



Parental Education and Educational Wastage in Public Secondary Schools in Tigania Central Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract: *The socio-economic status of a family is a critical determinant of student retention and success in education. Among its dimensions, parental education level plays a unique role in shaping student progression, academic motivation, and overall educational outcomes. The present study addressed the problem of educational wastage, manifested through dropout, grade repetition, absenteeism and low academic performance, which continues to undermine access, equity, and quality in secondary schools. The study examined the effects of parental education level on educational wastage in public secondary schools in Tigania Central Sub-County, Meru County. A descriptive survey design was employed, guided by the Education Production Function Theory. The study sample comprised 256 participants, with piloting conducted in Tigania West Sub-County. Data collection involved questionnaires for students and teachers, interviews for principals, and secondary data from educational reports. Reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.72, while validity was ensured through expert review. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were applied, while thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. Findings revealed that parental education level significantly influences educational wastage. Students with less educated parents faced poor academic follow-up and increased risks of dropout and repetition. Conversely, parents with higher education supported academic progress, valued learning, and acted as role models, reducing wastage. The study concluded that parental education enhances student persistence and recommended community awareness programs to sensitize parents on the long-term benefits of education.*

Keywords: *Parental education, Educational wastage, Dropout, persistence, Dropout, Meru County.*

How to cite this work (APA):

Kamundi, M. K., Kathuni, E. P. G. & Kirugua, J. M. (2025). Parental Education and Educational Wastage in Public Secondary Schools in Tigania Central Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 9(4), 73 – 81. <https://doi.org/10.59765/htj693j>.

1. Introduction

Parental education is a key determinant of children's academic achievement and retention. Research shows that parents with higher education levels value schooling, provide academic support, and enroll their children in better-resourced schools, which enhances performance and

completion rates (Kobane et al., 2025). Educated parents also actively engage in school activities, offer financial and emotional support, and serve as role models to their children, reducing dropout risks (Paul et al., 2025). Conversely, low parental education is linked to poor motivation and higher dropout rates, with illiterate mothers strongly associated with student's school withdrawal (UNICEF, 2010). Further studies highlight the

intergenerational effect, where each additional year of maternal education translates to more schooling years for children (UNESCO, 2014). Recent study confirm that parental education fosters positive attitudes and significantly lowers repetition and dropout rates (Addido et al., 2025; Mamet & Mudassar, 2017). Research across different regions shows that parental education significantly shapes student retention and dropout the two major indicators of educational wastage. Parental level of education is the extent to which parents have acquired some knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in formal and informal education. Studies have shown some relationship between parental level of education and education attainment of their children (Owen, 2015). The level of education of a parent was also seen as a factor when considering the kind of school a child will be taken to. A recent study in Dadaab Sub-County, Kenya, found a significant relationship between parental education and secondary school completion. Learners whose parents had higher education levels were more likely to complete schooling, due to stronger involvement and support, while those whose parents lacked formal education experienced heightened dropout rates (Kobane et al., 2025).

According to Paul et al. (2025) Educated parents not only appreciate the benefits of schooling but also actively engage in their children's academic and extracurricular activities, thereby minimizing absenteeism and the risk of dropping out. Recent evidence shows that parental education and involvement significantly reduce the likelihood of student dropout. According to Moses Lubaale, Nakabugo, and Nassereka (2021), children from homes with high educated parents achieve better academic success and are more likely to remain in school until they complete their education compared to those from households of illiterate parents. Literate parents are able to provide a supportive learning environment, engage with schoolwork, and emphasize the value of education, which enhances both performance and retention.

Learners that come from homes of Educated parents are retained in school because the parents have favorable attitude towards education and therefore there are very low cases of repetition and dropout in these homes (Mamet & Mudassar, 2017).

In India, education wastage as a result of dropout and stagnation was one of the problems affecting education. Patel (2017) noted that learners whose parents were illiterate were likely to stagnate in grade and were more likely to drop out of school. This is because parents did not value education and therefore did not encourage their children to study. On the contrary, majority of literate parents support their children's education regardless of gender and they are able to complete school.

In Pakistan literacy level of a parent was seen as one of the leading causes of students drop out of school. A study by Ahmad et al (2023) indicated that a parent that did not attend school was unlikely to support the same for their children unlike those that had attended school who act as second teachers to their children. They teach and provide academic support through participating in school activities. They also are at a good position to explain roles and values for education to their children. They act as motivation to their children and motivated learners are less likely to drop out of school because they have goals that they want to achieve.

Elsewhere in Zimbabwe, students dropped out of school and they cited lack of support from parents with low education level (Kudzai & Rose, 2020). The same sentiments were shared by Nsengimana and Mukurira (2022) from Rwanda who noted that the parental education level was a significant factor contributing to student dropout in schools. Parents with higher education level, cared for the students and their studies and this made the students not to drop out of school as well as perform better academically.

Further, in Kenya, based on study by Gitari, Odek and Marima (2023) on investigating the social-economic factors and secondary school dropout among girls in Mariani ward, Tharaka Nithi county Kenya. Findings revealed a significant positive correlation of 0.547 between parental educational level and the rate of dropout. Parents with a higher education level were likely to support the education of their children unlike those with lower education level hence dropout.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Education is universally recognized as a key driver of social and economic development. In Kenya, the government has invested heavily in Free Day Secondary Education to ensure access, equity, and retention of learners. However, despite these interventions, educational wastage—manifested through absenteeism, grade repetition, and school dropout—continues to challenge the attainment of Education for All and Vision 2030 goals. One critical factor influencing student retention and progression is the parental level of education. Parents serve as the first role models in a child's educational journey, shaping attitudes, expectations, and the support learners receive at home. Educated parents are more likely to monitor academic progress, assist with schoolwork, and prioritize education in household decision-making. Conversely, low parental literacy often translates into limited support, weak communication with schools, and a higher risk of children disengaging from formal education. This study therefore focused on determining the influence of parental education

level on educational wastage in public secondary schools in Tigania Central Sub- County, Meru County, Kenya.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to determine the influence of parental education level on educational wastage in public secondary schools in Tigania Central Sub- County, Meru County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

Parental education is a vital dimension of socio-economic status that strongly influences students' persistence and completion. Globally, evidence has shown that educated parents are more likely to value schooling, support academic work and minimize the risks of educational wastage. UNESCO (2014), through an analysis of household surveys from 56 countries, revealed that each additional year of maternal education contributed 0.32 more years of a child's schooling, with even higher benefits for girls.

Similarly, in India, a study by Patel (2017) on Wastage Stagnation: A hindrance to education (An Anthropology study among the high school going children of Jujamura Block of Sambalpur District of Western Odisha). The study used qualitative methods such as in-depth interview and observation to collect data from a sample size of 129 respondents, comprising of students from two schools only in the region. Findings revealed that learners whose parents were illiterate were likely to stagnate in grade and were more likely to drop out of school. This is because parents did not value education and therefore did not encourage their children to study. Majority of illiterate parents were poor and therefore they could not afford school fees as they were without meaningful employment because they lacked qualification. They withdraw their children from school to help earn a living and for girls, majority are married off. On the contrary, majority of literate parents support their children's education regardless of gender and they are able to complete school. This study however used only qualitative method and ignored quantitative data collection method. The sample size was very small and involved two schools only, other stakeholders such as teachers and the school administration were not part of the respondents and the information they would have given would be crucial for the study, these gaps were addressed in this study.

Ahmad et al. (2023) on exploring the factors affecting students' dropout: a case study of public secondary schools in Pakistan, using a mixed-methods design with 320 students and 60 parents, reported that educated parents acted as "second teachers," hence motivating learners and reducing dropout. However, these Asian studies largely

focused on dropout while neglecting repetition and absenteeism as other indicators of wastage.

In Africa, several studies have confirmed the role of parental education in shaping schooling outcomes. Effiong and Edet (2019) in Nigeria, on the Influence of family background on students' dropout from secondary school. Using descriptive survey design and a paired t-test and independent T-test to analyze data that was collected using questionnaires from a sample of 150 students. Findings from the null hypothesis that stated parent education status does not significantly affect students' dropout from school was rejected as the results showed a computed t-value of 8.60 at a significance level of 0.05 and 149 degree of freedom. In Zimbabwe, a study by Kudzai and Rose (2020) on the Parents' level of education and its effects on academic performance of adolescents in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, using qualitative phenomenological design with interviews to collect data from adolescent students and their parents from a sample size of 12 respondents and by use of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, findings reviewed that students dropped out of school and they cited lack of support from parents with low education level. Students that came from homes whose parents have low education level said that their parents did not support in school work and they struggled to pay school fee as compared to those from homes with educated parents resulting in dropout and poor performance. Both studies used small or student-only samples, limiting generalization.

A study on the contribution of family socio-economic status on school dropout in Rwanda by Nsengimana and Mukurira (2022) using a descriptive survey design on sample size of 250 respondents comprising of teachers, headteacher parents and students. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews Findings indicated that the parental education level was a significant factor contributing to student dropout in schools. Parents with higher education level, cared for the students and their studies and this made the students not drop out of school as well as perform better academically.

In a study by Albert (2020) in Uganda on socio-economic factors and pupil retention in Uganda Primary Education (UPE) schools, using a sample size of 96 respondents comprising of headteachers, teachers and parents, and by use of cross-sectional survey research design. Data was collected by questionnaires and interviews and findings revealed that the level of parental education was instrumental in the retention and drop out of students in school. This was concluded because of the 60.8% of respondents who agreed that parents that had low education level did not understand how to motivate their children, were not supportive and were not good role models and so

children did not feel inspired by the parent hence dropout. Again, parents with low education level involved their children with home activities that had nothing to do with education hence compromising their child's education. 89.9% of respondents felt that this led to dropout as some parents can intentionally let their children be absent from school in order to carry out home chores. On the other hand, 81.2% of participants agreed that a high number of parents who have a high level of education know how to motivate, inspire and are good role models to their children and this makes the children to excel in education and also remain in school until completion. This study has several gaps that the present study seeks to fill, this study was based on primary school pupils, the present one will be in high school student, the sample size was very small therefore for a larger population it will be hard to be generalized, data was not collected from students and they could provide significant information for the study, the present study included students as part of the respondents.

Kenyan research has similarly underscored the influence of parental education on students' academic wastage. Kobane et al. (2025) in Dadaab, using a descriptive survey with 300 students and 20 teachers, established that children of educated parents were more likely to complete schooling. In yet another study in Kenya by Misiko, Kirowk, and Kikechi (2023) parental educational level and pupils' academic performance in public primary school's pupils in Endebes sub-county, Kenya. Parental level of education was noted to have a great influence on pupils' academic performance. Using descriptive survey design and a sample size of 246 respondents which was selected from a target population of 3,072 individuals using Krejcie & Morgan table of sample determination, data was collected using questionnaires and interviews from head teachers, teachers and class eight learners. Findings revealed that there was a statistically significant association between a parent level of education and the performance of the pupil. A higher educated parent positively influences the learner's academic outcome compared to the lower educated parents. Consequently, a review of this literature shows that the study findings were on performance and therefore did not exhaustively capture data on the effects of parental level of education on wastage and it is for this reason that this present study was carried out to address these gaps. Still in Kenya, based on study by Gitari, Odek and Marima (2023) on investigating the social-economic factors and secondary school dropout among girls in Mariani ward, Tharaka Nithi county Kenya. The aim of the study was to investigate the high dropout rate of girls in the area. The study adopted deprivation theory and a descriptive survey research design. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews from a sample size of 385 respondents. Data was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods. Findings revealed a significant positive correlation of 0.547 between parental educational level and the rate of

dropout. Parents with a higher education level were likely to support the education of their children unlike those with lower education level hence dropout. The study's scope was limited to female learners and focused mainly on dropout as the indicator of wastage. The current study seeks to bridge the gap by investigating effects of parental income on educational wastage among all gender of students in Tigania Sub-county, Meru County.

Overall, literature across global, regional, and Kenyan contexts demonstrates that parental education reduces educational wastage by promoting retention, completion, and performance. However, most studies have limited their scope to dropout or to specific populations such as primary pupils or female learners. Few have holistically examined how parental level of education influences multiple indicators of wastage such as dropout, repetition, and absenteeism in Kenyan secondary schools. This gap underscores the need for the current study in Tigania Central Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted in Tigania Central Sub-County, Meru County, which has rural, urban, and semi-arid schools, providing a representative context. A descriptive survey design was adopted to investigate socio-economic factors influencing educational wastage. The target population comprised 27 principals, 27 class teachers, and 2,361 Form Three students (total 2,413). Using stratified random sampling by school category (mixed day, mixed day and boarding), 16 schools were selected, yielding a sample of 256 respondents: 16 principals, 16 teachers, and 224 students.

Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. Two questionnaires—one for students and another for teachers—captured demographic data and information on parental income, parental education, school resources, and teenage pregnancy. Principals were interviewed to obtain deeper insights. To enhance validity and reliability, the instruments were piloted in Tigania East Sub-County. Expert reviews from Tharaka University validated content, while Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.72 confirmed reliability. Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics that is frequencies and percentages and processed by SPSS version 26, while qualitative data were coded thematically. Results were presented in tables, percentages, and narrative form, aligned with the study objectives. Ethical considerations were observed, with approvals obtained from NACOSTI and the Sub-County Education Office. Participation was

voluntary and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity

4. Results and Discussion

The following are results of the study

4.1 The Effects of Level of Parental Education on Wastage of Students in Secondary Schools

Table 1
Students' Responses on the Highest Education Level of Their Parent or Guardian

	Frequency	Percent
No education	10	4.7
KCPE	41	19.2
KCSE	66	30.8
Certificate	57	26.6
Diploma	22	10.3
Undergraduate/Bachelor's degree	16	7.5
Master's Degree	2	0.9
Total	214	100.0

From Table 1, it was revealed that a majority of parents (30.8%), had attained a secondary level of education, which was followed by those with certificate level qualification at 26.6% and those with primary education registered 19.2%. Another 10.3% held diplomas as their highest level of education. 7.5% had a Bachelor's degree while only 0.9% of the total number had attained a master's degree. Notably, 4.7% of the parents had no formal education. The majority of parents had basic to mid-level education.

This section presents findings on how the education level of parents influences student wastage in public secondary schools. Responses were collected from both teachers and students.

4.1.1 Students' Responses on the Highest Education Level of Their Parent or Guardian

This section presents students' responses on the highest level of education attained by their parent or guardian. Table 1 presents the findings.

4.1.2 Teachers' Response on Effects of Level of Parental Education on Wastage of Students in Secondary Schools

This section was to gather teachers' professional opinions on how the level of parental education affects student wastage. Teachers were expected to draw from their experiences to state if the level of education of a parent influences learners' engagement, support as well as retention in school measured by a Likert scale with ranges: Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Undecided (3), Disagree (4), and strongly disagree (5). Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2: Teachers' Response on Effects of Level of Parental Education on Wastage of Students in Secondary Schools

Statements	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Parents with low education level do not follow up on academic matters of students resulting to academic wastage.	6	37.5	5	31.5	0	0	4	25.0	1	6.3
Educated parents prioritize their children schooling over other expenses	10	62.5	4	25.0	0	0	1	6.3	1	6.3
Less educated parents do not attach a lot of value to education	5	31.3	4	25.0	2	12.5	4	26.0	1	6.3
Parents with high level of education are more committed to academic progression of their children than less educated parents	8	50	4	25.0	0	0	3	18.7	1	6.3
Parental level of education determines the rate of school dropout	9	56.2	4	25.0	0	0	2	12.5	1	6.3
Educated parents are good role models to their children and this encourages them to remain in school.	6	37.5	9	56.2	0	0	1	6.3	0	0

Parental level of education influences the student's academic performance 6 37.5 5 31.2 0 0 4 25.0 1 6.3

SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, U- Undecided, D- Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree.

According to Table 2, respondents were asked to comment on their level of agreement with the statement that parents with a low education level do not follow up on the academic matters of students, resulting in academic wastage. 37.5% of respondents strongly agreed and 31.5% agreed, this indicated a strong consensus (69%) among respondents that parents with low education levels do not follow up on academic matters of their children, resulting in academic wastage a sentiment shared by Kobane et al (2025) the who noted that parents with little or no formal education were often unable to support academic follow up, resulting to low completion and higher dropout rates. However, 25.1% of respondents disagreed, and only a small number (6.3%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

When asked if educated parents prioritize their children's schooling, a striking 62.5% strongly agreed while 25% agreed. 26% disagreed and 6.3% strongly disagreed that educated parents prioritize their children's education needs over other things. Answering whether less educated parents do not attach much value to education, 31.3% strongly agreed, 25% agreed and 26% disagreed, indicating slightly more varied perceptions as 6.3% strongly disagreed and 12.5% was undecided. The findings were in line with Likoko, Barasa & Mabunde (2021) findings that educated parents were more engaged in academic activities and valued education of their children as opposed to the low educated parents.

On if parents with higher levels of education are more committed to the academic progression of their children. The majority (50%) strongly agreed, 25% agreed, while 18.7% disagreed, and 6.3% strongly disagreed, showing diverse opinions. Additionally, when respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that parental level of education determines the

rate of school dropout. 56.2% strongly agreed, 25.0% agreed, while 12.5% disagreed and 6.3% strongly disagreed that parental level of education determines the rate of school dropout. These findings were in line with Kobane et al (2025) who showed a statistically significant relationship where higher parental education correlates with lower dropout and higher completion.

On the statement of whether educated parents are good role models to their children, this encourages them to remain in school. Educated parents were perceived as good role models as 37.5%of the respondents strongly agreed and 56.2% agreed. Meanwhile, 6.3% of the respondents disagreed. Lastly, on whether parental education level influences the students' academic performance, 37.5% strongly agreed, 31.2% agreed 25% disagreed, and 6.3% strongly disagreed, showing mixed views. This agrees with Kabugo and Olendo (2024) study, which showed a significant relationship between parental education and students' biology scores. Students whose parents have a higher level of education score better than their counterparts whose parents have a lower level of education.

4.1.3 Students' Response on Effects of Level of Parental Education on Wastage of Students in Secondary Schools

This section presents data collected from students on the effects of the level of parental education on wastage of students in secondary schools. The responses were measured by a Likert scale with Values: Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Undecided (3), Disagree (4), and Strongly Disagree (5). The results of the findings were presented in Table 3

Table 3: Students Response on Effects of Level of Parental on Wastage of Students in Secondary Schools

Statements	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Parents with low education level do not follow up on academic matters of students resulting to academic wastage.	40	19	80	37.3	22	10.1	41	19.2	31	14.4
Educated parents prioritize their children's schooling over other expenses	108	50.5	96	44.9	3	1.4	5	2.3	2	0.9
Less educated parents do not attach a lot of value to education	80	37.4	102	47.7	12	5.6	16	7.5	4	1.7
Parents with a high level of education are more committed to the academic progression of their children than less educated parents	69	32.2	105	49.0	5	2.3	15	7.0	20	9.3
Parental level of education determines the rate of school dropout	99	46.3	102	47.7	2	0.9	6	2.8	5	2.3
Educated parents are good role models to their children, and this encourages them to remain in school.	105	49.1	78	36.4	2	0.9	15	7.0	14	6.5
Parental level of education influences the student's academic performance	78	36.4	86	40.1	11	5.1	14	6.5	27	12.6

As shown in Table 3, 19% of respondents strongly agreed and 37.3% agreed that parents with low education level do not follow up on the academic matters of students, leading to academic wastage. 19.2% disagreed and 14.4% strongly disagreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 10.1% remained undecided. These findings correspond with Kabugo and Olendo (2024) who found out that students whose parents were highly involved often due to higher education levels, performed better academically and that parents with low education levels were less involved in their children's academic work therefore contributing directly to poor performance. When asked to comment on the statement on if educated parents prioritized education of their children, 50.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and 44.3% agreed that educated parents prioritize their children's education while only 3.3% disagreed and 0.9 strongly disagreed with the statement. However, 1.4% of the respondents remained undecided. These findings align with Oloo, Juma and Murundu (2019) observed that many parents with low level of education prioritize income over school expenses as majority are from low-income families.

In the statement that if less educated parents do not attach a lot of value to education, 37.4% of respondents strongly agree, 47.7% agreed, 7.5% disagreed, and 1.7% strongly disagree, as 5.6% of the respondents remained undecided. When asked to comment on commitment to academic progression by less educated parents, the majority of respondents, 49.0%, agreed, 32.2% strongly agreed that parents with a higher level of education are very committed, while 9.3% strongly disagreed and 7.0% disagreed with the statement; however, 2.0% were undecided.

A high number of respondents, 46.3% strongly agree and 47.2% agree that the level of parental education determines the rate of school dropout, having minimal disagreement from 2.8% of respondents and 2.3% strongly disagreeing; however, 0.9% of the sampled population remained undecided. The findings thus indicated a strong perception by learners that lower parental education contributes to school dropout, a sentiment shared by Ndahiro et al (2019) in a similar study in Rwanda that found out that there is a strong negative correlation between parental education level and school dropout.

On a statement seeking to find out if educated parents are role models to their children, and if this encourages them to remain in school. Many respondents, 49.1% strongly agreed compared to 6.5% that strongly disagreed. Nevertheless, 36.2% agreed that parental education status serves as positive reinforcement for students, and 0.9% of respondents were undecided, while 7.0% disagreed. The findings show a sentiment shared by Ngethe (2023) who reported that students with educated parents were more likely to complete secondary school education because they admired and emulated their parents. Finally, on the influence of parental level of education on academic performance, 36.4% strongly agreed, and 40.1% agreed that parental level of education influenced academic performance. However, 6.5% disagreed and 12.6% strongly disagreed with the statement, while 5.1% were undecided, showing variance in experiences. This sentiment was shared by Mwirichia and Nyaga (2021) who noted that educated parents were more likely to monitor school attendance and support learning at home, reducing dropout rates and enhancing academic performance.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The following were the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

5.1 Conclusion

The findings conclude that parental level of education significantly influences attitudes towards schooling and students' persistence. Educated parents are more likely to value education and support their children academically while learners whose parents had little, or no formal education faced higher risks of dropout, repetition, and absenteeism.

5.2 Recommendation

1. Strengthen School–Community Partnerships. Schools should build stronger collaborations with parents, local leaders, and community groups to mobilize both material and moral support for learners. Such partnerships create a shared responsibility that can reduce absenteeism, school dropouts, and other forms of wastage.
2. Guidance and counselling services in schools should be expanded and well-resourced to address learners' academic, social, and emotional needs. By offering timely support, learners can better cope with socio-economic challenges, thereby improving retention.
3. Regular sensitization forums should be organized to empower parents with knowledge and skills on how to support their children's education. Awareness on issues such as the value of education, financial planning, and positive parenting will enhance parental involvement and student persistence.

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