

Key Factors In The Home Environment Contributing To The Low Pass Rates Of Primary Students In Selected Schools In Marondera District: A Comprehensive Review Using A Decision-Oriented Model

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Abstract

This article uses a decision-oriented model to provide a comprehensive review of the key factors in the home environment of learners contributing to the low pass rates of primary students in selected schools in the Marondera District. The home environment plays a significant role in shaping a child's academic achievement, and various factors contribute to this influence. This review examines the relationship between home environment and academic performance, highlighting the key factors that impact learners' success. The study's design was embedded mixed-methods research design. The sample comprised of two hundred and sixteen respondents and participants who were randomly and purposively selected. The study's data collection and generation instruments were the questionnaire, document analysis, interview and observation. Qualitative data was analysed using the traditional thematic content analysis and quantitative data was analysed using statistical methods. The key findings include parenting styles, education of parents, financial position of parents, resources for education in the home, attitudes of parents towards schooling, socio-economic context environment and parents' conflict. The research concluded that there were serious impediments in the home environment that has affected learners. The study recommends multifaceted approach that also upgrades the school environment as a way of improving the pass rate of the children in this study. The study also recommends a vast supply of safety nets and equitable distribution thereof. As well as encouraging parents to create a home that is conducive for their children's access to quality education.

Keywords: *learners, pass-rate variables, school home environment and teachers*

Introduction

The home environment is a critical factor in determining a child's academic performance. Parents, caregivers, and family members play a significant role in shaping a child's educational experiences and outcomes. The home environment encompasses various aspects, including physical, emotional, and socio-economic factors, which can either support or hinder a child's academic progress (Khan, Begum, & Imad, 2019). Primary education serves as a crucial cornerstone for the socio-economic and political advancement of any country. In Zimbabwe, education is recognized as a fundamental right afforded to every child. This decision-oriented model research focuses on specific, key factors that are contributing to the low pass rates observed at the grade 7 level in Zimbabwean primary schools. Using the Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) model,

a decision-oriented model, the study sought to outline the various challenges that hinder the academic performance of grade 7 students.

Background to the study

In 2017, Zimbabwe's Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) implemented a new curriculum. This curriculum encompasses grades one and proceeds up to advanced level. It is this new curriculum that led to the establishment of Early Childhood Development (ECD). This reform has altered the Primary education duration from seven to nine years. The updated curriculum's main deliverable was to supplant the traditional one that was implemented in 1980. The 1980 curriculum was heavily tilted and originating from the colonial Rhodesian government (Gasva & Moyo, 2017:456). Khan, Begum, & Imad, (2019) are of the view that the home environment is important in the success of every learner. They point out that the home environment plays a critical role in shaping students' academic performance. To, Khan, Begum, & Imad, (2019), the home environment impacts on low pass rates in schools cannot be improved because it is the parents and guardians who are able to help the learners.

Their contributions to the success of every learner should not be overlooked. In their research in Pakistan, Khan, Begum, & Imad, (2019) found out that deficiencies in the home environment can be a hindrance to success in a school. They supported their argument by pointing out that inadequate study spaces and limited family interaction can affect any learner. They further added that inadequate space contributes significantly to students' educational outcomes in the context of Pakistan. This means that if students in this study lack a conducive atmosphere for learning at home, their success is compromised. This is because the students' ability to focus and engage with academic material diminishes due to an environment that is not conducive to learning. What this means is that this research underscores the need for this study that seeks to examine factors in the home environment that can affect learners and compromise on their success. It also follows that to improve the pass=rate, there is a need to improve the home environment. Such an improvement in the home environment can translate into directly influencing the pass rates. This is because the home environment fosters better study habits. The home environment can also enhance students' overall motivation towards their education.

According to Devi (2022), many obstacles to learning can fuel the escalation of learning gaps in schools. Some of the challenges and learning gaps include motivation, learning challenges, emotional factors, learning environment, learning styles, learning experiences, and others (Devi, 2022). Regarding obstacles to learning, Devi (2022) further opines that when learners are grouped by gender, race, or socioeconomic status, and then some comparisons are made regarding academic attainment, persistent gaps, and disparities can be observed that are detrimental to equity and equality in educational provision. On the other hand, Dee cited in Devi (2022) also pointed at issues like disruptive behaviour, inappropriate behaviour, experiences of frustration, and others as some of the issues that greatly fuel learning discrepancies. Teachers even end up labelling the students who are in this category as inattentive and not completing their homework when asked to, and other harmful labels (Kober, 2015 & Smith, 2019).

According to Mensah, Acquah, & Mensah, (2024), the involvement of parents or in some cases the guardians, is important in the children's education. This is because the children's education is an important and crucial factor linked to academic success. In the study by Mensah, Acquah, & Mensah, (2024), they highlight that high socioeconomic status is a factor that can influence the success or lack of it in education. They further pointed out that active parental engagement correlates positively with student performance in the schools in their study. On the other hand, Mensah, Acquah, & Mensah, (2024), further opined that when household responsibilities disproportionately fall on children as is the case in many rural areas in the schools under study, it is the academic performance that suffers. This is because academic performance tends to suffer due to the added stressors of chores. In their study, Mensah, Acquah, & Mensah, (2024), pointed at cores such as childcare

or fetching water that are mostly assigned to girls, thereby affecting their success in education. According to Mensah, Acquah, & Mensah, (2024), this imbalance in the home environment underscores the need for equitable distribution of household duties. They further opined that if girls' education is to improve, it means that there is a need to increase parental support during school activities. Such support has been seen to enhance learning experiences. The physical environment of the home is also another factor that can greatly affect learning. According to Patel, Singh, & Vaishnav, (2024), this physical environment of the home has the potential to significantly impact a child's academic performance. They pointed at the factors such as the availability of the dedicated study space. To them this dedicated study space can help children focus and concentrate on their studies. They also pointed at the access to educational resources as one of the important areas in the home. To Patel, Singh, & Vaishnav, (2024), the availability of educational resources, such as internet connectivity, textbooks, and computers, can support and enhance learning and learning outcomes among children. In their study, Patel, Singh, & Vaishnav, (2024), pointed out that the issue of excessive noise levels is an important distractor that can affect learning. To them, excessive noise, if it is like if the home, can distract children. This distraction can then go on to hinder the children's ability to focus on their studies, on their homework and on their school assignments.

Mensah, Acquah, & Mensah, (2024), are of the view that in the home, learners can be affected by the emotional environment. They pointed out that the emotional environment of the home has the potential to impact on a child's academic performance. Under emotional environment in the home, Mensah, Acquah, & Mensah, (2024), pointed at the parents' emotional support and encouragement. They are of the belief that the parents' or guardians' emotional support can boost children's confidence and motivation. Smith (2019) also added the issue of conflict to the debate regarding the home environment. According to Smith (2019), conflict that is taking place within the family can create stress. Conflict can also create anxiety in the learners. This means that conflict will negatively impact academic because of stress and anxiety. What is important in the home environment is a positive parent-child relationship. This positive parent-child relationship is important for learning because it can foster a love for learning. The love for learning will then go on to improve academic outcomes.

According to Devi (2022), the home environment can also be affected by the socio-economic environment of the home. This was supported by Patel, Singh, & Vaishnav, (2024), who pointed out that the socio-economic environment of the home greatly impacts on children's learning and children's success in the school. They saw the socio-economic environment as a factor that can also influence a child's academic performance. In this regard, both Devi (2022) and Patel, Singh, & Vaishnav, (2024), pointed at factors in the socio-economic environment that will affect learning. Chief among these, they pointed at the parents' educational level. To them, the parents' educational level can impact the parents' ability to support their child's learning. Among other issues, they pointed to the family income. To them, this can affect access to educational resources. This can also affect educational opportunities, thereby compromising the pass rates of the students affected. This background appears to clearly point out that there are some key factors in the home environment of learners that can contribute to the low pass rates of primary students. Hence, this comprehensive review using that has used a decision-oriented model.

Statement of the problem

The Grade 7 examination is a critical milestone in the education system. It is the Grade 7 level that marks the transition from primary to secondary education. However, low pass rates at this level have become a perennial concern, with significant implications for students' future academic prospects and socio-economic mobility.

While there are some efforts to improve education outcomes, this is done in the dark. This means that decisions should be based on evidence. Because of this, the pass rate at Grade 7 in the schools under study remains

persistently low. What is more worrying is that some of the schools in this study have zero percent pass rate. It means that the students are failing to meet the minimum requirements for progression to secondary education. This phenomenon raises critical questions about the underlying factors contributing to this trend. The home environmental variables are some of the major factors as seen in the background. They contribute to low pass-rate at grade 7 level. Hence this study.

Research question

The research question that directed this study is:

In what ways does the school environment influence learner academic performance in Primary schools?

Methodology

The methodology for this study was the Mixed methods methodology (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018). The mixed methods methodology that was used in this research combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This combination was important in this research because it provided a more comprehensive understanding of the home environment as a research problem. According to Cresswell and Cresswell (2018), mixed methods methodology involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating qualitative and quantitative data in a single study. The mixed-methods methodology that was used in this study leveraged the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It also helped because the mixing helped to address limitations of using only one approach. Thus, the mixing of the two methodologies in this study led to more robust and credible findings.

The research design for this research was the nested or embedded research design. The nested or embedded design represents a sophisticated approach within mixed methods research that allows for a more nuanced understanding of complex phenomena. The nested or embedded research design is characterized by the integration of a secondary method, in this case, qualitative, within a primary quantitative framework. The nested or embedded research design. That was used as the research design in this study served as the backbone of the research project, while the secondary method complemented it by addressing distinct questions that provided deeper insights (Cresswell, 2023). This hierarchical structure enhances the overall rigor and depth of research findings.

Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews and documents. These three methods were used to achieve both data triangulation and method triangulation. Since this was mixed methods research, the data was analysed in two different ways. This means that quantitative data was analysed using statistical analysis while qualitative data was analysed using content analysis. Content analysis was employed because it provided a robust and cost-effective way (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018). This process included identifying patterns and themes within the qualitative data. The qualitative data was organised in a way that ensured the non-numeric information could easily capture themes and patterns (Amankwaa, 2016). These patterns and themes that emerged from the study were then used to answer research questions. In this research, during data collection, data analysis, and data presentation, trustworthiness was upheld. The trustworthiness of this study was mainly to do with the Four Dimensions Criteria (FDC), (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018).

The theoretical framework

This research used a decision-oriented model as the theoretical framework for this study. A decision-oriented modes play an important role in research. This is because it provides structured methodologies that can help in facilitating informed decision-making. Low-pass rate in some communities is an area that calls for decisive decision making because it is characterized by complexity and uncertainty. A decision-oriented model provided this research with the tools necessary to analyze data effectively and predict outcomes. Another importance of the decision-oriented model was the ability to enhance clarity through streamline processes.

There are many types of decision-oriented models. Thus, researchers can have a choice. This choice depends on the specific needs of the researcher and that of the research being undertaken. For this reason, this research selected the Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model. This model was selected because it serves as a robust theoretical framework for educational research. This is because, the CIPP model is a decision-oriented model. A decision-oriented model like the CIPP model, offers a comprehensive approach to evaluation that transcends traditional methodologies (Finney, 2020). By systematically evaluating the context in which an educational program operates, the inputs required for its implementation, the processes undertaken during its execution, and the products or outcomes generated, this model facilitates a holistic understanding of the grade seven pass rate and the educational effectiveness (Finney, 2020). This multifaceted approach not only aids in assessing current programs but also informs future initiatives by identifying strengths and weaknesses within various components of educational systems. In this research, the CIPP model was selected because of its versatility across different educational contexts such as the Marondera context where this study was held. The CIPP model can be applied to diverse settings. Such diverse settings in this study ranged from individual projects to large-scale institutional evaluations. The use in diverse settings made the CIPP model an invaluable tool for this research. The other reason why the CIPP model was chosen for this study is its emphasis on both formative and summative evaluation. Such flexibility of the model was crucial in this study because it allowed key educational stakeholders who were research informants in this study to engage in continuous improvement cycles rather than static assessments. This adaptability helped in enhancing accountability as educators can make informed decisions. Such decisions will be informed by comprehensive data derived from all four dimensions of the CIPP model. The CIPP model was employed as the evaluation method in this study because of the need for the research outcomes to be used in decision-making. The CIPP model was utilized in this study because of its flexibility in assessment of all the facets of the educational system that led to the low pass rate.

5. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discusses the findings. The research examined the factors in the home environment that contribute to low pass rate for primary school students.

Parenting styles

The low pass rates of primary students in selected schools in Marondera District can be attributed to several key factors within the home environment. Some 73% of the research participants in this study pointed at the parenting styles as contributing factors. Parent P14 pointed out that:

There are some parents that are somehow cruel. They are like dictators in their homes. We know them in our communities. They are known for their strict rules. There is no or very low warmth for their children. We also know them for high control. We have seen over the years that such practices can be detrimental to a child's academic performance. This will lead to low pass rate.

Another parent, parent P9 also weighed in on parenting styles by pointing out that:

Dictators are not only found in politics. They are also found in the homes. They are characterised by their demand for obedience. Some in our community are well-known for the minimal emotional support that they provide to their children. I know one near my home who is known for focusing on control rather than understanding the child's needs.

Schlecht (2024) who investigated the effect of family structure on student achievement believes that parenting styles can affect the education of students. The argument is that when parenting style is such that children have no voice, then the children who are raised in in such an authoritarian household, may struggle with self-regulation. Schlecht (2024) further pointed out that such children will exhibit less enthusiasm for learning. Once these children develop negative self-concepts, their performance at school is compromised.

According to Zhao & Zhao (2022), an important and significant factor that can affect children's learning at home is the prevalence of neglectful and permissive parenting styles. They pointed out that such parenting

styles are prevalent in their study and were common in the region in their sample. The findings of their research indicated that such parenting approaches affect the education of learners. This is because such parenting practices often lead to a lack of consistent support for children's academic endeavours (Zhao & Zhao, 2022). This means that in Marondera the study area if the environment is such that the parents are absent or overly lenient then it is the children's education that suffers. In such circumstances children may struggle with motivation for learning. They may also be affected in terms of discipline. Children with disciplinary challenges will not find time for schoolwork. Thus, a combination of disciplinary challenges and lack of motivation will ultimately impact negatively the academic performance of the learners.

Financial adversity and economic distress

Many 83% of the participants in this research pointed at financial and economic hardships as some of the contributors to children's failing pass rate. One of the parents (Parent P7) in this study pointed out that:

What many like you do not know is that many of us in this area are facing dire economic hardships. Such hardships have affected the education of all my children not only the one in Grade 7. Most of time, and that of the children, we are looking for something to eat. There is no time for homework.

Another parent, P12 also supported the issue of economic stress and financial hardships being faced by parents as a contributing fact by pointing out that:

Many of us in this area face economic difficulties. The economic hardship is affecting the education of our children. The financial stress that we face cascades to our children. This is another critical aspect that has greatly contributed to low pass rates among children in this area. I tell you that many families are facing financial constraints. These constraints negatively affect our children in schools.

Ansari (2024) investigated how economic hardship have limited the opportunities of learners in schools. The key findings in that study were that the economic and financial hardships limit the parents' ability to provide essential educational resources. Such resources include books, school uniform, stationery and tutoring a prevalent practice in Zimbabwean schools during the period of this research. The issue of financial stress is exacerbated by climate change and droughts. Such natural disasters worsen the economic stress of the parents. These challenges then affect the children in their quest for credible educational outcomes.

Schlecht (2024) who investigated the effect of family structure on the attainment of students also lamented that economic distress and financial adversity are factors that can significantly impact the education of children. He further argued that economic distress and financial stress manifest through increasing the stress levels. Such increased stress levels will culminate in diminished academic performance. On that note, the pass rate for the learners will be affected. According to a study that was conducted by Mistry (2023) during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, children in that study experienced a 205.2% increase in perceived stress. This stress was due to family financial difficulties. Such high stress levels that were caused by the economic hardships then overshadowed concerns related to school closures. Thus, Mistry (2023) further pointed out that when learners experience heightened stress, the high stress levels can detract these children's cognitive functions. Once cognitive functions are affected, it then means that this will lead to poorer educational outcomes.

The issue of financial stress and economic distress was also seen as an area that can affect mental health. Elenbaas (2021) in her study found out that there is a correlation between financial instability and mental health issues. She lamented that all children who are caught in such a web will not perform well in school. This is because children from economically distressed families will not devote their time to educational issue. This is because they may struggle with motivation and focus. They may also struggle with overall engagement in their education. In such a case, it is the results and the educational outcomes that suffer. Thus, according to Elenbaas (2021), preadolescents who worry about their family's economic hardships will be distracted from their

educational pursuits. This is because they will be exhibiting lower academic achievement because of their low motivation.

Excessive household chores

An interesting finding from this study from about 50% of the research participants is that of excessive household chores. Parent P13 believed:

Many of the children that you see in our area are involved in household chores. This is good for them because they learner to be responsible. However, when these chores become excessive, then it means that the education of the children who are involved suffers. In our area, there are many children who have many responsibilities that are placed on them.

Another parent, Parent P2 also echoed the issue of excessive chores by pointing out that:

Household chores in our area is one of the factors that affect children's learning. In towns you say child labour. Here in rural areas, we see it as free labour. However, we have seen that these household chores are some serious factors that can significantly restrict the time available for studying.

Wang, (2022) whose study wanted to find out if housework can help to improve academic performance, found out that housework can complete with homework assignments. When this competition unfolds in the home, it is the homework that suffers. This is because the learners may find themselves unable to meet academic expectations. Thus, instead of helping in improving academic work, Wang (2022)'s study revealed that excessive household chores have the potential to significantly hinder children's academic performance. This study further revealed that excessive housework diminishes the time and energy required for effective study. The learners who engage in an overwhelming number of chores are affected in terms of the time that they devote to their schoolwork. Such learners often find themselves fatigued after going through the excessive household chores. Thus, they are eventually unable to concentrate during class because they are tired. While Harrison (2025) is of the view that household chores are good for the children, also confirms that they cause exhaustion. Such exhaustion because of household chores can lead to reduced cognitive function. Once the cognitive function is affected the ultimate result in low pass rates and diminished engagement with schoolwork.

According to Harrison (2025), excessive household chores bring a new challenge for learners. The affected learners will then need to balance housework with academic responsibilities. Such a need for this competing balance can create a substantial burden on the affected learners. This means the household chores when they are excessive adversely affect the overall educational attainment of the affected children. This was the case in this study. In his study, Harrison (2025) found out that household chores are known to instil valuable life skills. Some of the life skills that he pointed out include issues such as discipline and time management (Harrison, 2025). However, the disadvantages of the excessive household chores outweigh the benefits. For example, Harrison (2025) pointed at the excessive workloads. These chores that are excessive may counteract the benefits. This is because they create a detrimental time deficit. The learners are then overwhelmed by the excessive chores. In such a case they may struggle to allocate sufficient time for studying thereby compromising their education. The effects is the low pass rate.

Parentless and left-behind children

An interesting finding of this study from 67% of the participants was that of parentless and left-behind children. One of the participants in this study P6 pointed out that:

Many of the learners in our community are affected by the absence of parents. Some of these have gone to other countries to look for employment opportunities. Some have left the rural areas to go to urban areas in search of opportunities. The children are then left behind. This then significantly impacts the educational outcomes of the affected children.

The challenges of the left-behind children were also echoed by another parent P9 who argued that:

There are cases of parental absence in our community. This parental absence has affected the children who are left behind in many ways. One of the most affected areas is schooling. Such children's education has been negatively impacted. It is the child's educational outcomes that are the biggest casualties of parental absence.

According to Braitstein (2020), the absence of parents in homes has long lasting educational effects for the affected children. The challenges that these children face manifests into lower academic achievement. The challenges can also be seen in increased absenteeism. What that means for the affected children is that they are behind in school compared to children with parents. In such a case, it is the pass rate that suffers from the absence of parents.

Sinha, Lombe, Saltzman, Whetten, & Whetten (2016) added their voice to the debate regarding parentless children. In their study they found out that these children's academic outcomes are greatly affected. They added that the challenge of missing the parent in the home can lead to lower academic performance. This may then greatly affect the children's cognitive development. In this research, Sinha, et al (2016) found out that there is a negative correlation between parental absence and children's educational achievements. This was also confirmed by Braitstein (2020) who argued that the left-behind children, whose parents may have migrated for work, will show signs of parental neglect. Such challenges will affect their education. In the school, the challenges that these children face will be seen through decreased examination scores on cognitive and academic assessments, when these children are compared to their peers with present parents (Braitstein, 2020). This scenario underscores the indispensable role of parental involvement in the education of their children. Parents are crucial in that they foster not only emotional support but also intellectual growth. In education, intellectual growth is vital for educational success.

Orphanhood

The 56% participants in this study distinguished between parentless children and orphaned children. To them, these two groups face different challenges though many of the challenges are common. One of the parents argued that:

Children who are orphans face many challenges that differ from children whose parents are absent in the home. The absent parents will one day come. The absent parents will send money to their children. However, it is a different ball game altogether for the orphaned child.

These sentiments were echoed by another parent P1 who opined that:

When you talk of the low pass rate, do not forget that because of the HIV pandemic, that ravaged many of the families in this community, we have a challenge of orphans. These children run child-headed families. Such a child-headed family has a challenge pertaining to school outcomes. Schooling for orphans is not a preference. They will rather stay at home looking for ways of raising money to buy food. In such a case, low-pass rate is a foregone conclusion for these children.

According to Zhao & Zhao (2022), the issue of orphanhood has been a challenge in many communities. They point out that in the case of the community in their study, orphanhood has been shown as a challenge that correlate with poor educational outcomes. This appears to be the same case in this study's community where orphanhood has been said to be a challenge. One of the main reasons for these challenges is due to associated socio-economic challenges (Zhao & Zhao, 2022). The two researchers further argue that orphaned children experience increased poverty levels. They said that these poverty levels hinder their access to quality education (Zhao & Zhao, 2022). The challenges appear to be many. They include inadequate schooling costs. The orphans cannot afford the schooling costs. Their challengers also include the domestic responsibilities.

These responsibilities, as discussed elsewhere in this paper, detract these affected children from their ability to focus on schoolwork. Zhao & Zhao (2022) further argue that it becomes evident in the context of the

challenges faced by orphans that the interplay between these home environmental factors are factors that contribute to low pass rate. This is because the interplay between these home environmental factors significantly contribute to the low pass rates observed among primary students in the communities in this study. Ansari (2024) also added that orphans are disadvantaged in terms of schooling, arguing that the socioeconomic context is a hindrance to the education of orphaned children. He pointed out that socioeconomic challenges associated with orphanhood further exacerbates the challenges faced by parentless children. They pointed further at the study that focused on over 25 million orphaned children and others that they called abandoned children. This study revealed that those children that are under non-biological caregivers, experience heightened educational risks due to limited resources (Ansari, 2024). These findings buttress what is obtaining in the school under this study. In the communities in this study, and in the communities in the study cited by Ansari, poverty and inadequate caregiver relationships are some of the factors that significantly hinder orphaned children's academic success. Such challenges have far-reaching implications that are profound. This is because when child-headed families are lacking sufficient means or motivation, it is their educational prospects that suffers. This means that the future of these vulnerable children is severely compromised.

Parental involvement in the education of the children

An important factor that contributes to low pass rate in the schools in this study was the issue of the parental involvement in the education of their children. Some 93% of the research participants were of the belief that parents have a positive impact on academic attainment of their children. One of the participants, parent P11 pointed out that:

We as parents also contribute to the pass rate of our children. For example, I help my child with the homework tasks that she is assigned by her class teacher. You find that for Grade 7 pupils, many of us are not conversant with the new curriculum. This means that the child does not get anything from me. It also follows that the pass rate will be affected because there is no help that we can provide from our side.

Parent P7 also weighed in on the contributions of parents. Parent P7 provided a different dimension to p11 by pointing out that:

Personally, I did not go far in terms of education. However, I still contribute to the education of my children. I help my children in many ways. For example, I motivate them to aim for more. I encourage my children to learn well so that they can achieve their goals.

The issue of parental involvement was also supported by Chetty & Hendren (2018). They pointed out that studies have consistently shown that students whose parents are regularly involved in their schoolwork tend to achieve higher grades. Such children, in many cases, perform better on standardized tests. These sentiments were echoed by Stewart (2025) who brought the issue of the increased motivation and engagement. He argued that parental involvement is key to enhancing the education of the children. This is because, among others, parental involvement can boost a child's motivation to learn. The children who are motivated both at school and at home will then perform better. They also engage more actively in their studies.

According to Stewart (2025), parental involvement has been seen to lead to enhanced study habits. Parents instil study habits in their children. He argued that in a study of parental involvement in the education of their children, one of the findings was that when parents actively participate in the education of their children, they can help these children to develop effective study habits. He pointed at some of the study habits that can be instilled in the children by parents. Some of these include finding educational resources for the learners, creating a study schedule that the child adheres to, and learning how to manage their time (Stewart, 2025). Annie & Casey Foundation (2013) are of the opinion that parental involvement in the education of the children will lead to a positive attitude towards learning. They pointed out that when parents are involved in the education of their children, they also demonstrate a genuine interest in their child's education. This means

that such involvement and interest in the education of their children, fosters a positive attitude towards learning and a positive attitude towards the school.

The issue of improved social skills and behaviour was also mentioned by Chetty & Hendren (2018). They argued that parental involvement in the education of their children can contribute to better social skills. These improved social skills will also cascade to the classroom as improved classroom behaviour. The parents who give educational support and encouragement to their children will also help the children to develop a greater sense of self-confidence and motivation (Chetty & Hendren, 2018). This will lead to better attendance and reduced absenteeism. Because the involved parents are more likely to make sure that their children attend school regularly. This will then lead to a reduction in absenteeism. Such involvement is health for the children because it can help in fostering a positive and collaborative relationship between learners, the parents, and the teachers.

Neighborhood conditions

An important finding of 68% of the research participants in this study is that of the neighborhood conditions. The participants in this study saw these conditions as fostering or as an impediment to the education of the neighborhood. One of the participants in this study P12 had this to say:

While many blame the children for the low pass rate, I do not believe that they are correct. This is because they only look at the results of the child. They do not look at other contributing factors, especially what happens in our communities. For example, some children spend more time either drinking beer or selling that beer to beer-drinkers. This can take place throughout the night. Do you think such a student will come out with anything from the school?

Another parent also weighed in to support the influence of the neighborhood by pointing out that:

These days, there are so many distractions for the education of children. There are many overnight activities that attract young children. They attract school going children. For example, churches are known for the night vigils where many of the participants are school going children.

While the participants in this research raised the issue of the neighbourhood as a contributing factor to the low pass rate in schools, Chetty & Hendren (2018) appear to agree with them. They opined that neighborhood conditions are some of the factors that significantly impact children's learning. Their main argument supporting the issue of the neighbourhood is that these conditions influence the factors such as social support, safety, access to resources, and others that can help in fostering the educational success of the children. They point out that when children receive social support from the neighbourhood, their educational outcomes will be enhanced. The factors in the neighbourhood that were raised by Chetty & Hendren (2018), significantly affect academic outcomes and overall child development. They further added that poverty that is prevalent in a neighbourhood is also a factor that can influence the education of the children. This is because poverty in all its forms can lead to a lack of educational resources and educational opportunities for the affected children. On the other hand, the participants in this research pointed at nighttime activities. Such activities can affect the safety of the children. It follows that unsafe environments can affect the education of the children. This is because unsafe environments will deter children from attending school and even deter them from participating in extracurricular activities (Chetty & Hendren, 2018).

On the issue of the neighborhood, Bischoff & Tach (2018), point out that the neighborhood conditions have the potential to significantly influence children's educational outcomes. This is because the neighbourhood conditions can shape the children's readiness for school. This readiness for school will lead to overall academic performance. Bischoff & Tach (2018) pointed at many factors such as the opportunity that come from the neighbourhood. For example, in their research, they pointed at the racial segregation that was rampant in the communities in their study. To them, the racial segregations will affect children's education. This will then affect children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. To Bischoff & Tach (2018), the

developmental skills are indispensable in the education of children. They are crucial predictors of future academic success. They further pointed out that any learners that grow up in those neighbourhoods such as those in this study that have limited access to educational resources, often enter school less prepared than their more affluent peers. This clearly shows that the contribution of neighbourhoods to the success or lack of it in the education of the children from that neighbourhood is immense. The findings from this study, highlight the critical role that neighbourhood context is playing in educational inclusion, equity, equality and access (Bischoff & Tach, 2018).

Stewart (2025) also added a voice to the neighbourhood debate by adding the issue of the environmental factors within neighbourhoods. Stewart saw these environmental factors as major contributors to students' academic achievements. He points at the issue of the physical disorder. Such disorder is not good for the education of the children. In some cases, the physical disorder as evidenced by graffiti and litter, will be huge distractions to educational success. This is because such practices can negatively impact student attendance and performance. This is more rampant in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Thus, Stewart (2024) maintains that external conditions in the neighbourhood have the potential to undermine even supportive home settings. This means any improvements in the conditions of the children should not leave the neighbourhoods behind.

Family stability and routine

An important finding in this study from the 54% of the participants was the issue of the stable home life. One of the participants in this study, parent P11 believed that:

One thing that many do not know that it affects the education of the children is the issue of stable homes and stable families. I have seen that instable homes and unstable families cause a lot of harm to the children. This harm will cascade into schools. Such children are greatly disadvantaged. They enter school with a deficiency that emanate from the instable home that they come from.

Sonya (2025) appears to support the research participants in this study by arguing that unstable home conditions greatly affect the education of the children. The unstable homes, according to Sonya (2025) are characterized by frequent homelessness, frequent moves, and in some cases evictions. Such unstable homes significantly hinder children's educational potential. Sonya (2025) further points at research that found out that even a single eviction can have devastating effects on the education of the children. Such homelessness or evictions may lead to decreased school attendance (Sonya, 2024). Thus, there are far reaching consequences of housing instability. Such housing instability can even extend beyond mere attendance because when children experiencing such disruptions, their academic performance may even decline. This means that unstable homes in the form of evictions or homelessness will exacerbate systemic inequities in the education of many children who are affected by the instability. This means, in terms of the decision-oriented model that directed this study, decision makers should also address housing instability that has been seen to be essential for ensuring equitable educational opportunities.

Housing Matters (2024) also joined the family stability debate that was unearthed in this study. They argued that the impact of unstable housing can be extended to the children's mental health. This further complicates the debate and complicates the children's educational experience. According to Housing Matters (2024), those children who face housing instability are more likely to develop anxiety and depression from an early age (Housing Matters, 2024). The mental health challenges are not good for the education of children. The mental health challenges impair the cognitive function of the affected children. It is their education that suffers. It is also their educational focus that suffers. All these are factors that are integral to learning and academic success.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this research examined the key factors in the home environment that have contributed to the low pass rates of primary students. The findings buttress the view familial support and socioeconomic conditions play a key role in educational outcomes. The findings further point out that those learners coming from homes with limited resources such as financial or emotional, are at a significant disadvantage. The research also unearthed that access to educational resources, parental involvement, and a conducive study environment, are key enablers in the home environment. These factors have been shown to correlate strongly with academic success. The findings of this research are an indication that interventions aimed at improving the home conditions should be prioritised whenever, a decision must be made to improve the low pass rate of the children in this study. Although individual student's school readiness and school quality practices are undeniably important factors, this research has shown that they cannot be viewed in isolation from the home environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions that were reached, this study has recommended that:

- ❖ There is a need to promote and enhance collaboration between schools, communities and the families. The focus should not only be on curricular improvements, because this research has shown that there is a need to engage with communities and families to foster an environment conducive to learning at home.
- ❖ Schools must start a program that is designed to educate community members including parents regarding effective support strategies that can lead to a more supportive home environment for the learners.
- ❖ In terms of the decision-oriented model, beyond schooling, a need is there to address broader socioeconomic challenges ravaging communities such as the community in this study. This may then address some of the challenges faced by these families and the communities.
- ❖ There is a need for all stakeholders to put in place a holistic approach. This approach will consider both the external influences stemming from students' homes and the educational practices within schools. This is because such comprehensive strategies can improve academic outcomes for disadvantaged students and ensure equitable opportunities for all learners.
- ❖ This study has shown that there is an interplay between children's education and the unstable home conditions. This shows a pressing need for policy interventions. The interventions should be aimed at providing stable housing solutions. This means that if decision makers prioritize stable living conditions for families such as those in this study, they can enhance not only individual academic outcomes but also broader societal equity in education.

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