



Role of Volunteerism as a Parental Involvement Strategy in the Achievement of Core Competencies among Learners in Public Primary Schools in Nandi County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to assess the role of volunteerism as a parental involvement strategy in the achievement of core competencies among learners in public primary schools in Nandi County, Kenya. The study was guided by Joyce Epstein's Model of parental involvement. The sample size comprised 293 participants who included 6 sub-county education officers, 24 head teachers, and 263 parents. Multistage sampling was used to determine the schools to take part in the study. The study adopted multistage sampling. The research instruments used in collecting data were questionnaires for parents and interview schedules for Sub-County education officers and head teachers. Validity was tested through factor analysis, while the Cronbach Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented in the form of figures and tables. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. The study results showed that volunteerism as a parental involvement strategy had a positive linear effect on the achievement of core competencies among learners in public primary schools ($\beta=0.432$, $p=0.000$). The role of parental volunteerism is invaluable in creating a supportive and enriching educational environment in public primary schools. The study recommends that the schools' management boards establish structured programs that promote and recognize parental volunteerism, fostering a collaborative environment that enhances students' academic journey.

Introduction

In response to the escalating competitiveness in the world, many parents actively seek ways to contribute to their children's academic success (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter (2019). One notably effective strategy gaining popularity is parental volunteerism in education, where parents dedicate their time and skills to support the school community (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). This involvement can potentially significantly impact learners' academic outcomes and overall development. Scholars such as Ganon-Shilon and Schechter (2019) and Edwards (2016) emphasise the importance of integrating parental volunteerism into educational strategies, highlighting its potential to enhance learner achievement by fostering a sense of community within the classroom.



Recognising the pivotal role of parental involvement in children's academic success, public primary schools have identified effective parental strategies and core competencies as critical factors (Krane & Klevan, 2019). Despite the well-established positive correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement, research indicates that some parents remain hesitant to actively participate in their child's education, particularly in schools with economic disparities (Abrams & Gibbs, 2022).

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya underscores the importance of parental participation in children's education, emphasising the need for parent-teacher relationships. The success of competency-based curricula relies on various variables, including the collaboration between teachers and parents. Regardless of the approach employed at home or school, parental volunteerism strategies have consistently significantly impacted learners' academic performance (Houry et al., 2019).

Core competencies recognised as foundational skills essential for effective functioning in the complex, information-rich world of the twenty-first century is often lacking among secondary school learners and recent college graduates in Kenya, mirroring global concerns. The recently adopted curriculum in Kenya emphasises teaching strategies geared towards cultivating these critical skills, with teachers and parents playing pivotal roles in helping learners acquire the knowledge and abilities necessary to pursue their passions. Currently, many parents are less involved in their children's parenting and learning processes due to changes in family structure, economic and technological advancement, and the behaviours of family members. However, there remains a gap in understanding whether parents are actively involved, willing, and able to contribute to achieving the core competencies. Studies by (Githui et al., 2017 Antony-Newman (2020); Chekol & Ayane (2019); and Kelty et al., 2020) showed that few links exist between parental involvement strategies and the development of core competencies, prompting this study to address the research gap by assessing the role of volunteerism as a parental involvement strategy in achieving core competencies among learners in public primary schools in Nandi County. The study aimed to shed light on the extent of parental volunteerism and its impact on the acquisition of core competencies, ultimately informing strategies to enhance parental involvement in the educational process.

Joyce Epstein Model

This study was guided by the Joyce Epstein Model, developed in 2002. The model identifies six key family involvement behaviours, including positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, shared decision-making within the school, and community partnerships. These behaviours collectively contribute to effective parental involvement, covering various dimensions of the parent-school relationship (Newman et al., 2019). Epstein's Model explicitly emphasises creating a conducive home environment, encouraging volunteering for active participation, and facilitating collaborative decision-making. Within the parenting realm, the model suggests strategies to establish a supportive home environment for children's education. Volunteering is highlighted as a means of active participation, fostering a sense of community beyond the classroom (Massucco, 2020). The application of the Epstein Model holds significant implications for educational stakeholders, with a specific emphasis on actively involving parents in their children's education for better learning outcomes.

Volunteerism and Achievement of Core Competencies

Parental volunteerism is pivotal in shaping various aspects of learners' education within public primary schools. Parents' engagement through volunteer work demonstrates a shared commitment



to the value of education, fostering a positive outlook on learning for both parents and learners. Research indicates that learners benefit significantly from parental involvement, leading to increased academic achievement, improved attendance, and a more optimistic perception of school (Hourii, Thayer & Cook, 2019). Parental volunteers contribute to the classroom environment and signify the broader community's investment in education.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey design. The total target population of the study was 1534 respondents. The target population comprised 6 Sub County education officers, 764 head teachers and 764 parents’ representatives. There are six sub-counties in the county, including Tinderet with 123 schools, Nandi East (93), Nandi Central (94), Chesumei (136), Nandi South (143), and Nandi North (175) (Ministry of Education Nandi County Records, 2023). The Sub County education officers and head teachers were targeted to ensure the research gets a deep insight into the area.

Table 1: Target Population

Sub Counties	Schools	Sub County education officers	Head Teachers	Parents’ representative	Total
Tinderet	123	1	123	123	247
Nandi East	93	1	93	93	187
Nandi Central	94	1	94	94	189
Chesumei	136	1	136	136	273
Nandi South	143	1	143	143	287
Nandi North	175	1	175	175	351
Total	764	6	764	764	1534

Source: Ministry of Education Nandi County Records (2023)

The study employed a multistage sampling technique to ensure a comprehensive representation. Initially, the schools in Nandi County were stratified into six strata, each corresponding to one of the sub-counties. Proportional sampling was then conducted within each stratum to select primary schools. The selection of schools involved stratified and simple random sampling, where a list of school numbers was created, placed in a basket, and thoroughly mixed to ensure equal chances for each school. Representative samples were then chosen by randomly picking a piece of paper from the basket and recording the selected school's name.

The Yamane formula (1967) was applied to calculate the sample size for parent representatives, ensuring a systematic approach to determine the number of participants needed for this crucial aspect of the study.

$n = N/(1+N(e^2));$ where n = Sample size, N =Total population

e = Error of Tolerance at 95% confidence (Margin of error of 0.05)

$n = 764/1+764*(0.05)^2$

$n = 263;$

Therefore, the sample size was 263 respondents



The questionnaire data was analysed quantitatively using SPSS version 26 to conduct descriptive and inferential statistics. A regression analysis was performed to learn how the independent variables influence the dependent ones. Using the study's findings, this method analysed the connection between parental involvement and the mastery of core competencies at the targeted schools. The research's hypotheses were put to the test via multiple regression analysis.

Results and Discussions

The study assessed the role of volunteerism as a parental involvement strategy in achieving core competencies among learners in public primary schools in Nandi County. Descriptive data were collected from respondents, summarised, and analysed. To achieve this, a five-point Likert scale was used, where 1 = strongly Disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly Agree. The study findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Role of Volunteerism as a Parental Involvement Strategy

Statements		SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Std.
Parents in this school volunteer to participate in ensuring learners achievement of knowledge application	F	99	72	36	27	18	3.82	1.258
	%	39.3	28.6	14.3	10.7	7.1		
Parents contribute financially to school projects voluntarily which contributes to problem-solving among learners	F	90	72	45	18	27	3.71	1.308
	%	35.7	28.6	17.9	7.1	10.7		
Parents volunteer to assist teachers in learners' creativity	F	90	54	63	9	36	3.61	1.374
	%	35.7	21.4	25.0	3.6	14.3		
Parent's volunteerism relates to all school matters concerning learners' creativity	F	144	63	18	18	9	4.25	1.092
	%	57.1	25.0	7.1	7.1	3.6		
The school recruits parent volunteers to achieve creativity among learners	F	63	90	45	36	18	3.57	1.210
	%	25.0	35.7	17.9	14.3	7.1		
The school communicates with the parents and other stakeholders on strategies used in achievement of cooperation	F	63	90	45	27	27	3.54	1.270
	%	25.0	35.7	17.9	10.7	10.7		
The school recognizes parents support on achievement of creativity	F	99	54	45	27	27	3.68	1.367
	%	39.3	21.4	17.9	10.7	10.7		
The school creates flexible schedules to have more parents participate in critical thinking of learners	F	81	99	54	9	9	3.93	0.999
	%	32.1	39.3	21.4	3.6	3.6		
The school gives the parent volunteers opportunities to address the problems concerning learners' cooperation	F	126	45	27	22	32	3.84	1.443
	%	50.0	17.9	10.7	8.7	12.7		
The school involves the parents to obtain materials and resources for learners' creativity	F	99	81	36	9	27	3.86	1.276
	%	39.3	32.1	14.3	3.6	10.7		

As shown in Table 2, most respondents (67.9%) agreed that parents volunteer to ensure learners achieve knowledge application, while 17.8% disagreed. Statistical analysis showed a mean of 3.82 with a standard deviation of 1.258, indicating general agreement. A significant portion of respondents (64.3%) acknowledged that parents voluntarily contribute financially to school projects, aiding in problem-solving and influencing learner discipline. Only 17.8% disagreed. The mean response was 3.71, with a standard deviation of 1.308. Respondents were split on whether parents assist teachers in fostering learners' creativity, with 57.1% agreeing and 17.9% disagreeing. However, the mean response was 3.61 (standard deviation of 1.374), indicating a slight disagreement overall. Antony-Newman (2020) highlighted that parental involvement can enhance children's achievement through social networks and support.



A significant majority (82.1%) agreed that parental volunteerism relates to all school matters concerning learners' creativity, with a mean of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 1.092. This concurs with Torrecilla and Hernández-Castilla (2020), who found that parent volunteering contributes to successful learning and school functioning. Most respondents (60.7%) agreed that schools recruit parent volunteers to promote creativity among learners, with a mean response of 3.57 (standard deviation of 1.210). Smith et al. (2020) confirmed that parent volunteers significantly impact early childhood education, promoting creativity and critical thinking.

Sixty percent of respondents agreed that schools communicate strategies for achieving cooperation with parents and stakeholders. The mean response was 3.54 with a standard deviation of 1.270. Smith et al. (2020) found that effective school-family communication enhances learner achievement. Most respondents (60.7%) agreed that schools recognise parents' support in achieving creativity. The mean response was 3.68, with a standard deviation of 1.367. Studies by Roy and Giraldo-García (2018) and Chekol and Ayane (2019) affirm that parental support significantly predicts children's creativity.

Most respondents (67.9%) agreed that schools provide parent volunteers with opportunities to address cooperation problems among learners, with a mean of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 1.443. Ama and Widyana (2021) noted the positive impact of parent involvement on learner achievement and behaviour. However, Epstein (2001) warns that the effectiveness of such involvement largely depends on the quality of the programs and the genuine collaboration between parents and school staff, which is not always easy to achieve. Finally, 71.4% of respondents agreed that schools involve parents in obtaining materials and resources for learners' creativity. The mean response was 3.86, with a standard deviation of 1.276. Mohammed and Engler (2022) found that parental involvement positively influences children's creative development.

Table 3: Achievement of Core Competencies

Statements		SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Std.
Respectfully listening to others to gain a full understanding of issues	F	117	45	45	27	18	3.61	1.266
		46.4	17.9	17.9	10.7	7.1		
Comprehending written material	F	90	45	54	54	9	4.00	1.491
	%	35.7	17.9	21.4	21.4	3.6		
Presenting information in a clear and concise manner orally and in writing to ensure others understand his/her ideas	F	153	36	9	18	36	3.86	1.410
	%	60.7	14.3	3.6	7.1	14.3		
Appropriately adapting his/her message, style, and tone to accommodate a variety of audiences	F	126	45	27	27	27	3.86	1.460
	%	50.0	17.9	10.7	10.7	10.7		
Warmth, liveliness, social boldness, privateness, and self-reliance	F	135	27	45	9	36	3.64	1.520
	%	53.6	10.7	17.9	3.6	14.3		
Building positive working relationships and gaining trust	F	117	36	27	36	36	3.86	1.358
	%	46.4	14.3	10.7	14.3	14.3		
Identifying and stating others' needs, restating the main points of an idea expressed by another learner, and role-playing.	F	117	54	36	18	27	3.64	1.078
	%	46.4	21.4	14.3	7.1	10.7		



As shown in Table 3, most respondents (64.3%) agreed that respectfully listening to others to understand issues is important, while 17.8% disagreed fully. The mean response was 3.61, with a standard deviation of 1.266. This observation supports Gilakjani's (2016) research on the significance of effective communication and active listening in comprehending complex issues. Over half of the respondents (53.6%) agreed on the importance of comprehending written material, whereas 25.0% disagreed. The mean was 4.00, with a standard deviation of 1.491. These findings align with McDougal et al. (2020), who highlight the crucial role of strong reading and comprehension skills in academic success.

A vast majority (75.0%) agreed that presenting information clearly and concisely, both orally and in writing, ensures that others understand their ideas, while 21.4% disagreed. The mean response was 3.86, with a standard deviation of 1.410. Reddy and Gupta (2020) also emphasise the importance of effective communication skills for clearly conveying ideas and information. A significant portion (67.9%) of respondents agreed that it is essential to adapt one's message, style, and tone for different audiences, with 21.4% disagreeing. The mean response was 3.86, with a standard deviation of 1.460. Helens-Hart and Engstrom (2021) underscore the importance of this skill in effective communication strategies.

Most respondents (64.3%) agreed that warmth, liveliness, social boldness, privateness, and self-reliance are important, while 17.9% disagreed. The mean was 3.64, with a standard deviation of 1.520. A majority (60.7%) agreed to build positive working relationships and gain trust, while 28.6% disagreed. The mean response was 3.86, with a standard deviation of 1.358. Paschina (2023) supports the role of trust and positive relationships in professional and personal contexts. Finally, 67.8% of respondents agreed on the importance of identifying and stating others' needs, restating the main points of an idea expressed by another, and role-playing, while 17.8% disagreed. The mean response was 3.64, with a standard deviation of 1.078. Arnold and Boggs (2019) emphasise these interpersonal skills as crucial for effective collaboration and communication.

Inferential Analysis

Correlation Analysis

The degree and direction of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables were analysed using Pearson's correlation.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis

Volunteerism	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Achievement of core competencies	Pearson Correlation	.355**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 4, the research found that volunteerism as a parental involvement strategy was positively associated with achievement of core competencies among learners ($r=0.355$; $p=0.000$). Parents actively participating in school activities or assisting teachers contribute significantly to their children's learning and competency development. Ammar, Sondergeld, Provinzano and Delaney (2021) suggest that parents actively participating in school activities or assisting teachers can significantly contribute to their children's learning and competency development.

Multiple Regression Analysis



The power of a link between the dependent variable and several predictor variables was evaluated with multiple regression analysis, and the relative relevance of each predictor was determined, typically with the effect of other predictors eliminated statistically.

Model Summary

The coefficient of determination (R²) and correlation coefficient (R) showed the degree of association between dependent and independent variables. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Interpretation of Multiple Regression Models

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.558 ^a	.311	.300	.72440

a. Predictor: (Constant), Cultural Norm Strategies.

Table 5 displays the regression findings, which showed an R-squared of 0.311 and an R-value of 0.558. The high linear correlation between the dependent and independent variables was indicated by the R-value of 0.558. According to the coefficient of determination (R²), the independent variables provided 0.311 of the total explanation. The regression model accounted for roughly 31.1% of the observed variation in the independent variable.

Regression Model Fitness Test

The model's fitness was checked to see if it provided the best possible fit for the data. Table 7 shows the outcomes of the investigation.

Table 6: The Fitness of Regression Model

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	58.493	4	14.623	27.867	.000 ^b
	Residual	129.614	247	.525		
	Total	188.107	251			

Table 6 displayed an F-statistic of (F =27.867), which was statistically significant at the p=0.000 level, demonstrating that the model was accurate. This means that the data fit well with the multiple regression model. That is why it was important to consider the independent variables while designing the system.

Regression Coefficients

Running a regression model yielded a coefficient for use in the regression equation. Table 7 details the study's findings.

Table 7: Regression Model Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.835	.538		5.271	.000
Cultural Norm Strategies	.432	.068	.339	6.333	.000



Table 7 shows that volunteerism as a parental involvement strategy positively affected the achievement of core competencies among learners in public primary schools ($\beta_1=0.432$, $p=0.000$). This shows that a 0.432-unit improvement in volunteerism can be attained by instituting a more stringent achievement of core competencies among learners in public primary schools.

Conclusion

In conclusion, parental volunteerism is pivotal in shaping various aspects of learners' education within public primary schools. Firstly, parents actively contribute to ensuring learners' proficiency in knowledge application, emphasising the hands-on involvement of parents in their children's academic journey. Secondly, financial contributions from parents to school projects are voluntary, highlighting a collective commitment to problem-solving and support for learners' needs. Furthermore, parental volunteerism is important for effective communication strategies between schools and parents, with recognition given to parental contributions promoting cooperation and academic achievement. Parental volunteerism is invaluable in creating a supportive and enriching educational environment in public primary schools.

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