



Principals' Communication Strategies as Determinants of Parental Involvement in Academic Programmes in Public Secondary Schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya

Clarix Naliaka Kuteli, Samuel N. Waweru & Daniel Otieno Okech
School of Education
Kenyatta University
Email: clarixkuteli@gmail.com

Abstract: *Principals' communication strategies are vital in enabling parents to take part in academic programmes in public schools. However, in Nairobi City County, the level of parental involvement in academic programmes is low. Many parents rarely attend annual general meetings (AGMs), academic clinics or prize-giving days. Thus, the purpose of this study was to assess principals' communication strategies as determinants of parental involvement in academic programmes in public secondary schools. The study adopted a mixed methodology and concurrent triangulation research design. Target population comprised 101 principals, 2084 teachers and 1678 parents' representatives totaling 3863 respondents from which 363 respondents were sampled using Yamane's Formula. This consisted of 33 principals, 297 teachers and 33 parents' representatives. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and interview guides from principals and parents' representatives. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically based on the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25) and presented using tables. The study found that there has been a decline in parental engagement in academic activities between 2019 and 2023. There has been a consistent drop in attendance at AGMs, committee meetings, disciplinary sessions and academic clinics. In response, principals have employed a range of communication strategies; however, the effectiveness of these strategies has not been fully realized. Thus, principals should adopt multiple communication platforms to ensure parents are always informed.*

Keywords: *Parental involvement, Communication strategies, Academic programmes, Public, secondary schools*

How to cite this work (APA):

Kuteli, C. N., Waweru, S. N. & Okech, D. O. (2025). Principals' communication strategies as determinants of parental involvement in academic programmes in public secondary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 9(2), 397 – 409. <https://doi.org/10.59765/tgy47rp>.

1. Introduction

Parental involvement in schools has become a critical component of education systems worldwide and they play a crucial part in the education of their children. As per Epstein and Sanders (2020), their immersion in schools can have a significant impression on their children's educational accomplishments. This indicates that parents have a crucial duty in the instruction of their children by undertaking a multiplicity of tasks. These include providing curriculum support materials, preparing learners for school and modeling learners'

behaviour. According to Lawson and Alameda-Lawson (2021), parents are often expected to undertake a myriad of activities such as discussing school events, ensuring that students perform their academic tasks such as homework, attending school functions as well as parent-teacher meetings and volunteering in classrooms. In the same token, the United Nations (2024) also postulates that one of the indicators for measuring progress towards this goal is the percentage of parents or caregivers who report engrossment in their youngsters' schooling. However, some parents rarely attend or take part in school academic programmes.

In Austria, for example, a report by McKenna and Millen (2021) shows that 45.9% of parents irregularly attend annual general meetings in their children's schools, 12.9% rarely participate in volunteering activities whereas 24.9% rarely take part in disciplinary meetings concerning their children. In Colombia, the scenario is the same with almost 50.4% always failing to attend academic activities in their children's schools. To mitigate these challenges, principals have devised communication strategies to ensure that as many parents as possible turn up for school academic activities. In the words of Hallinger and Heck (2023), communication strategies are deliberate efforts by school leaders to convey information, set expectations, and cultivate collaboration. According to Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2023), principals who engage in clear, consistent, and supportive communication contribute significantly to the development of a positive school climate.

Similarly, communication strategies that include regular feedback, clear instructions, and opportunities for dialogue between stakeholders are linked to improved teacher satisfaction and retention (Mason & McCarthy, 2022). This implies that effective communication is a pivotal element of leadership within schools, influencing how parents engage with their children's academic activities. Various forms of communication strategies, such as newsletters, parent-teacher meetings, school websites, and social media, have been employed by school principals to foster positive relationships with parents (Smith & Peterson, 2022).

The strategy chosen often depends on the cultural context, technological accessibility, and socioeconomic factors prevalent in a particular region. Despite these variations, the role of principals in creating an open, transparent, and engaging communication environment remains a central theme. In the United States of America, there has been a growing emphasis on digital communication tools in recent years. School principals have increasingly relied on websites, emails, and social media platforms to communicate with parents (Johnson & Leavitt, 2021). According to Thompson and Sullivan (2022), principals in urban schools have leveraged social media to encourage parental involvement by sharing real-time updates and engaging parents through online forums. This strategy has been particularly effective in reaching parents who may have difficulty attending traditional in-person meetings due to work or transportation issues.

Moreover, principals in the U.S. are increasingly aware of the need to engage diverse parent populations. As highlighted by Davis and Traynor (2020), successful school leaders use communication strategies that are culturally responsive, ensuring that language barriers do not hinder parental involvement. For instance, bilingual newsletters and interpreters at parent-teacher meetings are common practices used in schools with high numbers of immigrant families. Such practices ensure that all parents, regardless of their background, can actively

participate in their child's education. In France, the communication strategies employed by school principals tend to be more formal and structured. Lemoine (2021) suggests that principals in French schools often use face-to-face meetings and official school bulletins to communicate with parents. These communication methods are deeply rooted in the country's educational culture, where academic achievement is highly valued, and formal interactions between parents and school staff are the norm. Lemoine (2021) argues that this lack of technological integration has led to a gap in communication between schools and parents, particularly in rural areas where parents may not have easy access to digital resources.

In Ghana, parental involvement is often deeply rooted in community relationships. Principals typically rely on informal communication channels, such as word of mouth or community gatherings, to engage parents in school activities (Owusu-Ansah, 2020). In Uganda, Nsubuga and Buwembo (2022) posit that there are several barriers to effective parental communication in schools, including limited access to technology, language differences, and socioeconomic challenges. Principals in Ugandan schools often face difficulties in reaching parents, especially those in rural areas who may not have access to the internet or mobile phones.

According to Nsubuga and Buwembo (2022), face-to-face communication remains the most common method of engagement, though it is often inconsistent and dependent on parents' ability to attend scheduled meetings. Despite these challenges, principals in Uganda have implemented innovative strategies to improve communication. For example, community radio stations and local gatherings have been used to relay important information to parents (Ssewanyana, 2023). These methods help overcome the barriers posed by limited access to digital tools, ensuring that parents stay informed about their children's academic progress. In Kenya, the role of principals in facilitating communication with parents has been evolving rapidly.

Obara and Kiprop (2021) assert that urban schools in Nairobi have embraced digital platforms such as WhatsApp groups, SMS, and school websites to keep parents informed and involved. This shift toward digital communication has been accelerated by the increasing use of mobile phones among parents, particularly in urban areas (Kiplagat, 2022). Such platforms allow principals to communicate with parents in real-time, sharing updates about school events, academic performance, and other relevant information. However, in rural Kenya, principals still rely heavily on traditional methods of communication, such as notices sent home with students or during parent-teacher meetings (Otieno, 2023). Kiplagat (2022) suggests that the digital divide between urban and rural areas poses a significant challenge to ensuring equitable parental involvement. Nonetheless, efforts are being made to bridge this gap,

with initiatives aimed at improving digital literacy among parents in rural areas.

In public secondary schools in Nairobi County, however, the level of parents' involvement in academic programmes is low. Many parents rarely attend annual general meetings (AGMs), academic clinics as well as prize-giving days. As previously mentioned, a survey by Mudibo (2023) reveals that, at various public secondary schools, only 44.8% of parents take part in school AGMs, 47.1% participate in academic clinics for their children, 54.9% of them take part in prize-giving activities whereas 39.1% get involved in discipline issues in secondary schools. Despite these statistics, there is need for further research on the extent to which principals' communication strategies influence parental engagement in academic programmes in public secondary schools, hence the study.

1.1 Research Objectives

The study sought to address the following objectives:

1. To assess the status of parental involvement in academic programmes in public secondary schools in Nairobi City County.
2. To examine how principals' communication strategies determine parental involvement in academic programmes in public secondary schools in Nairobi City County.

2. Literature Review

In contemporary society, establishing proficient communication tactics among principals, instructors, parents, and learners within public secondary schools is essential to fostering a prosperous and gratifying educational milieu. Principals assume a vital part in this context, as they are liable for establishing an atmosphere of communication as well as facilitating parental engagement in academic initiatives. In an investigation conducted in Antarctica, Raja, Rajesh, Gangwar, Rastogi and Bajaj (2023) revealed that principals undertook a proactive role in promoting parental participation in the institute's various activities and available resources. The researchers further found that fostering effective communication between parents and principals could yield positive outcomes within the context of elementary schools. In the same token, Edelstein and Strahl (2022) conducted an investigation in Antarctica which also recognized that it would be beneficial for principals to prioritize enhancing connections among teachers, parents, and school staff while fostering parental engagement in school-related activities. These data indicate that the institution of learning heads must ensure that communication strategies are customized to suit the unique cultural environment of secondary schools.

In many public secondary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa, the circumstances remain unchanged. With

communication approaches adopted by school heads being crucial in enabling parents to take part in academic programmes with many school heads widely employing parent-teacher meetings as a strategy. According to Maru (2022), this approach involves organizing a designated day for parents to visit the school to engage in meaningful interactions with their child's teachers and the principal. In other words, this communication practice enables educators to offer feedback and recommendations to parents of students concerning their children's academic, cultural and personal growth. An investigation conducted in Nigeria by Peters (2023) found that many school principals employ internet communication technologies, including websites and social media networks, as an additional method. According to Peters (2023), this facilitates parental involvement through direct communication with the school and staff, enabling discussions regarding their child's academic progress or any inquiries they may have. These results indicate that principals' use of effective communication approaches by principals is key in encouraging active participation of parents in academic programmes. In other words, establishing a communicative channel between parents and schools is vital to fostering collaboration and creating an environment where pupils feel nurtured in their academic pursuits. In Kenya, fostering health communication practices by school heads has been regarded and touted as a key to motivating parents to participate effectively in school academic programmes. An investigation conducted in Nyeri County by Njoroge and Koome (2022) found a range of measures available for principals to promote parental involvement in school activities. According to Njoroge and Koome (2022), these practices encompass a range of approaches, such as open-house meetings, parent-educator consultations, and active participation in school events such as field excursions and sports undertakings and effective utilization of school newsletters.

These results indicate that communication strategies adopted by principals such as open-house meetings provide principals with a platform to effectively communicate with parents regarding educational policies and changes in school programmes as well as academic activities implemented in schools, including school fees and performance targets. In other words, these meetings facilitate parents in acquiring a more comprehensive comprehension of the school's curriculum and expectations while also allowing them to inquire and seek elucidation. This supports the results of research conducted by Wanyonyi and Kiplagat (2023) which uncovered that frequent communication with parents is productive in fostering parental engagement in endeavours aimed at bolstering their children's educational pursuits.

Wanyonyi and Kiplagat (2023) further revealed that parent-teacher conferences allow educators to discuss and resolve any academic or behavioural concerns that

could impede a student's academic advancement. These meetings also provide an opportunity for parents to engage in dialogue regarding their issues while allowing teachers to elucidate their strategies for addressing these problems. This was consistent with the assertions of Islam (2022) that establishing frequent meetings enhances the relationship between the home and school, fostering a collaborative environment between parents and the educational institution. This implies that utilizing school newsletters to disseminate information to parents seems to be a productive strategy in ensuring their awareness and active engagement in their child's educational journey.

According to Din, Baharum and Aminah (2022), principals can use this platform to communicate with parents about forthcoming events, recent curriculum adjustments, and policy modifications. Furthermore, utilizing this approach facilitates the reception of input from parents, encompassing their views and suggestions about the educational institution. In Kenya, in many public secondary schools, communication practices that school heads adopt are considered crucial in attracting many parents to partake in institutes' academic programmes. A study conducted in Machakos County by David (2022) established that instituting effective communication channels between principals and parents is crucial in fostering parental engagement in a school's academic programme. According to David (2022), principals can cultivate robust relationships with parents and promote their engagement in their child's education by implementing various strategies, including open-house meetings, parental-teacher meetings, active participation in school activities and regular dissemination of information through school newsletters.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in public secondary schools in Nairobi City County where poverty, limited resources, and substantial student enrollments contribute to significantly diminished levels of parental involvement and educational achievements. For example, an investigation by Mutua and Onyango (2020) demonstrated that effective communication techniques between principals and parents resulted in heightened engagement in student activities and improved academic performance. The study's findings also suggest that effective communication strategies between parents and principals should consider the cultural and socio-economic contexts of the parents involved.

Moreover, research conducted by Mutua and Onyango (2020) has illustrated the indispensability of furnishing parents with sufficient assistance and resources to facilitate favourable outcomes in students' academic performance. These findings further affirm the fact that effective communication between parents and principals is crucial for promoting greater parental engagement in a secondary school context and for fostering a good school

climate. Yet, more work has to be done because Mutua and Onyango (2020), along with other evaluated research, have not investigated how particular communication strategies used by principals' impact parental engagement in academic programs in public secondary schools, thus the study.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the communication theory whose proponent was Shannon (1948). One of the central principles is the concept of feedback, which highlights the importance of two-way communication. For parental involvement to be effective, principals must not only disseminate information but also listen to parents' concerns, preferences, and suggestions. Another important principle is context, which asserts that communication cannot be separated from the environment in which it occurs. For principals, this means understanding the cultural, socioeconomic, and emotional context of the parents they are communicating with to ensure that messages are appropriate and accessible. Additionally, the principle of clarity and transparency emphasizes the need for principals to ensure that their communication is straightforward and easily understood, avoiding jargon or complex language that may alienate parents. In the context of this study, when applied to the study of principals' communication strategies, communication theory provides a lens through which we can examine how leaders engage parents in academic programs.

In practical terms, this could involve using multiple channels of communication, such as email, phone calls, or face-to-face meetings, to accommodate different preferences and ensure that all parents are reached. In application, principals who embrace communication theory may develop tailored strategies to engage parents effectively, such as organizing regular parent-teacher conferences, sending home newsletters, or utilizing digital platforms for real-time updates on academic progress. These strategies help create a transparent flow of information that encourages parents to take an active role in their children's education, fostering a partnership that benefits the students. Through the application of the communication theory, principals can strengthen the school-community relationship, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for students. This study was also guided by the parental involvement theory by Palkovitz (2002). This idea is based on the fact that the essential characteristics of parenting, such as nurturing and protection, are more widely recognized, and there is far more agreement about excellent parents than about bad parents.

According to Palkovitz (2002), categorizing parents as being more or less active in their children's lives in a global sense contributes little to our knowledge of parental participation or how parental involvement impacts children's well-being and development. Instead,

it is more significant to examine the unique how parents communicate with children of their own in light of numerous co-occurring conditions.

Palkovitz (2002) defines continuum as time put into it, extent of participation, visibility, prominence, directedness, closeness, and appropriateness. In the words of Palkovitz (2002), parents' ideas about watching, organizing, or fretting regarding their children's lives may not be visible actions, but they can have a substantial impact on the way they behave toward their children in various situations. Parents who think long and hard about how they may assist their children cope with individual challenges or developmental concerns are far more inclined to be adequately prepared to connect with their little ones in a good way than parents who react to their offspring without much thought. The aforementioned theory applies to this study since it underscores the vitality of parental involvement in academic programmes in schools.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a mixed methodology and concurrent triangulation research design. Target population comprised 101 principals, 2084 teachers and 1678 parents' representatives totaling 3863 respondents from which 363 respondents were sampled using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create 11 strata based on the number of sub-counties in Nairobi County. From each sub-county, three principals and three parents' representatives were selected using purposive sampling. However, from each of the sample schools, 9 teachers were selected using simple random sampling. This procedure realized a sample of 33 principals, 297 teachers and 33 parents' representatives. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and interview guides from principals and parents' representatives. The researcher also undertook a document analysis.

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically based on the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25) and presented using tables. In this study, an ethical clearance certificate was obtained from Kenyatta University Ethical Review Committee (KU ERC) before embarking on data collection processes. The researcher undertook to keep private any information given by the respondents that touched on their personal life. The researcher assured the respondents that no private information would be divulged to a third party. The nature and the purpose of the research were explained to the respondents by the researcher. The researcher explained to the respondents the procedure that would be followed during the data collection so that they could participate willingly. The raw data collected were filed for easy reference. Once the data were analyzed, computer printouts were filed while soft copies were stored in storage devices such as CDs and flash discs.

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, findings of the study as per the objectives of the study are outlined besides highlighting presentation of findings as well as discussions.

4.1 Response Rates

In this study, 297 questionnaires were distributed among teachers, but 269 were successfully filled and returned. At the same time, 25 principals and 25 parents' representatives were interviewed. These gave response rates shown in Table 1;

Table 1: Response Rate

Respondents	Sampled Respondents	Those who Participated	Response Rate (%)
Principals	33	25	75.8
Teachers	297	269	90.6
Parents' Representatives	33	25	75.8
Total	363	319	87.9

Source: Field Data (2024)

From Table 1, the principals registered a response rate of 75.8%, teachers registered 90.6% whereas the parents' representatives registered a response rate of 75.8%. This yielded an average response rate of 87.9% which, according to Creswell (2014), is appropriate besides being of acceptable levels for generalization of the results to the target population.

4.2 Status of Parental Involvement in Academic Programmes in Public Secondary Schools

The study sought to assess the status of parental involvement in academic programmes and activities in public secondary schools. This was measured by analyzing the number of parents who had been attending

academic functions such as Annual General Meetings (AGMs), disciplinary meetings and academic clinics for the last five years (2019-2023). Results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Parental Involvement in Academic Programmes in Public Secondary Schools in Nairobi County

School Academic Programmes	Number of Parents in Attendance				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of parents attending AGMs	26800	16175	15097	14562	13765
Number of parents attending committee meetings	23	21	21	19	18
Number of parents who turn up for meetings to discuss discipline issues	19	14	12	12	9
Number of parents who attend academic clinics	856	765	576	512	501

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 2 shows that the number of parents who participate in academic programmes from AGMs to academic clinics has been on a downward trend for the last five years (2019-2023). The researcher also interviewed the principals and parents' representatives who also admitted that many parents do not take part in academic programmes in schools. These findings corroborate the findings of a study carried out by Mudibo (2023) which also revealed that, in public secondary schools in Nairobi County, many parents rarely attend annual general meetings (AGMs), academic clinics as well as prize-giving days. According to Mudibo (2023), only 44.8% of parents take part in school AGMs, 47.1% participate in academic clinics for their children, 54.9% of them take part in prize-giving activities whereas 39.1% get involved in discipline issues in secondary schools. These findings affirm the fact that, despite the prevailing consensus on the positive correlations between parental

engagement and student outcomes, a notable occurrence has emerged that many parents rarely attend significant school events such as Annual General Meetings (AGMs), committee meetings, disciplinary meetings as well as academic clinics.

4.3 Principals' Communication Strategies and Parental Involvement in Academic Programmes in Public Secondary Schools

The study sought to establish how often principals adopt different communication strategies and how it influences parental involvement in academic programmes in public secondary schools. Descriptive data were collected from teachers and results are indicated in Table 3;

Table 3: Frequency of Principals' Use of Different Communication Strategies in Public Secondary Schools

Training	Very Often	Rarely	Never
	%	%	%
Use of physical meetings	40.9	50.2	8.9
Use of newsletters	30.9	51.7	17.4
Use of technology	53.2	40.1	6.7
Use of learners	79.2	19.0	1.8

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 3 shows that 110(40.9%) of the teachers stated that principals very often use physical meetings to share information with parents, slightly more than half, 135(50.2%), stated they rarely do whereas 24(8.9%) indicated that principals never use physical meetings. Similarly, 83(30.9%) of the teachers indicated that principals use newsletters to relay information to parents, slightly more than half, 139(51.7%) stated that they rarely do while 47(17.4%) said they never do. Most of the teachers, 143(53.2%) stated that principals very often use technology to communicate with parents, 108(40.1%) said they rarely while a paltry 18(6.7%) said they never do. On use of learners to communicate to parents, 213(79.2%) of the teachers stated that parents very often use learners as media of communication, 51(19.0%) said they rarely whereas a paltry 5(1.8%) said

that principals never share information with parents through learners. During the interviews, however, the principals and parents' representatives also stated that school heads use a variety of communications channels to share information with parents. Principal, P1, stated.

In my school, I frequently use newsletters, technology and above all, use learners as a medium of communication. In some cases, especially when dealing with discipline cases, I invite parents to come for physical meetings.

On their part, parents' representatives stated that principals often use different communication strategies ranging from physical meetings to learners depending on the issues to be discussed. These findings underscore the vitality of communication with parents and attendant strategies adopted by principals. In other words, in the contemporary educational landscape, effective communication is imperative for promoting a cohesive learning environment. These findings corroborate the findings of a study carried out by Smith and Jones (2021) that the communication strategies have been employed by principals, particularly emphasizing the use of newsletters, technology, and student involvement as mediums of interaction.

Newsletters have emerged as a traditional yet effective tool for principals to disseminate information. Smith and Jones (2021) further assert that regular newsletters foster a sense of community and keep parents informed about school events, academic achievements, and policy changes. By providing parents with structured information, newsletters help bridge the gap between home and school, enhancing parental engagement in education. In the same token, these findings further lend credence to the findings research conducted by Davis, Thompson and Williams (2022) who found that the advantages of social media platforms and school websites in providing real-time updates. These digital tools allow principals to reach a broader audience more effectively, particularly in urgent situations. The integration of technology not only expedites information dissemination but also encourages two-way communication, enabling parents to respond with queries

and feedback. Moreover, involving students as a medium of communication has gained traction in recent literature. As discussed by Johnson (2023), students can act as liaisons, sharing information about school activities and initiatives with their families.

This approach not only empowers students but also fosters a culture of responsibility and ownership of their education. However, when addressing sensitive issues such as discipline cases, research suggests the necessity of face-to-face interaction. Inviting parents for physical meetings allows for a more personalized discussion and fosters a collaborative atmosphere in resolving conflicts. This multifaceted communication strategy enhances trust and transparency between the school and families, ultimately contributing to a more supportive educational environment. These findings affirm the fact that effective communication between principals and parents is crucial for fostering a strong school community. This further shows that principals employ various communication strategies to convey information, including newsletters, emails, phone calls, and social media. Regular newsletters and emails enable principals to disseminate important updates regarding school events, policies, and academic performance. Additionally, phone calls are often utilized for more personalized communication, particularly during conferences or addressing specific concerns. By utilizing these diverse communication methods, principals maintain transparency and build trust, ultimately enhancing parental involvement in the educational process.

Table 4: Teachers' Views on the Influence of Principals' Communication Strategies on Parental Involvement in Academic Programmes in Public Secondary Schools

Summary of Test Items	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Public secondary school principals often use physical meetings to attract parents to school	53.2	11.5	1.5	10.4	23.4
In public secondary schools, the principals always use newsletters as a way of inviting parents to take part in school academic activities objectives of strategic plans	66.9	13.4	2.6	12.6	4.5
To attract parents to get involved in academic activities in public secondary schools, the principals sometimes use technology and digital platforms	50.9	9.74	1.5	3.3	34.6
In public secondary schools, learners act as agents for relaying information to their parents	58.4	19.7	3.7	5.6	13.8
In public secondary schools, communication strategies used by principals have not improved parental involvement in academic programmes	23.0	6.7	3.3	18.6	48.4

Source: Filed Data (2024)

Table 4 shows that 143(53.2%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that public secondary school principals often use physical meetings to attract parents

to school whereas 31(11.5%) agreed. However, only a paltry 4(1.5%) were undecided, 28(10.4%) disagreed whereas 63(23.4%) strongly disagreed. During the

interviews, the principals and parents' representatives also responded in favour of the view that use of physical meetings to share information with parents is still frequently used and has attracted parents to take in school academic programmes. Principal, P2, noted;

In my school, I always ensure that parents attend AGMs, academic clinics, committee meetings physically.

These findings lend credence to the findings of research carried out by Epstein (2020), who revealed that such meetings are essential because they allow for direct, personal communication between school staff and parents, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility for the students' education. Moreover, these events provide a space for parents to voice concerns, ask questions, and become informed about school policies and student progress. As noted by Deslandes and Bertrand (2021), while physical meetings remain a cornerstone of parent-school interaction, the accessibility and convenience of such events can be an issue, particularly in schools with diverse parent populations or those located in communities with socio-economic challenges.

These findings underscore the vitality of physical meetings as an enabler of parents' participation in academic programmes. These physical meetings, including parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and school events, serve as a way to build trust and encourage active participation. Majority, 180(66.9%), of the teachers strongly agreed that, in public secondary schools, the principals always use newsletters as a way of inviting parents to take part in school academic activities as did 36(13.4%) who agreed. At the same time, 7(2.6%) were undecided, 34(12.6%) disagreed whereas 12(4.5%) strongly disagreed. These views were supported by most of the principals and parents' representatives who noted that the use of newsletters to relay information to parents has been a common practice. Parents' representative, PR1, stated;

We often receive newsletters from school at the end of every mid-term or end-term to get information about the school activities

This indicates that newsletters serve as a vital communication channel between schools and families, fostering a sense of community and partnership. These findings lend credence to Epstein's (2018) framework on parental involvement, which indicates that effective communication constitutes one of the six key dimensions that enhance family-school relationships. Newsletters provide essential updates on school events, academic programmes, and volunteer opportunities, thereby keeping parents informed and engaged. These findings further support the findings of a study carried out by Lewis and Hoover-Dempsey (2020) which revealed that regular newsletters that highlight the importance of

parental involvement in academics can lead to increased rates of participation in programmes such as parent-teacher conferences and extracurricular activities. These findings underscore the effectiveness of newsletters as a strategic communication tool employed by school principals to engage parents in academic activities. As schools strive for increased parental involvement, the insights gained from this review suggest that well-structured newsletters should be emphasized in future communication strategies, thereby supporting the overarching goal of fostering a collaborative educational community. Most, 137(50.9%), of the teachers strongly agreed that, to attract parents to get involved in academic activities in public secondary schools, the principals sometimes use technology and digital platforms whereas 26(9.7%) agreed. However, 4(1.5%) were undecided, 9(3.3%) disagreed whereas 93(34.6%) were in strong disagreement. Both the principals and parents' representatives also concurred with most of the teachers that principals use technology and other aspects of digital platforms to share information with parents. Principal, P3, noted;

In my school, I often communicate with parents through direct phone calls or messages. We have even formed social media platforms where parents, teachers and school management can share information on school activities

This indicates that use of digital platforms such as school websites, mobile applications, and social media channels have become instrumental in disseminating information about academic programmes, events, and student progress. These findings lend credence to the findings of a study conducted by Smith and Jones (2022) which found that schools utilizing dedicated mobile apps experienced a 25% increase in parental attendance at school events, demonstrating the potential of technology to enhance participation. This is attributed to the fact that these platforms provide a convenient means for parents to communicate with teachers, fostering a collaborative environment that supports student learning. This is also consistent with the findings of research conducted by Lee, Kim and Park (2023) which revealed that learning management systems (LMS) not only facilitate the sharing of academic resources and assignments but also enable parents to monitor their children's academic performance in real-time. This transparency empowers parents to engage more actively in their children's education, leading to improved academic outcomes.

The study emphasizes that when parents are informed and involved, students are more likely to succeed. These findings point to the fact that strategic use of digital platforms by school principals is a promising approach to enhancing parental involvement in public secondary schools. By leveraging these tools, schools can foster a more collaborative and supportive educational environment, ultimately benefiting students' academic

experiences and outcomes. Majority, 154(58.4%) of teachers strongly agreed that, in public secondary schools, learners act as agents for relaying information to their parents while 53(19.7%) agreed. However, 10(3.7%) were undecided, 15(5.6%) disagreed whereas 37(13.8%) strongly disagreed. On their part, principals and parents supported the views expressed by most teachers that learners are always the agents for sharing information with parents. Parents' representative, PR2, stated;

I always receive information concerning school activities from my child. This has been the most common approach which the principals have used to communicate to parents

This implies that learners in secondary education are increasingly pivotal in bridging communication between educators and parents. This corroborates that the assertions of Epstein and Sheldon (2016) that students function as intermediaries, disseminating pertinent academic information, school policies, and extracurricular opportunities, thus ensuring parents remain informed and engaged in their children's education. In other words, according to Epstein and Sheldon (2016), such approach of relaying information not only enhances parental engagement but also fosters a sense of responsibility among students, empowering them to take ownership of their academic journeys. On the contrary, a small proportion, 62(23.0%), of teachers strongly agreed that, in public secondary schools, communication strategies used by principals have not improved parental involvement in academic programmes whereas 18(6.7%) agreed. However, 9(3.3%) were undecided, 50(18.6%) disagreed whereas 130(48.4%) strongly disagreed. During the interviews, the principals and parents' representatives responded on the contrary in support of the views expressed by most of the teachers that principals have devised communication approaches of ensuring that as many parents as possible take part in academic programmes. Principal, P3, stated;

In my school, despite the decreasing parents' attendance of school functions, I have often adopted a multiplicity of communication strategies to ensure that parents participate in academic programmes.

These results support the findings of a study carried out by Jones et al. (2020), who found that the modern family often grapples with time constraints that significantly impede their ability to participate in in-person events, such as parent-teacher conferences and school performances. However, despite these barriers, principals have increasingly turned to alternative methods of communication to ensure their involvement. These include online platforms, including social media, class apps, and virtual meetings, have emerged as pivotal tools that facilitate communication between parents and schools. In the same token, research conducted by Smith and Garcia (2022) emphasizes that these digital avenues not only enhance accessibility but also allow for real-time engagement, enabling parents to remain informed and connected. Furthermore, the adoption of informal communication methods, such as text messaging and community-driven social groups, has demonstrated a successful means of bridging the gap between home and school. Such strategies encourage a more personalized approach, allowing parents to share insights and feedback while fostering a sense of community among themselves.

This further indicates that, while the decline in physical attendance at school functions poses notable challenges, principals have demonstrated remarkable ingenuity by leveraging diverse communication strategies. To further show the influence of principals' communication strategies and parental involvement in academic programmes, data were collected on how often (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) principals of the 25 sampled public secondary schools communicate with parents and the number of parents who have been attending Annual General Meetings (AGMs) for the last five years (2019-2023). Results are shown in Table 5;

Table 5: Frequency of Principals' Communication Strategies and Parental Involvement in Academic Programmes in Public Secondary Schools

How Often Principals Communicate with Parents	Number of Parents Attending AGMs				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
2	696	502	487	467	432
4	905	608	581	540	515
3	1123	689	660	633	621
4	2578	802	788	750	711
5	4021	892	870	841	798
2	537	529	500	473	424
5	3807	1761	1597	1541	1508
4	757	644	620	652	620
2	673	499	479	504	499
3	779	512	490	468	412
5	919	677	597	554	547
4	831	701	644	632	613
5	792	674	656	541	457
4	749	555	530	510	488
3	548	540	501	499	470
3	654	509	470	442	434
5	878	641	599	579	557
2	734	571	430	487	436
2	712	508	445	420	405
5	1602	645	620	598	551
2	997	656	635	627	630
3	789	509	498	457	400
2	807	587	490	485	435
2	978	508	480	452	399
1	734	456	430	413	403

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 5 shows that, in public secondary schools where principals often communicate with parents using different strategies, many parents take part in academic programmes compared to their who rarely share information with parents. This further affirms the fact that principals' frequent and regular communication with

parents using a multiplicity of strategies not only creates transparency but also encourages parents to take a more active role in their children's education. Data in Table 5 were further run through Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis and outcomes are recorded in Table 6:

Table 6: Frequency of Principals' Communication with Parents and Parental Involvement in Academic Programmes in Public Secondary Schools (2019-2023)

		X1	B	C	D	E	F
X1	Pearson Correlation	1	.502*	.526**	.560**	.519**	.501*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011	.007	.004	.008	.011
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25
B	Pearson Correlation	.502*	1	.804**	.831**	.828**	.814**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25
C	Pearson Correlation	.526**	.804**	1	.991**	.989**	.981**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25
D	Pearson Correlation	.560**	.831**	.991**	1	.991**	.983**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25
E	Pearson Correlation	.519**	.828**	.989**	.991**	1	.996**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25
F	Pearson Correlation	.501*	.814**	.981**	.983**	.996**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Key: X1- Frequency of Principals' Communication with Parents; B, C, D, E and F-Number of Parents Who Have Attended AGMs for the last five Years (2019-2023) respectively.

Table 6 presents the results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis, which revealed significant positive correlations between principals' communication strategies and parental involvement in academic programmes in public secondary schools. The correlation coefficients were $r_1(25) = 0.502$, $r_2(25) = 0.526$, $r_3(25) = 0.560$, $r_4(25) = 0.519$ and $r_5(25) = 0.501$ with corresponding p-values of 0.011, 0.007, 0.004, 0.008 and $0.011 < 0.05$ respectively. This further indicates that the manner in which principals convey information and engage with parents and strategies adopted therein directly impacts parental participation in school activities. Principals who utilize clear, consistent, and inclusive communication frameworks foster a welcoming environment conducive to parental engagement. Frequent use of methods such as regular newsletters, informative meetings, and digital communication platforms enhance transparency and build trust between school administration and families. When parents are adequately informed about academic programmes, school policies, and student performance, they are more likely to take an active role in their children's education. In other words, these findings affirm the fact that effective communication strategies adopted by school heads empower parents to contribute meaningfully to the educational experience, fostering a partnership that supports student success.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

There is a noticeable decline in parental engagement in academic activities within public secondary schools in Nairobi City County. Over the last five years (2019-2023), there has been a consistent drop in attendance at annual general meetings, committee gatherings, student disciplinary sessions, and academic clinics. In response, school principals have employed a range of strategies; however, the effectiveness of these measures has been called into question. The research shows that principals utilize various communication methods to inform parents about school operations, with the intention of boosting their involvement in academic initiatives. These methods encompass in-person meetings, newsletters, digital communication, and leveraging students as conduits for information. Nevertheless, this strategy has not significantly enhanced parental participation in school activities.

5.2 Recommendations

As a practice, principals should continue adopting and fostering multiple communication platforms like newsletters, mobile apps, and parent-teacher meetings to ensure parents are always informed. They should tailor

their communication to meet the diverse needs of parents and implement feedback mechanisms including suggestion boxes or online surveys allow parents to share their views, creating a collaborative environment.

References

- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- David, D. M. (2022). *Influence of Parental Involvement on Student's academic achievement in public mixed day secondary schools in Yatta Sub-County, Machakos County*. Thesis, Strathmore University.
- Davis, K. & Traynor, T. (2020). Culturally responsive communication strategies in urban schools: A case study. *Journal of Educational Leadership*, 48(3), 112-123.
- Davis, M., Thompson, G., & Williams, R. (2022). The impact of digital communication tools on school engagement. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 58(3), 214-229.
- Deslandes, R., & Bertrand, R. (2021). The dynamics of parental involvement in urban contexts: Bridging perspectives and partnerships. *Education and Urban Society*, 53(8), 883-906.
- Din, M., Baharum, S.A., & Aminah, A. (2022). Parental Involvement in Education: A Comparison between Urban and Rural Areas in Malaysia. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 58(2), 1191-1197.
- Edelstein, H., & Strahl, E. (2022). Communication strategies for Antarctica secondary school principals: Finding a balance between the RCN-INSET-Afro SBS framework for guidance. *Education and Educational Research*, 3(1), 3-14.
- Epstein, J. L. (2018). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Westview Press.
- Epstein, J. L., & Sanders, M. G. (2020). *Family, school, and community partnerships*. Mahway, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2022). Present and accounted for: Improving student

- attendance through family and community involvement. *The School Community Journal*, 26(1), 1-24.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2023). Collaborative leadership and school improvement: Understanding the impact on school capacity and student learning. *School Leadership & Management*, 30(2), 95-110.
- Islam, A. (2022). Parental Involvement in Education: Evidence from Field Experiments in Developing Countries. Retrieved on 13-05-2024 from monash.edu/business-economics
- Johnson, A., & Leavitt, L. (2021). Leveraging social media for parental engagement in U.S. schools. *Journal of Digital Learning*, 12(1), 34-46.
- Johnson, L. (2023). Empowering students as communicators: The role of students in school-family communication. *Journal of School Leadership*, 44(1), 45-60.
- Jones, T. R., Smith, L. M., & Thompson, G. D. (2020). Barriers to parent involvement: The lack of team-building programs in school leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 56(4), 501-523.
- Kiplagat, F. (2022). Communication and parental involvement in Nairobi's urban schools. *Journal of Kenyan Education*, 10(4), 52-65.
- Lawson, M. A., & Alameda-Lawson, T. (2021). A case study of school-linked, collective parent engagement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(4), 651-684.
- Lee, J., Kim, D., & Park, H. (2023). The impact of learning management systems on parental engagement: A study of real-time academic monitoring. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 26(2), 45-58.
- Lemoine, C. (2021). The role of school principals in fostering parental involvement in France. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 59(1), 22-30.
- Maru, D. (2022). Parent involvement in public secondary schools in Africa. *Journal of Educational Research and Reviews*, 35(2), 28-37.
- Mason, D. C., & McCarthy, A. M. (2022). Teacher communication strategies and their effects on student achievement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 44(3), 430-447.
- McKenna, M. K., & Millen, J. (2021). Look! Listen! Learn! Parent narratives and grounded theory models of parent voice, presence, and engagement in K-12 education. *School Community Journal*, 23(1), 9-48.
- Mudibo, S. O. C. (2023). *Impact Of Parents' Involvement on Students' Academic Success in Secondary Schools in Kenya*. Master of Education, the University of Nairobi.
- Mutua, K., & Onyango, M. (2020). Parent-Principal Communication Strategies Linked to Student's Academic Performance in Nairobi County, Kenya. *International Academy of Science and Research Journals*, 1(4), 45-66.
- Njoroge, P.M., & Koome, E.G. (2022). Strategies for enhancing parental involvement in public secondary schools in Nyeri Municipality, Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 3(2), 1-20.
- Nsubuga, M., & Buwembo, B. (2022). Barriers to parental involvement in Ugandan schools: A principal's perspective. *Educational Review*, 15(3), 94-106.
- Obara, R., & Kiprop, M. (2021). The role of digital communication in parental engagement in Kenyan schools. *Journal of Kenyan Educational Research*, 7(1), 78-90.
- Otieno, F. (2023). Traditional communication strategies in rural Kenyan schools. *Journal of Rural Education*, 16(4), 134-146.
- Owusu-Ansah, F. (2020). Parental involvement in Ghanaian schools: The role of community relationships. *Journal of Education and Community Engagement*, 15(2), 45-62.
- Palkovitz, R. (2002). *Involved fathering and men's adult development*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Peters, J. (2023). Enhancing school-community engagement in education in public secondary school in Africa. *Studies in Education*, 9(2), 161-178.
- Raja, G. P., Rajesh, E., Gangwar, R. P., Rastogi, E. & Bajaj, R. (2023). Role of Parental Involvement in Education – A Study. *ResearchGate*, 16(4), 1398-1404
- Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2023). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential

effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635-674.

Shannon, C. E. (1948). A mathematical theory of communication. *Bell System Technical Journal*, 27(3), 379-423.

Smith, A., & Jones, P. (2021). Effective communication strategies for school principals: A focus on newsletters, technology, and student involvement. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 39(2), 112-126.

Smith, J., & Garcia, M. (2022). The impact of digital communication on parental involvement in education. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 15(3), 45-59.

Smith, M., & Peterson, T. (2022). Communication strategies and parental engagement in schools: A comparative study. *Journal of School Leadership*, 39(5), 276-290.

Ssewanyana, D. (2023). Innovative communication strategies in Ugandan schools. *Educational Journal*, 14(1), 45-58.

Thompson, B., & Sullivan, R. (2022). The impact of social media on parental involvement in U.S. schools. *American Educational Review*, 49(2), 120-130.

Wanyonyi, A.N., & Kiplagat, D.K. (2023). Parental involvement and its effects on Academic Achievement of Grade Six Pupils in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 2(6), 170-173.