes as outlined in the Epstein (1991) framework of overlapping spheres of influence. In a qualitative investigation, an informant opined that:

Home visits provide a chance to observe actual difficulties and demonstrate parents the way to learn with the help of simple tools. We provide display of exercises of mobility in their space rendering it relatable. Parents will have a sense of involvement and report improved progress.

(KII 3, October 20, 2025, Kibarani Integrated School)

The sentiment reveals the significance of in-situ engagement. Teachers enhance parental confidence and capabilities to practice learning strategies at home by giving them practical demonstrations. It has been demonstrated in literature that effective home-based interventions can be used to improve efficacy and independence in parents and learners as noted by Bogale (2024), especially in settings with minimal access to digital and physical resources.

Parents actively support learning at home by providing tactile and audio materials, practicing orientation skills and reinforcing classroom lessons. Touch-based toys, large-print books and magnifiers used on a daily basis can increase independence and ensure a steady progress in skills. The involvement of parents in PTAs and school meetings helped in advocacy, mobilization and sharing of best practices. Problem-solving guidance and counseling were also used as emotional support enabling children to overcome the problems that come with visual impairment. These plans emphasize the importance of parents as co-teachers and emotional supports. The results indicate that this type of cooperation promotes resilience, motivation and inclusion, which helps to overcome poverty, stigma and lack of specialization of teachers. In line with the study by Walker *et al*. (2022), family engagement is indispensable in alleviating the home-school gap and enhancing academic and socio-emotional performance. In an interview, an informant stated that:

Home study is given by means of tactile books and audio equipment and daily instructions support school learning. The approach can help overcome the lack of resources, ensures consistency in learning and forms self-sufficiency skills.

(KII 5, November 10, 2025, Kibarani Integrated School)

The assertion exemplifies how parents utilize the resources at their disposal to maintain the continuity in learning. The studies indicate that tactile and audio methods can promote functional literacy and self-acquired skills in visually impaired students as Anyango and Okello (2023) established, especially when there is material shortage.

In Kilifi County, parental involvement was greatly restricted by socioeconomic factors. Poverty also meant that there was limited access to assistive technologies, including magnifiers and braille materials and so people had to use low-cost improvisations, which were frequently ineffective. Parents went through emotional pressures and other priorities, which minimized time and resources available to them to support education. Myths of cultures relating visual impairment to curses were shameful and slow to adapt to homes. Educators tried to overcome such difficulties by sensitizing workshops and community works, advocacy and organized cooperation. Even with these interventions, there were still gaps. These results are consistent with Sharma *et al*. (2023) and Jelagat (2026) who report that poverty, lack of awareness and cultural beliefs are structural factors which are an impediment to effective parental involvement in low resource settings. In an interview, an informant outlined that:

Poverty restricts the purchasing power of families to purchase braille equipment since other essential necessities such as food are given priority. The self-made low-price products are usually inefficient, slowing down the development of children and adding pressure to the family.

(KII 11, October 5, 2025, Kibarani Integrated School)

The note identifies the convergence between financial and educational barriers. It has been supported in literature that economic limitations hinder home learning support, which can be addressed by sharing resources and training them (Oranga *et al*., 2022), which justifies the necessity of specific policy interventions.

A central contribution to productive cooperation was the preparedness of teachers. Inadequate training on adaptive practices, absence of assistive materials and non-supportive facilities were a barrier to the teachers to offer consistent instructions. Individualized instruction was influenced by large classes and poor evaluation instruments. The teacher capacity to involve parents in IEP development and home-based learning strategy was enhanced by professional development programs and interdisciplinary collaboration with vision specialists. These attempts encouraged responsibility, continuity and consistency between school and the home activities. In line with Anyango and Okello (2023) and Njeru *et al*. (2024), the effect of teacher knowledge and skills on inclusive education is that they directly affect the effectiveness of family partnerships, which is why systematic capacity-building measures and frameworks of teacher-parent collaboration are important. In a probe, an informant revealed that:

IEPs take the initiative in involving parents in goal setting. Educators and parents exchange the practices to be applied at home so that learning processes would be regular and reinforced.

(KII 10, December 10, 2025, Sahajanand Special School)

The voice note proves that professional educators are able to make the organization of parental participation in IEPs, guaranteeing the consistency of activities in the school and home. The importance of teacher capacity is justified since literature demonstrates that a coordinated implementation of IEP enhances the outcomes of learners and parental involvement (Anyango & Okello, 2023).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teacher-parent cooperation is core in improving the learning outcomes of LVI, especially in the preliminary primary classes where the basic skills are acquired. Quality collaboration implies that the learners get the supportive help at school and at home, which allows reinforcing the academic skills, social-emotional growth and autonomy. Teachers and parents are highly committed to these learners but are often constrained by socioeconomic factors such as poverty, low levels of parent literacy and lack of access to special resources such as assistive technologies and adapted learning materials. Also, educators are not always professionally trained in inclusive education and parents are not always well-advised on effective home-based intervention methods, which prevents the full potential of joint interventions and inclusive learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researcher expresses profound gratitude to the supervisors, Prof. Gladwell Wambiri and Dr. Stephen Musila Nzoka, who have provided a sense of direction, constructive criticism and support during the research process and which were invaluable in crafting the study. Many thanks is conveyed to the management and the employees of the Kibarani Integrated Day and Boarding School and Sahajanand Special School to have been given the opportunity to access, to help in data collection and assist in the research logistics. The researcher owes a great debt of gratitude to the teachers, Grade One to Three educators, who volunteered to give their experiences and views with patient and honesty. Great credits also to the parents and guardians of the LVI who gave in to the study, were open and committed to the education of their children and their cooperation was the key to the development of this study and its completion became possible.

RECOMMENDATION

The study highlights several key areas where policy and academic interventions can be implemented:

- The study strongly recommends the implementation of intensive policies adoption that encourage inclusive education and parental participation in the education of LVI. These policies must offer proper guidelines to the schools on how their collaboration with parents should be structured in a way that both the parents and schools are active contributors to the learning process. Policymakers can also establish a sustainable framework to promote LVI by institutionalizing the involvement of the parents in the form of frequent meetings, workshops and school-community partnerships. Also, the offering of assistive technology and special learning resources should be given priority to allow both the teachers and parents the opportunity to offer individualized support that can meet the individual needs of the learner. This will make sure that every learner gets equal opportunity to quality education.

- Furthermore, teachers should be provided with specific training on inclusive practices that would help them with the skills on how to engage parents and benefit LVI. At the same time, parents should be empowered through capacity-building programs to provide strategies and confidence to support learning at home. It is imperative to establish strong communication systems between the schools and the families to enable the sharing of information about the progress of the learners, challenges and resources in a timely manner. These interventions combined will create a cooperative atmosphere in which teachers and parents collaborate to enhance educational progress and social inclusion of LVI.

- In practical terms, the Kilifi County Education Board, in conjunction with the Educational Assessment and Resource Centres (EARCs), can implement low-cost solutions such as: parent peer groups that meet once a month in each school, in which experienced parents teach other parents about how to perform braille exercises and O&M; mobile phone-based audio communication such as, WhatsApp voice notes or SMS and voice calls in Kiswahili and Giriama that helps parents with low literacy skills understand what tasks to do at home each week; “make-and-take” workshops for parents conducted by teachers that teach parents how to create tactile teaching tools using materials found locally; and an assistive device loan programme between the school and the home.

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