



## **Parents and Teachers collaboration in the education of children in secondary schools in Lusaka province: Voices of parents and pupils**

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### **Abstract**

The study aimed at establishing parents and teacher's collaboration in the education of children in secondary schools in Lusaka. The objectives of the study were to: establish parents understanding of the importance of parents-teacher's collaboration, establish the role of parents in the education life of their children, determine parents and pupil's perception of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling in secondary schools and to determine barriers that hinder parent-teacher collaboration.

A convergent parallel research design was used when conducting this research. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The sample consisted 77 respondents: 37 parents and 40 pupils. In selecting the participants, simple random sampling technique was used. The study employed the questionnaire and focus group discussion to ensure validity of the findings. The quantitative data was analysed using the statistical package for social sciences computer software while the qualitative data was analysed by coding and grouping the emerging themes.

The study revealed that 91% of parents are involved in the education of their children. 93.4% of the parents are aware that their participation in the education of their children was very important. As regards to challenges in the parent-teacher collaboration, parents indicated that work schedules and distance to schools were some of the barriers that hindered their full participation in the education of their children. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the Ministry of General Education must come up with a policy on how parents and teachers can be collaborating in the education of children and that schools should sensitize parents on the benefits of collaborating with teachers.

**Keywords:** barriers, education outcomes, parent, teacher collaboration

### **Introduction**

The ever-growing complexity of the society with social problems and rapid development place a heavy demand on education. Pupils face many difficulty situations in today's life. They have to make wise choices in curricular and other activities, acquire basic skills for optimum achievement and adjustment to their peers, teachers and parents (Fan, 2001)<sup>[15]</sup>. With increased demands on the school, there is greater challenge of addressing problems children face in order for institutions to prepare citizens for future challenges.

Most secondary school pupils are in the adolescent stage, they are at their pre-puberty or puberty stage. This is a crucial time for identity formation. Teachers and parents must take a leading role in responding to problems and challenges associated with development at this stage.

It is however not clear whether parents and teachers collaborate in the education of children. Most teachers or school counsellors in Zambian schools try to resolve challenges pupils face without involving parents in the counselling process. Parents in most cases are called upon when their children are being suspended or expelled from school. This is against the argument supported by research that parental involvement is very critical in the education process of children.

Research conducted by (Griffin and Galassi, 2010)<sup>[16]</sup> revealed that parental involvement is critical in successful education experience of children. Bryan and Henry (2012) defined parental involvement as parents advocating for

mentoring, tutoring, academic and for cultural enhancement. They further argued that whatever form of parental involvement in the welfare of children is implemented, collaboration between parents and school teachers is important in enhancing student success (Griffin and Galassi, 2010).<sup>[16]</sup> Other studies such as that of (Cripps and Zyromski, 2009)<sup>[9]</sup>, also revealed that parental involvement in the school has been linked to psychological well-being of children. The study by Jeyness (2005) argued that decline in parental involvement in secondary schools is detrimental to the students' academic, personal, and social success. Even if research shows that parental involvement in academic life of children is essential, parents' collaboration with school counsellors/teachers has not been adequately explored in Zambian secondary schools.

### **Statement of the problem**

The increase in the prevalence of problem behaviors during adolescence is a national concern. The study by Kapasa (2011)<sup>[25]</sup> revealed that there was rapid erosion of discipline and lack of respect among children, especially those pursuing secondary education. Addressing these problems require parental involvement in the academic lives of the children. A study conducted by Epstein and Van Voortis (2010)<sup>[14]</sup> concluded that school counsellors should increase time spent in strengthening partnership with other educators, parents and the community. Henderson and Mapp, (2011) revealed that parent gaining greater control and visibility

with the school can promote student's academic, personal and social success.

Research available on parent's involvement in the education of their children in secondary schools is minimal. There is therefore, need to explore parents- teacher's collaboration in the education of pupils in secondary schools in Lusaka Province.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate parents and teacher's collaboration in the education of secondary school pupils in Lusaka Province.

### **Objectives**

#### **The objectives of the study will be to**

1. Establish parents understanding of the importance of parents-teacher's collaboration.
2. Establish the role of parents in the education life of their children.
3. Determine parents and pupils' perception of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling in secondary schools.
4. Determine barriers that hinder parent- teacher collaboration

### **Research question**

1. What is the parents understanding of the importance of parents- teachers' collaboration?
2. What is the role of parents in the education life of their children?
3. What is the parents and pupil's perception of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling in secondary schools?
4. What barriers hinder parent- teacher collaboration?

### **Literature review**

#### **Studies that show benefits of parental involvement in the education of their children**

Research done on the benefits of making parents part and parcel of the education of their children in secondary school, cement the idea that teachers must involve the parents in all areas of children's welfare.

A study done by Hornby and Lafaele (2011) <sup>[22]</sup> revealed that parental – teacher collaboration on the counselling and guidance of adolescent children has been shown to have a positive impact on their children's academic and personal welfare. Hill and Craft (2003) <sup>[18]</sup> also added their voice to the benefits of involving parents in the counseling of their children. Their findings were that parental involvement positively impact on children's academic skills. The improved academic skills in turn lead to an improvement in academic performance. The study further revealed that the parent – teacher collaboration increases social capital, increases parents' skills and information and making parents better equipped to assist their children in school related activities.

Hill and Taylor (2004) argued that when parents are incorporated in what is happening at school, they build agreement about appropriate learner behavior for their children. The agreed learner behavior can then be shared with children at home and at school, this in return reduces unwanted learner behavior. Similarly a longitudinal parental involvement study conducted by Barnard (2003) <sup>[2]</sup> showed that when parents are involved in the discipline of

their children. Most children gained long term benefits such as lower rates of school drop outs, increased on time high school graduation and increased highest grade completion. Hill and Tyson (2009) <sup>[19]</sup> conducted a meta-analysis on 50 studies about parental involvement in mid school. The results revealed that there was a positive association found between involvement and achievement.

The American School Counselling Association (ASCA) National Model (2012) <sup>[1]</sup> promote active involvement in leadership, advocacy, educational reform, Systematic changes and collaboration between school counsellors and community members as well as school personnel (Wood and Rayle, 2016). When it comes to improving lives of children at school, school counsellors play a critical role especially in enhancing learner academic, career and personal / social development of children at school (ASCA, 2012) <sup>[1]</sup>. What the school counselors put in place in the process of helping a child may not work effectively if parents are not part of the remedial plan. The idea of collaboration becomes key in helping learners in pursuit of their studies. A good counselor must know who the stakeholders are and must plan coordinated activities to ensure their total participation in improving the lives of children. Parental involvement in the education of learners has documented positive effects by renowned scholars such as Cripps and Zyromski, (2009) <sup>[9]</sup> and Bower and Griffins (2011) <sup>[5]</sup>.

The parental involvement in the academic lives of their children cannot come easily without school counselors to deliberately position themselves to take a leadership role to promote this partnership because they are at the Centre of all the administration of the welfare of learners. This means that the school counsellor must have all the details of the parents so that whatever issue that comes up its easy to get in touch with the concerned family (Walker, 2010) <sup>[31]</sup>. Walker (2010) <sup>[31]</sup> further argued that since school counselors focus on academic, personal /social, and career development and all three of these areas benefit from strong parental support and involvement, school counsellors make natural partners or leaders in establishing school – family and community partnerships.

Wanat (2010) <sup>[32]</sup> studied parent's experience in secondary schools and parents who had positive interactions with school personnel resulted in positive relationships with their children's school administrators and teachers. These parents reported feeling supported with answers to their questions concerning their children's progress and that their involvement were valued as essential to their children's success in school, in contrast, parents who reported negative experience with their children's school and who felt disconnected from the school, often due to their own work constraints felt dissatisfied with their children's school and frustrated at the level of communication between home and school (Wanat, 2010) <sup>[32]</sup>. While the results are difficult to generalize because the study represented only one school district (Wanat, 2010) <sup>[32]</sup>, it did provide an important perspective which is probably relevant to any school district and school.

Parental involvement has been said to be a powerful influence to educational outcome of children. Hill and Tyson (2009) <sup>[19]</sup> stated “family – school relations and parental involvement in education have been identified as a way to close demographic gaps in achievements and maximizes students potential” (p.740). Research has shown

positive association between parental involvement and student grades, rates of participation in advanced courses, lower dropout rates, motivation towards schoolwork, and valuing of education (Hoover-Dempsey 2005)<sup>[20]</sup>. Research has further demonstrated that parents can model learning behaviors, reinforce productive choices, and help set future goals such as college attendance (Bergerson 2009)<sup>[3]</sup>. Communication between families and school may promote social adjustments in addition to academic achievement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994)<sup>[10]</sup>. Facilitation of parental involvement is beneficial to the schools as well as the students; thus, many teachers are increasing their outreach to parents (Bryan and Griffin, 2010).

Gouzalez – Pienda (2002)<sup>[17]</sup> explored effects of parental involvement on achievement for a sample of 261 Spanish adolescents. Standardized attainment tests were used to measure achievements, psychometric tests to appraise self-concepts and related personal attributes and parental involvement was rated by students, characteristically, student aptitude accounted for a significant portion of variances in academic achievement following that parental involvement as rated by students themselves and taking the form of interest and encouragement was a major causal factor of achievement. The effect of parental involvement on achievement however was not direct, rather it made its contribution through the shaping of the adolescent self-concept. The researcher concluded that the results clearly supports the thesis that parental involvement behaviors significantly affect children's academic achievement. However, this influence is not direct.

Dubois (1994)<sup>[12]</sup> showed that family support and the quality of parent-child relationship significantly predicted school adjustments in a sample of 159 young US adolescents (aged 10 – 12) followed in a two-year longitudinal study. At-home parent involvement clearly and consistently has significant effects on pupil achievement and adjustment which far outweigh other forms of involvement. The significance of parental values as perceived by students as a mechanism for both manifestly and explaining the impact of parental involvement has been validated in a number of studies. Examples include Fan (2001)<sup>[15]</sup> who established the significant impact of parental aspiration on the general academic achievement of US adolescents. Fan (2001)<sup>[15]</sup> who showed a strong impact of parental expectations on achievement in advanced Mathematics; Carr and Hussey (1999)<sup>[6]</sup> showed that parents were the most influential social agents on children task orientation.

### **Parental perceive barriers in involvement**

Yanghee (2009)<sup>[35]</sup> proposed eight obstacles that hinder parents from participating in their children's school life. These barriers were based on teachers' perception of what keeps parents from being involved in schools. Although Yanghee (2009)<sup>[35]</sup> researched this phenomenal from teacher's perspective, school counsellors may receive similar dynamics, parents who experience some or all these barriers may perceive school counsellors very different and less positively than parents who do not encounter these impediments. It is very important for school counsellors to be aware of these barriers. The first barrier involved teacher's perception of parents' efficiency. When teachers have a negative perception of parents, parental involvement in their children's education is inhibited (Yanghee 2009)<sup>[35]</sup>. The second barrier consist of teacher's perception that

ethnic minority parents are disinterested in their children's education this potentially minimizes parent - school relationships. (Yanghee, 2009)<sup>[35]</sup> in addition to Yanghee (2009)<sup>[35]</sup> study on minority parents, other studies have found that teachers perceive parents with college education and high socioeconomic background as more actively involved in their children's school when compared to parents who are only high school and from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Duru-Bellat, 2004, Tett, 2004; Weiger and Larean, 2003)<sup>[13]</sup>.

The third barrier preventing parental participation was teacher's belief about the effect of parental involvement, and within parental involvement is philosophically understood by the school staff (Yanghee 2009)<sup>[35]</sup> teachers who perceived parental involvement as having a positive impact were more likely to encourage it than teachers who believe parental involvement had a negative impact (Hoover – Dempsey and Sandler, 2007).

The fourth barrier pertained teacher modeling the attitude of their administration. When the teachers perceived that the administration was adopting innovative and diverse programmes to help engage parents in school programmes, they would soon align with administration's perception (Brown and Medway, 2007; Yanghee 2009)<sup>[35]</sup>. However, the barrier exists when teachers modeled negative attitudes of the administration.

The fifth barrier was a lack of school friendliness and positive communication (Yanghee 2009)<sup>[35]</sup>. Parents who experienced a welcoming, friendly environment were more likely to engage in school activities. The sixth barrier related to lack of diversity in the student body. Minority parents rarely get involved in schools which offered limited culturally sensitive programmes. Parents teacher's organizations do not generally lead themselves to cultural sensitive (Turkey and Kao, 2009)<sup>[30]</sup>. Parents who do not speak an official language used at school find themselves lost. This means that traditional school programmes must integrate cultural sensitive programmes in order for all parents to feel welcome within the school (Turnkeyand Kao 2009)<sup>[30]</sup>.

The seventh barrier is focused on school policies that did not involve parental involvement, objectives and expectations, school policies that clearly value parental input resulting in greater parental involvement that school policies which marginalize parent expectations (Yanghee, 2009)<sup>[35]</sup>. The eighth final barrier comprised infective leadership, which impeded effective parental involvement and weakened collaboration between school and home. School leadership sets the tone for staff and their involvement with parents (Thomson, Mc Donald and Sterbinsky, 2005)<sup>[26]</sup>.

### **Benefits of parent's home discussions with their children**

Tett (2004)<sup>[29]</sup> say parental effect, which includes how frequently parents discuss activities or events of particular interest to the child or things the child studies in class, is positive related to student achievement. This view has a lot of support from various sources, but old and new Jeynes (2005; 2), for example, confirm that investing a lot of time in activities such as reading and communicating with one's child and the more subtle aspects of parental involvement, such as parental style and expectations, have a greater impact on pupils educational outcome the some of the more demonstrative aspects of parental involvement such as

having household rules. SeneChal (2006) and Catsambies (2001) in Desfoges and Abouchaar (2003)<sup>[11]</sup> lend credence in Jeynes view by affirming that home based involvement positively impacts on school achievements whether directly or indirectly, such involvements includes parents actively encouraging children to engage in learning in the home setting and providing learning opportunities for children.

**Research design**

This study used a convergent parallel design. The convergent design was initially conceptualized as a “Triangulation” design where the two different methods are used to obtain triangulated results. The convergent design occurs when the research collects and analyses both quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase of the research process and then merges two sets of results into an overall interpretation.

**Target population**

The population for this study comprised all pupils and all parents who have children in secondary schools in Lusaka.

**Sample size**

The sample of this study comprised 77 respondents: 37 parents and 40 pupils.

**Sampling procedure**

In selecting the schools that participated in this study, purposive sampling technique was used. This was done in order to have both rural and urban scenarios. Simple random sampling procedure was used to select teachers and pupils who participated in this study; this was in order to provide each population element an equal probability of being included in the sample (Blep and Achola 1988)<sup>[4]</sup>. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting parents who participated in the study.

**Research instruments**

In this study, a structured questionnaire and a focus group discussion were used to collect data. The use of the above mentioned research instruments helped to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to enhance clear and understanding of the topic under research.

**Data collection procedure**

Cresswell (2014:239) notes that it is important to access a research site by seeking the approval of gate keepers and individuals who provide access to the site and allow or permit the research to be done.

In this research, the researcher got permission from the Lusaka Provincial Education Office and from Chongwe District Education Office (DEBS) in order to get permission to talk pupils. The researcher distributed a consent form and questionnaire to the respondents who were sampled and willing to complete them. Enough time was given to the respondents so that they could complete the questionnaire, after which the researcher collected the questionnaire. After collecting the questionnaire, the researcher randomly selected twelve pupils at every school sampled so that they could participate in focus discussions. It must also be noted here that the teachers and pupils will have a separate focus group discussion to enhance free participation on the issues raised. During focus group discussions, the researcher will moderate all discussions and will use a voice recorder so

that the follow up of the discussion cannot be disturbed. The recorded discussion will later be transcribed and analyzed.

**Data analysis**

Mc Caig (2010:45) described data analysis as “a process that involves organizing what you have seen, heard and read, so that you can make sense of what you have learnt. The data for this study was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative data was analyzed by coding and grouping the emerging themes. Coding is a process of applying the thematic framework to the data, using numerical or textual codes to identify specific pieces of data which responds to different themes (Lacy and Luff, 2001:10). The purpose of coding is to assign codes (Numbers) for each category of answers. According Matters *et al.* (2007: 42), the quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer software to generate tables of frequencies and percentages which will be used in describing distributions of variables.

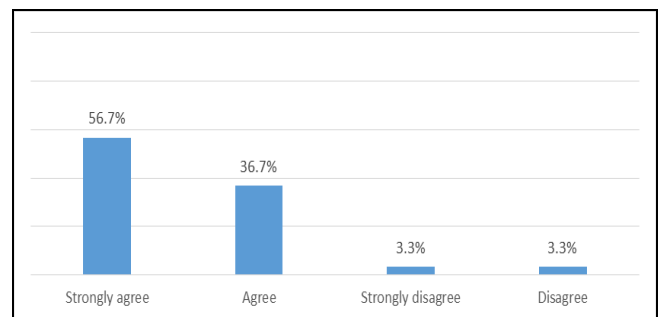
**Ethical Consideration**

The study took into consideration ethical issues. The information that was collected was kept strictly confidentially. Consent was sought from all the respondents and their participation was voluntary. Mugema and Mugende (2003) noted that awareness of ethical issues protects the integrity of the people involved in the research, some of whom may not be able to represent themselves in the event of being misrepresented and also protecting the integrity of the researcher and ensure authentic results.

**Findings and discussion**

**Assessing Parents` understanding of the importance of parent-teacher collaboration**

Parents were asked to indicate whether teacher-parent collaboration was important in the education of their children. The figure below shows their responses:



**Fig 1:** Views of parents on the importance of teacher-parent collaboration

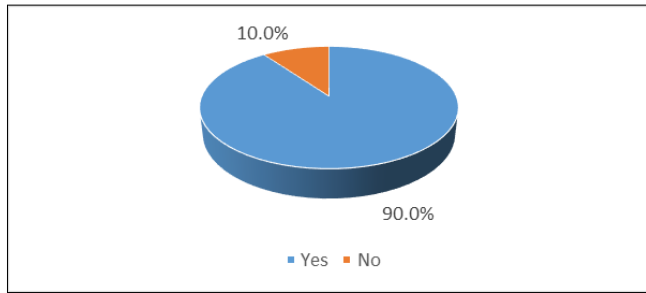
Figure 1 above shows that 56.7% of parents strongly agreed that teachers-pupil collaboration is important while 36.7% agreed. Only 3.3% disagreed.

The study has revealed that the majority of the parents (93.4%) know that parent- teacher collaboration is very critical in the education of children. This high awareness might be due to ministry of education demand on high learner performance in schools.

**Whether parent-teacher collaboration has an effect on academic performance of pupils**

Parents were asked to indicate whether parent-teacher

collaboration has an effect on academic performance of pupils. Figure 2 below shows their responses.



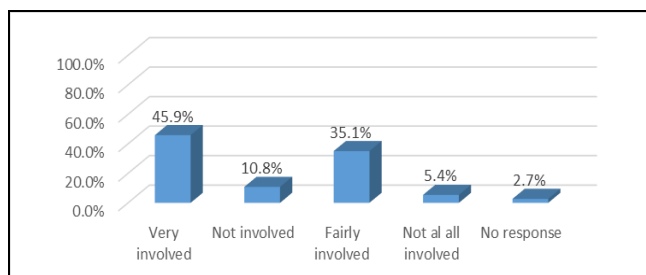
**Fig 2:** Views of parents on the effect of parent-teacher collaboration

Figure 2 above shows that 90% of the parents agreed that parent-teacher collaboration has an effect on the academic performance of the pupils while only 10% indicated that the collaboration has no effect.

The study further showed that parents know that the teacher-pupil collaboration has an effect on the academic performance of pupils. This is evident from the 90% of parents said that the teacher- parent collaboration enhances educational performance of learners. This finding is similar to that of Horby and Larfael (2011) which revealed that parental involvement in the education life of children has an impact on the children’s academic and personal welfare.

**Determining parent’s involvement in the education life of their children**

Parents were asked to state how involved they are in the education of their children. Their responses are indicated in Figure 3 below.



**Fig 3:** Involvement of parents in the education of their children.

Figure 3 above shows that 45.9% of the parents are very involved in the education of their children while 35.1% are fairly involved. Only 5.4% indicated that they are not at all involved.

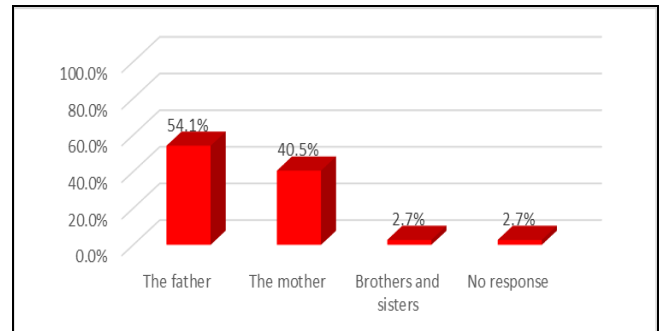
The study shows that 91% of the parents are very involved to fairly involved in the education of their children. The involvement as earlier stated are due to government position which states that parents must be fully involved in the education of their children.

**The pupils were also asked during the focus group discuss to state whether their parents are involved in their education. Their responses are presented below:**

Most pupils said that their parents participated in their education by buying them text books, attending meetings called by the school and paying for their private tuition. One pupil said, ‘my parent checks my homework and regularly check my school work in general’

**Persons involved in the education of children in families.**

Parents were asked to state the person who is very involved in the school life of their children. Their views are indicated in Figure 4 below.



**Fig 4:** Views of parents on the person involved in the education of their children.

Figure 4 above shows that 54.1% of parents indicated that their fathers are involved while 40.5% respondents indicated that its mothers. Only 2.7% indicated that its brothers and sisters.

The study has also revealed that fathers (54%) are more involved in the education of children followed by mothers (40.5%).

**Parents View of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services offered in schools.**

Parents were asked to state the effectiveness of guidance and counselling offered in schools. The table below presents their views.

**Table 1:** Effectiveness of guidance and counselling services offered in schools.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very effective	12	40.0
Average	14	46.7
Very ineffective	3	10.0
Ineffective	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0

Table 1 above shows that 46.7% of the parents rated the guidance and counselling services as average while 40.0% rated the services as very effective. Only 3.3% rated the service as ineffective.

The majority of the parents (46.7%) rated the guidance and counselling services offered in schools to be average. This could be due to the fact that most secondary school do not have qualified counsellors.

Pupils were also asked to indicate rate the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling services offered in their schools. Most of the pupils said that counselling services offered in their school were not effective. These findings are similar to Maluwa-Banda’ study which revealed that guidance and counselling offered in Malawi secondary schools is weak and has no impact.

**Role of parents in the collaboration**

During interviews parents were asked to indicate their role in the education of their children at home. Most parents indicated that they help their children at home by supervising their homework, buying them text books and

paying for their extra tuitions in subjects that they have problems.

Then one parent said *“We try to ensure that necessary help is given so that our children can learn well, sometimes we look for teachers to them extra tuition so that they catchup in subjects that they have difficulties.”*

#### **Barriers that hinder parent-teacher collaboration**

When parents were asked to discuss factors that hinder them from fully working with teachers in the education of their children, the following factors were given; most parents indicated that they're too busy to go to school to discuss with teachers on issues affecting their children's education.

One parent said *“my work has no weekend, no holiday. I work throughout so it is very difficult to find time to participate fully in the education of my children.”*

Some parents indicated that some teachers are not receptive to their presence in schools therefore; they get discouraged to engage teachers on the education of teachers.

Another parent said that *“the curriculum has changed, so I fail to assist the child with homework sometimes.”*

The other parents said *“the schools are far away, so it becomes costly to attend some meetings called by the school.”*

One parent said *“the economy is bad, we struggle to find money to feed our children, going to discuss with teachers in distant schools is a huge challenge.”*

Other reasons advanced by parents as barriers for poor teacher-parent collaboration was that schools did not have any clear policy on how to involve parents in teacher-parent collaboration.

#### **Pupils were also asked to state barriers their parents face in participating in their education**

Most pupils gave similar reasons to their parents' such as their parents being busy and that some teachers are not willing to fully involve their parents.

One pupil said, *“the communication between our teachers and our parents is mostly tied to collection of report books and Parents - Teachers Meeting which usually come once in a year.”*

The findings of this study are similar to that of Yanghee (2009) <sup>[35]</sup> who researched parental – teacher collaboration barriers from teacher's perspective found similar barriers.

#### **Conclusion**

The study has revealed that parents are aware of the importance of collaborating with teachers in the education of their children. This is evident from the majority of the parents 93.4% who agreed that their collaboration with teachers is very important. As regards to parental involvement in the education of their children, 91% of parents stated that they are very involved to fairly involved in the education of their children. It also emerged from the study that parents are highly involved in the learning of children at home through, homework supervision and material support such as purchase of textbooks.

The study further showed that parents view guidance and counseling provided in schools as average. As regards to barriers to parent-teacher collaboration, the study showed that, work schedules, poverty, distance to schools, poor attitude of teachers were barriers that hinder good parent-

teacher participation.

#### **Recommendations**

Arising from the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Ministry of Education must come up with a policy on how parents and teachers can be collaborating in the education of children.
2. Schools should sensitize parents on the benefits of collaborating with teachers.

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