**Parents' Participation in School Decision-Making and Impact on Students' Grades and Test Scores in Public Primary Schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania**

**ABSTRACT**

Parental participation in education has long been recognized as a crucial element in fostering and enhancing students' academic achievement. It plays a pivotal role in creating a supportive and enriching learning environment that extends beyond the classroom. This study investigated the influence of parents’ participation in school decision-making and its effects on students' grades and test scores in public primary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania. Parents' participation in school decision-making is linked to students' academic progress through engagement in diverse activities such as assisting the students in undertaking homework, attending the students’ school mentorship programs, connecting teachers and students, and attending teacher-parent meetings. The study was based on social capital theory and adopted a concurrent research design under a mixed research approach. Moreover, the study targeted a population of head teachers, teachers, and parents within public primary schools. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling for the case of 3 head teachers and 30 parents, and also adopted stratified random sampling in selecting 30 teachers. Questionnaires were used to draw data from teachers, interview guides were used to get information from head teachers, and focus group discussions were used to obtain data from parents. Validity was ensured through pilot testing and clear instructions, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach’s alpha with a reliability of 0.93. Data was analyzed, and meaningful interpretations and presentations were reported through statistical tests of descriptive statistics (mean) and inferential statistics (linear regressions) using the SPSS 20 version program. Findings from the analyzed data established that parents’ participation in school decision-making positively impacts students' grades and their test scores with a P-value (sign) < 0.05. Most of the teachers (78.1%) agreed and strongly agreed that parental participation positively impacts student motivation and academics. An extreme majority (84.4%) of respondents with a mean of 4.03 rated agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that “Parental participation influences the overall academic success of students”. Moreover, the majority (81.3%) of respondents with a mean of 4.09 agree and strongly agree with the statement that “Parental support is important in improving student behavior and discipline at school”. The findings also revealed that (65.6%) of respondents with a mean score of 3.53 agreed and strongly agreed that “School policies effectively encourage parental engagement in school-related events”. The findings align with the social capital theory that put emphasis on relationships and networks. The theory underscores the importance of relationships and networks as critical assets for fostering educational success. The study concluded that parents' and teachers’ communication is important in the academic achievement of the learners in public primary schools. The study also recommends that education policymakers should enhance communication infrastructure to support learning in schools and ensure that parents are sensitized to the need for enhanced parental occupations and the benefits of having positive attitudes towards a learner’s academic journey.

Keywords:Parents, Parents’ Participation, Grades, Test Scores.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Parental participation in school decision-making encompasses the active engagement of parents in shaping and influencing the policies, programs, and practices that govern their children’s educational experiences (Epstein and Sheldon, 2022). This involvement is critical as it bridges the gap between home and school environments, fostering a collaborative approach to addressing the educational needs of students. Parental engagement can manifest in various forms, ranging from formal roles, such as serving on school boards, advisory councils, or committees, to more informal yet impactful activities, such as attending parent-teacher conferences, maintaining consistent communication with teachers, and participating in school events (Goshin et al., 2021). Parental participation in education has long been recognized as a crucial element in fostering and enhancing students' academic achievement (Kantova, 2024). It plays a pivotal role in creating a supportive and enriching learning environment that extends beyond the classroom. Researchers and policymakers consistently highlight the importance of parents' engagement across various educational contexts worldwide, emphasizing its universal relevance and positive impact (Hill et al., 2020; Epstein, 2018). The Epstein model of 1995 broadly deliberates on three overlapping environments that fulfil the needs of the child in terms of development, growth and learning. These three environments are the family, the school, the community and, above all, they are intertwined and interlinked. In these environments, a parent’s presence is requisite since a parent appears either as a parent/guardian, teacher/instructor or a community member (Mahuro & Hungi, 2016).

Numerous studies have shown that when parents are actively involved in their children's education, the benefits are far-reaching. Academic outcomes significantly improve as students demonstrate better performance in assessments, higher grades, and overall academic success (Enteria & Tagyam, 2020). Active parental involvement also boosts students' motivation, inspiring them to set and achieve higher educational goals. The involvement of parents in daily life and activities at school also directly affects the quality of the educational institution, thereby enriching the child's personality whilst increasing chances of his or her success (Kovács et al., 2024). Furthermore, it is linked to increased school attendance, as students feel more supported and encouraged to engage with their education regularly. Beyond academic achievements, parental participation contributes to the development of essential social skills. Children learn to communicate effectively, collaborate with peers, and navigate social situations with confidence, which are vital for their long-term personal and professional success (Jeynes, 2018). The terms "test scores" and "grades" are key metrics used to evaluate students' academic performance. While these terms are often used interchangeably, they represent distinct aspects of educational assessment and achievement, providing a comprehensive picture of student outcomes (Brookhart, 2019; Zhao et al., 2021). Test scores typically refer to the numerical results obtained from standardized or teacher-created assessments designed to evaluate a student's knowledge, skills, or competencies in specific subject areas. These assessments are often administered periodically and serve several purposes, includingdiagnostic purposes, which involve identifying areas where a student may need additional support or intervention to improve their learning outcomes (Herman et al., 2020). Also, comparative analysisallows making comparisons of individual or group performance against benchmarks or standards, such as national, regional, or school-level averages, to inform instructional strategies (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022). Moreover, progress tracking monitors academic growth over time by comparing scores from multiple testing periods, providing insights into students' learning trajectories (Kim & Zuo, 2020).

Grades, on the other hand, refer to the evaluations of a student’s overall performance in a subject or course, typically expressed through letter grades (A, B, C, etc.). Unlike test scores, grades often incorporate multiple factors, including assignment completion,whichevaluates how well students complete homework, projects, and other assigned tasks, which reflect their effort and understanding (Graham et al., 2021). Also, class participation is for measuring engagement and active involvement in classroom activities, which often contributes to deeper learning and collaboration (Wiliam, 2020). And behavioral attributes for assessing effort, timeliness, and adherence to classroom norms, which contribute to students' overall development and academic success (OECD, 2019).

Grades provide a holistic assessment of a student’s academic performance over an extended period, often reflecting both academic mastery and non-cognitive skills such as organization, perseverance, and teamwork (Brookhart, 2021; Zhao et al., 2021). Several mechanisms have been proposed to explain the positive impact of parental participation on students' grades and test score outcomes. One compelling explanation is that parents who actively engage in school decision-making processes often become more effective advocates for their children's unique educational needs (Henderson & Mapp, 2022). These parents can work collaboratively with teachers and school administrators to ensure that their children receive tailored instruction, necessary resources, and appropriate support to address specific academic challenges or strengths. This advocacy role can be especially crucial in identifying and mitigating potential barriers to learning, such as learning disabilities, socio-emotional difficulties, or lack of access to enrichment opportunities.

Moreover, parental involvement has been shown to foster a stronger sense of motivation and engagement in students. When parents take an active role in their children's education—whether through participation in decision-making or regular communication with educators—students often feel a heightened sense of accountability and ownership over their learning process. This involvement signals to children that their education is a priority, which can enhance their intrinsic motivation to perform well academically (Baker & Lareau, 1984). Additionally, the presence of involved parents often creates a more supportive and inclusive school climate. Teachers and administrators may feel more encouraged to collaborate with families, leading to more effective and personalized educational strategies. This partnership can contribute to a more cohesive learning environment that benefits not only the individual student but also the broader school community. Overall, these mechanisms underscore the critical role of parental participation in shaping academic outcomes and building a foundation for long-term success.

Research consistently indicates that parental participation in school decision-making can significantly enhance students' academic outcomes. This involvement provides parents with opportunities to influence policies and practices that directly affect their children’s learning environments. Several studies have explored the relationship between parental engagement in decision-making processes and students' academic performance, highlighting the multifaceted benefits of such involvement. For instance, Epstein et al. (2018) conducted a comprehensive study that demonstrated a strong positive correlation between parental participation and improvements in student grades and test scores. The study emphasized that parents who actively contributed to school decisions were better equipped to advocate for high-quality educational resources and tailored instructional strategies, thereby creating a more conducive environment for academic success.

Similarly, Jeynes (2018) reported that parental involvement, including participation in decision-making activities, was associated with higher standardized test scores and overall better academic grades. The study also revealed that this positive relationship held across diverse demographic groups, including students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds and those from low-income families. This finding underscores the universal importance of parental participation, suggesting that it can help bridge educational disparities by providing equitable support to all students, regardless of their socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds. These findings highlight the transformative potential of parental involvement in shaping academic achievement. When parents are included as active stakeholders in school decision-making, they not only contribute to the creation of policies that reflect students’ needs but also foster a collaborative school culture that values partnership and accountability. This inclusive approach ultimately benefits students, schools, and communities alike by promoting higher academic standards and more equitable educational opportunities. (Tan et al., 2020). A study aimed at understanding the influence of socioeconomic status and the family environment on students’ academic achievement through the mediation of parental involvement in rural China found that family environment and parental involvement can compensate for the negative impact of disadvantaged family socioeconomic status on academic achievement. A positive family atmosphere plays a significant compensatory role for rural students (Gu et al., 2024).

In the African context, the critical role of parents' participation in education is increasingly recognized as a key factor in enhancing student outcomes and fostering a culture of academic excellence. Across the continent, numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact of parental involvement on students' academic achievements, underscoring the importance of active engagement by families in the educational process. For example, a study conducted in South Africa revealed a significant positive correlation between parents' participation in their children's education and student academic achievement (Coşkun & Katıtaş, 2021). The study emphasized that when parents actively engage in activities such as attending school meetings, monitoring homework, and collaborating with teachers, students tend to exhibit better academic performance, higher levels of motivation, and improved classroom behavior. This finding is particularly relevant in the South African context, where educational disparities often mirror socioeconomic challenges, demonstrating that parental involvement can play a transformative role in bridging these gaps.

Similarly, studies conducted in Nigeria have reported comparable findings, further substantiating the link between parental participation and student success. Okeke & Chukwu, (2019) found that when parents were involved in educational activities such as school decision-making, regular communication with teachers, and participation in parent-teacher associations, students consistently achieved higher grades and performed better on standardized assessments. These results were observed across diverse regions of Nigeria, highlighting the widespread benefits of fostering stronger partnerships between schools and families. These studies collectively underscore the universal relevance of parental involvement in education within the African context. They point to the need for educational policymakers and school administrators to implement strategies that actively encourage and support parental participation. By doing so, schools can create inclusive and collaborative environments that empower families to contribute meaningfully to their children's academic journey, ultimately improving outcomes for students across the continent.

**1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Parents’ participation in school decision-making processes is pivotal in fostering a collaborative educational environment that benefits students, teachers, and the broader school community. This involvement ensures that parents contribute to shaping policies, resource allocation, and teaching practices, thereby aligning educational objectives with students' needs. Public primary schools, as the foundational source of education for many children, require a robust understanding of how parental participation influences educational outcomes. Addressing this issue is essential for tackling broader social needs, including improving education quality, promoting equity in access and achievement, and enhancing parental engagement in educational governance.

The research underscores the importance of parental participation in school decision-making processes and its impact on academic outcomes. For example, Henderson and Mapp (2022) argue that when parents are actively involved in educational decisions, it fosters a sense of shared responsibility between the home and school, leading to improved student performance. Similarly, Epstein (2018) highlights that schools with strong parental partnerships are better equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students, resulting in enhanced academic achievement and social development. Social needs such as equity, community engagement, and inclusive education are inherently tied to parental participation. In many communities, especially in low-income or marginalized settings, schools serve as not only educational institutions but also as community hubs. Parental involvement in decision-making can ensure that these institutions are more responsive to the unique challenges faced by students, such as inadequate resources, cultural differences, or language barriers (Okeke & Chukwu, 2019). Additionally, parents' active roles in decision-making can address social inequalities by advocating for policies that support underprivileged groups, ultimately narrowing the achievement gap.

Despite its significance, a knowledge gap exists regarding how parental participation directly influences specific academic metrics such as grades and test scores, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Existing studies in contexts like Morogoro Municipality often explore general parental involvement, such as attendance at parent-teacher meetings or support for homework (Coşkun and Katıtaş, 2021). However, comprehensive research specifically linking active parental participation in decision-making processes with measurable academic outcomes remains limited. For instance, while some studies in Nigeria and South Africa have documented positive correlations between parental engagement and student achievement (Jeynes, 2018; Okeke & Chukwu, 2019), these findings are often generalized and do not delve into the mechanisms by which decision-making participation affects outcomes such as grades and test scores.

This knowledge gap is particularly evident in Tanzania, where the role of parents in school governance has received limited empirical attention. While national policies encourage community involvement in school management through school committees, the actual extent of parental influence on decision-making and its subsequent impact on student outcomes remains unclear. Understanding this relationship is critical for addressing systemic challenges, such as resource allocation inefficiencies, lack of teacher accountability, and low parental literacy rates, which often hinder effective participation. The distinction between test scores and grades is critical for this research because these metrics offer complementary insights into the relationship between parental participation in school decision-making and student academic success. Test scores provide a standardized and objective measure of student achievement, offering a direct link to instructional quality and curricular alignment. On the other hand, grades capture a broader picture of student performance, incorporating day-to-day learning behaviors, teacher perceptions, and overall classroom engagement. By analyzing both metrics, the study seeks to understand not only whether parental involvement influences academic outcomes but also how it impacts different dimensions of student performance. For instance, while test scores might reflect enhanced academic preparedness due to improved school resources, grades could reveal increased motivation and consistency, driven by the positive reinforcement of active parental participation. Together, test scores and grades serve as robust indicators of educational effectiveness, helping to establish a clearer picture of how collaborative school governance can benefit public primary school students.

Therefore, this study aims to bridge the knowledge gap by investigating the relationship between parents’ participation in school decision-making and academic outcomes, specifically grades and test scores, among students in public primary schools in Morogoro Municipality. By examining this relationship, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform policies and practices aimed at fostering meaningful parental engagement and improving educational quality in Tanzania.

* 1. **Research Question and Hypothesis**

QN: How does parental participation in school decision-making influence students’ grades and test score outcomes in public primary schools in the Morogoro municipality?

H1: There is a significant relationship between parents’ participation in school decision-making and students’ grades and test score outcomes in public primary schools in the Morogoro municipality.

**2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study was guided by Social Capital Theory (SCT) as proposed by James Coleman in 1990. The concept of social capital refers to the resources embedded in social relationships that individuals or groups can leverage to facilitate actions and achieve goals. Coleman (1990) described social capital as an "intangible social resource based on social relationships that one can draw upon to facilitate action and achieve goals." The theory provides a lens through which parental involvement in children’s education can be examined, emphasizing its potential to drive social development and academic achievement as children progress through various stages of development (Jeynes, 2007).

Under SCT, parental involvement is categorized into three primary areas of social relationships: parent-child, parent-school, and parent-community interactions (Wang, 2004; Kao and Rutherford, 2007). For example, home-based involvement includes parents discussing school activities with their children, addressing challenges in their studies, and supporting their academic aspirations. On the other hand, school-based involvement refers to participation in school events, activities, and decision-making processes. Empirical evidence shows that both forms of involvement are linked to positive student outcomes, such as higher academic achievement and pro-social behavior (Bassani, 2008; Dika & Singh, 2002).

The role of social capital in education has been widely studied across various contexts. For instance, Lin (2001) emphasized that social capital embedded in parental networks can provide access to information and resources critical for student success. Similarly, Putnam (2000) highlighted the importance of community-level social capital, where strong ties among parents and school stakeholders foster a supportive educational environment. Further, Epstein (2018) argued that parental involvement builds relational trust between parents and educators, creating a collaborative atmosphere conducive to student achievement.

Research in diverse settings, such as studies by Fan & Chen (2001), confirmed that parental involvement, particularly in decision-making processes, positively correlates with student performance, motivation, and behavior. However, it is also noted that the effectiveness of parental involvement depends on the quality and consistency of the interaction, as well as contextual factors such as socio-economic status (Crosnoe, 2010).

The strengths of social capital theory are based on the emphasis on relationships and networks; SCT underscores the importance of relationships and networks as critical assets for fostering educational success. It provides a structured framework for understanding how parental involvement in school decision-making enhances social cohesion and resource sharing within the school community (Fan & Chen, 2001). Also, a multifaceted view of parental involvement: the theory incorporates diverse aspects of parental engagement, including both home- and school-based involvement, offering a holistic perspective on its impact on academic performance (Dika & Singh, 2002). Furthermore, the theory has policy relevance. SCT highlights the role of parents as active stakeholders in education, supporting initiatives that enhance parent-school partnerships and encourage community participation in school governance.

However, critics argue that social capital theory may oversimplify social dynamics; critics argue that SCT can oversimplify the complexities of social interactions, ignoring the nuances of cultural, economic, and individual differences that influence relationships and networks (Field, 2003). Moreover, limited focus on inequality: The theory does not adequately address how systemic inequalities, such as poverty or discrimination, might limit the ability of certain groups to access or benefit from social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). It also creates contextual variability; SCT assumes uniform applicability, which may not hold in diverse educational contexts where family structures, cultural norms, and resource availability vary significantly (Portes, 1998).

The relevance of SCT to this study lies in its ability to provide a framework for exploring how parents’ participation in school decision-making activities contributes to building social networks within the school community. These networks can facilitate the sharing of knowledge, collaboration among stakeholders, and support mechanisms that enhance students’ academic outcomes, particularly grades and test scores. By examining these relationships, the study aims to identify actionable strategies for fostering stronger parental involvement and leveraging social capital to improve educational quality in Morogoro Municipality.

**3. REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES**

**3.1 Parents' Participation in School Decision-Making and Academic Achievements**

Wilder (2023) in the USA found that parental involvement was positively related to students’ academic achievement. The research involved a nationally representative sample of over 28,000 students from kindergarten to eighth grade. Parental involvement was measured through various indicators such as reading to children, discussing school activities, attending parent-teacher meetings, and volunteering at school. The results showed that students with higher levels of parental involvement scored significantly higher on standardized tests and had better grades than those with lower levels of involvement. Another study conducted in the USA established that the academic achievement of learners was highly influenced by parental involvement (Paulynice, 2020). The survey adopted a qualitative case study research design, using Epstein’s (1995) model of parental involvement, where the respondents were directly interviewed about their involvement in the learners’ academic progress. According to the study, communication, resources, and parental events are effective in involving parents in learners’ activities.

Darko-Asumadu & Sika-Bright (2021) in Ghana investigated the impact of parental participation on pupils’ academic performance in Ghanaian primary schools. The findings indicated that there was a positive correlation between parental involvement and pupils’ grades in mathematics and English language. Parents who actively participated in their children’s education through activities such as helping with homework and attending parents-teachers associations (PTA) meetings had children with better academic performance than those whose parents did not engage in such activities.

Moreover, several studies by Indimuli (2022), Noor (2021) & Rabok (2021) indicate that parental involvement in learners’ academic work significantly influences the learning process of the children. Makokha (2018) also examined several schools on how parental monitoring influenced the academic achievements of students in Busia County. The results showed that parental monitoring and academic performance were positively correlated. Furthermore, most parents in Busia supported their children by offering the basic needs, attending to school activities, and engaging in school decision-making. According to Kisiang’ani (2018), parents’ demographic characteristics in their involvement in lower primary positively influence academic outcomes. The findings relate to the mathematics scores that showed that parents who assisted their learners at home with mathematics greatly improved the mathematics aggregate points of the learners (Zurlo et al., 2020).

Sekiwu & Kaggwa (2019) examined the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance in denominational primary schools in Tororo District, Uganda. The study used a comparative design with a sample of 360 students. Eight denomination schools were considered for the study. The findings revealed parental involvement positively influences the academic performance of learners. This means that a study by Kigobe (2019) examined the relationship between parental participation and academic achievement among primary school pupils in Tanzania. The results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between parental involvement and pupils’ grades in mathematics and the English language. Parents with higher levels of parental involvement had children with better academic performance than those whose parents did not engage in such activities.

**4. METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a pragmatic philosophy, which emphasizes the practical application of research to solve real-world problems by integrating multiple approaches to data collection and analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023). In this context, a mixed research approach was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to enrich the study findings. A concurrent research design was utilized, allowing for the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Battista & Torre, 2023).

The target population comprised head teachers, teachers, and parents, reflecting diverse perspectives essential for triangulating findings (Kumar, 2019). The sample size included 63 respondents, encompassing three head teachers, 30 teachers, and 30 parents. To select participants, three schools were randomly chosen from a list of primary schools in Morogoro Municipal. Within these schools, stratified random sampling was applied to ensure representation among teachers and parents, while purposive sampling was employed to select head teachers due to their pivotal role in school administration (Cohen et al. 2018). Data collection involved both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure methodological robustness. Structured questionnaires were administered to teachers to collect quantitative data, while qualitative data were gathered through focus group discussions with parents and interviews with head teachers. This multimodal approach facilitated a deeper exploration of the research questions (Ahmadin, 2022).

To ensure the validity of the instruments, they were pretested with a small sample from schools outside the main study population, as recommended by Fraenkel & Wallen (2019). Additionally, the instruments were reviewed by research experts to refine their constructs and ensure they accurately measured the intended variables. Feedback from the pre-test and expert reviews was incorporated into the final instruments. Reliability was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha technique, which yielded a coefficient of 0.93 for the teacher questionnaires, indicating high reliability (Barbera et al., 2020). Standardized procedures and clear instructions were followed during instrument administration to maintain consistency in responses.

Data analysis combined quantitative and qualitative techniques to offer a holistic understanding of the findings. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and percentages, with the assistance of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 (Leech, 2022). Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of key patterns and themes within the data. The findings were presented narratively to provide context and depth (Christou, 2022).

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Permissions were obtained from relevant authorities, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly observed to protect participant identities and ensure their safety. These measures align with best practices in research ethics (Suri, 2020).

**5. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between parents’ participation in school decision-making and its effects on grades and test score outcomes among students attending public primary schools in Morogoro municipality, Tanzania. The study employed self-administering questionnaires to teachers; an interview guide was used to obtain information from heads of schools and focus group discussions for parents. The study was guided by Social Capital Theory; it had sixty-three (63) respondents whose selection was based on purposive and stratified simple random sampling techniques. The study generated information from 30 parents (PF), 3 head teachers (HS), and 30 teachers from 3 public primary schools in Morogoro Municipal, Tanzania. The interview guide was deployed to get information from heads of schools; questionnaires were used to generate information from teachers, and focus group discussions with parents. Table 1 summarizes the results of parents’ participation in decision-making and its effects on grades and test scores outcomes.

**Table 1. Teachers' responses on parents’ participation in decision-making and its effects on grades and test scores outcomes (n= 30)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **STATEMENTS** |  **Responses in percentages (%)** | **MEAN** |
| **SD** | **D** | **UN** | **A** | **SA** |
| 1. Teachers are satisfied with the level of communication between school and parents regarding academic matters | 6.3 | 15.6 | 3.1 | 59.4 | 15.6 | 3.63 |
| 2. Parental participation positively impacts student motivation and academic performance. | 6.3 | 15.6 | 0.0 | 53.1 | 25.0 | 3.75 |
| 3. Effective parental engagement enhances student attendance and participation in school activities  | 12.5 | 15.6 | 9.4 | 37.5 | 25.0 | 3.47 |
| 4. Parental support is important in improving student behavior and discipline at school | 3.1 | 12.5 | 3.1 | 34.4 | 46.9 | 4.09 |
| 5. Parental participation contributes to creating a positive learning environment for students | 3.1 | 6.3 | 12.5 | 31.3 | 46.9 | 4.13 |
| 6. Parental participation influences the overall academic success of students | 0.0 | 15.6 | 0.0 | 50.0 | 34.4 | 4.03 |
| 7. School policies effectively encourage parental engagement in school-related events | 3.1 | 29.9 | 9.4 | 50.0 | 15.6 | 3.53 |
| 8. Teachers are confident that increased parental participation leads to better students outcome academically | 6.3 | 15.6 | 3.1 | 28.1 | 46.9 | 3.94 |
| 9. Parents’ participation in school activities enhances the overall learning environment for students. | 6.3 | 12.5 | 0.0 | 40.6 | 40.6 | 3.97 |
| 10. Teachers recommend increased parental participation as a strategy to enhance student academic achievement. | 0.0 | 0.0 | 21.9 | 46.9 | 31.3 | 4.09 |

**Key**: SA=Strong Agree, A= Agree, Un= Undecided, D= Disagree, SD = Strong Disagree,

**Source: Field Data (2024)**

Data in Table 1 points out that the majority (75%) of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that teachers are satisfied with the level of communication between the school and parents regarding academic matters with a mean score of 3.63. This suggests that teachers in public primary schools in Morogoro Municipality have good interactions with parents regarding school activities and students’ welfare, including academic matters. The findings from teachers correlate to the information given by Head Teacher 1 through face-to-face interviews, who insisted that:

“There is effective communication between teachers and parents; most parents respond positively once called to discuss matters concerning the school development, and they are ready to contribute to facilitating teachers and the teaching and learning facilities (HT 1, Personal Communication, 20th May 2024).

The information provided by HT1 implies that parents’ participation in decision-making is very important in supporting students’ performance. This finding means that engaging parents in school decision-making processes fosters a positive relationship between teachers and parents and hence simplifies communication related to students’ progress. This is similar to the theory of Social capital which insists that parental involvement in children’s education can bring about social development and academic achievement as they progress through the stages of development from one level to another.

Also, figures in Table 1 show that most of the teachers (78.1%) agreed and strongly agreed that parental participation positively impacts student motivation and academics with a mean score of 3.75, similar to that of 78.2% of the teachers who agreed and strongly agreed that parental participation contributes to creating a positive learning environment for students with a high mean score of 4.13. In addition to that, 81.2% of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed that parents’ participation in school activities enhances the overall learning environment for students with a mean score of 3.97. These results suggest that parents’ participation is crucial in ensuring that their children study well in a conducive and motivating environment through their participation in school programs. The findings from teachers align with the information given by parents from focus group discussion 1, who proposed that:

“It is very important for teachers and parents to have meetings and discuss various issues regarding the learning of our children. In our experience, since we have started these programs of monthly meetings between parents and teachers have observed significant improvement in students’ test scores especially in the monthly examinations”. (FGD1, personal communication 20th May, 2024)

The information given by parents from FGD 1 indicates that they are motivated and have confidence that through strengthening teachers – parents’ relationship their children are in a safe and good position to perform well in their tests and exams. These findings relate to the findings by Suud & Setiawan (2020), who argued that one of the students’ external motivations for learning comes from their parents. Therefore, parents need to seriously engage in supporting children’s education and success.

Further to that, during a face-to-face interview with one of the head teachers, he came out with an argument that was in line with the responses from the teachers and information given by parents concerning parental participation on impacting students’ motivation, academic performance, and learning environment. The head teacher emphasized that;

“In my school, the majority of the parents especially those in standard four and standard seven attend school meetings and we share the challenges and find out the solutions to make of school environment a better place for students to learn, this helps much in improving pupils’ performances” (HT2, personal communication 20th May, 2024).

The information given by head teacher 2 implies that teachers are satisfied with the level of cooperation they get from parents through attending school meetings and collaborating with teachers to ensure that the learning environment supports students’ performance. The findings correspond to the findings from the study by Sokip et al., (2019) who stated that parents have an important role in children’s education both at home and at school, especially in teaching positive behavior and life values.

Additionally, Statistics in Table 1 show that the extreme majority (84.4%) of respondents with a mean of 4.03 rated agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that “Parental participation influences the overall academic success of students”. Also, the extreme majority (75.0%) of students with 3.94 mean scores rated agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that “Teachers are confident that increased parental participation leads to better students’ outcomes academically”. In addition to that, 78.2% of the respondents with a high mean score of 4.09 rated agree and strongly agree with the statement that “Teachers recommend increased parental participation as a strategy to enhance student academic achievement”. This indicates that parents’ participation in school decision-making, especially in teaching and learning, can be an alternative motivation towards improving pupils’ performance in their tests and examinations in public primary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania. Moreover, the statement given by the HT3 supported the argument that: “Teachers are motivated when they get maximum cooperation from parents especially when the parents deliberately attend school meetings and adhere to the agreements made during the meetings” (HT3, Personal Communication, 20th May 2024). The statements from HT3 reveal that parental participation in public primary schools positively impacts students’ academic achievements. These findings concur with studies by Indimuli (2022), Noor (2021) and Rabok (2021) who indicated that parental involvement in learners’ academic work significantly influences the learning process of the children.

Further, the argument was also supported by information from parents from focus group discussion 2 who said that “there is a positive relationship between increased parental involvement and our children's academic performance since the school environment becomes friendly to the children”. (FGD2, personal communication, 20th May, 2024). The finding corresponds to the findings from the study by Sexana and Sexana (2020) who insisted that through engagement in a child’s education, parents can support their children, such as strengthening their relationship with the child, providing learning support, and instilling character values.

The statistics in Table 1 show that 81.3% of respondents with a mean of 4.09 agree and strongly agree with the statement that “Parental support is important in improving student behavior and discipline at school”. Also, table 1 indicates that 62.5% of respondents with a mean of 3.47 agreed and strongly agreed that “Effective parental engagement enhances student attendance and participation in school activities”. The result indicates that teachers believe that through effective parental engagement and support, students’ attendance, behavior, and discipline will be improved and this will stimulate academic excellence in terms of grades and test scores in public primary schools in Morogoro Municipality. The findings align with the study by Davids et al., (2021) who insisted that parental involvement in child education is crucial for the overall development and academic success of children.

During a face-to-face interview, head teacher 1 provided information that supported the arguments of teachers and emphasized that;

“When there is effective parental participation in supporting academic matters concerning their children, our task of making sure that the students perform well becomes easy. This is because when parents are engaged in school-related issues it is easy for them to follow up on their children's attendance at school as well as to get feedback on their children's behavior and discipline at school as they will be communicating daily with class teachers to know the progress of their children”. (HT1, Personal communication 20th May 2024).

Moreover, the information provided by parents from focus group discussion 3 cemented the observations as they contended that:

“We have been able to reduce the absenteeism rate of students with no reason through cooperating with teachers, and this has been successful since we have our school parent committee which deals with students who are absent without any genuine reason. Once we are notified by teachers about cases of absenteeism we parents must communicate with our fellow parents to know the whereabouts of the absent students and take measures where and when need be” (FGD3, Personal Communication 20th May 2024)

The finding above corresponds to the study by Sokip et. al. (2019) who stated that parents have an important role in children’s education both at home and at school, especially in teaching positive behavior and life values.

Lastly, Table 1 indicates that (65.6%) of respondents with a mean score of 3.53 agreed and strongly agreed that “School policies effectively encourage parental engagement in school-related events”. The result of the statement indicates that most of the public primary schools in Morogoro Municipality have good communication between teachers and parents. This fact is supported by parents from focus group discussion 4 who informed that “School administration encourages parents to participate in education development and the parents must know that school needs/ problems must be solved through involving the parents”. Also, responses from a face-to-face interview with Head Teacher 2 were as follows;

“We have a calendar which shows specific dates for teachers – parents meetings and a few days before the meeting we inform the parents through letters given to their children, in addition to that we provide mobile contacts to the parents to easy communication between us” (HT2, personal communication 20th May 2024).

These statements are supported by the study from Smokoska (2020), who proposed that schools should encourage communication between the parents and their learners while at home through different media channels such as social media platforms and also schools use communication to involve parents in the school’s academic programs, planning and implementation of education policies.

**5.1 Hypothesis Testing**

To establish the relationship between parents’ participation in school decision-making and pupils’ grades and test score outcomes in public primary schools in Morogoro municipality, a simple linear regression statistical technique was used to test the Null Hypothesis (H0), which stated that there is no significant linear relationship between parents’ participation in school decision making and pupils’ grades and test scores outcomes in public primary schools in Morogoro municipality, Tanzania. The establishment of the decision rule was done at a significant level of 0.05 (2-tailed), guided by assumptions of normal distribution of data with no significant outliers. The tested output is displayed in Table 2 below.

|  |
| --- |
| **Table 2. Linear Regression Testa** |
| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| 1 | Regression | 25.429 | 1 | 25.429 | 26.818 | .000b |
| Residual | 28.446 | 30 | .948 |  |  |
| Total | 53.875 | 31 |  |  |  |
| 1. Dependent Variable: Students’ grades and test scores outcomes
 |
| 1. Predictors: (Constant): Parental participation in decision-making
 |

From Table 2, the data shows the p-value of the statistical test was 0.00 at a significance level of 0.05. This indicates that a P-value is less than the significance level of 0.05; therefore, it permits to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that “There is a significant relationship between parents’ participation in school decision making and students’ grades and test scores outcomes in public primary schools in Morogoro municipality, Tanzania.” The results of this study align with the study conducted by Sobri et al., (2022), who proposed that parent participation in the children's learning process is one of the key roles in children's development. There are many activities that parent can do to support and motivate their children in the learning process.

**6. CONCLUSION**

From the research findings, parents- teachers’ communication is important in the academic achievement of the learners in public primary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania. This is revealed by the analysis that showed most of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that parents’ participation in school decision-making positively impacts students' grades and test score outcomes. Furthermore, the findings suggest that teachers are motivated when they get maximum cooperation from parents, which helps to raise their morale in teaching and hence ensure the performance of the students. The involvement of education policymakers and educators is paramount in this regard. Formulating policies in schools that clarify the role of parents in students’ academic activities would be beneficial. Moreover, creating a collaborative environment in schools will generate positive outcomes for students.

**7. RECOMMENDATION**

Taking the findings of this study in the context of other research, some recommendations may be formulated to encourage education policymakers. They should prepare a parental involvement policy in public primary schools which would state clearly the key functions of parents for students registered in public primary schools and their roles in students’ academic activities. Without parents, the link between school, pupils, and home becomes incomplete.

In addition, the study recommends that parents should follow up on their children’s daily school attendance and assist them in their homework and related assignments so that they don’t get confrontational when their children fail to perform to their expectations.

Moreover, teachers and other educational stakeholders should motivate parents through appreciation for effective involvement in academic activities, rewards, and announcing names of parents with good records as active school participants.

Lastly, teachers should make sure that parents are informed and involved more in school activities, including academic issues of their children and other issues in decision making. This will build transparency, and hence increase their morale, motivation, and accountability in participating in school activities.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Option 1:

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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Details of the AI usage are given below:

1.

2.

3.

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