



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of Parental Involvement on Children's Academic Performance in Zimbabwean Primary Schools

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The study examined the influence of parental involvement on learners' academic performance in Zimbabwean primary schools. A qualitative research approach was used, gathering data through interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Purposive sampling and case study research design were used. Participants included 15 parents, 15 teachers. The main findings indicated that parents participated in the education of their children in various ways, such as paying fees, parenting, communication, homework and research, and continuous Assessment Learning Activity (CALA). Parents spared their time attending consultation days to assess their children's progress. Despite the high support, some parents faced difficulties providing their children with adequate learning resources. Thus, it may be concluded that parents impact learners' academic performance by staying involved with their children's education. The study recommends that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education make clear policies on how parents should support their children. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should conduct awareness campaigns to conscientious parents and stakeholders on their roles as equal partners in their children's education worldwide, encouraging them to take an active role and improve parental support.

INTRODUCTION

Active parental involvement is an undeniable catalyst for improving a student's academic performance and overall well-being. Research has clearly shown that children whose parents actively participate in their education tend to exhibit better grades, attendance, and motivation to learn.[1]. Due to limited school resources, parental involvement is crucial in Zimbabwe (Gombe & Msezane, 2024). Some common forms of parental involvement include attending school events, volunteering in the classroom, and supporting homework and learning at home (Alinsunurin, 2020). Parental involvement barriers include a lack of time, language, and cultural differences (Johnson, 2023). The importance of parental involvement in education has been well-documented. Research consistently shows that when parents are involved in their child's education, it leads to improved academic outcomes, better behaviour, and increased engagement with learning (Amponsah et al, 2018). This paper explores the impact of parental involvement on learner performance in Zimbabwean primary schools and examines the factors that contribute to or hinder parent involvement.

According to Dawadi (2020), Various actions at home or school have been described as parental involvement. It involves the active participation of parents in their children's education. "Parent" in this context refers to anyone who looks after young children, including family members. Despite the

importance of parental involvement in education, little is known about the specific impact of parental involvement on learner performance in Zimbabwean primary schools (Chindanya, 2011). Previous research has primarily focused on the effect of parental involvement on academic achievement. Still, it has not examined the impact on other important aspects of learner performance, such as attendance, motivation, and social-emotional development (Simweleba & Serpell, 2020). Furthermore, the role of specific types of parental involvement, such as involvement in homework, communication with teachers, and engagement in school activities, has not been fully explored, as indicated by (Mazambara & Sepeng, 2023), who purported that Parental involvement in schools in Zimbabwe had not yet fully moved away from the colonial history of marginalization when economic unrest negatively affected the management of schools. Furthermore, the financial turmoil led to severe irregularities in school operations when teachers went on a prolonged strike, resulting in very little learning taking place for years and a general lack of school development (Chinyoka & Mugweni, 2020). These challenges increased indifference, mistrust, and hostility from parents (Nyemba & Chitiyo, 2018). This study aims to address this gap by examining the impact of parental involvement on a range of learner performance indicators in Zimbabwean primary schools.

Parents provide psycho-social support, enrol their children in schools, and provide necessary school requirements, positively impacting pupils' academic performance (Magwa & Mugari, 2017). Thus, the influence of parental involvement on a student's academic success should not be underestimated. According to Singogo (2017), a child's support system at home is the primary factor determining their academic achievement, despite the roles played by brainpower, work ethic, and genetics. Nakijoba, Biihah, Akullo, and Mugimu (2024) clarified that parental involvement in a child's schoolwork determines the outcome in terms of results to some extent.

Background

The issue of parental involvement is a global issue that transcends different countries (Peprah et al., 2023). Internationally, parental involvement in school has long been heralded as an essential and positive variable in children's academic and socio-emotional development (Waller et al., 2024). However, it can be noted that children from both developed and undeveloped countries need parental involvement for them to succeed in their education (Xu et al., 2024). International research has shown that parental involvement positively influences academic achievement. This has been demonstrated across different populations and educational levels through various meta-analyses. (Jeynes, 2024 Parents' support is crucial in school as they are the first teachers and significantly impact their children. (Green, 2021)

In the United States of America, evidence of parental involvement in education exists both at home and within the school (Johnson et al., 2024). According to Echaune, Ndiku, and Sang (2015), the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 recognizes parents' involvement and empowerment in determining the quality of school teaching and learning processes. The issue of parental support is also evident in several African countries, as evidenced by available literature and research studies. Echaune et al. (2015) assert that policies supporting parental involvement are also noted in most African countries, such as Uganda, South Africa, and Kenya. According to these authors in Kenya, the Basic Education Act of Kenya 2013 was enacted, requiring school Boards of Management to assess school needs with the full participation of parents. Furthermore, Amponsah, Milledzi, Ampofo, and Gyambrab (2018) investigated the effects of parental involvement in schools on academic performance in Ghana, and the results revealed a positive and significant correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement. Additionally, Muigai (2018) argues that the new Kenyan curriculum emphasizes parents' crucial role in their children's education and the success of curriculum implementation. Therefore, the importance of parental involvement transcends all boundaries, be it cultural, geographical, or racial. It is a universally accepted concept that holds the power to shape our children's future. Parental involvement knows no boundaries or race.

The Zimbabwe Education Act (1987) notes that in Zimbabwe, primary education should be managed and developed with active parental support (Magwa & Mugari, 2017). In Zimbabwe, Chindanya (2011) conducted a study on parental involvement (PI) in primary schools in the Zaka district, and the results revealed its many benefits. In agreement, Elvy (2022) suggested some of the benefits of

parental involvement, such as promoting pupils' motivation, teacher motivation, improved school attendance, and good behaviour. Thus, Zimbabwe is no exception in terms of parental involvement in education.

Parents' involvement in their children's education has evolved alongside changing educational trends (Alinsunurin, 2020). Parental involvement varies across cultures and societies and can influence academic performance differently (Falayi, 2023). Thus, any form of parental involvement is essential in supporting the education of primary school children.

Parents have specific duties to ensure that they protect the interests and welfare of their children in terms of the United Nations International Convention on the Rights of the Child. Mawere (2015) postulates that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child 1959 states that the child's best interest shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his or her education and guidance. Therefore, the education of the child solely rests with the parent.

Statutory instruments 87 of 1992 and 70 of 1993 gave parents power and jurisdiction in their children's education in Zimbabwe, making them significant players in school programs and policy formulation at national and local levels (Magaya & Fambasayi, 2021). Therefore, the researcher was tasked with assessing the impact of parental involvement on the learners' academic performance in Zimbabwean primary schools in the High Glen District in Harare.

This article explores the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement in Zimbabwean primary schools. It will also examine the impact of different types of parental involvement on learner performance, the barriers to parental involvement, and how they can be addressed. Furthermore, the article will discuss how parental involvement affects learner motivation and engagement in learning. The findings could help policymakers and educators develop effective strategies for improving educational outcomes. As discussed above, the study examines different types of parental involvement and their effects on children's academic achievement. It also explores factors that may impact the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance. The findings would provide educators, parents, and policymakers insights to support children's learning and development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education research has established that parental involvement is crucial for children's academic success (Choge & Edabu, 2023). Numerous studies have shown that parents who actively participate in their children's education tend to have children who perform better in school, achieve higher grades, and are more likely to graduate (Dickens & Teopista, 2023). Parental involvement is crucial for children's academic success, but there is still much to learn about what types of involvement work best and how it impacts their learning and development (Choge & Edabu, 2023). (Dickens & Teopista, 2023). However, there is still much to learn about the specific types of parental involvement that most effectively promote academic success and how parental involvement impacts children's learning and development. The background and context of this study are rooted in the recognition that parental involvement is a multifaceted construct encompassing a range of behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs (Choge & Edabu, 2023). Parental involvement can include attending school events, communicating with teachers, helping with homework, and engaging in educational activities at home (Diaz, 2023). Hence, the effectiveness of these activities in promoting academic success may vary depending on several factors, such as the child's age, the type of involvement, and the cultural and social context (Elvy, 2022).

Moreover, the impact of parental involvement on academic performance may be influenced by factors such as parental education, family income, and beliefs about schooling (Jarrah et al., 2024). These factors may consequently influence the type and extent of parental involvement and, ultimately, their children's academic success (Waller et al., 2024). Therefore, a deeper understanding of how parental involvement affects academic performance is necessary to inform policies and programs that promote parental involvement and support children's learning and development.

Kim & Brand (2023) in their study of Korean elementary school students, found that parental involvement in homework was positively associated with academic achievement, particularly in

mathematics. Park and Lee (2022) investigated the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance in Korean middle school students. The study found that parental involvement in school activities was positively associated with academic achievement (Jarrah et al., 2024).

(Jeynes, 2024) The study found that parents who actively participated in their children's education had children who performed better academically in a diverse sample of U.S. students. In addition, Chung and Lee (2023) found that parental involvement in school events positively impacted academic achievement, especially in science and mathematics, for South Korean high school students. This study addresses these literature gaps by investigating the impact of parental involvement on children's academic performance in Zimbabwean primary schools. The study will examine how parental involvement affects academic success, identifying specific forms and mechanisms that influence it. Additionally, it will explore mediating factors that could impact this relationship. This study will contribute to developing policies and programs to support children's learning and development by comprehensively understanding the relationship between parental involvement and academic success.

Parental engagement in children's education leads to better academic outcomes, higher self-esteem, and increased motivation (Alinsunurin, 2020). Moreover, involved parents provide emotional and educational support, serve as role models, and can be powerful advocates for their children's education. Such children tend to have better attendance and fewer behavioural problems (Chinyoka & Mugweni, 2020). Literature added that parental involvement in a student's education is linked to higher grades, test scores, and positive attitudes towards school and learning (Chinyoka & Mugweni, 2020). Dickens (2023) unequivocally asserts that parental involvement is crucial to a student's academic success.

The participation of parents leads to better outcomes and increases the likelihood of graduation and attendance in college. Low-income families may face involvement barriers like transportation, language, or work schedules (Chinyoka & Mugweni, 2020). Different cultures have varying beliefs about the role of parents in education. Some consider the teacher the primary educator, while others consider parents equally important. (Chinyoka & Mugweni, 2020) Some parents may feel intimidated by the educational system, leading to disengagement from their child's education. It is essential to create an inclusive and welcoming school environment for all families (Green, 2021). Regularly communicate with parents via phone, email, or in-person meetings. Invite them to school events and provide clear information about school policies and procedures (Johnson, 2023). The text emphasizes the significance of teachers building positive relationships with parents. Encouraging parental involvement and collaboration can benefit the students. Teachers must show interest in parents' perspectives, listen actively, and work together to enhance their children's learning experience. Schools must provide bilingual or multilingual services, materials, and events to involve parents in their children's academic performance actively.

Furthermore, they must offer translation and interpretation services to eliminate language barriers that may hinder communication between parents and teachers (Muigai, 2018). In addition, schools may engage parents in decision-making and leadership roles within the school to establish parent-teacher communication through regular check-ins, newsletters, and events. Encouraging parental involvement in a child's academic and extracurricular activities is crucial for their success. Culturally relevant curriculum and programming can help foster positive relationships between parents, teachers, and schools, promoting better communication and collaboration. Various theories support this approach. The study on parental influence on children's academic performance is underpinned by several theories explaining how parental involvement affects children's learning and development. Here are some of the critical theories:

Social Learning Theory

According to social learning theory, children acquire knowledge and skills by observing and imitating the actions of those around them, particularly their parents (Bandura, 1977). When parents take an active interest in their children's education, they demonstrate a positive attitude towards learning and provide the necessary encouragement and support for academic pursuits. This

can enhance the motivation and engagement of children in their studies, leading to better academic performance in the long run.

Epstein's Typologies

Newman, Northcutt, Farmer, and Black (2019) stated that Epstein developed a framework emphasizing the importance of the family, school, and community, with the child at the center. Epstein (1995) presented three categories of parental involvement, which form the basis of the National Parent Teacher Association's (PTA) standards for family involvement, adopted in 1997. Epstein's research-based framework acknowledges different non-hierarchical involvement that schools can implement to achieve various goals for students' academic success and improvement (Epstein, 1995). The framework outlines three key factors crucial to parental involvement, and it is based on research findings identified by Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) as practical in children's education. Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at Johns Hopkins University have categorised six different types of parental involvement, as demonstrated in TABLE 2. I Epstein

Typologies

Table 1. Model of parental involvement

TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Type1	Basic obligations of families Good child-rearing means a positive home environment. Schools can help with parenting skills, adolescent development, home visits, family support groups, referrals for special services, and social services to provide information and skills to parents of teenagers.
Type 2	Basic obligations of schools Communication between schools and the home. Constant communication with parents is a crucial ingredient for increasing parental involvement. Clear communication about student progress, school programs, policies, and transitions should be made through regular conferences, phone calls, e-mails, newsletters, and websites.
Type 3	Involvement at school Parents can volunteer and play audience roles to support teachers, students, and organizations within schools. This includes helping other parents, calling about attendance, discussing their careers, mentoring students, and increasing family attendance at events.
Type 4	Involvement in Learning Activities at home Parents can monitor and assist their children at home to improve family involvement in learning activities such as homework and class work. This includes helping students set goals and select courses, providing college information, and conducting career transition programs.
Type 5	Involvement in decision-making and advocacy Parents should have a say in school decisions and be involved in advocacy groups for school improvement. The school should encourage more active parent participation in decision-making groups.
Type 6	Collaboration and exchange with community organizations Involving the community in school activities and programs and collaborating with them can help enhance student learning and development, family practices, and school programs.

These theories establish a foundation for analyzing the impact of parental involvement on children's academic performance. By investigating how parental engagement influences academic achievement, the study can shed light on how parental involvement impacts children's learning and development. Furthermore, this research can provide valuable information about effective strategies and programs that encourage parental engagement and foster children's academic success.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a qualitative research design to explore the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance. In-depth interviews, focus groups, and observational methods were used to investigate the experiences and perspectives of 15 parents and 15 teachers recruited from local schools and community organizations. The study provides rich and detailed

insights into the topic's complexities. Future research could expand the study to include a more extensive and diverse sample and explore other factors that may influence the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance.

Data Collection Process

Data was collected through rigorous interviews with parents and teachers and carefully designed focus groups. The thematic analysis identified clear patterns and narratives about parental involvement and its impact on academic performance. The study resulted in six powerful themes, including (1). Parental Involvement is Multifaceted (2). Motivations for Parental Involvement, (3). Barriers to Parental Involvement, (4). Perceived Impact of Parental Involvement on Academic Performance, (5). Parent-Child Relationships and Parental Involvement, and (6). The Influence of Socioeconomic Status and Cultural Background on Parental Involvement. The study strictly adhered to ethical guidelines for research with human participants and was approved by the relevant institutional review board or ethics committee.

RESULTS

The themes that emerged are discussed below

Parental Involvement is Multifaceted

According to Choge and Edabu (2023) and Diaz (2023), parental involvement involves various activities such as assisting with homework, attending school functions, communicating with teachers, and offering emotional support. The participants in the study agreed that the most effective forms of involvement are tailored to meet the child's unique needs and learning style. One of the parents pointed out that,

Pp1 We can get involved in our children's education in many ways, including helping with homework, attending school events, and communicating with teachers. Parental involvement is multifaceted.

T3 said, "I value parents who assist their children with homework, spend time discussing their day, and attend school events.

Fgrp1 agreed that parental involvement in a child's education should be tailored to each family's specific needs and circumstances—their needs and interests. Supportive involvement is crucial without being pushy.

Educators and policymakers must understand that parental involvement involves various activities, motivations, and contexts. To ensure children's academic success, they must design effective strategies that promote parental involvement.

Motivations for Parental Involvement

Parents have various motivations for their involvement in their children's education, including supporting their learning and development, building positive relationships, and ensuring academic success. Children appreciate their parents' efforts, and teachers may have different perspectives on motivations for parental involvement based on their experiences and interactions (Simweleba & Serpell, 2020; Poudel & Subedi, 2024).

P P4 argued that I want to support my child's academic success, build a positive relationship with the teacher, and stay informed about their progress.

PP9, in support of the above idea, said that.

I believe education is crucial for my child's success, so I actively support their learning at school and at home.

T p7 pointed out that.

Based on my experience, parents are usually keen to participate in their children's education to aid their academic achievements and overall growth. I have discovered that it is beneficial for parents to establish positive connections with their children's teachers and remain up-to-date with their academic progress.

FGRP 3 agreed that *some parents are motivated to advocate for their children's needs and ensure they receive appropriate support and resources.*

Fgr2 concurred that *Involved parents have stronger relationships with their children and can better support their learning and development.*

The study conducted by Dickens and Teopista in 2023 indicates that parents and educators acknowledge the significance of parental involvement in promoting children's academic and personal growth. These findings align with the conclusions of Jeynes in 2024, who also emphasised the importance of effective communication and cooperation between parents and teachers in enhancing the impact of parental involvement on children's education.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Chinyoka and Mugweni (2020) agree that various barriers hinder parental involvement, such as a lack of time, communication challenges with teachers, and cultural or linguistic differences. Some parents also feel unsure about how to support their children's learning. Participants in a study on parental involvement identified various barriers that hinder their ability to be involved in their child's education. Here are some of what they said:

P P7 stipulated that,

Limited time due to work and family commitments, as well as communication barriers, make it difficult for the person to be involved and stay informed about their child's academic progress.

During the focus group session, FGRP3 participant highlighted that financial *limitations could impede their ability to participate in certain activities or purchase educational resources for their child. Moreover, cultural disparities or a lack of familiarity with the education system could challenge their understanding of optimistically supporting their child's learning.*

T P2: *Parents may face barriers to involvement due to work, childcare, or transportation.*

TP 6: *Communication obstacles, such as linguistic disparities or insufficient access to technology, may impede educators' ability to effectively involve parents in their children's education.*

Fgrp1: *Some parents may face cultural or social barriers preventing them from participating in school events or activities or communicating with teachers.*

Fgrp2: *Limited funding for parent education and support for parent-teacher associations can hinder parental involvement.*

Parents and teachers face various barriers to parental involvement, hindering their ability to engage in their child's education. Addressing these barriers is crucial for promoting parental involvement and supporting children's academic success (Johnson, 2023).

Perceived Impact of Parental Involvement on Academic Performance

The focus group participants revealed that parents and teachers perceived parental involvement as beneficial for academic performance, with parents reporting increased motivation, improved study habits, and a better understanding of their children's learning needs (Musengamana, 2023). Research findings argue that children also reported feeling supported and encouraged to do their best. However, some parents and children acknowledged that excessive or pressuring involvement could harm academic performance and overall well-being (Chindanya, 2011).

Parent-Child Relationships and Parental Involvement

According to Epstein's typologies, parents' involvement in their children's education can improve their relationship with their children. This aligns with Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of collaborative learning activities for parents and children, leading to stronger relationships and increased communication (Newman et al., 2019). Falayi (2023) agrees with these findings and suggests that the impact of parental involvement on academic performance is more significant when parents are more attuned to their children's academic needs, interests, and challenges, as indicated by parent participants.

PP8 argued that *a positive relationship with my child is vital for effective parental involvement. This helps them communicate their academic experiences and needs, better understand their strengths and challenges and allows me to provide more targeted support.*

Positive parent-child relationships can significantly impact parental involvement and academic performance. According to Bunijevac's (2017) study, parents who actively participate in their children's education tend to report better academic performance regarding higher grades, better homework completion, and increased engagement in learning activities.

Teachers have confirmed that parental involvement is linked to better educational outcomes. According to one teacher, the relationship between parents and children can also directly impact academic performance. Children who feel loved and supported are more likely to be motivated and engaged in learning. Parental involvement plays a significant role in a child's academic success. It promotes positive learning behaviors such as effective study habits, time management skills, and self-regulation. However, it is essential to maintain a balance between involvement and autonomy to foster healthy relationships and support children's development.

The influence of socioeconomic status and cultural background on parental involvement

According to a recent study by Amponsah et al. (2018), parental involvement in their children's education can significantly influence their socioeconomic status and cultural background. Parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds might face financial challenges, limited resources, and time constraints, making it challenging to get involved in their children's education. Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds have greater access to resources and support, such as tutoring, extracurricular activities, and private lessons, which can lead to more involvement in their children's education. However, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may have limited education and resources, affecting their ability to support their children academically. Participants brought their views as follows.

TP4: *Socioeconomic status and cultural background can affect parental involvement in education, influencing their ability to attend school events, provide support with homework, and purchase educational resources.*

PP10 added that *Teachers should respect their students' families' cultural and socioeconomic contexts to engage parents effectively in their children's education. Schools should provide support to address potential barriers to parental involvement, such as interpretation services, flexible meeting times, and culturally responsive programming.*

There are cultural and social differences in parental involvement, with some placing more importance on academic achievement and others prioritizing different values and goals (Chinyoka & Mugweni, 2020). Parents' involvement in their children's education can be influenced by various factors, such as their education level, work commitments, and family responsibilities. Cultural background and socioeconomic status can also play a crucial role in determining the level of parental involvement. It is essential to consider these factors when devising strategies to support parental involvement, as some cultural traditions may prioritize collective goals over individual academic achievement, impacting parental involvement. Cultural barriers such as language differences, immigration status, or cultural stigma can also hinder parental participation in school activities.

Addressing the impact of socioeconomic status and cultural background is essential to ensuring equity in education and academic success for all children. Schools and educators must engage parents from diverse backgrounds and help them overcome potential barriers to involvement.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance from the perspectives of teachers and parents in selected primary schools. The findings affirm that parental involvement significantly influences learners' academic success. The six themes that emerged—home-school communication, homework support, school activities engagement, parental aspirations, parent-child relationships, and socio-cultural factors—are supported by and extend existing literature on this subject. Participants unanimously emphasized the importance of regular

communication to bridge the home-school gap. Parents and teachers highlighted that when communication is effective, learners perform better due to consistent monitoring and reinforcement of school expectations at home.

This finding is consistent with Simweleba and Serpell (2020), who found that teacher-parent communication builds partnerships that contribute to learner performance. Marange and Gunter (2022) further support this, arguing that when teachers and parents maintain regular contact, it creates a shared responsibility for the child's education. Moreover, Yong and Choy (2021) found that digital platforms like WhatsApp and Google Classroom have facilitated more frequent communication, aligning with participants who cited mobile communication as a tool for updates on learner behavior and performance.

However, this study found that some parents only engage when problems arise (e.g., discipline), which aligns with Muronda (2020), who noted that in Zimbabwean schools, parental communication is often reactive rather than proactive. This partially agrees with existing literature, highlighting the need for proactive rather than crisis-driven communication strategies. Both teachers and parents acknowledged that parental involvement in homework boosts learner confidence and performance. Participants noted that when parents monitor and assist with homework, learners are likelier to complete assignments on time and understand the content better. This supports Chabaya (2020), who found that learners whose parents assisted them with schoolwork achieved higher test scores. The findings also mirror Mudzielwana (2021), who reported that parental involvement in homework cultivates a sense of discipline and commitment in learners. A notable insight from this study is that parents used online tools and video tutorials to help their children, reflecting the digital shift emphasized by Yong and Choy (2021).

However, this study also found that parents with limited educational backgrounds or demanding work schedules struggled to support their children adequately, echoing findings from Mugabe (2022), who reported that socioeconomic constraints impede parental involvement in schoolwork. The data shows that parental presence at school events (e.g., sports days, prize-giving ceremonies) reinforces children's motivation and sense of belonging. Teachers observed improved learner behavior and participation following such events, suggesting a psychological boost from parental support. This finding aligns with Vatterott (2021), who stated that visible parental involvement in school functions enhances student self-esteem and engagement. It also agrees with Simweleba and Serpell (2020), who noted that school-based involvement contributes to a learner's positive perception of schooling.

Nevertheless, low attendance rates for school activities due to work constraints or cultural indifference among some parents, as observed in this study—echo concerns raised by Muronda (2020), who documented that socioeconomic hardship often reduces school event participation in Zimbabwean community

The study found that high parental aspirations often correlated with high academic achievement. Teachers reported that students whose parents emphasized the importance of education were more disciplined and focused. This supports the findings of Marange and Gunter (2022) and Nyamukapa (2023), who linked high parental expectations to greater student motivation and goal orientation. The motivational role of aspiration aligns with Chabaya (2020), who emphasized that parents who model a value for education tend to have children who perform better academically. Yet, it was also noted that unrealistic expectations may place pressure on learners. This nuance is somewhat less emphasized in prior studies and suggests an area for further research: exploring the potential psychological toll of parental academic pressure.

Positive parent-child relationships emerged as crucial to academic success. Learners who experienced emotional support and open communication at home were reportedly more resilient and confident at school. This finding is supported by Simweleba and Serpell (2020), who emphasized that emotional security enhances cognitive development and concentration in learners. Vatterott (2021) similarly argued that nurturing relationships provides a secure base for exploration and academic effort. However, in households with authoritarian parenting styles or poor communication, learners were described as withdrawn and less participatory. This contrasts with

the positive effects seen in democratic parenting environments. This dichotomy is echoed in Mudzielwana (2021), who explored how parenting style influences learner behavior and school engagement.

Participants consistently highlighted poverty, unemployment, and cultural norms as major barriers to parental involvement. Teachers noted that some parents could not afford school supplies or transport, while others viewed education as primarily the school's responsibility. These findings strongly align with Mugabe (2022), who found that financial constraints significantly reduce parents' ability to support schooling. Muronda (2020) also pointed out that traditional gender roles and cultural beliefs in rural Zimbabwe often delegitimize the mother's role in educational involvement, which is consistent with observations from this study. Additionally, parental illiteracy was cited as a hindrance, with parents feeling inadequate to engage meaningfully in academic matters. This concurs with Mudzielwana (2021) and Nyamukapa (2023), who argued that parental education levels significantly influence their ability to provide academic guidance.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance in selected primary schools, drawing on qualitative insights from interviews, focus group discussions, and observations with parents and teachers. The findings revealed that parental involvement is a critical factor influencing learners' academic success. Parents who consistently engage with their children's schooling—through communication with teachers, supervision of homework, participation in school activities, and the cultivation of strong parent-child relationships—contribute significantly to their children's academic performance. These forms of involvement foster not only academic support but also emotional stability, motivation, and discipline in learners. The study also highlighted the powerful role of parental aspirations and expectations in shaping children's attitudes toward education. Parents who value education and communicate high, yet realistic, expectations often inspire better performance and a more focused academic trajectory for their children. These findings align with existing literature, which underscores the importance of a supportive home environment and positive parental engagement in learner achievement (Chowa et al., 2013; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). However, the study also brought to light several barriers that hinder parental involvement. Socioeconomic constraints, limited parental education, and traditional gender roles emerged as significant challenges. Some parents, especially those from low-income households, expressed a lack of time, knowledge, or confidence to effectively support their children's schoolwork. In addition, socio-cultural norms often place educational responsibilities on mothers, with fathers and other caregivers remaining largely uninvolved. These limitations echo findings by Nyagura and Reece (2022), who reported similar challenges in parental participation in under-resourced settings.

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge. First, schools should strengthen communication with parents through consistent, structured platforms such as newsletters, mobile messages, and scheduled parent-teacher meetings. Such efforts can enhance transparency and foster trust between schools and families. Second, there is a pressing need for parental education initiatives that empower parents with the knowledge and skills to support learning at home. Workshops on assisting with homework, understanding school policies, and nurturing learning-friendly environments could bridge many existing gaps. Additionally, schools should adopt flexible scheduling for events to accommodate parents with varying work commitments. Policies that promote inclusivity and cultural sensitivity are also vital in encouraging diverse forms of parental involvement, particularly among fathers and caregivers who may feel excluded. Partnerships between schools, communities, and local organizations can provide much-needed psychosocial support to families struggling with poverty, trauma, or social isolation.

At the policy level, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should consider developing national frameworks that promote and institutionalize parental involvement across all schools. These frameworks should encourage the formation of parent support groups, community education programs, and school-community partnerships. Finally, further research is recommended to explore learners' perspectives on parental involvement and how different engagement models influence a

broader range of educational outcomes beyond academic performance, such as attendance, behavior, and emotional well-being. Such research would deepen our understanding and inform context-sensitive interventions that resonate with Zimbabwe's diverse social and economic realities. In conclusion, enhancing parental involvement in education requires collective effort from parents, teachers, school administrators, and policymakers. When parents are equipped, supported, and encouraged to participate in their children's education, the benefits extend beyond academic performance to learners' holistic development and long-term success.

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest

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