

# Influence of Parents' Provision of Basic Needs on the Academic Performance of Learners in Junior Secondary Schools in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya

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#### **Abstract**

The academic performance of Junior Secondary Schools' learners is essential for expanding their economic opportunities. However, JSS learner achievement in Imenti North Sub-County is limited, despite the policies and guidelines for learner achievement outlined by the Ministry of education (MOE) and KICD. Challenges such as high learner drop-out rates, little achievement in assessments, and poor communication skills still persist. This paper investigates the influence of parents' provision of basic needs on the academic performance of learners in Junior Secondary Schools in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County; anchored on the Epstein's model of parental participation. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing descriptive survey research design to achieve its purpose. The target population comprised 26 public primary schools, 26 head-teachers, 26 class-teachers, 1170 parents, and 1170 grade seven learners. A sample size of 8 head-teachers, 8 class-teachers, 71 parents and 71 pupils was obtained using Mugenda and Mugenda's 20% recommendation. Whereas simple random sampling was used to get parents and learners; census sampling was adopted for head teachers, and class-teachers. Questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data, and validity and reliability of the tools was ascertained. The findings indicated a statistically significant relationship between parents' provision of basic needs and academic achievement. The study concludes that parents' provision of clean water, nutritional diet, warm bedding, school fees, medical needs and a conducive reading environment impacts the academic achievement. Factors such as learners being sent home to collect school fees, not meeting medical needs makes learners less interactive, less attentive in class and perpetually absent. The study recommends MOE and head-teachers to prioritize parent education and sensitization on learner basic needs. Moreover, stakeholders such as churches, NGOs and the ministry of education should support school food program and implement a healthcare strategy to enhance learners' health.

**Keywords:** Parental involvement, Basic needs, Learners, Academic performance, Junior Secondary Schools

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## 1.0 Introduction

Academic success is crucial for junior secondary learners as it influences learner's career progression, self-dependency and socio-economic stability (Li, 2022). The JSS level is vital in meeting the requirements for basic education (Odeyemi, 2024; Li, 2022). Conceding the significance of desirable achievement, the Ministry of Education prioritizes investment infrastructure, human resources, elaborate policies and parental involvement to enhance the academic affairs (Odeyemi, 2024). Academic performance among junior secondary school learners involves the aggregate recommendations they get during examinations (Tadesse et al., 2022). Desirable learner achievement requires strong parent involvement, management support, environmental support, workable policies, resource diversification, sustainable funding, stakeholder partnerships, and access to resources (Jele, 2023; Nchinyi et al., 2022). Additionally, established criteria for performance includes the physical and the intangible evidence of compounding components such as learner' characteristics.

Globally, nations emphasize that quality education needs fervent collaboration between the teacher, the learner and the caregiver (Sujarwo & Herwin, 2023). Student achievement has also been maximized making by parental involvement an absolute obligation for every child (Umek, 2021). In Turkey, UK, the US and Australia, successful models effective infrastructure stress technological adaptation for improved achievement (Çalık, Strategies like government intervention in funding basic education, and strengthening

parental involvement parameters contribute to higher learner academic performances (Liu et al., 2020; Duan et al., 2018). Indeed, knowledge expansion thrives where parents involve themselves in communicating academic expectations, funding, resource provision, attending meetings, and decision-making in matters pertaining the education of the child at home, and linking with the grade teachers (Catsambis, 2001).

Africa, teacher education professional development contribute to learner performance (Simeon & Nnaa, 2020). In spite of this, Ethiopia, South Africa, Ghana, Botswana, Nigeria and Tanzania are reporting poor academic performance of learners in junior primary and secondary schools (Nchinyi et al., 2022; Simeon & Nnaa, 2020; Lemessa et al., 2023; Mesfin, 2023). To remedy this challenge, Ethiopia Ministry of Education invested material, infrastructure, human, and teaching and learning resources to achieve an enabling school environment (Kahunzire et al., 2023). Ghana focuses on pedagogical practices and initiation of parental involvement to learners (Mabena et al., 2021).

In Kenya, learners' academic performance faces challenges in high school drop-out rates, caregiver in-cooperativeness, and limited transition to next academic levels, necessitating strategies for enhancing it (David, 2021). Parental participation in the provision of basic needs is crucial in achieving quality performance, especially in Imenti-North Sub-County, where low achievement persists (David, 2021). Inadequate parental engagement providing basic requirements for learners results in low-quality teaching and learning, mainly due to poor health, lack of school



fees, which impact negatively on the availability of learners in school (Thuba, 2019).

#### Statement of the problem

The academic achievement of learners in iunior schools demand conceptualization of academic concepts, engagement, hands on abilities, and development of diverse skills, prompting changes in the policies, training and learning characteristics (Wanjala et al, Despite significant 2022). reforms. including the enactment of MOE and KICD policies, standards and guidelines for primary schools, running teacher training, and availability of teaching and learning resources in Junior Secondary Schools, academic performance, particularly in Imenti-North Sub-County, continue to lag behind.

"The paper exposes significant deficits in payment of school fees, provision of care of medical needs of learners, conducive environment for reading at home; and limited learning materials which eventually hinders grade seven pupils from engaging with others, concentrating in class, and presenteeism."

Notably, there has been negative academic perceptions among learners, high drop-out rates, little achievement in the assessments, and poor communication skills among

learners (David, 2022). Failure to improve academic performance of junior secondary learners undermines government's investment in education. There are several empirical studies which explored various aspects have performance in primary and secondary schools; for example, the contribution of parents and their engagement on the learners' quality of education (David, 2022; Thuba, 2019; Chebii, 2021) However, the influence of parents' provision of basic needs on the academic performance of learners in Junior Secondary Schools has not been investigated; hence, the justification for this study.

# Research Objective

To explore the influence of parents' provision of basic needs on the academic performance of learners in Junior Secondary Schools in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya

#### Research hypothesis

H<sub>01</sub> Parental provision of basic needs does not have a statistical significant influence on the academic performance of Junior Secondary School learners in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya

#### **Empirical Review**

Parents' provision of basic needs to learners infer infers the pupils' well-being. Parents play a very critical role in providing basic needs which mean their survival, which aggregately influence their ability to attend to vigorous academic activities, including going to school (Oladele et al., 2021). Caregivers provide children with clean water, nutritional diet, warm bedding, medical needs and conducive learning environment at home (Oladele et al., 2021). Specifically, parents contribute



tremendously by making their children comfortable at school through clothing them, paying school fees, feeding them and providing them with peace of mind so that they can be able to concentrate on their studies (Nzeh & Akulue, 2022).

Scholars across the global have investigated the impact of provision of basic needs on academic achievement. learner For Australia. Đurišić instance. in and Bunijevac (2017) emphasized that parental provision of basic needs goes beyond the provision of food and shelter, to the provision of a safe and secure home environment. In agreement with these findings, Epstein and Sheldon (2019) note that good parenting ensures serenity of children at home. Additionally, parents provide nutritious diet, security, guidance and healthcare which contribute to children safety.

In Africa, studies on the impact of provision of basic needs on learners' academic performance in JSS are needed. In Nigeria, Nzeh and Akulue (2022) assessed the influence of health needs on achievement among students in senior secondary schools. They observed that good hygiene, good sleep and vaccination contributed significantly to alleviating student absenteeism at school. However, their study failed to observe the contribution of other basic needs including food, water, shelter, school fees, clothing, security conducive environment. This was bridged by Seni and Onyango (2020) in Tanzania, who established that school uniform, books, learning tools, shoes, paying school fees and transport were parenting responsibilities that ensured learners wellbeing in secondary schools.

In Kenya, provision of leaners' basic needs has been explored by David (2022) and Muthui (2020), expounding that provision of basic needs improves participation in education, improvement of quality of education and learner retention. Ngangi (2023) and Muthui (2020) focused on the need for parental provision of conducive environment at home for the learners' education. An exploration of the role of parental provision of basic needs is insufficient, and focusing on other parameters which influence the quality and participation in education is essential.

#### Theoretical review

The study was underpinned by the Epstein's model of parental participation developed by Joyce Epstein in 1900s, and later improved in 1995. The model states that family involvement is a resultant of different kinds of behaviours and actions. She therefore came up with six major forms school-family engagement partnerships; namely, parenting, volunteering, communication, decisionmaking, collaborating with the community and learning from home. Epstein's model informs how parents participate in the affairs of their children through the specific responsibilities they undertake at home or at school. It clearly delineates parenting through providing basic needs, including food, shelter, school uniforms, shoes, school fees, informational and learning materials which infer their participation in their children's education. It substantiates the need for parents' provision of basic needs towards improvement of academic performance of learners in Junior Secondary Schools.



#### 2.0 Materials and Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. It targeted 26 public primary schools in Imenti North Sub-County. The study population comprised 2392 respondents, constituting 26 headteachers, 26 class-teachers, 1170 parents and 1170 grade seven learners. The study sampled 8 schools which was 30% of the targeted schools. Respectively, 8 headteachers, 8 class-teachers, 71 learners and 71 parents were sampled, totalling to 158 participants. The sample size was achieved by adopting 20% threshold stipulated by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003); noting that 10-30% of a population is representative of the population. The schools, parents and learners were sampled using simple random techniques, while sampling sampling technique was utilized to select head-teachers and teachers. The research instruments included questionnaires for parents, head-teachers and teachers; and focus group discussions for leaners. A pretest was done in St. Rita and KK Rwanjwee primary schools in Tigania West Sub-County and reliability computed. The research tools were checked for content, construct and face validity. This was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.825 on the variable regarding provision of basic needs using SPSS. Reliability was confirmed by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Quantitative data was analysed through Pearson correlation and regression. Percentages, mean, and standard deviation were computed. Thematic and content analysis were applied to qualitative data.

#### 3.0 Results and Discussion

The study gave out 71 questionnaires to parents of grade seven learners. Out of the 71 questionnaires, 54(76.0%) completed,

returned and used in the analysis. The study had intended to interview 8 head-teachers, but 5(62.5%) were available. For class-teachers, all the sampled 8 class teachers were interviewed, while 70(99%) learners took part in focus group discussions. The overall response rate was 137 (86.7%). Babbie (2014) notes that a response rate of 70% is rated as very good.

# **Background Information of Respondents**

The respondents in this research were headteachers, class-teachers, grade learners and their parents. The parents were predominantly 34(63%) female and aged between 31-40 years 23(42.6%) and 41-50 years19 (35.2%). Most parents were married 36(66.7%), 11(20.4) had separated with only 3(5.6%) windowed. 18(33.3%) secondary school certificate, had 14(25.9%) college certificate 12(22.2%) primary certificate, 13% had a bachelor's degree and with a 5.6% a diploma. The results also indicated that 17(31.5%) were self-employed, 15(27.8%) were unemployed, 25.9% had casual employment and only 8(14.8%) of the parents were permanently employed.

Resultantly, all the 5 head-teachers had served in their current capacity leadership between 1-5 years. Accordingly, 3(60.0%) head-teachers had undergraduate degree education qualifications and the rest held a diploma. The presented results demonstrate that. head-teachers interviewed had adequate experience and requisite qualification requirements for effectively leading the schools contribute to academic leadership. For class-teachers, 6(75.0%) had served in the leadership capacity of a class-teacher for two years and 1(12.5%) for a duration of one year, and 16 years. The professional



experience sufficed the study with needed inferences on PI in education affairs of their children.

# Parental Provision of Basic Needs and Academic Performance

This study aimed to examine the influence of parents' provision of basic needs on the academic performance of learners in Junior Secondary Schools in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. The quantitative views of parents were rated in a 5-level Likert scale and each sampled parent was expected to give their perception by ticking how they feel about each of them such that; 1 represented strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neutral, 4 for agree and 5 was coded to represent strongly agree. Table1 captures the main points for parents of leaners in grade seven.

**Table 1**Descriptive results on parental provision of basic needs

Statements on Provision on basic needs (N = 54)	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev
I provide clean water, nutritional diet and warm bedding to my children.	2 (3.7%)	5 (9.3%)	3 (5.6%)	22 (40.7%)	22 (40.7%)	4.06	1.089
I support my children through providing school fees.	3 (5.6%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (14.8%)	25 (46.3%)	18 (33.3%)	4.02	1.000
My child has never been sent home to collect school fees.	11 (20.4%)	15 (27.8%)	20 (37.0%)	2 (3.7%)	6 (11.1%)	2.57	1.191
The medical needs of my children are well taken care of.	10 (18.5%)	11 (20.4%)	3 (5.6%)	13 (24.1%)	17 (31.5%)	3.30	1.550
Learners take breakfast in the morning before going to school.	6 (11.1%)	11 (20.4%)	4 (7.4%)	11 (20.4%)	22 (40.7%)	3.59	1.473
Our home provides a conducive environment for children to learn after school.	3 (5.6%)	12 (22.2%)	8 (14.8%)	16 (29.6%)	15 (27.8%)	3.52	1.270
I can afford all the basic requirements such as school fees, activity fee, uniform, lunch and learning materials my child require for their education.	2 (3.7%)	11 (20.4%)	22 (40.7%)	11 (20.4%)	8 (14.8%)	3.22	1.058
Provision of information and learning materials enable learners to do their homework at home.	3 (5.6%)	2 (3.7%)	6 (11.1%)	21 (38.9%)	22 (40.7%)	4.06	1.089
Provision of children guidance and protection from bad company is essential in promoting learners' academic performance.	8 (14.8%)	1 (1.9%)	3 (5.6%)	24 (44.4%)	18 (33.3%)	3.80	1.337



The results show diversity in views of parental involvement in parents on provision of basic needs with 44(81.4%) agreeing. The study revealed a generally low level of agreement, with a mean summation score of 2.5 and more and a standard deviation of 1.100, indicating minimal deviation from the However, 17(31.5%) of parents at a mean of 3.59 and a notable standard deviation of 1.473, indicated that learners did not take breakfast before going to school. Only few parents 8(14.8%) confessed that their children had never been sent home to collect school fees. It is only 19(35.2%) agreed they can afford basic requirements such as school fees, activity fees, uniform, lunch and learning materials. This indicates the struggle parents have in meeting the basic requirements for their children in school. The research also demonstrates that 21(38.9%) were not able to meet medical needs of grade seven learners. The school may need to address concerns related to food and healthcare model for learners to enhance the overall learning environment. This could involve seeking support from stakeholders to fund food programs, medical insurance and prioritizing free education policy initiatives.

The findings reveal that while a substantial 31(57.4%) of parents agreed to provide a conducive environment for children to read after school, 15 (27.8%) of disagreements and 14.8% neutral views raises concerns. With this finding, the Junior Schools needs to focus on creating awareness and promoting parents' awareness on allocation of reading time at home to support pupils education. Parents also were in agreement that the provision of children guidance and protection from bad company is essential in

promoting learners academic performance 42(77.7%). This strengthens the needfulness to parenting, and ensuring the safety of children.

During an interview, the head teachers were asked to explain the Ministry Education's directive on addressing parental provision of basic needs. From the responses gathered, the study noted that the ministry directs parents to provide basics. Head-teacher number 2 emphasized "Government officers have always encouraged us to be champions for encouraging parents to provide basic requirements by sending us to do parental sensitization on through forums and parent *meetings*". This calls for training parents to undertake their responsibilities and provide for their children.

Grade seven class-teachers were asked during the interviews to elaborate the impact of limited provision of basic needs on the academic performance of leaners. Some critical issues raised included: causing learners to distance themselves from others, poor concentration in class, absenteeism and missing important class activities when sent home to get school fees. One head-master expressed sorrowfully, "Our school has very few teaching and learning resources, so we are doing very poorly". Accordingly, the focused group discussions carried out with the grade seven learners underscored that parents experienced challenges such as lack of employment and very limited pay in exchange for the casual jobs they did which hindered them from providing basic needs. Different mitigation measures for addressing the challenges relating to parental provision of basic needs were recommended by head-teachers including



emphasizing the provision of basic needs of learners by parents be emphasized. The results also communicate needfulness of the ministry of education through KICD to deploy teaching and learning resources to Junior Secondary Schools.

# Academic Performance of Learners in Junior Secondary Schools

The study's primary purpose was to examine the influence of parents' provision of basic needs on the academic performance of learners in Junior Secondary Schools in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. The dependent variable was the academic performance. Parents who were the main respondents in the research filled the questionnaire, hence providing quantitative data. The head-teachers and class-teachers were interviewed, while focused group discussions responses were given by the grade seven learners. The summary of assertions for parents of leaners in grade seven are recorded in Table 2.

 Table 2

 Descriptive results on academic performance of learners in Junior Secondary Schools

Statements on performance of leaners in JSS (N = 54)	SD(1)	D(2)	N (3)	A(4)	SA(5)	Mean	S. Deviation
Parental provision of basic needs has enabled learners to improve their academic performance	3 (5.6%)	1 (1.9%)	4 (7.4%)	19 (35.2%)	27 (50.0%)	4.22	1.058
Parents participation in school meetings has made learners to perform better in the continuous assessment tests	8 (14.8%)	1 (1.9%)	7 (13.0%)	21 (38.9%)	17 (31.5%)	3.70	1.341
Parental academic and homework supervision has made learners to perform better in end of term examinations	4 (7.4%)	2 (3.7%)	10 (18.5%)	20 (37.0%)	18 (33.3%)	3.85	1.156
My attitudes towards getting involved in school activities negatively affect my children's academic performance	16 (29.6%)	18 (33.3%)	6 (11.1%)	9 (16.7%)	5 (9.3%)	2.43	1.326
Participation in school- decision-making has boosted my children academic achievement	9 (16.7%)	3 (5.6%)	7 (13.0%)	22 (40.7%)	13 (24.1%)	3.50	1.370
Regular guiding children in doing school work have made my	2 (3.7%)	3 (5.6%)	5 (9.3%)	27 (50.0%)	17 (31.5%)	4.00	.991



child to respond quickly to questions in class

Parental support enable learners to remain active in class	2 (3.7%)	2 (3.7%)	3 (5.6%)	27 (50.0%)	20 (37.0%)	4.13	.953
My parental support has boosted the ability of my child to participate in group discussions	3 (5.6%)	0 (00.0%)	7 (13.0%)	28 (51.9%)	16 (29.6%)	4.00	.971

The results from parents on learners in grade seven have narrowed down on parental provision of basic needs. participation school meetings, in participation in academic and homework supervision, and school decision-making constructs as influential in the learners' achievement. The results also exemplify how parent participation influence the achievement of learners in public primary schools through ensuring they remain active in class 47(87.0%) and a mean of 4.13; 44(81.4%) respond quickly to questions; 44(81.55) participation in group discussions (mean=4.00) and (70.35)performing better in end of term examinations. Some of the featured dimensions affected by parent participation aspects include learner behaviour in class, grades attained in continuous assessment tests, response to posed questions in class and contribution during group discussions with peers. The performance of Junior Secondary School learners in grade seven was revealed to be at an average level, as illustrated by the head-teachers. Qualitative results from the head-teachers therefore, hint that, strategies need to be put in place to realize improvement of the academic performance of JSS learners.

Notably the focused group discussions conducted with the grade seven learners required them to state the main drawbacks to achieving academic success at Junior Secondary Schools in Imenti North Subcounty in Meru County. Some of the noted challenges were: inadequacy of teaching and learning materials, inadequate teaching staff, and learner absenteeism, lack of equipment in the laboratories and computer facilities and financial challenges. The interview with the class teachers showcased that the main drawbacks to achieving improved academic achievement among the learners were: learners' absenteeism due to lack of school fees, learners' family background, poverty, limited parental care, teacher-learner ratio and inadequate infrastructure and facilities. Additionally, Head-teacher number 01 emphasized that the inability of learners to be provided with basic needs such as food, water, school fees and medical needs also affect our learners learning behaviour which is normally reflected in form of poor academic achievement.

Head-teachers were asked in the interview to suggest what should be done to solve the challenge of academic achievement among Junior Secondary School learners. They emphasized on educating parents on the expectations of the CBC curriculum, government intervention through food program to ensure learners get food, government to equip computer and labs with resources and facilities, and Junior Secondary School to be taught by primary



school teachers due to the nature of the training they received while in college.

## Correlation analysis results

The objectives' null hypothesis read; parental provision of basic needs has no statistical significant influence on the academic performance of Junior Secondary School learners in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. A Pearson correlation was conducted to assess the hypothesized relationship and the results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**Correlations analysis between parent provision of basic needs and the academic performance

		Y	X1
Y	Pearson Correlation	1	_
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	54	
X1	Pearson Correlation	.593**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	54	54

<sup>\*\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results obtained a Pearson correlation value of .593\*\*, indicating a positive value that can be rounded off to 1. Consequently, the P-value obtained = .000; hence P < 0.05implying the significance of parent provision of basic needs. Given that P < 0.05, the research rejected the null hypothesis for objective one and concluded that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between parent provision of basic needs, and the academic achievement of grade seven learners in JSS. In interpreting the results further, they implicate that a positive increase in provision of basic needs by guardians would lead to a positive reaction on the performance of learners. This require public schools in Imenti-North Sub-County to strengthen parent provision of basic needs affairs so as to improve learners' achievement. The areas of improvement were noted to include providing parent education, supporting school food program, supporting medical insurance and

deploying learning resources and facilities to address the threat to the provision of basic necessities required by learners.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

The paper exposes significant deficits in payment of school fees, provision of care of medical needs of learners, conducive environment for reading at home; and limited learning materials. This hinders grade seven pupils from engaging with others, concentrating in class, and presenteeism. Quantitative and qualitative data emphasized the need for targeted interventions to ensure parent education, support to school food program, adequacy of learning resources and medical needs to address the threat to the provision of basic necessities required by learners.

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

The study highlights a critical need for substantial investment in parents' education and awareness on the needfulness of



providing basic needs to learners by school managers and class-teachers. It recommends the ministry of education to provide learning resources and facilities to address the threat to the provision of basic necessities. A school food program and a healthcare strategy for taking care of learners should be put in place. The noted gaps call for standard guidelines in policy

development regarding basic needs like health, safety and nutrition. Consequently, the Ministry of Education should encourage collaboration of charitable organizations, such as churches and NGOs; and enforce the guidelines for provision of healthcare, nutritional and learning needs in Junior Schools.

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