Strengthening Teacher-Parent Relationships for Holistic Student Success in Dodoma: Insights and Recommendations

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Abstract: *The connection between teachers and parents is crucial for Learners' academic achievement. This research identified factors that influence teacher-parent relationships in primary education by focusing on emphasizing communication frequency, parental engagement, and teacher responsiveness. The study employed a mixed methods approach. The study identified elements like teachers and parents maintain regular communication, the effectiveness and structure of this communication need enhancement. Parental participation in homework, school events, and educational activities outside of school hours is average, with a noticeable hesitance to assist at school functions. Teachers were found to respond to parental concerns after some delay, and feedback regarding students' progress was only moderately adequate. Nonetheless, concludes by suggesting that teacher-parent partnerships and academic success of a learner are inseparable. Clear guiding policies must accommodate the flexibility of communication.*

Keywords: *Teacher-parent relationship, parental involvement, communication, academic performance, primary education*

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1. Introduction

Teacher parent relationship is very important for learners' growth holistically in education. For example, Saxena (2020), Mwaibingila & Mwakalinga (2022) emphasized that support from both home and school positively influenced students' attitudes towards school, boosted self-confidence, and enhanced academic achievement. This interconnected support system underscores the importance of a holistic approach involving parents and teachers in creating conducive learning environments.

Garbacz et al. (2017) highlighted that effective parent-teacher communication is crucial for family-school engagement, suggesting that school outreach strategies should be equitable and accessible to all families. Yang (2019) detailed various communication methods, such as notes from teachers, daily report cards, and home visits, essential for effectively addressing school-related concerns.

Garbacz et al. (2019) further underscored that a supportive family environment and strong teacher relationships significantly benefited elementary school children (p. 433). Letswalo's (2023) study in Limpopo identified barriers to enhancing parental involvement, including challenges like parental education levels, confidence levels, time constraints, and teacher-related factors, providing insight into critical areas for improvement (Letswalo, 2023). Chowa et al. (2012) underscored the positive association between parental involvement, particularly talking to children about school, and academic outcomes in Ghana.

Pinantoan's work underscored the influential role of parental involvement in students' academic success, highlighting that home support was as critical as cognitive abilities, work ethic, and genetics (Pinantoan,

2013). Kigobe's (2019) research in Tanzania revealed a strong desire among parents to actively participate in their children's education, emphasizing the alignment between parental involvement and expectations for academic success. All these are evidence for the effects of teacher parent relationship in schools.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Among the most crucial variables influencing pupils' academic achievement and overall development is the relationship between parents and teachers. Positive interactions between teachers and parents have consistently been linked to better outcomes, including academic performance, social adjustment, and general well-being (Epstein, 2011; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). To achieve sustained learning outcomes in Tanzania, where educational reforms emphasize inclusive and high-quality education, strengthening school–family partnerships remain essential (URT, 2015).

Despite their importance, building and sustaining effective teacher–parent relationships in Dodoma's primary schools continues to face challenges. Although parents and teachers interact regularly, such interactions often lack structure, timeliness, and depth, thereby limiting meaningful cooperation (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Parental participation in schoolwork, events, and extracurricular activities remains moderate, reflecting broader cultural, social, and financial constraints that hinder active involvement in sub-Saharan African contexts (Nyarko, 2011).

Teachers' responses to parental concerns are often delayed, and their feedback on pupils' progress may not be comprehensive. These shortcomings undermine collaborative efforts aimed at enhancing learning outcomes (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). As a result, the creation of supportive learning environments that foster both academic and social development is significantly constrained.

Notwithstanding these challenges, both parents and teachers acknowledge that effective collaboration is critical for student success. The persistence of these barriers highlights the urgent need for frameworks and strategies that can improve teacher responsiveness, enhance parental involvement, and strengthen communication (Epstein et al., 2018). Understanding these dynamics is key to fostering environments where learners can thrive (Jones et al., 2020).

A large body of research consistently underscores the pivotal role of positive teacher–parent relationships in shaping student achievement. Studies reveal that when teachers and parents collaborate effectively, students are more likely to excel academically (Epstein, 2018;

Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Keith et al., 1993; Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Fan et al., 1997; Jeynes, 2007; Brown & Miller, 2018; Mwaibingila & Mwakalinga, 2022; Letswalo, 2023; Chowa et al., 2012).

Despite this extensive evidence, limited studies have explored how these dynamics function within the Tanzanian context, particularly in primary schools. Addressing this gap is critical, as educating parents on the value of education through identifying elements contributing to teacher–parent partnerships and their potential to significantly improve the educational landscape in Tanzania.

1.2 Objectives of the study

1.2.1 Main objective

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1.2.2 Specific objectives

1. To investigate how teacher-parent relationships in primary school are influenced by the frequency of communication.

2. To determine how parents are involved in school duties, tasks, and classes as well as the effect it has on pupil achievement.

3. To assess how well teachers respond to parental issues.

1.3 Specific research questions

1. How does the frequency of communication influence teacher–parent relationships in primary schools?

2. In what ways are parents involved in school duties, tasks, and classes, and how does such involvement affect pupils' academic achievement?

3. How effectively do teachers respond to parental concerns in primary schools?

2. Literature review

2.1 Empirical review

2.1.1 The Role of Teacher–Parent Relationships in Student Development

The relationship between teachers and parents plays a pivotal role in fostering the holistic development of learners. When schools and families collaborate

effectively, students are more likely to thrive both academically and emotionally. Research highlights that consistent support from home and school significantly shapes students' attitudes toward learning, boosts self-confidence, and enhances academic achievement (Saxena, 2020; Mwaibingila & Mwakalinga, 2022). This interconnected support system illustrates the value of a collaborative and inclusive learning environment in which educators and families work together to nurture the child.

2.1.2 Communication as the Foundation of Collaboration

Effective communication serves as the cornerstone of strong family–school partnerships. Garbacz et al. (2017) argue that communication strategies must be equitable and accessible to all families, ensuring inclusivity regardless of socioeconomic or linguistic backgrounds. Similarly, Yang (2019) identifies practical approaches—such as teacher notes, daily report cards, and home visits—that facilitate timely and meaningful exchanges between schools and families. These practices establish a dynamic feedback loop that allows educators to address academic and behavioral issues while reinforcing parental involvement as a critical factor in student success.

2.1.3 Empirical Evidence Across Contexts

A growing body of literature reinforces the importance of teacher–parent relationships in diverse educational contexts. Garbanzos et al. (2019) found that a supportive family environment, combined with strong teacher relationships, had significant benefits for elementary school children (p. 433). In Ghana, Chowa et al. (2012) demonstrated that parental involvement—particularly through conversations with children about school—was positively associated with academic outcomes. Similarly, Pinantoan (2013) emphasized that home support was as critical to student achievement as cognitive abilities, work ethic, and genetics. In Tanzania, Kigobe (2019) revealed that parents strongly desired to participate in their children's education, underscoring alignment between parental involvement and expectations for academic success.

2.1.4 Barriers to Effective Teacher–Parent Relationships

While evidence supports the benefits of teacher–parent collaboration, several challenges hinder effective partnerships. Letswalo (2023), in a study conducted in Limpopo, identified barriers such as limited parental education, low confidence levels, time constraints, and teacher-related factors. These findings highlight areas requiring attention in order to strengthen parental engagement in schools.

Taken together, the literature underscores that teacher–parent relationships significantly influence student outcomes by fostering supportive learning environments. Effective communication, strong family support, and inclusive engagement strategies enhance learners' academic and emotional growth, while addressing barriers remains key to realizing the full potential of such partnerships.

2.2 Theoretical review

2.2.1 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework serves as a model that explains how relationships among key variables are conceptualized in addressing a given problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, teacher–parent relationships were examined in relation to their influence on academic performance using Epstein's Educational Partnership Model, which provides a comprehensive lens for analyzing the interactions between teachers, parents, and students (Epstein, 2011; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014).

2.2.2 The Educational Partnership Model

Joyce Epstein's Educational Partnership Model, developed in 1995, is a widely recognized framework for understanding the dimensions of family–school partnerships. The model identifies six essential practices for effective collaboration: (1) parenting support, (2) communication, (3) volunteering, (4) student learning involvement, (5) shared decision-making, and (6) community collaboration (Epstein, 1995; National PTA, 1997; Epstein et al., 2018). These practices are designed to strengthen the relationship between families and schools, with the ultimate aim of promoting student success.

2.2.3 Application to the Present Study

In the context of this study, Epstein's Educational Partnership Model provided the foundation for examining how teacher–parent relationships contribute to academic performance. The model's emphasis on communication and shared decision-making was particularly significant, as these elements foster supportive learning environments (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Moreover, the practical focus of the framework—encouraging parental involvement in learning activities, volunteering, and joint decision-making—offered actionable strategies for improving teacher–parent partnerships in primary schools (Epstein, 1995).

3. Methodology

3.1.1 Study Population and Sample

The study engaged a total of 71 participants, comprising parents, students, and teachers. There were 21 teachers,

20 Parents and 30 students. This population was selected to capture diverse perspectives on the research problem and to allow for a balanced integration of both quantitative and qualitative insights.

3.1.2 Data Collection Methods

A mixed-methods design was adopted to strengthen the breadth and depth of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to teachers, parents and students. In addition, qualitative data were gathered using interviews with 5 teachers and 5 parents who were selected from those who participated in filling the questionnaires. This provided opportunities for participants to share detailed experiences and perspectives.

3.1.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative responses were organized into tables and analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation, to identify patterns and trends (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015). Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis, which entailed coding, identifying, and interpreting recurring themes within participants' narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By integrating these two approaches, the study ensured methodological triangulation, thereby enriching the interpretation of findings and enhancing validity through multiple sources of evidence (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Elements influencing positive teacher-parent relationships

4.1.1 Quantitative results from Teachers and Parents

The responses are organized following communication frequency, parents' involvement and teacher responsiveness. Below is the presentation:

A. Communication Frequency

Table 1: Communication frequency

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I. How often do parents communicate with teachers regarding students' academic progress?	1.Rarely	6		
	2.Occasionally	6		
	3.Sometimes	29		
	4.Frequently	0	2.67	0.88
	5.Very frequently	0		
II. In the past month, how many times have your parents communicated with your teacher through phone number, emails or messages?	0 times	0		
	1-2 times	18		
	3-5 times	23	3.33	0.52
	6-10 times	0		
	More than 10 times	0		
III. How frequently do your parents attend parent-teacher meetings or conferences?	1.Never	0		
	2.Rarely	0		
	3.Occasionally	6		
	4.Sometimes 5.Every time	35	4.67	0.52

Source: Field data, 2024

The teachers and parents declared that they often communicate with each other and their children (Mean: 2.67 and Standard Deviation: 0.88) this informs that there are very few parents who do not frequently communicate with teachers and their children as well. Also, attending the parent-teacher meetings or conferences, most of those who filled in the questionnaires declared that they participate (Mean: 4.8 and Standard Deviation: 0.52).

B. Parent Involvement

Table 2: Parent's involvement

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I. To what extent do your parents get involved in your homework assignments and projects?	Not at all involved	0		
	Moderately involved	6		
	Very involved	24	4.17	0.75
	Extremely involved	11		
II. How often do your parents engage in educational activities after school hours?	Never	0		
	Occasionally	6		
	Sometimes	23	4.33	0.82
	Frequently	12		
III. Have your parents volunteered or participated in any school events or activities in the past year?	Never	0		
	Rarely	12		
	Occasionally	6		
	Sometimes	0	3.83	0.75
	Frequently	23		
V. How important do you believe parental involvement is for your academic success?	Not important at all	0		
	Slightly important	0		
	Moderately important	0		
	Very important	12	4.67	0.52
	Extremely important	29		
	Strongly agree	29		

Source: Field data, 2024

Parental involvement is a crucial part in checking learners' progress and motivating the learners by heart. In this question respondents declared that they seldom participate in checking students' progress especially checking homework assignments and projects (Mean: 4.17 and Standard Deviation: 0.75). This indicates that parents are a little bit reluctant to check learners' progress. On the other hand, they have contended that they are not often engaged in educational activities with your child outside of school hours (Mean: 4.33 and Standard Deviation: 0.82). Again, it has been revealed that parents do not volunteer or participate in any school events or activities in the past year (Mean: 3.83 and Standard Deviation: 0.75). This is a bad indicator to their effectiveness in monitoring the progress of their learners

Teacher Responsiveness:

Table 3: Teacher's responsiveness

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. When you reach out to your child's teacher with concerns, how long does it take for them to respond?	Very quickly	0		
	Quickly	6		
	Moderately	29	2.75	0.50
	Slowly	6		
	Very slowly	0		
2. How satisfied are you with the feedback provided by your child's teacher on their academic progress?	Very dissatisfied	6		
	Dissatisfied	6		
	Neutral	12	3.00	1.00
	Satisfied	12		
	Very satisfied	5		

Source: Field data, 2024

In the questionnaires respondents showed that when they reach out to their child's teacher with concerns, their response takes time (Mean: 2.75 and Standard Deviation: 0.50). This can be interpreted as teachers are not actively responding to the parents' concerns. In responding to the level of satisfaction about the feedback provided by their child's teacher on their academic progress the respondents showed moderate satisfaction (Mean: 3 and Standard Deviation: 1.0). This means something is not okay with the modality of giving feedback. On the other side parents who filled the questionnaires pointed out that here is a strong relationship between learners' academic performance and teacher parent relationship (Mean: 4.75 and Standard Deviation: 0.20).

4.1.2 Quantitative findings from students
A. Communication frequency

Table 4: Communication frequency

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
How often do your parents communicate with your teacher regarding your academic progress?	Rarely	7		
	Occasionally	12		
	Sometimes	9	2.8	0.45
	Frequently	2		
	Very frequently	0		
In the past month, how many times have your parents communicated with your teacher through phone number, emails, or messages?	0 times	0		
	1-2 times	10		
	3-5 times	15	2.75	0.50
	6-10 times	5		
How frequently do your parents attend parent-teacher meetings or conferences?	Never	0		
	Rarely	1		

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Occasionally	2		
	Sometimes	2	4.6	0.89
	Frequently	25		
How comfortable do your parents feel in initiating communication with your teacher?	Very uncomfortable	0		
	Uncomfortable	0		
	Neutral	1	4.6	0.55
	Comfortable	13		
	Very comfortable	16		

Source, Field data, 2024

Students who filled the questionnaires contented that parents communicate with teacher regarding academic progress is very crucial to their achievements (Mean: 2.8 and Standard Deviation: 0.45). Yet on Parents communication with teacher through phone number, emails, or messages showed the Mean: 2.75 and Standard Deviation: 0.50 this is an indicator that there is an issue with the kind of communication used or the organization of the communication is not well structured. In Parents attending parent-teacher meetings or conferences respondents showed that parents have a good attendance (Mean: 4.6 and Standard Deviation: 0.89). This may be one of the facts for the good academic performance in their schools. Again, responding to parents feeling comfortable in initiating communication with teacher students declared their parents feel comfortable (Mean: 4.6 and Standard Deviation: 0.55).

B. Parent Involvement

Table **5**: Parent involvement

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
I. Parent Involvement in Homework Assignments and Projects	Not at all involved	0		
	Minimally involved	0		
	Moderately involved	6		
	Very involved	18	4.00	0.71
	Extremely involved	6		
II. Parent Engagement in Educational Activities After School Hours	Never	0		
	Rarely	0		
	Occasionally	5		
	Sometimes	10	4.00	0.82
	Frequently	15		
III. Relationship Between Learners' Academic Performance and Teacher-Parent Relationship	Strongly disagree	0		
	Disagree	0		
	Neutral	0		
	Agree	8	4.75	0.50

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Strongly agree	22		

Responding to parent's involvement in homework assignments and projects given to them students showed that the parents are also involved (Mean: 4.0 and Standard Deviation: 0.71). Also, students declared that their parents are engaged in educational activities after school hours (Mean: 4.0 and Standard Deviation: 0.82). This is a positive indicator to the students support. Again, students declared that there is a close Relationship between learners' academic performance and teacher-parent relationship (Mean: 4.75 and Standard Deviation: 0.50).

4.1.3 Qualitative results from teachers and parents

Teacher-parent relationships influences to pupils' academic performance through communication of which it can be friendly, live, simple communication through the use of computer technology, WhatsApp groups and mobile phones. Table 6 below summarizes.

Table 6: Thematic analysis

Main themes	Sub themes	Components
Positive communication	Online meetings	Use of computer technology
		Forming WhatsApp groups
	Simple communication	Mobile phones
Strategies to enhance positive teacher-parent relationships	Enhancing communication	Use of computer technology
		Use of mobile phones
	Meetings and collaborative responsibilities	Enhancing cultural norms and responsibilities

In the interviews participants gave their insights as follows:

Friendly and Online meetings
Respondents declared that friendly online meetings enhance relationships between teachers and parents other than depending on the live meetings below is the ancho example:

> *Nowadays things are simple there is no success in education if there is no team work we need to have meetings frequently these meetings can be organized using social media so we cannot always meet physically this makes the learner feel like parents are always closer to his or her learning process. **(Interview 1, Pos. 5)***

> *Communicating frequently helps to make friendships, thus using online platforms makes communication easy, for example WhatsApp groups and other online means. **(Inteview3, Pos**.2)*

Live and simple communication

In live and simple communication respondents contented that the use of simple communication like mobile phone messages and calls helps students to understand that they are closely monitored by their teachers and parents on their academic progress:

> *Communication using available devices like mobile phones and normal messages makes the communication to be simple. **(Interview 2, Pos.4)***

> *Positive relationships between parents, teachers and students has positive effect on the students' performance and builds friendship. **(Interview 10, Pos. 27)***

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study gives the significant role that teacher-parent relationships play in shaping students' academic performance. The discussion focuses on three key aspects: communication frequency, parental involvement, and teacher responsiveness, as well as their implications for students' learning outcomes.

4.2.1 Communication Frequency

The data indicates that while parents and teachers maintain regular communication, the structure and effectiveness of these interactions require enhancement. The results suggest that communication is often informal

and sporadic, which may limit its impact on student outcomes. This aligns with Garbacz et al. (2017), who highlighted that structured and equitable communication strategies enhance parental engagement. Despite parents frequently attending meetings (Mean: 4.67, SD: 0.52), their direct communication with teachers via phone or email remains moderate (Mean: 3.33, SD: 0.52). This suggests the need for digital platforms, such as WhatsApp groups or school portals, to improve structured communication.

4.2.2 Parental Involvement

Involvement of parents in their children's academic activities is crucial for enhancing learning. The research indicated that while parents were engaged in overseeing homework and projects (Mean: 4.17, SD: 0.75), their participation in school activities was comparatively lower (Mean: 3.83, SD: 0.75). These results align with Letswalo (2023), who pointed out that time limitations and lack of self-assurance hinder parental involvement. The study recommends that schools adopt approaches to promote greater parental engagement, such as offering flexible volunteering options and digital tools for engagement at home.

4.2.3 Teacher Responsiveness

This study raised issues concerning how responsive teachers are. The results indicate that teachers typically respond to parental concerns within a moderate time frame (Mean: 2.75, SD: 0.50), and the feedback regarding students' progress is only moderately positive (Mean: 3.00, SD: 1.00). This aligns with the findings of Garbacz et al. (2019), which emphasized that prompt feedback and active engagement from teachers strengthen parent-teacher partnerships. Motivating teachers to implement proactive feedback strategies, like regular progress updates, might improve parental satisfaction and involvement.

4.2.4 Qualitative Insights and Thematic Analysis

The qualitative findings highlight the significance of friendly and approachable communication between educators and parents. Participants pointed out that online meetings and digital communication tools enable consistent and convenient interaction. As one participant mentioned, "There is no success in education if there is no teamwork... utilizing social media for meetings gives the learner the impression that parents are always involved in their educational journey" (Interview 1, Pos. 5). The study also discloses the importance of improving communication through digital channels and promoting cultural norms of collaboration can enhance the relationships between teachers and parents Mwibilicha & Mwakalinga, 2022).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study highlights the essential importance of relationships between teachers and parents in promoting academic achievement. Although communication between parents and educators occurs frequently, its effectiveness can be enhanced through organized and digital methods. Parental engagement in their children's educational activities is apparent but necessitates more active participation in school functions. Furthermore, there is a need to improve teachers' responsiveness to parental inquiries and feedback systems to foster stronger collaboration. To enhance teacher-parent relationships, schools ought to integrate digital communication tools, promote flexible ways for parents to get involved, and establish timely feedback mechanisms from teachers. By reinforcing these elements, a more supportive and cooperative learning atmosphere will be created, ultimately aiding students' academic success. Future studies should investigate the effects of targeted communication strategies and parental engagement initiatives to further refine these approaches.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Policy makers should think of creating policies that mandate regular and transparent communication between schools and parents. Policies should include guidelines for the use of technology, frequency of communication, and responsibilities of school communication officers.

2. They should make sure that educational institutions have the money for staff, technology, and training needed to set up and maintain efficient communication channels. Additionally, give top priority to invest in digital infrastructure that will facilitate virtual meetings, web portals, and other communication tools.

3. Politicians should use political platforms to highlight the importance of effective communication in education and advocate for policies that support this.

4. Teachers should maintain regular and open communication with parents through meetings, phone calls, emails, or digital platforms (e.g., school apps, WhatsApp groups).

5. Parents should attend parent-teacher meetings, school events, and academic discussions to stay informed about their child's progress.

6. This study recommends investigating current communication practices in schools, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. By focus on

how different communication strategies impact student outcomes, parental involvement, and teacher satisfaction.

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