

Parental involvement in children's education in Rwanda: A case study of vulnerable families from Shyogwe Sector in Muhanga District

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Abstract

This paper aimed at analyzing parental involvement in children's education in Rwanda with a particular focus to vulnerable families from Shyogwe Sector in Muhanga District where the research was conducted. We drew upon Epstein et al.'s (2002) parental involvement framework to examine how Rwandan parents participate in their children's education and the challenges they encounter when they try to be involved. The study utilized a mixed methods that integrated both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A questionnaire was administered to parents while interviews were conducted with school administrators and teachers while focus group interviews were conducted with children from Mbare primary school and G.S Shyogwe. The results of this study indicated that a big number of parents of Shyogwe sector try to get involved in their children's education, but at moderate level. This implies that, even if there are many challenges faced by vulnerable families they do their best to help their children. Therefore, it is important to support these parents, make them be aware of the importance of their participation in their children's education, hence, move to a high level supporting their children.

Keywords: Education, parental involvement, children's education, vulnerable families

1.Introduction

Children's education begins from birth, with parents as their first teachers and role models. Parents play a critical role in providing a learning bridge between school and the home, while instilling in their children positive attitudes and values towards learning and life. Parent engagement in their children's upbringing and education is thus crucial for a child's holistic development (Manzon, et al.,2015).

Families are the first educators of their children and they continue to influence their children's learning and development during the school years and long afterwards. Parents engage in their children's education in many ways at home, in the community and in schools (Jennings and Bosch, 2011).According to Price (2002), students whose parents are highly involved in their education tend to perform better and have fewer behavioural problems. A historical overview indicates that several legislations were passed to support parental involvement practices in schools; as early as 1642 when Massachusetts colony passed a law that required parents to be actively involved in their children's education to reduce poor performance in the classroom (Pulliam and Patten, 2007).Parental involvement is an important consideration for school personnel while according to Wilson and Gross, 2018),awareness and understanding of how parents' educational involvement affects children's learning and academic success are also of paramount importance.

The concept of parental involvement in children`s education seems to be new in Rwanda and mainly in rural areas like Shyogwe sector where many parents are not well educated. In Rwanda and overseas, the majority of parental engagement programs and strategies have been targeted at low-income communities where educational participation and achievement tend to be lower. As implication, parents decide to engage when they understand that collaboration is part of their role as parents, when they believe they can positively influence their child's education and when they perceive that the child and the school wish them to be involved (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 2005).Hence, such a situation motivated us to undertake this research to come up with tangible facts and seek how parents can be made aware of their role following their children education.

However, as stated previously parents in most rural Rwandan areas are less educated or not educated at all, with some financial constraints to sustain their families. The fact that parents are always striving to earn their daily lives may lead them to forgetting the other role of making a

follow-up of their children education not only because of the ignorance, but also because of poverty.

Hence, this paper seeks to address that part of the research gap and represents a modest attempt to explore the importance of parental involvement in children's education and is intended to answer the following research questions:

- What are the parents and teachers' views about parental involvement in children's education for vulnerable families?
- What are the views of school leaders and learners on parental involvement in children's education for vulnerable families?
- What are the barriers against parental involvement in children's education and how can they be overcome?

2. Literature Review

This section highlights what scholars pointed out about parental involvement in children's education, its importance and some of the obstacles that hinder parents from getting fully involved in children education. Key-concepts in line with parental involvement in children are highlighted and an attempt is made to clarify each of them.

2.1. Parental involvement

Epstein et al., (2002) developed a parental involvement framework that has been widely reviewed in the literature. They developed six major types of parental practices that have been approved by numerous practitioners in developing school and family partnership programs.

Moreover, research had shown the link between parental involvement and children's academic success. It is in this line that inspired by Epstein et al., (2002) parental involvement framework, we tried to draw a diagram for conceptual framework to examine how Rwandan parents participate in their children's schooling and the challenges they encounter when they try to be involved. In the same vein, based on a wealth of existing literature, this section describes five categories of parental involvement in children's education as illustrated in the figure below:

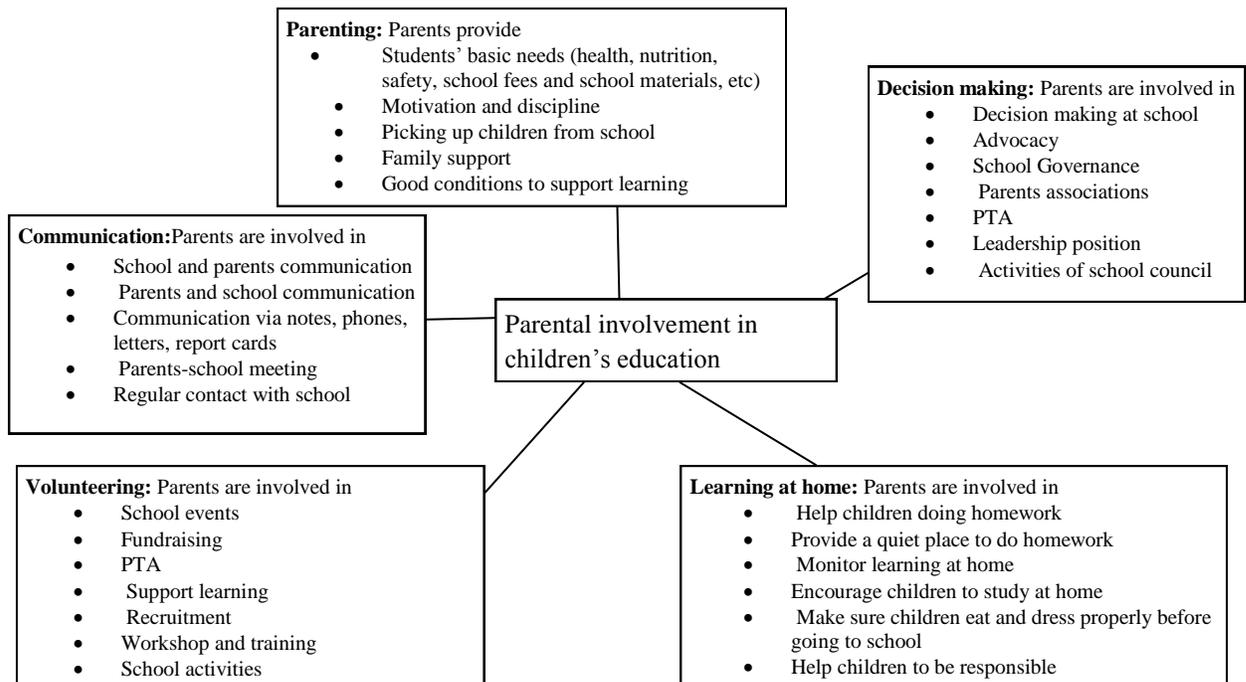


Figure1: Diagram for conceptual framework

2.1.1. Parenting

In **parenting**, parental involvement is understood as buying uniforms, paying school fees, choosing the best schools for children, and only communicating to teachers and school administrators upon request (Nyemba, and Chitiyo, 2018). Parents enrol children in extracurricular activities, or provide educational materials at home when children were at the start of elementary school (Crosnoe et al., 2016). Parents across settings identify relatively similar needs for enabling parental involvement, emphasizing parenting approaches for supporting well-being (e.g., nutrition, mental health, and technology use) and skills for home-based learning (Hamlin, and Flessa, 2016).

Since, parents remain their children's first role models, they influence much on children's attitudes and behavioural development. Because of this, parents also transmit their own attitudes towards education, including sense of efficacy, aspirations and expectations which eventually impact academic achievement (Holloway and Yamamoto, 2008). So, good parenting provides a good foundation of skills, values, attitudes and self-concept (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). Parenting styles affect children's emotional and social characteristics, which may shape their attitudes towards education (Manzon et al., 2015).

Parents provide good parenting skills through providing emotional, social, and moral support to their children. Mothers provide social support by making decisions to send their children to what they regarded as the best schools to protect them from different kinds of abuse (Nyemba, and Chitiyo, 2018). Functional involvement refers to a father's physical and hands-on participation in different therapies (i.e., speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy). Social involvement refers to the father's engagement in different leisure activities (i.e., reading, singing, and engaging in games). By getting parents involved, staff could enhance parents' skills, attitudes, and knowledge, which in turn could lead to positive gains in children's development (Ansari, and Gershoff, 2016).

Parents are not directly involved in school curricula activities but also provide non-academic support, such as encouraging children to work hard and respect elders, which they believe would help their children in schools (Smith and Williford, 2014). Motivation from parents has a tangible impact on learners' behaviours and success. Hence, positive reinforcement is needed than negative reinforcement (Rogers et al., 2009).

2.1.2. Communication

Under this category, communication is crucial for parents to keep themselves updated with their children's progress in school and align their actions accordingly (Manzon et al., 2015). Communication refers to open discussions between parent and child on academic and non-academic matters, as well as a clear display of parents' interest in a child's general and academic well-being (OECD, 2012b).

Effective communication has used various methods of connecting teachers with parents, including face-to-face, intensive individual coaching (Sheridan et al., 2011; Landry et al., 2012) and regular parenting groups (Mendez, 2010). Mostly, different methods used by schools to communicate with parents were convenient. If not communicated through e-mails, their children bring home envelopes or folders once or twice a week containing all the necessary information such as report cards, forms for parents to complete and sign, updates about school activities, and weekly classroom agendas (Nyemba and Chitiyo, 2018). In addition, visits to school to gather relevant information and establish good relationships, discussions with teachers to keep abreast of the child's progress lead to effective communication between parents and teachers (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

Effectively communicating with teachers is necessary because parents need to know all the information necessary to support their children's learning. (Swap, 1987). Written information, and/or enrichment materials and activities for home use with children provides in-depth, research-based information on ways to engage and maintain meaningful parent involvement in children's learning and school governance (Bierman et al., 2008).

2.1.3. Volunteering

In **volunteering**, parents should be involved in helping with several volunteering classroom activities and workshops, at school, which include helping with classroom parties, fundraising activities, boy scouts, and carnivals. (Westmoreland et al., 2009). Some schools hold parent workshops on weekends to explain and discuss techniques with parents on how to help with homework and how to effectively discuss subject content with their children. According to Comer (1995), School Development Program includes school-based involvement such as parent-teacher conferences, volunteering at school, being present in the school and participation in school governance. School-based involvement includes also visits to school for school events such as Parents and Teacher Association (PTA), meetings, open houses, etc, and communication between parents and school personnel (Hill and Tyson, 2009).

Outside the home, parents can serve as advocates for the school. They can volunteer to help out with school activities or work in the classroom (Hughes et al., 2013). Parents work as volunteers in home-school communications, phone contacts, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, homework assistance, home tutoring, and home educational environment (Tangri and Moles, 1987).

This perspective can be argued to encompass such constructs as parents participating at their children's schools, communicating with the school, discussing with their children what they have done during school time, and supervising schoolwork at home (Al-Mahrooqi, R. et al., 2016).

2.1.4. Learning at home

In this category of **learning at home**, the home and school are the two most sustaining and influential contexts in which children develop today (Rogers et al., 2009). One of the practices parents do mainly at home is assisting with homework at home and helping with projects. However, there were some mixed feelings among parents that schools expect them to do too much at home, which is sometimes a major challenge for those with younger kids. Parents were

more involved with the day-to-day homework, making sure that children do it, making sure they take it to school (Nyemba and Chitiyo, 2018).

Parents are children's first teachers, providing an important language environment as they talk to children and answer their questions. A number of studies have shown that parents consider assisting their children with academic work are very important regardless of their financial background (Calvo and Bialystok, 2014). In addition, parents on low incomes perceive helping their children with reading as more important than helping them with mathematics (Drummond and Stipek, 2004). Thus, the more the parents engaged with the children in literacy activities, the greater was their influence on children's reading progress, regardless of parental education background. In other words, evidence of the impact of coaching and tutoring at home aimed at boosting the children's language. It is clearly apparent from the present results that reading books, telling stories and singing songs in the mother language, playing word games, writing letters to match sounds or words, using reading aloud signs and labels and playing puzzle compound word games, are important activities to promote students' mother-tongue language growth and children's literacy development (Tse et al., 2017). Parents can become more involved in helping their children improve their schoolwork, providing encouragement, arranging for appropriate study time and space, modelling desired behaviour, monitoring homework and actively tutoring their children at home.

Home-based involvement includes strategies like communication between parents and children about school, engagement with school work (homework help), taking children to events and places that foster academic success such as museums, libraries, etc, and creating a learning environment at home by making educational materials accessible, such as books, newspapers, educational toys (Hill and Tyson, 2009). Moreover, as Ramani et al., (2015) highlights, parents may engage their pre-schoolers in educationally enriching activities at home in a variety of ways, such as reading books, visiting libraries, engaging the child in chores/errands, and playing counting games or reading books that feature numbers.

Parent engagement in the home ensures that a favourable learning environment extends beyond the school and children feel encouraged to continue learning even at home. Effective home-based activities include parental reading with children which helps, encourages interest and inculcates

reading habits (Jeynes, 2011). Educational involvement of parents may be facilitated when parents have partners, especially a partner also invested in the child (Ressler et al., 2017).

So, good parenting in the home includes many different kinds of engagement including; providing a secure environment, providing intellectual stimulation and conversation, modelling constructive social and educational values, shaping the child's self-concept as a learner by fostering literacy and problem solving, encouraging high aspirations, both personally and socially (Jennings and Bosch, 2011).

2.1.5. Decision making

In **decision making**, parents can take an active role in the **governance and decision making** necessary for planning, developing, and providing an education for the community's children. One of the most effective ways of becoming involved in school decisions is by joining **the school board**, participating in school decisions by attending meetings, as this facilitates access with the administration and some of the parents always know what is going on if there is a problem. Some schools have an association for parents where you would go and say whatever you want (Nyemba and Chitiyo, 2018).

Parental involvement scaffolds adolescents' burgeoning decision-making and problem solving skills and elucidates linkages between their schoolwork and future goals may be more strongly linked to achievement in middle school than is home- or school-based involvement. Parents Teachers associations include communicating parental expectations for education and its value or utility, linking schoolwork to current events, fostering educational and occupational aspirations (Hill and Tyson, 2009).

Briefly, with reference to the above described categories one can confirm that liaising with parents or parents-teachers association, the schools have much to gain from incorporating family and community perspectives into their curricula and pedagogy, and leveraging their resources. It has been suggested that schools cannot work well if their relationships with families and communities do not work well (Weiss, H.B. et al., 2010).

2.3. Importance of parental involvement in children education

A significant body of both international and Australian research has found correlations between parent/family engagement in children's education and schooling, and indicators such as improved school readiness, higher motivation, etc. Effective schools have high levels of parental

and community involvement which can be related to improved student learning, attendance and behaviour, regardless of the social or cultural background of the family (Jennings and Bosch, 2011).

Different programs should do even more to facilitate parent involvement because it can serve as an important means for promoting both parent and child outcomes (Ansari and Gershoff, 2016). Greater parent involvement in their children's education was significantly associated with greater gains in children's early literacy, math, and self-regulatory skills from socioeconomically disadvantaged families. Parent involvement in comprehensive early interventions could be beneficial in terms of improving school readiness for pre-schoolers from disadvantaged families (Marti et al., 2018).

Encouraging parents to be actively and highly involved much earlier on may help in the early detection and resolution of a child's disciplinary or academic problems. Moreover, the effects of parents' engagement on children's emotional and intellectual well-being and their self-efficacy and motivation to learn and succeed are life-long (Jeynes, 2012).

Parents are **the prime educators** before starting school who also have a major influence on children's education in school life and beyond. In addition, a number of researchers have found positive relationships between parental involvement and student achievement through parent-teacher combined work which could also improve school attendance (Harris and Goodall, 2007). Epstein (2002) describes the benefits of **"in-school parental participation"** as parental participation can improve school programmes and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work. High levels of parental/guardian involvement in their children's education are often associated with a number of educational, social, and even psychological benefits.

In general, research findings supported that parental involvement in schooling has positive effects on academic achievement and educational attainment, in addition to reducing the likelihood of dropout and lowering behavioural problems for children at various stages of the life course (Higgins and Katsipataki 2015; Kim and Hill 2015). A review by O'Connor and Scott (2007) revealed that family involvement is associated with an array of positive behavioural, emotional, psychological, social, intellectual, and physical outcomes such as improved social

connections with peers, emotional security and higher IQ (Intellectual quotient) scores. In addition, family involvement has a positive effect on children's academic achievement and social adjustment (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

2.4. Barriers to parental involvement in children's education

One parent-related barrier is associated with less engaged parents tend to come from lower **economic backgrounds**, migrant and minority groups and are single parents. The most commonly cited barriers on the part of parents, especially for **dual-income earners**, are work commitments or other home-school scheduling conflicts, material and psychosocial deprivation suffered by either parent or child, and parents having inappropriate beliefs and values underlying a fatalistic view of education (Manzon et al., 2015).

Some parents may also lack the **knowledge or confidence** about how to be appropriately involved (Hill and Tyson, 2009). Parents may experience language difficulties when communicating with teachers and school officials (Chavkin, 1993). Parents' own negative experiences as students may also influence their attitudes towards their children's academic learning and their teachers (Grolnick, et al., 2009).

Challenges that inhibit parent engagement can include: **work commitments**, demands of other children, childcare difficulties and lack of time generally, parents perceiving themselves as unqualified to participate, a sense of disenfranchisement, language barriers, lack of common understanding between school staff and parents about what constitutes parent involvement, leading teachers to blame families and parents to feel unappreciated (Smith and Wohlstetter, 2009).

Many parents may feel intimidated by schools and may need to be actively encouraged to become engaged. They may have had **negative school experiences** themselves and may feel unwelcome or uncomfortable in an 'alien' school environment. They may feel that they have no contribution to make, or that they will be perceived as overstepping their role (Jennings and Bosch, 2011).

There are many factors cited in the current literature explaining parents' limited involvement in their children's education. These include among others, the inability by some parents to understand the educational system; the majority of parents lack knowledge about how the school system works and its concept of parental involvement (Thao, 2009); and the inability to speak

the English Language by parents literacy and numeracy where English is a medium of instruction like in Rwanda. Ringenberg et al., (2009) argued that the ability to speak the English language well has clear advantages when both interacting with school personnel and preparing children to succeed in school. Occasionally, this language barrier is very stressful for some parents and they would eventually stop participating in school activities (Turney and Kao, 2009).

Most parents in villages are employed in low-income jobs and struggle to fulfil basic living needs, preventing them from getting involved (Crosnoe, 2010). Some parents feel uncomfortable about their lower economic status and would prefer to stay away from teachers, fearing that they would be questioned for not providing their children with school lunch. This is similar to what takes place in Shyogwe sector of Muhanga District in Rwanda where the study was conducted and much sensitisation is highly needed to make children parents aware of their importance in their children education. Taking into account the Rwandan context, one can confirm that the above highlighted barriers are all observed since many parents in rural areas of Rwanda, Shyogwe sector included of low income, less educated or fully non educated and have no relevant surviving means. Hence, a continuous support in different ways is needed for many families to upgrade their living condition and make them more participative in their children' education.

3. Methodology

The research design of this study adopted mixed methods (Qualitative and quantitative) approach. For qualitative approach, the study used document analysis, observation, interviews administrated to teachers and school authorities as well as the focus group interviews conducted with selected primary school children in Shyogwe sector. The document analysis consisted of reviewing different literature in relation to parental involvement in children's education and their success. For quantitative approach, questionnaires were used while collecting data required to determine the level of parental involvement in their children's education.

The population chosen for this study included parents from vulnerable families, teachers, school administrators and learners from G/S Shyogwe and Mbare primary school. The total number of parents was 1118 vulnerable families from Rwandan social category one "Ikiciro cyamberecy'ubudehe". Thus, the study used the sample size calculated according to the

following Slovin's formula: $n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$; Where: n = required sample size; N = Total population; e =

Level of precision estimated at 5% (standard value of 0.05).

By applying the above formula, the sample size was calculated as follows: $n = \frac{1118}{1 + 1118(0.05)^2} = 294.59$ around 295. The calculus done on the basis of the above formula provided us the sample size of 295 respondents from 13 villages of shyogwe sector. These villages were selected randomly and the snowball sampling was used to have an access to the respondents to be questioned for this study.

In the analysis, the level of parental involvement in Shyogwe sector was determined according to the mean score interpretation method as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Mean ranges for likert rating scales

Range	Mean range	Response mode	Description	Interpretation
1	1.00–1.75	Strongly Disagree	Disagree with no doubt at all	Low level
2	1.76– 2. 50	Disagree	Disagree with some doubt	Moderate level
3	2.51– 3.25	Agree	Agree with some doubt	High level
4	3.26 - 4.00	Strongly Agree	Agree with no doubt at all	Very High level

Source: R. Likert (1932),

The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software, while qualitative data were analysed by means of thematic analysis. The questionnaire was administered to respondents and collected data analysed and interpreted accordingly.

In this study, a pilot survey was conducted for checking the suitability of the questionnaire. To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot survey on a group of 30 respondents in Shyogwe Sector in order to see whether the proposed items of the questionnaire could really help measure the parental involvement in their children's education. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used as an indicator to check the internal consistency of whether the items that propose to measure the same general construct produce similar scores. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient varied between 0.75 and 0.74, which indicates that the inter-item reliability is acceptable and that the items can be considered reliable for the sample.

After discussion with fellow researchers, observations from the supervisor and the pilot survey, a minimum Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.7 suggested by Amin's formula $CVI = \frac{R}{N}$ was used

to determine whether the instrument was valid(Amin, 2005).On the overall of 32 items, 28 were proved valid, which gave, for the whole instrument, the Content Validity Index of $28/32 = 0.87$. Therefore, the research instruments were proven valid.

To interpret the findings, the researchers were able to use the range in locating the computed mean score responses for interpreting or ranking specific items for each component. The mean score was used to measure the level of perceptions, the standards deviations measure the spread of responses in rating individual perceptions, the Chi-square test measure the significance level and degree of associations between respondents perceptions and components studied, and P-value or asymptotic significant helps researcher to draw the conclusions that, the data collected has provided enough evidence to help the researchers conclude on research questions.

4. Findings

As stated in the section of methodology, presented and interpreted data were collected by means of questionnaires, personal interviews and focus group interviews. A designed questionnaire was administered to some of parents of the children in schools; personal interviews teachers and others in school administration while focus group interviews were conducted with selected school learners, mostly those in P5 and P6 deemed a bit grown up to respond to the focus guided question.The general are findings presented and interpreted in the following paragraphs.

4.1. Parenting support to learners as perceived by parents

To measure parenting support, questionnaire items were used to measure the parenting level and findings were presented below:

Table 2: Parenting support to learners

Parents 'involvement (295)						
<i>Item</i>	Mean score responses	Std. Dev	Interpretation of perceptions level	Chi-Square Value	P-value	Decision
Fulfil the students' basic needs such as food, health, safety, motivation, skills, school fees and discipline	2.56	0.524	High Level	χ^2 287.628 ^a	0.000	Significance

Provide students' school needs such as paying school fees on time, providing the school equipment	2.18	0.643	Moderate Level	χ^2 206.536 ^a	0.000	Significance
Pick up children from school	1.37	0.567	Lower Level	χ^2 178.983 ^b	0.000	Significance
Cater for child and adolescent development	2.34	0.775	Moderate Level	χ^2 143.819 ^a	0.000	Significance
Create home environment and conditions to support learning	2.32	0.558	Moderate Level	χ^2 279.055 ^a	0.000	Significance
Overall Mean index	2.154		Moderate level		P-value 0.000	Significance

The results in table 2 indicate that the parents' perceptions mean scored (Lower Mean score: 1.37 to 2.56 as highest mean score). The overall means index for parenting skills is 2.154 equivalent to moderate level for the parents' views, with computed p-value of 0.000 which is less than the research standards error of 0.05 (P-value 0.000 < 0.05). These results provide enough evidence by concluding that the parenting support for learners is at moderate level in Shyogwe sector in particular and probably in the entire Rwanda in general.

4.2. Teachers/headteachers and learners views on parenting support

In the same perspective, responding to the role of vulnerable parents in providing support to their children headteachers/teachers recognized parents' will to cooperate with schools but at moderate level. They said for example that few parents have positive mindset towards involvement in their children's education. Parents try to buy school materials and pay some contribution in terms of money for the school ongoing activities (HTr1). However, due to tough living conditions, the other headteacher claimed that there are parents who fail to provide required school materials and pay the school contribution in money (HTr2).

Findings from learners' focus group interviews in relation to parental practice indicated that some parents are aware of their involvement in children education and provide such a support in different ways while others keep ignoring it. Learners highlighted their parents' role in the following:

- ✓ *Parents involve in our education in various ways such as buying school materials such as bags, pens, notebooks, shoes, school uniform (6 students).*
- ✓ *Other learners, claimed that some of their parents do not get involved in their education due to the extreme poverty and low mindset (31 students).*
- ✓ *In relation to the acquisition of school materials on time, learners reported that their parents tried to buy school materials and pay their school fees for allowances on time (13 students)”.*

Briefly, according to respondents, while some parents try their best to follow and support their children education, there are others who do not dare to get involved in their children’s education at all. Ordinarily, there is no collaboration between parents, teachers and school authorities.

4.3. Parents-School communication as perceived by parents

Considering the importance of inter-communication between school and parents, items assessing this aspect were set in the questionnaire and provided us with relevant and tangible information as presented in table 3:

Table 3: Parents-School communication

Parents (Communication)						
Item	Mean score responses	Std. Dev	Interpretation of perceptions level	Chi-Square Value	P-value	Decision
One-way communication (only the parents communicate with school or only the school delivers the information to the parents)	1.87	0.834	Lower level	χ^2 106.017 ^a	0.00	Significance
Two-Ways of communication channels between school and parents	2.46	0.764	Moderate level	χ^2 235.667 ^a	0.00	Significance
A channel of Communication with families about school programs and students’ progress	2.44	0.668	Moderate level	χ^2 85.443 ^b	0.00	Significance
Communication between school and parents via notes, phone calls, letters, report cards	2.32	0.725	Moderate level	χ^2 155.089 ^a	0.00	Significance

Regular meeting	Parents-teacher	2.63	0.648	High level	χ^2 194.866 ^b	0.00	Significance
Ways to maintain contact with the teacher	regular	1.83	0.634	Moderate level	χ^2 86.000 ^b	0.00	Significance
Overall Mean index		2.258		Moderate level		0.00	Significance

The overall results in table 3 indicate the level of parents-school communication level in Shyogwe sector with the parents' perceptions mean scored (lower mean score: 1.83 to 2.63 as highest mean score). The overall mean index for parenting is 2.258 equivalent to moderate level for the parents' views, with computed p-value of 0.000 which is less than to research standards error of 0.05 (P-value 0.000 < 0.05). These results provide enough evidence by concluding that the parental involvement involvement in parents-school communication is at moderate level.

4.4. Teachers/headteachers and learners' views on school and parents' inter-communication

Teachers/headteachers and learners as respondents were approached to assess their view points on the role of inter-communication between school and parents for the success of learners the findings are presented and interpreted in the following paragraphs.

One of the head teachers confirmed that: *“some parents were involved in their children's education they tried to visit their children at school sometimes (HTr1). He went on to say that some parents respond to our call and try to attend school meetings (HTr2). However, according to both headteachers there are parents who come at school to visit their children only if there are some problems, while others come to blame school authorities and teachers”*. Teachers on their behalf, recognize the domination of one-way communication (only the parents communicate with school or only the school delivers the information to the parents) between school and parents with the neglect of two ways communication which hinders the school from making a good progress.

Responding to how they find school-parents inter-communication, students reported the followings:

- ✓ *“The parents visit me once per term to see how they learn (8 students).*
- ✓ *Parents do not visit us at school, they do not have time to help us in our school activities and they can not even provide time to discuss with us about different issues (10 students).*

- ✓ *The parents come to our school to pick school reports or they come only if there is a problem at school (3 students).*
- ✓ *Our parents do not come at school because they are always busy with their job, they cannot dedicate time on visiting us at school (7 students)''.*

In few words, one can confirm that there is a focus in one way communication even though it is not regularly respected. Some parents decided to keep a way from knowing what takes place at their children schools, hence, poor communication leads to poor support of their children in cooperation with the school.

4.5. Volunteering activities

To get findings pertaining to school events in which parents can participate, questionnaire items were addressed to respondents and the findings are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Volunteering activities

Parents (Volunteering)						
Items	Mean score responses	Std. Dev	Interpretation of perceptions level	Chi-Square Value	P-value	Decision
Are involved in school events as a volunteer, guest teacher, fundraising, the PTA, the academic report	1.69	0.818	Low level	χ^2 51.571 ^a	0.000	Significance
Are willing to volunteer at the school to assist teachers in the classroom	1.86	0.84	Moderate level	χ^2 12.918 ^a	0.002	Significance
Are volunteering in classroom to support learning process	2.45	0.749	Moderate level	χ^2 200.014 ^b	0.000	Significance
Make schedules to involve families as volunteers and as audiences	2.54	0.772	High level	χ^2 179.878 ^b	0.000	Significance
Participate in the recruitment of school staff	1.09	0.375	Low level	χ^2 723.415 ^b	0.000	Significance
Participate in Trainings organized by schools like parents 'schooling	1.92	0.638	Moderate level	χ^2 88.796 ^a	0.000	Significance
Overall Mean index	1.925		Moderate level		0.0003	Significance

The results in table 4 indicate that, the parental involvement in volunteering activities at school of their children, the parents' perceptions mean scored (lower mean score: 1.09 to 2.86 as highest mean score). The overall means index for parenting is 1.925 equivalent to Moderate level for the parents' views, with computed p-value of 0.00033 which is less than to research standards error of 0.05 (P-value $0.000 < 0.05$). These results provide enough evidence by concluding that parental involvement involvement in volunteering activities at school is at moderate level.

4.5.1. Teachers/headteachers and learners' views on Volunteering activities

Though interviews, school leaders reinforced what parents have provided through questionnaire highlighting what is done together with parents.

“building schools through monthly communal work (Umuganda), few parents collaboration between them via parents association and participate in committee meetings. Headteachers went on to mention that all parents normally should regularly participate in school events, they should participate in different association and parents' meeting, they should participate in various volunteering schools activities such as (umuganda) and parents association but most of the parents do not understand this”.

However, they confirmed that at moderate level some parents are willing to volunteer at the school to assist teachers in the classroom for a successful learning process.

According to learners, it was confirmed that some of their parents attend the school meeting and different school events (18 students). Others confirmed that their parents do not attend the school meeting or any other school event while according to some other learners sometimes parents come to school if there is a challenge (7 student).

Briefly, according to respondents' views few parents are willing to partner with school and volunteer in different ways but at moderate level.

4.6. Home based learning as perceived by parents

Home based learning can not be ignored in empowering our children and supporting them in their education. Hence, attempts were made to test the situation of home based learning in Shyogwe sector. The findings as responses to items set in the questionnaire revealed in the followings:

Table 5: Home based learning activities

Parents (Learning at Home)					
Items	Mean score responses	Std. Dev	Interpretation of perceptions level	Chi-Square Value	P-value
Help children doing homework reading, transition and career decisions	2.18	0.805	Moderate level	$\chi^2 107.600^a$	0.000
Monitor children's learning at home	2.34	0.764	Moderate level	$\chi^2 144.069^a$	0.000
Encourage children to study at home	2.74	0.63	High level	$\chi^2 428.317^a$	0.000
Make sure children eat before they go to school or have food	1.88	0.741	Moderate level	$\chi^2 142.414^a$	0.000
Provide a quiet place for children to do homework	2.63	0.651	High level	$\chi^2 290.883^a$	0.000
Help children take responsibility as they get older	2.75	0.687	High level	$\chi^2 413.421^a$	0.000
Ask children about how their school day was and what they learned	2.12	0.786	Moderate level	$\chi^2 106.083^a$	0.000
Help with or check homework	2.09	0.724	Moderate level	$\chi^2 146.441^a$	0.000
Overall Mean Index	2.341		Moderate level		0.000

The results in table 5 indicate the parental involvement about helping children learning at home with the parents' perceptions mean scored (lower mean score: 1.88 to 2.75 as highest mean score). The overall mean index for parenting is 2.341 equivalent to moderate level for the parents' views, with computed p-value of 0.000 which is less than to research standards error of 0.05 (P-value 0.000 < 0.05). These results provide enough evidence by concluding that the facilitation of parents to help their children learning at home is at moderate level.

4.6.1. Teachers/headteachers and learners views on home based learning

Regarding the other activities on which parents can get involved, unanimously school authorities and teachers identified that few parents ask their children the activities done at school every day, encourage their children to read books and to do homework, they make follow up of the hygiene of their children before going at school and encourage their children to have a good performance at school whereas others in big number they do not care about it.

For learners' perceptions on home based learning activities most learners claimed the following:

- ✓ *we discuss with parents what they learnt at school, parents check our notebooks and we get advice from our parents accordingly (8 students).*
- ✓ *Other students identified that there is no discussion between parents and children about school activities, students themselves are responsible for each and every school activities (15 students).*
- ✓ *We cannot discuss with parents various school activities because they do not know the language of instruction that is English; they do not know reading and writing, and again they do not take care of our education (1 student).*
- ✓ *Parents do not discuss with us what we have learnt at school because: some parents are old, they are not educated, they have low mindset and others are busy with their jobs to earn daily life or they do not have time for children because they are very busy with their daily or weekly affairs (7 students).*

For homework monitoring and the provision of a safe environment to revise lesson at home the students reported that their parents monitor their homework; provide to them a place for doing homework and remind us to do homework (12 students). Others reported that their parents do not monitor their homework and they do not provide a place for doing homework. Parents are not aware of what children do at school and they never ask children any think related to their school activities (26 students). Moreover, according to other learners some parents assign few task at home in order to save time to revise the lesson and arrive at school on time (10 students). Most children confirmed that they do different home activities after class such as washing clothes and plates, prepare food, fetching woods, etc.

Briefly, one can assert that most parents are not aware of the importance of helping their children revising lessons at home, which may be due to their limited literacy level and poverty. It was found that instead of encouraging learners doing exercises at home they force them to concentrate on housework activities.

4.7. Involvement of parents in decision making

Considering the role of parents' involvements in decision making at schools a supportive and motivational learning environment for their children question items were asked. Related findings are summarized in the table 6:

Table6: Involvement of parents in decision making at school

Parents (Decision making)					
Items	Mean score responses	Std. Dev	Interpretation of perceptions level	Chi-Square Value	P-value
Involvement of parents in school decisions, governance and advocacy	1.64	0.746	Low level	χ^2 54.519 ^a	0.000
Activities through school councils, committees and parents organization	1.59	0.599	Low level	χ^2 237.334 ^b	0.000
Parent-teacher association (PTA).	1.96	0.72	Moderate level	χ^2 28.143 ^a	0.000
Serving in a parent-teacher association or committee	1.86	0.753	Moderate level	χ^2 121.621 ^b	0.000
The importance of being involved in various leadership positions at school	2.82	0.59	High level	χ^2 335.137 ^b	0.000
The importance of communicating and discussing with other parents about the school programs	2.83	0.691	High level	χ^2 327.382 ^b	0.000
Their role in conveying suggestions for school communities and school programs	1.47	0.728	Low level	χ^2 301.444 ^b	0.000
Overall mean Index	2.0242		Moderate level		0.000

The results in table 6 indicate the parental involvement in school decisions as mean scored (Lower Mean score: 1.47 to 2.83 as highest mean score). The overall means index for parenting is 2.0242 equivalent to Moderate level for the parents' views, with computed p-value of 0.000 which is less than to research standards error of 0.05 (P-value 0.000 < 0.05). These results provide enough evidence by concluding that at this component, parental involvement in children's education is at a moderate level. Teachers' views on the participation of parents in

school decision making do not differ from parents observations. For teachers, parents involvement in school decisions governance and advocacy is at low level.

Other items of the questionnaire and guided interview aimed at finding out what are the barriers that parents face in getting involved in their children’s education and ways to overcome them. The results are presented in table 7 followed by a brief interpretation.

Table 7: Barriers to parental involvement in children’s education

Barriers	Percent
1. Low level of education and illiteracy of the parent	70.10%
2. Lack of time to be involved in their children’s education	69.90%
3. Lack of family basic needs and school needs due family poverty	68.90%
4. Parents’ lack of confidence	29.40%
5. It is hard to contact parents	19.50%
6. School is far away from home	15.10%
7. The perception that parents’ involvement in education is not part of their roles	13.10%
8. Parent living with chronic diseases like HIV/AIDS , oldest parent and other disabilities	10.90%
9. The Tradition of parents ‘involvement in their children's education doesn't exist	10.50%
10. Children living with disabilities(Visual,mental,deaf) and diseases (HIV, Asma, eyes, etc)	6.60%
11. Lack of home amenities(electricity and water)	6.00%
12. Lack of parent motivation, awareness and focus on their children education	2.70%
13. Parents’ divorce and conflict between parents	2.40%
14. Parents involve their children in housework more than school activities	1.20%
15. Parents who are not living with their children as they are busy and stay near of their job	1.20%

The data presented in table 7 gives the information on barriers against parental involvement in children’s education low level of education and illiteracy of the parent is the barriers confirmed by 70.1% the majority of respondents. Lack of time to be involved in their children’s was reported by 69.9% respondents, lack of family basic needs and school needs due family poverty by 68.9% and parents lack of confidence was reported by 29.4% respondents, etc.

In the same vein, addressing barriers associated with parental involvement in children’s education school authorities highlight the followings:

- ✓ *there is extreme poverty of parents, lack of financial means to buy school materials, lack of basic needs, lack of enough food due to lack of cultivation land.*
- ✓ *Some children complain that they do not come to school regularly due to lack of food and they are unable to attend class when they have not eaten.*
- ✓ *Some parents have low mindset and they are less motivated to be involved in their children's education. They think that education of their children is regarding the schools authorities and teachers only, and getting involved in their children education is not their role*
- ✓ *Parents are against the will that children can bring at home the books for reading, just because when children arrive at home, those parents find it as an opportunity to help them in houseworks not for reading or revising what they have learnt at school.*
- ✓ *Parents who are living from doing temporary small jobs such as daily work for farmers, etc. If there is no such jobs, a serious problem occurs in family and the children stop to come to school during that period”.*

Among others, school authorities highlights divorce between parents or parents who are living with conflicts as another main factor that affects negatively children's education. They went on to say that lack of collaboration between parents, teachers and school authorities, bad living conditions of parents for families who have many children comparatively to their financial capacity and premature pregnancy for girls also affect learners' education.

In the same perspective, learners were approached and highlight different aspects as barriers that hinder their parents from being involved in their education and these include:

Liimited literacy or fully literacy; lack of school materials from which parents can get ways to guide their children; parents do not give us time to concentrate on what we have studied at school asking us to do a lot of houseworks such as cleaning the room, taking care of our young brothers and sisters; parents do not help us to do homework or revise the lesson just because they are not able; failure to understand the language of instruction; lack of enough time; lack of motivation; poverty and lack of financial means, parents who are busy in activities to earn their daily life, etc”.

Since, there was an intension of finding solutions to pointed out various items in the interview aimed to come up with such solutions, and respondents suggest the following:

- ✓ *Parents need to be motivated and regularly sensitised to understand the role of their involvement in children's education, facilitate them to conduct small scale projects to get financial means in order to buy school materials of their children.*
- ✓ *Help the parents to change their mindset and stay in touch with the school authorities and teachers of their children. Help parents to get family basic needs and capacity.*
- ✓ *Help parents to satisfy the basic needs of their families.*
- ✓ *To provide advocacy to vulnerable parents, provide school materials to children from vulnerable families, motivate and encourage frequently parents to be involved in their children's education, etc.*
- ✓ *It should be better if parents are motivated to: help children revise the lesson, provide school visit frequently, motivate children to read books, buy enough school materials on time, help their children to do homework, attend school meeting and other volunteering association, save money/have culture of saving, change parents' mindset.*
- ✓ *Parents should be sensitised in order to understand the role of being involved in their children's education and it is necessary to support parents for being able to buy and pay school materials.*

In few words, it is observed that parents in Shyogwe sector as rural area of Muhanga District which may display the whole image of rural areas in Rwanda; parents face a lot of challenges in giving hand to their children's education. Much advocacy is still needed for parents to be aware of their role in their children education. They also need some trainings and mainly support in improving their living conditions.

5. Conclusion

The study aimed to examine the importance of parental involvement in their children's education in Shyogwe sector. Attempts were made to find out barriers hindering parents from being involved in their children education and what should be solutions to those barriers. Parents, teachers, school authorities and learners volunteered to participate in the study, while a triangulation of different research instruments was used to gather supportive data. The findings indicated that despite the barriers that parents from vulnerable families face, they try to be involved in their children's education though at moderate level. Few challenges reported include

among others family poverty, conflicts in families, lack of time, low level of education and illiteracy to many of them. The results of this study revealed that parents try to show a certain kind of involvement in their children's education at moderate level. However, it was suggested that if given resources and support, parents can be highly get involved in their children's education. Hence, the final implication of the study is that parents need to receive adequate supportive educational training so that they can understand their role in education of their children. This would help reduce the negative feelings that some teachers and head teachers have towards some parents whom they accuse of reaching the schools only when they were called for school meetings or when called to come after their children misbehave at school. Moreover, the extreme poverty should be reduced among vulnerable families as a way to motivate them and let them get time to collaborate with schools and provide relevant educational support to their children, which will increase learners' performance and lead to future success of children. This will positively have an impact on improving the families' living conditions and change in minds as children education is concerned.

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