



Stakeholders' Perception on Parents Involvement in Management Systems of Private Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Sumbawanga District Council

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to assess parents' perception on involvement in management systems of private secondary schools by using Sumbawanga Municipality as a case study. This study employed a survey research design. The sample size of this study was 155 respondents including 5 Heads of Schools, 5 members of the board of schools, 20 parents, 50 teachers, and 75 students from Sumbawanga Municipality. Interview, Focus Group Discussion, questionnaire and documentary review methods were used to collect data. The findings of the study identified two major aspects of parenting styles and frequency of communication as springboards for

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understanding parent involvement. Parents with encouraging parenting styles were found to be more engaged and adept in following academic, disciplinary and responsive to children demands as compared to commanding and liberalistic parenting style. Otherwise parents are involved in the management issues by communicating to the school teachers and Head of Schools. Basing on the study findings, the study recommended that schools should educate all stakeholders on various ways they can be involved and help in the management of the schools. Also, there is a need of government to establish proper model to involve the community in affairs of the schools, in order to address the societal needs, policy formulation matters on management of secondary schools should be all inclusive.

Keywords: Parents involvement; school management; private secondary school.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of parental participation in school management had been a topic of interest to many scholars who devoted to study about the roles of parents as major stakeholders of education and academic excellence of students. Parents are believed to be the first and most important teachers that children encounter and thus, their involvement in their children's education would accelerate and simplify learning, ultimately resulting in improved educational outcomes [1]. Thus, participation of parents could be perceived as the initiatives taken to involve parents on governance and administrative activities and affairs of the school in view of bringing parents near to their children in school.

Different literatures were in agreement on the fact that parents are pillars of children academic growth and learning process not only to the school management in attaining its goals but also children will be motivated to attend school [2,3,4]. Furthermore it indicates that, when parents are involved in their children's education, there are mostly positive benefits associated with such involvement Sontaga, S. M [5].

Although scholars like Kruger and Michalek [6], Xaba and Nhlapo [7] insist on academic performance when parents are involved in school management. Yet parent's involvement yields other benefits like strengthen parent-learner, parent-teacher and teacher-learner relationships. This simplifies the teaching and learning process in the school and outside of the school. Good relationship helps teachers and parents to receive information about their children's performance early and act accordingly Dixon [8].

Parent's involvement in school management simplifies communication, thus, teachers and parents receive information and give feedback to each other. Feedback between home and school is vital as it clarifies possible misconceptions and

misunderstandings between home and school and therefore paves the way for the development of a smooth partnership between the involved parties Sontaga, S. M [5].

As studies reveal the importance of parent's involvement in school management system, then lack of parent's involvement may results to a lot of students misbehaving. It has been observed that children's academic performance and behavior in school was affected by the lack of parental involvement Leithwood and Patrician [9]. When parents were not involved in their children's education, students become frustrated and discouraged. Because of their inability to achieve academic proficiency they often exhibited disruptive and combative behavior to avoid academic tasks [10,9]. Moreover it was found that lack of parental involvement resulted in students' low self-esteem at school and lower levels of intrinsic motivation Elmore and Gaylord-Harden [11]. On the other hand, it was reported that, when parents were involved there was a positive change in students' behaviors [12,13].

Many studies had been done on the influence of parental involvement on academic progression of students [10,9] (Almuammria, 2015; Bower & Griffin, 2011). All these studies have proved the importance of parent's involvement in management of school. Furthermore, Aluede, and Ojugo (2016) studied the correlation between parental involvement and students' academic progress. They found that when parents communicated with teachers, checked homework, and encouraged their children to read and practice skills at home, helped students experience success in school.

Since studies revealed the importance of involving parents in school management system, then parents can involve in management of schools by adopting different ways that are seen are important in improving learner's academic performance. Parents are supposed to take part

in school management either by consultation, information communication, physical involvement through meetings and decision making as well as contribution of material or financial donation. Parents could also take part in parent-teacher meeting or association. It is argued that, when there is a consistent parental participation in school management, children are expected to increased academic performance [3].

Furthermore, to achieve best academic performance, private secondary schools have been seen as an outcome of teachers and the internal school management and students personal efforts to study hard. This has resulted in better performances among private secondary schools as compared to public secondary schools, that the individual performances of students were found be poor (Mwiria, 2004). Considering the importance of student's academic performance, there is a need to find out the causes of poor performance of students in secondary schools. Highlighting the situation, various private secondary schools in particular sought to improve students' academic performance in order to get fame for market purposes.

Despite the introduction of Tanzania's educational reforms to promote schools gain greater community involvement, it is still not clear whether the development of such programmes was participatory, involving parents, and whether they are practicing it. The prospective study put interest on studying the strategies to involve parents in school management on enhancing academic performance of students at secondary level.

Different researches were done on students' academic performances and revealed that parental participation was effective in motivating learners and teachers, increasing financial support, in assisting schools to build different infrastructures and take part in school events [14]. However, little is known on how parents took part in school management affairs and ultimately how the mechanisms of involvement contribute to student academic performance.

The study was probed by the fact that various private school administrators complain about their efforts to improve school education quality were limited by lack of appropriate school infrastructures, poor staff remuneration, deficiencies of teaching and learning materials

and government interventions (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

In turn such challenges become a burden to the schools in view of improving school academic performances since all is left unto them. What if parents would take part in governing school affairs? What strategies do schools use to involve parents in school management of private secondary schools result to better academic performance of their students? Such inquiries have initiated the need to investigate strategies of parents' involvement in management of private secondary schools on students' academic performances in Sumbawanga Municipality.

2. THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEWS

This study was guided by the theory of overlapping spheres of influence as developed by Epstein [15]. This theory proposes that, a child/student learns and grows under three circumstances, namely family, school and the community. While each of the entities may play different roles but interact on the level of central focus that is a child. The child being the main actor is influenced by the practices of the family or parents in collaboration with the school and the community at large.

The common efforts of the school, parent and the community per se could not yield result if the center of focus is not students. The partnership of parents and school may work on different level that overlaps of practice such as guiding, motivating, energizing and orientating students to carry out academic studies and achieve well.

In this theory the main argument is that when parents involve in educational management of the school it is likely to find student become more engaging in learning process. The Fig. 1 shows the overlapping spheres of influence basing on Epstein explanation of involvement of parent.

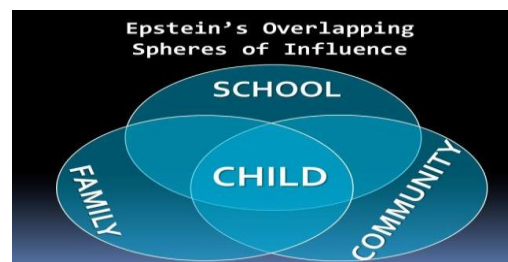


Fig. 1. Taxonomy of interaction in parents involvement

Source: Epstein [15]

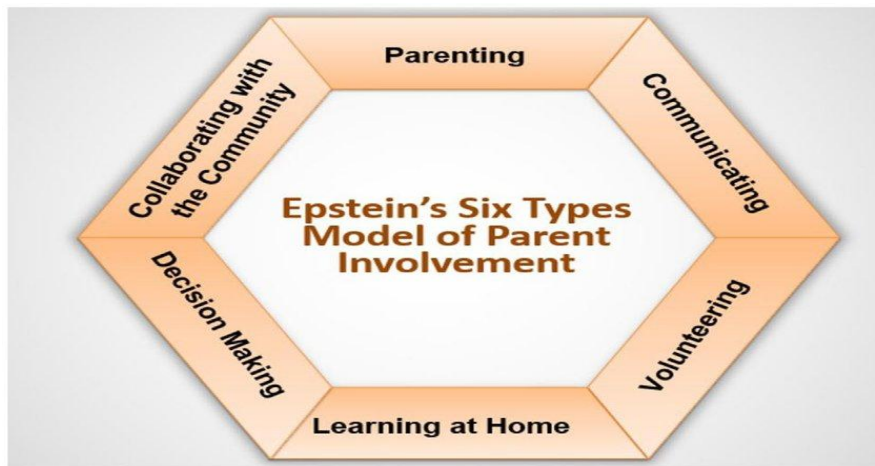


Fig. 2. Epstein six types model of parent involvement

Source: Epstein [15]

In the course of involving parents in schools, Epstein outlines six types of parents' involvement and show out how families get involved in the education of children. Such types of parents' involvement are presented in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 presents the six important factors with regards to parental involvement. Those factors are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community.

Parenting pertains to helping all families understand the development of both the child and the adolescent. It also helps establishing a supportive home environment for children as students.

Communicating refers to how best to design and conduct an effective two-way communication, which is school-to-home and home-to-school, about school programs and their children's progress.

Volunteering applies to recruiting and organizing help and support from parents for school programs and students' activities.

Learning at home pertains to providing ideas and information to parents about how they can best assist their children with homework and curricular related decisions and activities.

Decision-making refers to including parents in school decisions and to developing parent leaders and representatives. *Collaborating with the community* pertains to identifying and integrating communities' services and resources

to support and strengthen schools, students, and their families.

Campbell [16] suggested interchanging the term learning at home with family learning, for the reason that learning at home denotes that learning occurs only from the school area which is not the case. In fact, the learning process begins at home, continues at school and around the given context of the community. In that regard the term family learning provides a more explanation on parents' perception on involvement in management systems of private secondary schools becomes practical.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology that guided the study. This paper employed study a survey research design with a mixed research approach that involves both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The sample size of this study was 155 respondents including 5 Heads of Schools, 50 teachers, 20 parents, 5 members of the board of schools, 75 students from Sumbawanga Municipality. Interview, Focus Group Discussion, questionnaire and documentary review methods were used to collect data. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics for quantitative data while the qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section seeks to explore stakeholders' perception on parents' involvement in management systems of private secondary

Table 1. Perceptions of teachers on parenting styles (n=50)

Details	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Encouraging parenting style	14 (28%)	22 (44%)	7 (14%)	7 (14%)
Commanding parenting style	5 (10%)	7 (14%)	24 (48%)	14 (28%)
Liberalistic parenting style	4 (8%)	22 (44%)	17 (34%)	7 (14%)

Source: Field Data (2021)

schools. In this case, the study developed several variables or aspects through which participant's knowledge was sought from. The invoked aspects included parenting styles, means of communication and frequency communication and stakeholder perceptions on Free Education Policy.

4.1 The Parenting Styles

Monadjem (2003) noted that, it is the parents' basic obligation to provide for their children's needs such as food, shelter and safety. Respondents were asked to provide their views on what sorts of parenting style that most parents portrayed to the school in the course of the involvement. Table 1 presents the teachers results as to what kind of parenting styles do parent exhibit in private schools.

The results in Table 1 shows that, majority of respondents (72%) agreed that, parents are practicing encouraging parenting style, followed by 52% of respondents who revealed that, parents practiced commanding parenting style, while 24% of respondents observed that, parents are practicing liberalistic parenting style.

These findings imply that, teachers were aware of the different parenting styles whereas the identified dominant parenting style further portrayed that parents could be willing to communicate with the school and his or her children at school. Furthermore, the liberalistic parenting style that were revealed by the minority ones suggested the kind of parents who would just let their children to school to struggle with teachers insofar as they fulfill to pay school fees.

These findings were supported by students who revealed that, the encouraging parenting style is the most preferred parenting style among parents. In this style, parents take time to follow up each step of their children academic progress and are willing to support children and can create friendship with them. This type of parenting reflects the six characteristics theory of overlapping sphere of influence of Epstein [15]. Parents invest their time in volunteering and

collaborate with school and community in bringing up the academic life of their children. The liberalistic parenting style is preferred by few parents since it involves no or very little follow-up on children progress.

Furthermore, it was revealed that, despite most of their parents being practicing encouraging parenting style some did not provide their children with the standard codes and discipline required for successful learning. They also felt that most parents did not supervise their children adequately especially using good language, good manner, hardworking spirit and self-determined character.

During interview held, one of the Head of School in Sumbawanga Municipality revealed the following:-

"In our school majority of parents are practicing encouraging parenting style since whereby they follows about the situation of the student on his or her academics that consists paying visits time to time to school to meet his child to checkout academic performance and discipline issues". (Interview held with Head of Schools, February, 2021).

4.2 Means of Communication

The Fig. 3 below presents the brief description of the means of communication mostly used by most parents in private secondary schools.

The results in Fig. 3 shows that, majority of respondents (70%) revealed that most parents with children in private secondary schools use telephone in respective schools to find out about their children progress, but also the school used phone to inform parents on different matters regarding their children academic formation. As suggested by Epstein [15] in his overlapping theory that, communication between school, family and community enhance good academic performance of the children. The findings of the study prove that school use telephone as the means of communication to communicate with

parents. While in other case the minority (4%) revealed that, posted letters were used as the means of communications between parents and schools.

These findings were supported by students who revealed that, since majority of them came from various regions within Tanzania like Rukwa, Mbeya, Mwanza, Morogoro and Dar es Salaam and thus the best means to communicate with their parents is through telephones. But in special cases, parent pay visits in the school just as remarked by academic teacher in the discussion.

During interview held, one of the Head of School in Sumbawanga Municipality revealed the following:-

“There are some parents who could take strange decision when they find poor performance in the school they process transfer for their children to another schools. They think we don’t teach well, we therefore invite them to come to school and see how we work hard and how we organize our weekly tests for him or her to take an informed decision or in case of serious sickness of the students we call upon the parent to come and visit the student”. (Interview held with Head of Schools, February, 2021).

The researcher conducted interview with the Head of Schools, and Focus Group Discussion with parents to analyze the communication media between school and parents in selected schools.” The results are presented as follows.

4.2.1 Whatsapp group - Tawheed Secondary School

Tawheed secondary school is composed of students from different part of Tanzania including Zanzibar. Though it is Islamic school it receives students from other religions as well but they have to abide to the rules and regulation of the school which are religiously based. According to the Head of School, the school possesses Whatsapp group for parents and the school management team. The second master is the ring leader who administrates the group there by sharing information from the school to parents concerning different programs and events that are to be undertaken in the school.”-

“In addition to that, second master takes note of the suggestions that parents post in the group and share them to the school management team for discussion and resolution.” –

Furthermore, the second master revealed the following:-

“Here in this phone I have almost all the number of parents of each student in this school. It serves me and the administration to easily parents through the group and finds him or her on the personal inbox when I am told to inform the parent of the particular issue that concerns his or her child”.

The Head of School further revealed that, academic masters, discipline masters and class teachers are main supplier of information for parents. In addition to that, second master take note of the suggestions that parents post in the group and share them to the school management team for discussion and resolution. The Head of School also noted that, during holidays, the school selects group teachers to pay visit to some parents whom student portrayed some difficulties during school time. This was another way of meeting parents and gets to know about the condition of parents and the students as well.

4.2.2 Group messages database - Kagwa Secondary School

Kagwa secondary school is an individual owned private secondary school that has two in one intakes. To mean that, it has two registration numbers, one for boys and the other for girls in a same location.

The school communicates with parents mainly by use of a software networking messages whereby each number of the parent or guardian is being saved to the school data base *operated by* a competent information technician. Parents can receive examination results from phones even if they are far from the school.

Together with the message networking data base, the school conducts semester meetings for parents one in January and the other in July. It is through these summoned meetings that parents can meet with the teaching staff, exchange ideas, ask question, and get to know the school and its projects as well as get detailed information about the progress of the child in the school.

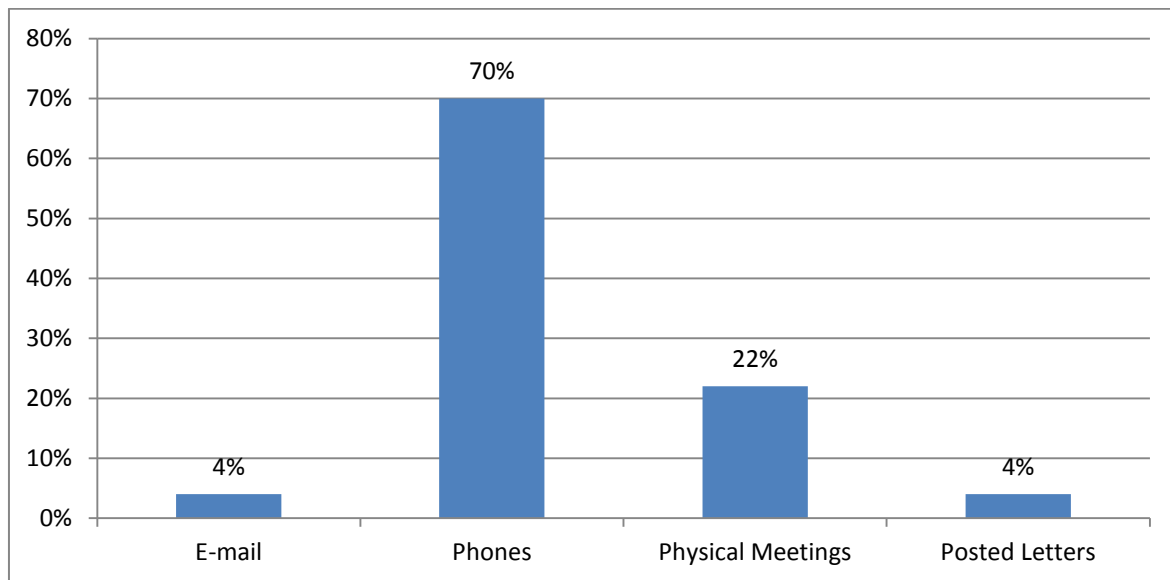


Fig. 3. Means of communication used by parents in private school

Source: Field Data (2021)

One of the parents asserted that, the school management team deliberates on academic issues for the students and listen to what parents say about its programs. The method is more of consultative than discursive. In a nutshell, the school made use of simple technology to reach parents in view of updating them about the academic and disciplinary issues concerning the particular student. Physical meetings were also taken into board.

4.2.3 Mobile phone - St. Theresa Secondary School

St. Theresa secondary school is the only girls' school that was involved in the study. It owned by sister's congregation. While other school allowed nearby students to study while coming from their homes, the school only host boarding students whether from near or far from the school. Therefore, there was need to communicate with parents on different matters of academic and disciplinary interests.

According to the sharing of the Head of School students communicate with their parents through the allocated mobile phones for the school. There are matrons who are given phones by the school; any student in need of communicating to the parent has to request the phone from the matron. No other teacher is allowed to provide his or her proper phone number to the parent apart from the school phone number.

Normally, a student could be allowed to talk to her parent at the weekend. Together with phones, parents are also summoned through semester meetings in the beginning of the semester on the opening days.

4.2.4 Formation of parents committees - Msakila Secondary School

Msakila secondary school was a newly adopted name after his Lordship Bishop KaloloMsakila. It is actually a property of the catholic Diocese of Sumbawanga. Until 2005, the school was known by the name of Rukwa High school privately owned by group of parents. It is basically a day school which slowly hosts some students in a hostel. This snapshot of historical background as a significant effect on the involvement of the parents on school management affairs.

The school receives many of its students from the nearby surrounding thus forming part of the jurisdiction. Parents are mainly physically involved through meetings and are called to form small committees to carry on some deliberations pertaining to school academic programs. For instance, in the discussion groups it was noted that classes that are nearly to national exams are supposed to come and stay in the school for three or more months before the examinations. This practice is known as Camping. It concerns students from form four and form two and to some occasion form six.

To facilitate camping formation parents are summoned to discuss on how to realize the event, they are organized to through a parent committee which are far apart from the school board, to collect contributions, arrange students menu and realize other extra curricula needs for the student, thus letting teachers concentrate on teaching and preparing students for the national examinations.

4.2.5 Use of phones and meeting - St. Maurus Secondary School

St. Maurus Chemchem secondary school is under the African Benedictines of Mvimwa Abbey. The school is largely boarding but accommodates day students. It receives students from different parts of the country but majority are from the Rukwa and Katavi regions.

Students are not allowed to own phones but have access to mobile phones from the class teachers, academic, discipline and head masters. Weekends are mostly proposed days for communicating with parents and guardian on matter of student's needs. The school collects phone numbers from student for administrative purposes like informing parents about the progress of the students on matters of academic, finance or discipline wise. In addition, there is an out day and visiting day in every end of the moth. This is the occasion for parent and guardian to visit school and meet their children, discuss with teachers concerning eh situation of the student at the school.

Although, the Head of School said that, there was no special parent's day, in the discussion student and teachers perceived that the 15th of January on the occasion of commemorating their patron Saint Maurus, was the major parents' day.

It was perceived that way since they invited parents and other friends of the school to celebrate with them spending time with student and the Abbot, the owner of the school would give speech and share the way the school heads to. This was disclosed by parents who revealed that, they have two meeting in a year normally, one held on June and the other on October.

4.3 Frequency of Parents to Communicate with School

Respondents were also given the chance to express their views on how far they understood the means and frequency of parent's

communication with the school management team. The Fig. 4 below portrays the results of the responses.

The results in Fig. 4 shows that, majority of respondents (88%) agreed that there is high frequency of communication between parents private secondary school teachers on the student's progress when they are at school.

These findings were further affirmed by one of the Head of School during interview in Sumbawanga Municipality who revealed the following:-

"Here at school we have a list of phone numbers for a parent or guardian of every student and we normally communicate with parent in several occasions"(Interview held with Head of Schools, February, 2021).

In addition to that, another Head of School during interview revealed the following:-

"The school request phone number of parents from students, and we are allowed to communicate to our parents in the week-end as we are given phones to use to tell to our parent about our needs...In some cases they come to visit me and find out about my academic and discipline performance" (Interview held with Head of Schools, February, 2021).

4.4 Stakeholder Perceptions on Free Education Policy

This sub-section focused on presenting stakeholder perceptions on Free Education Policy in Sumbawanga Municipality.

4.4.1 Increased access to secondary education

The results in Fig. 5 shows that, 30 respondents equivalent to 26% strongly agreed that, the access of secondary education has been increased since Free Education Policy has been implemented, 36% agreed, 14% were neutral, 14% disagreed and the remaining 10% of respondents strongly disagreed. These results indicate that, majority of respondents (62%) agreed that the access of education has been increased as the results of implementing Free Education Policy.

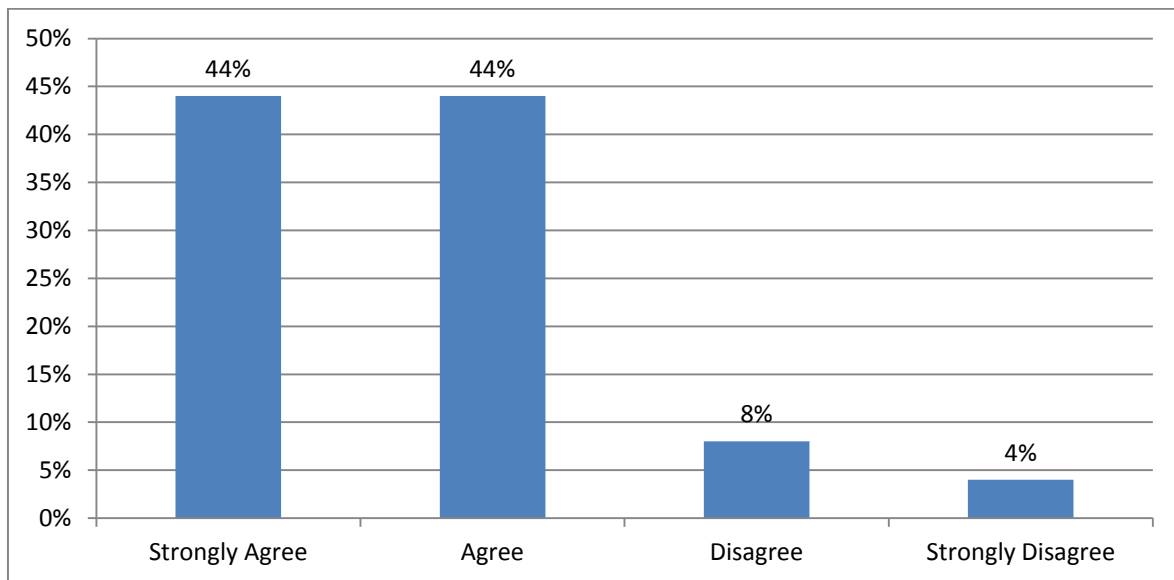


Fig. 4. Frequency of parents to communicate with school
 Source: Field Data (2021)

The results indicate that, Free Education Policy has reduced the financial burden to the parents in terms of the costs of education and provides a chance for children who were unable to access education opportunities to do so now. In addition to that, the policy has also increased enrolment of students in schools, retention rate, limits students' dropout rate and provides more opportunities for girls to enroll in schools and thus reduce gender disparity in education.

These findings were supported by one of the Head of School during interview in Sumbawanga Municipality who revealed the following:-

"Since our beloved Government introduces free education in 2016, parents do incur less cost for their children, and thus led into increasing the access of secondary education. This happen because they only responsible for purchasing clothes for their children and the Government cover other costs such school fees and book". (Interview held with Head of Schools, February, 2021).

These findings were in agreement with the study by Muindi [17] who observed that, in most African countries where the policy is being implemented, the increase in students' enrolment has been considered as a positive impact of implementing the policy that more children are getting access to secondary education. However, the increase in students' enrolment has created quality

problems at schools such as heavy teaching loads, shortage of teachers and inadequate instructional materials and infrastructures.

Furthermore, Kattan [18] indicated that there were so many obstacles faced by the poor in accessing education. One of the greatest obstacles was the cost of education such as school fees, which denied many children their right to access education opportunities especially those from poor families, orphans, girls, disabled and other disadvantaged groups. Therefore, the policy of free secondary education has helped to ensure access to secondary education among the poor and marginalized populations. Moreover, the study indicated that the policy of free education has minimized the gap in enrolment between the poor and non-poor children in public schools, where the poor are now being more enrolled in schools than it was before.

4.4.2 Increased students retention

The results in Fig. 6 shows that, 34% of respondents strongly agreed that students retention has been increased since Free Education Policy has been implemented, 36% agreed, 10% were neutral, 12% disagreed and the remaining 8% strongly disagreed. These results indicate that, majority of respondents (70%) had agreed that students retention has been increased as the results of implementing Free Education Policy.

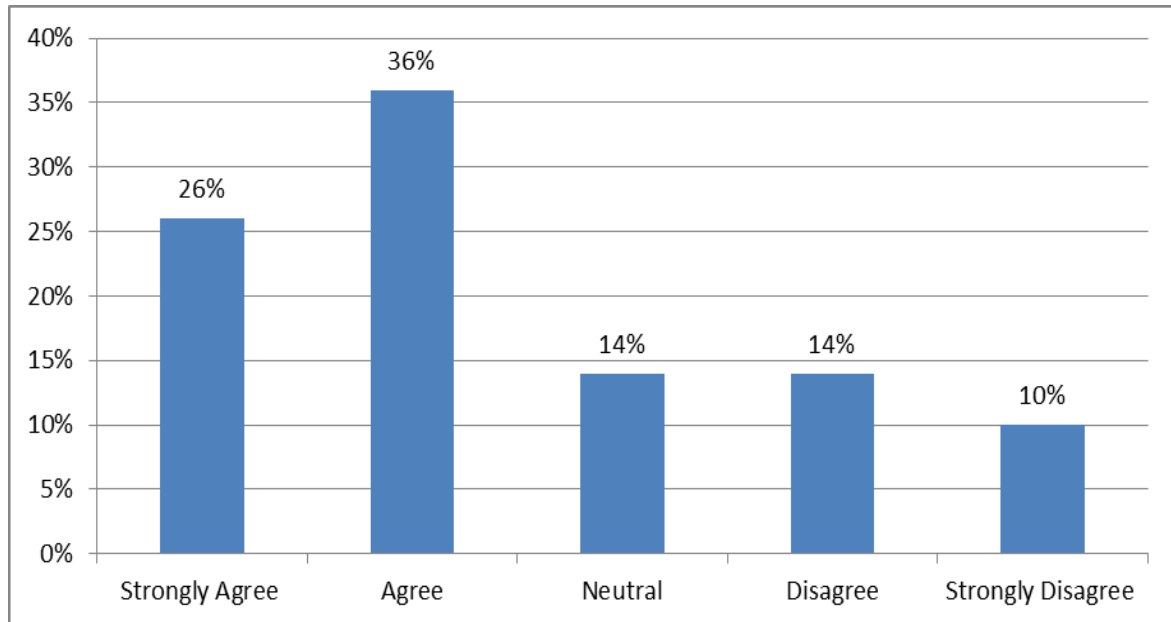


Fig. 5. Increased Access to Secondary Education
 Source: Field Data (2021)

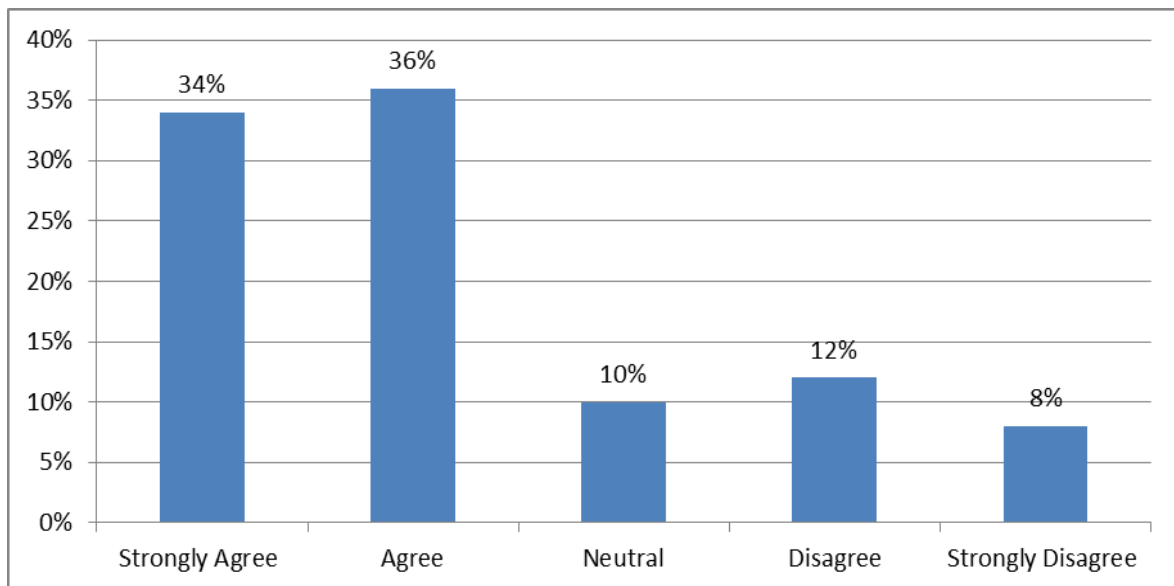


Fig. 6. Increased students retention
 Source: Field Data (2021)

These results indicate that, the retention rates among students have been increased as a result of implementing Free Education Policy. An increase is a result of children from either poor or rich backgrounds continued to be represented in enrolment and completion in their secondary school education.

These findings were in agreement with the study by James, et al. [19] who found that, the provision of free education has witnessed the

increase in completion rates among students in Ghana. However, it was further revealed that, not every student who joins secondary education completes the full cycle of secondary education. Factors such as early marriages, pregnancies among girls, illness, teachers' absenteeism, drug abuse, long walking distance from home to school and inability of parents to incur other school expenses such as school uniforms has reduced retention rate.

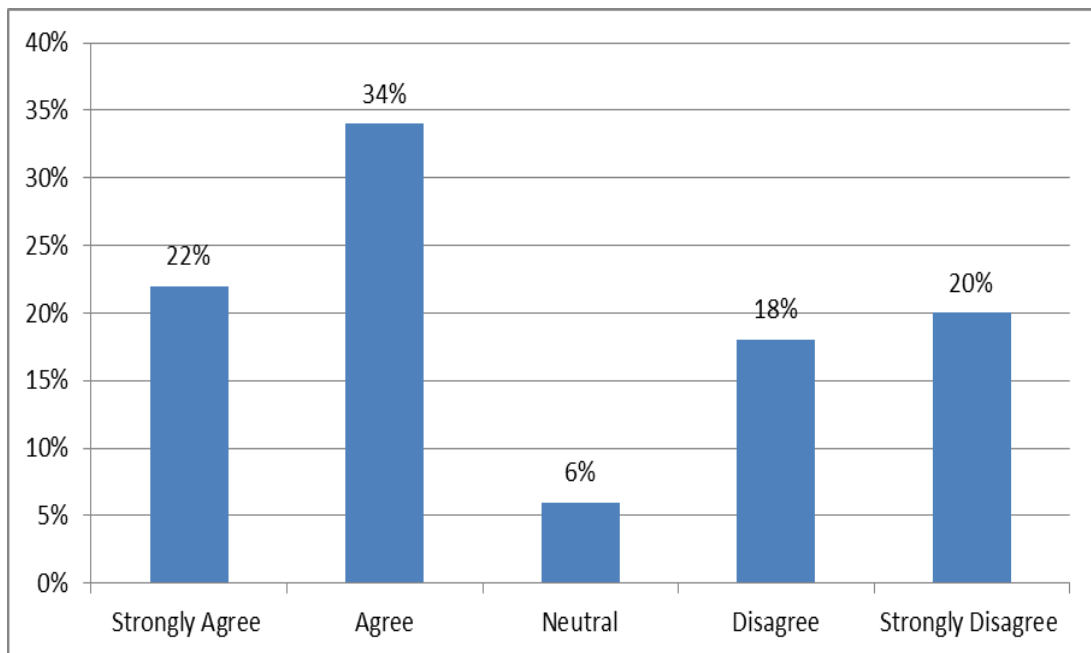


Fig. 7. Reaching out the school children

Source: Field Data (2021)

4.4.3 Reaching out the school children

The results in Fig. 7 shows that, 26 respondents equivalent to 21.7% strongly agreed that reaching out the school children has been increased since Free Education Policy has been implemented, 40 respondents equivalent to 33.3% had agreed, 8 respondents equivalent to 6.7% were neutral, 22 respondents equivalent to 18.3% disagreed and the remaining 24 respondents equivalent to 10.0% strongly disagreed. These results indicate that, majority of respondents (55%) had agreed that reaching out the school children are the results of implementing Free Education Policy.

These results indicate that, through Free Education Policy factors limiting retention are properly addressed and students are able to complete their full levels of basic education, even the master life skills and literacy. Therefore, parental involvement in the education of their children, good relationships between parents and teachers and discipline may reduce absenteeism and dropout rate and hence improves retention rate among learners.

These findings were in agreement with the study by James, et al., [19] who revealed that, inability of parents to afford the costs of education such as paying school fees due to poverty

has caused poor attendance of students in schools and dropout among secondary school students.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study gained support from the findings of Umeana [20] that stressed on the importance of parenting models as pillars for enforcing parents to participate in schooling affairs of their children. Based on the findings and its discussion the study concludes that parenting and communication systems, involvement in discipline and academic management enhanced student's academic performance. The potential and limitation for parents to be involved in school management system acted as determinants for parental involvement in school management [21].

The study recommends that, the efforts that schools take to involve parents in management of schools have to be improved in terms of quality and transparency; teachers and heads of school together should find better and sophisticated means that could attract parents and guardian from far to visit school and find a way to participate constructively on the improvement of the school targets and goals.; parents should provide their children with basic

needs such as food, shelter and clothes, learning materials like exercises books, pens and instruments including calculator, adequate academic and moral attention, unconditional love and the opportunity to develop responsible citizenship; and parents should make follow up of their children's daily school attendance and assist them in their homework and related assignments.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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