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Parents as Enablers of Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Uganda: A Learners' View Point

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Abstract:

The study examined whether parents are enabling the academic achievement of their children. The research was conducted in six Secondary Schools in Kampala City, Uganda. A total of 105 students of senior one to senior six in both public and private mixed schools were involved. Six schools were selected through simple random sampling while the three public and three private mixed schools were purposively selected. The study utilised mixed methods design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A self-administered survey questionnaire, Interview Schedule and a Focus Group Discussion guide were used to collect data. The study findings indicate that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between parents as enablers of academic achievement and academic achievement ($r=.498$, $p=.000$) and that parents enable up to 22.5% of their children's academic achievement (Adjusted $r^2=.225$, $p=.225$). The research confirms existing postulations that parental involvement in academic activities of the child enables the child's academic achievement. The study recommends that educational policy framers and implementers devise means that will increase parents' involvement in the academic activities of their children to realize higher dividends in academic achievement.

Keywords: parental involvement, mixed methods, academic achievement, home environment, parents as enablers.

1. Introduction

Parents play a vital role in the physiological, socio-emotional and cognitive development of a child (Epstein, 2011). The appreciation of parents' influence on the academic performance of children gained prominence after World War (WW) I in the US (Epstein, 2011). Different ways of engaging parents in school activities were therefore designed. These, *inter alia*, included attending school conferences, Parents' Teachers Associations (PTA) meetings and fundraising events (Marphatia et al, 2010). Consequently, different countries designed approaches to encourage parental involvement in the academic lives of their children. These forms include creating and sustaining an academically supportive home environment, participation in the child's academic work, and participation in school activities, among others (Epstein, 2011). Uganda enshrined the responsibility of parents in supporting the education of their children in the legal and policy frameworks such as the Constitution of Uganda 1995, the Children's Act 1997, the Universal Primary Education Policy 1997, the Education Act 2008 and the Universal Secondary Education Policy 2007.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews the existing scholarly work about the subject of parents as enablers of academic achievement. It starts with the conceptualization of the variable academic achievement and shows the debates about the role of parents in enabling academic achievement.

2.1. Academic Achievement

Crow and Crow (1969) define academic achievement as the extent to which a learner is profiting from instructions in a given area of learning. Academic achievement is reflected by the extent to which skills and knowledge have been imparted. Academic achievement transcends one's potential in the educational goals measured by examinations. From Crow and Crow's definition, academic achievement is more holistic. Though academic grades are commonly used to measure achievement, other measures of skill and knowledge are applicable. Ampofo and Osei- Owusu (2015) suggest that regular school attendance and engagement in constructive learning indicate academic achievement. While Marphatia et al (2010) and Echuane et al (2015) indicate that completion of schoolwork in time and participation in academic work are academic achievements. Meanwhile, Nyarko (2011) indicates that better social behaviour and better grades are good indicators of a child's academic achievement. Drawing from the holistic definition and the supplementary discourses aforementioned, the indicators of academic achievement are taken to include: regular attendance; seeking out academic assistance from parents and teachers (part of the good social behaviour); participation in academic work such as group discussions, seminars and debates (drawn from the wisdom, skills and knowledge imparted); doing school work correctly; improved class performance and good subject grades.

2.2. Parents as Enablers of Academic Achievement

Parents are enablers of the academic achievement of their children (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Parental involvement in the academic affairs of the children has been considered the most potent means through which parents enable academic achievement (Epstein, 2011). Nyarko (2011) defines parental involvement as the degree to which a parent is committed to his or her role as a parent in fostering of optimal child development including academic achievement. Parental involvement therefore denotes the amount of effort that a parent puts into child-oriented education versus other activities (Ampofo & Osei-Owusu, 2015). Epstein et al (2002) in the theory of parental involvement suggest six dimensions of parental involvement in school activities. These include parenting, communication, volunteering, decision-making, learning at home and collaboration with the community. Ampofo & Osei-Owusu (2015) argue that when a parent gets involved in the child's learning process, both the parent and the pupil become more interested in the academic progress and the parent assists the child to cope with learning. Ultimately, this builds the child as a learner and the parent as a facilitator.

Studies indicate that parents' enabling role has a causal relationship with the academic achievement of children (Hill & Tyson, 2009, Schmitt & Kleine, 2010, Epstein, 2011, Shute et al, 2011 and Msila, 2012). Parents enable academic achievement through providing a supportive home environment, participation in academic work, and participation in school activities. Shute et al (2011) posit that parental participation in both home and school activities improves the academic achievement of children. Activities such as attending Parents', Teachers' Association (PTA) meetings; two-way parent-teacher communication on the child's progress; checking on the child's home work; home supervision and rules on reduction of distractions; and monitoring of home related behaviors positively and significantly improve the child's academic achievement. However, Shute et al (2011) caution that this involvement should be in moderation to stimulate the desired level of academic achievement.

2.2.1. Home Environment and Academic Achievement

Parenting is the cornerstone of an effective home environment for better academic achievement. Parenting is carrying out the responsibilities of raising and relating to the child as a learner in a manner that the learner is prepared to realise his/her potential as a human being (Dzever, 2015). The home environment, *inter alia*, includes elements such as providing the basic human needs (adequate feeding, clothing and living space); availing the necessary scholastic requirements and emotional support (respect, acknowledging performance, setting realistic goals, sharing life challenges and protecting the child from negative stimuli); and inculcating desirable social behaviours and good values (greeting, respect for self and others, kindness, and fear of God). The home environment builds principles in the child that form an integral part of the child's overall personality. Creating an atmosphere that promotes learning at home sets a stage for better performance at school.

Home environment positively and significantly influences the learner's social and emotional wellbeing and academic achievement (Shute et al, 2011 and Dzever, 2015). Establishing an enabling home environment and encouraging educational progress at home is associated with a decrease in the learner's problem behaviours like aggression, being disruptive, anxiety and depression. At the same time, the learner's pro-social skills such as cooperation and self-control improve (Epstein, 2011). The learner develops physiologically, socio-emotionally, and cognitively. Rulinda et al (2013) posit that behavioural change makes the learner attend school regularly, and the learner's attachment both to curricula and non-curricula activities increases. High attendance increases the learner's level of commitment and the remarkable positive change in classroom performance.

Parents to improve their children's academic performance should provide a safe environment that is free of physical, sexual and emotional abuse; ensure that the child has basic needs like adequate feeding, shelter, clothing and medical care; ensure up keep of the child; provide the child with self-esteem needs including accepting the child's curricula and non-curricula achievements and pro-social behaviour (Epstein, 2011). Additionally, parents should set realistic and age-appropriate expectations; inculcate morals; communicate with both the child and teachers and get to know the child better. This makes the home a theater where the parent plays this role to improve the child's abilities both in curricula and non-curricula behaviours. Jeynes (2007) adds that to allow the child time to concentrate on academic work, distractions such as watching television, gallivanting and engagement in house chores should be regulated.

2.2.2. Participation in Academic Work and Academic Achievement

Parents spend much time with their children after school, which provides an important avenue for the parents to assist their children with their studies specifically, homework. Shute et al (2011) argue that findings from over 27 published journal articles on the subject of parental involvement suggest that children supported by parents posted better results than those that did not. Keith et al (1993) note that the most important contribution to the child's learning is through help with and monitoring of homework. However, Tizard, Schofield and Hewison (1994) indicate that checking on homework sometimes has a negative association with academic achievement. The style of involvement, the parents' level of education and the ability to appreciate the child's academic work influence the parent's capacity to offer helpful intervention. Nevertheless, supporting the child with homework builds the child's ability to improve performance (Shute et al, 2011 and Wamala et al, 2013).

Participation in the child's academic affairs enhances the child's reading skills; development of basic skills like verbal comprehension, vocabulary, numeracy, and cognitive and physical competence; interest in and the enthusiasm for reading hence better performance (Reynolds, 2005 and Nsubuga et al, 2015). The role of parents in helping the child with academic work such as completing homework builds the child's confidence level and triggers a wave of sustained effort to excel.

The motivation for parents to be involved in their children's academic work is critical to enhancing academic achievement. Parents are motivated to participate in their child's academic work when: they believe it will make a positive difference in their children's

performance; they feel invited, valued and accepted by the school authorities; and when there is feedback on the benefits of their inputs (Hoover- Dempsey, 2009 and Shute et al, 2011). Tony and Lanclos (2003) and Shute et al (2011) suggest that parents can support children with academic work through interaction with teachers; signing off completed homework assignments; establishing physical and psychological structures to support the child's academic achievement; helping the child structure their academic work time; structuring academic work within the flow of family life and ensuring that parents are available on demand; tutoring, working with the child or doing academic work with the child and modelling or demonstrating appropriate learning processes. Setting such an enabling environment enhances task accomplishment by the child and has a lasting effect on the child's learning capabilities and academic achievement.

2.2.3. Participation in School Activities and Academic Achievement

Studies suggest that the most popular form of parental participation is through organisations such as the Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs) and School Management Council of Boards (Epstein, 2011, Msila, 2012). In addition, participation in school events such as visitations, sports, fundraising and constant communication with the teachers and school management increases parental participation. During meetings with teachers, parents are able to communicate their ambitions and teachers to clarify what parents should do to catalyse learning. These interactions between the teachers and parents build confidence on both sides of the spectrum and enhance learning and academic achievement. However, the roles of parents need to be properly clarified to realise any benefits in academic achievement from parental involvement (Schmitt & Kleine, 2010).

Shute et al (2011) posit that parental involvement is a significant input to the holistic learning process. When parents are involved and knowledgeable about school and academic activities, they offer focused support that underscores better academic achievement (Schmitt & Kleine, 2010). Epstein (2011) suggests that parental involvement in school activities encourages socialisation among parents and teachers and increases their appreciation of the value and utility of each other. Parents in the process are able to discuss with teachers and their children the academic strategies to improve the academic standards.

Parental involvement in school activities builds trust and respect between the teachers, parents and children (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Parental involvement also develops the parents' confidence to guide the academic trajectory of the children (Dearing et al, 2006). Parents who go to school regularly and/or are in constant communication with teachers about school programmes encourage their children to develop positive attitudes such as good conduct, attention in class and regular attendance.

The theoretical and conceptual discourses generally support the hypothesis that parents enable the children's academic achievement. However, most of the discourses focus on the elementary level of education and seem to have ignored the voice of the learner as a beneficiary of the parenting process for academic achievement. This study therefore seeks to contribute to the understanding of the role of parents in enabling academic achievement (i) among the secondary school children and (ii) from the learners' own consideration as affected parties. Without such a contribution, many parents, teachers and educational policy makers and implementers may continue finding difficulty articulating the role parents play in learners' academic achievement at secondary school level. Therefore, this study expects to provide helpful information to the academia, policy makers, school administrators, teachers and parents on harnessing the potential of parents as facilitators of academic achievement. This would ultimately contribute toward creating and sustaining an environment where parents are more able to extend their positive learning influence on their children in a more structured manner for the benefit of the children and the community.

3. The problem

Effective education is a source of demographic dividends for development to countries with a young population such as Uganda. Noting the aforesaid, in the period 2003/04-14/15, the government of Uganda made deliberate efforts to improve the quantity and quality of learning in the country, among others, at the secondary school level. These, *inter alia*, include Universal Secondary Education Policy (2007), increase in budget allocation to secondary schools by a factor of 6, increase in stock of classrooms by 53%, provision of scholastic materials and increase in the number of teaching staff by 32%. Reports indicate improvement in completion rates from 30% in 2005 to 39% in 2015. However, 61% of students who start senior one do not complete senior four. In addition, between 2008 and 2014, only 28% of girls and 32% of boys that qualified to join secondary schools were enrolled against a target of universal secondary education (Republic of Uganda, 2015). The performance index at secondary school level declined from 56.1% (59% boys and 52.6% girls) in 2005 to 42.25 (44.5% boys and 39.7% girls) in 2015. With the existing enabling environment created by the state, should the academic achievement at secondary schools remain dismal? In Uganda, education is a partnership between the government, parents and the community. Government seems to have done its duty in creating an enabling environment for better academic achievement. In addition, the legal and policy framework to harness parents' contribution to their children's academic achievement is in place. Article 34 of the Constitution 1995, Part II Section 5 of the Children's Act 1997 as amended and the Education Act 2008 Article 13 (4) enjoin parents to provide and support the education of their children. However, it is not clear whether parents are playing their role. This situation raises one critical research question: "Do the parents exercise their mandate of enabling the academic achievement of their children"? To answer this question, the adopted one objective "to examine whether parents are enabling the academic achievement of their children from the viewpoint of the children as learners themselves".

4. Methodology

The study employed a mixed methods sequential explanatory design. It utilised both quantitative and qualitative designs (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The essence of an explanatory study is to clarify why and how there is a relationship between two aspects of the phenomenon (Kumar, 2014). The design provides quantitative procedures to explore and quantify the extent of variations in the study

phenomenon and the qualitative descriptions that explore diversity, emphasise descriptions, narration of feelings, perceptions and experiences that give deeper meaning to the descriptive and inferential statistics obtained from the quantitative study (Kothari, 2008 and Kumar, 2014). The study involved two phases. Phase one was a quantitative inquiry utilising a self-administered survey questionnaire while phase two involved Key Informant (KI) interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). After phase one, the data collected using the questionnaire were analysed and predictors of parents as enablers of academic achievement noted. These were used to develop the interview schedule for KI and the FGD guide to ensure that the quantitative findings are clarified and deeply explained in the second phase.

The study was carried out in Kampala Capital City, Uganda. It involved students from six secondary schools. The six schools were selected through simple random sampling. Using purposive sampling, three public and three private mixed schools were selected. The quantitative phase involved 105 respondents from senior one to senior six. This number being higher than the minimum recommended sample of 64 participants for one tailed hypothesis or 82 for the two-tailed hypothesis in correlational designs was considered adequate for the study (Collins et al, 2007). Convenience sampling was used to select students to fill in the questionnaires. Inclusion depended on the student's availability and willingness to participate in the study. In the qualitative phase, 24 students from three of the targeted secondary schools were interviewed as KIs while four FGDs two for male and two for female each comprising 8 members were conducted.

A self-administered survey questionnaire, unstructured interview schedule for KI interviews and the FDG guide were used to collect data. The survey questionnaires permitted a greater depth of responses within a short time while the unstructured interview schedule enabled the researchers to focus on the predictors at the same time allowing the participants the freedom to respond without predetermined responses to allow respondents provide answers that are not compromised by structural limits. The FDG guide helped the researchers to focus on the themes that needed more attention to elicit deeper meaning from the participants.

The quantitative data collected using the survey questionnaire were edited, transcribed, coded, entered into the computer using SPSS Program Version 18, tabulated and cleaned. The data were analysed using both descriptive (mean and standard deviations) and inferential (correlation) statistics. Significance of the relationship between variables was determined at $\alpha=0.05$. For the qualitative data, the researchers identified the main themes that emerged from the review of the KI interviews and FDG notes, wrote about these themes, and quoted them extensively verbatim to augment the descriptive and inferential statistics.

5. Results

The objective of the study was to examine whether parents were enabling the academic achievement of children.

5.1. Respondents' Background

The background information of the respondents is as presented in Table 1.

Characteristics	Description	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	44	41.9
	Female	61	58.1
Age Category	13-15	33	31.4
	16-18	59	56.2
	19-21	13	12.4
Education Level	O' Level	50	47.6
	A' Level	55	52.4
Parental Care Giver	Father & Mother	57	54.3
	Father only	7	6.7
	Mother only	27	25.7
	Sister/ and or Brother	8	7.6
	Other	6	5.7
N= 105			

Table 1: Respondent Background

Source: Primary Data

Results in Table 1, reveal that more female respondents 61 (58.1%) than 44 (41.9%) participated in the study. The essence of involving both male and female respondents was gender representation. Majority of the respondents 59 (56.2%) were 16-18 years, 33 (31.4%) 13-15 years and 13 (12.4%) 19-21 years of age. Majority of the respondents (87.6%) were ≤ 18 years. Children in this age group are dependent on their parents for physical and emotional support. They are deemed to represent views of a group whose achievement could be influenced by their parents. Majority of the respondents 55 (52.4%) were A level students while 50 (47.6%) were O' level students suggesting that the respondents had adequate contextual knowledge of the study phenomenon. Most respondents 57 (54.3%) receive parental care from both parents while 27 (25.7%) receive parental care from mother only and 7 (6.7%) from father only. Overall, 86.7% reported receiving care from their parents hence in position to share the real-world experience about the study phenomenon.

5.2. Home Environment

This sought to examine the perceived level of the home environment in enabling academic achievement. The findings are as indicated in Table 2.

Constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My Parent/Guardian provides me with necessary requirements to do my school	105	4.55	.888
My Parent/ Guardian provides me with adequate feeding	105	4.73	.576
My Parent/Guardian provides me with clothes required	105	4.38	.892
My Parent/ Guardian provides me with enough living space at home	105	4.33	.987
My Parent/ Guardian makes me feel respected at home	105	4.49	.822
My Parent /Guardian acknowledges my school achievements	105	4.49	.695
My Parent/ Guardian protects me from any form of harassment at home	105	4.56	.759
My Parent/ Guardian sets for me realistic expectations that match my age	105	4.32	1.024
My Parent/ Guardian encourages me to show good values	105	4.74	.591
My Parent/ Guardian encourages me to share with him or her my life challenges	105	4.23	1.031
Aggregate Mean		4.48	.827
Valid N (List wise)	105		

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Home Environment
Source: Primary Data

Results in Table 2 indicate that all indicators measuring the home environment construct registered high mean scores above 3.5 suggesting that the home environment was supportive to the learners. Likewise, it was noticed that the magnitude of the standard deviation of individual items was small; an indication that views of individual respondents spread less from the general average view of the respondents. Parents mostly encourage good values mean score (4.74) and provide adequate feeding mean score (4.73). Results also indicate that parents protect their children from harassment at home mean score (4.56) and provide necessary requirements to enable the children do their academic work mean score (4.55). Other indicators namely the children feeling respected at home, parents acknowledging their school achievements, providing clothing, enough space, setting realistic expectations that match the age of the children and sharing life challenges were high with average mean value above (4.22). The overall rating of home environment as a predictor of academic achievement is high mean score (4.48). This suggests that in the studied schools, most parents provide a supportive home environment that would ideally enable academic achievement.

5.3. Participation in Academic Work

This sought to examine the perceived level of parental participation in the academic work of their children. The findings are indicated in Table 3.

Construct	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My Parent / Guardian helps me do my school work	105	3.56	1.308
My Parent/ Guardian encourages me to complete my school work in time	105	4.31	.974
My Parent/ Guardian signs off my school work all the time	105	3.57	1.247
My Parent/ Guardian follow up to ensure that I hand in my work	105	3.83	1.105
My Parent/ Guardian inspects my school work regularly	105	3.77	1.227
My Parent/ Guardian discusses with the teachers learning challenges	105	4.10	1.156
Aggregate mean		3.86	1.170
Valid N (list wise)	105		

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Participation in Academic Work
Source: Primary Data

Findings in Table 3 show that all the indicators measuring participation in academic work registered high mean score above 3.5. Likewise, it is also noticed that the magnitude of standard deviations of individual items was moderate; an indication that views of individual respondents spread moderately from the general average view of the respondents. The findings indicate that parents encourage children to complete their homework in time mean score (4.31); parents discuss with teachers the learning challenges of their children mean score (4.10); parents follow up their children to ensure that work is handed in mean score (3.83); inspect work regularly mean score (3.77); sign off work mean score (3.57) and help their children do their homework mean score (3.56). The findings suggest that in the studied schools, most parents participate in the academic work of their children that would ideally lead to better academic achievement.

5.4. Participation in School Activities

This sought to examine the level of parental participation in school activities. The findings are as indicated in Table 4.

Constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My Parent/ Guardian visits me on visitation	105	4.57	.856
My Parent/ Guardian attends parent's meeting at school	105	3.95	1.218
My Parent/ Guardian assists me whenever called upon by the school	105	4.50	.788
My Parent/ Guardian contributes to the school academic developments	105	4.16	.860
My Parent / Guardian participates in school guidance and counseling	105	3.57	1.265
My Parent / Guardian communicates regularly with teachers about school activities	105	3.55	1.269
Aggregate Mean		4.05	1.043
Valid N(listwise)	105		

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Participation in School Activities

Source: Primary Data

Findings in Table 4 indicate that there is high participation in the school activities by the parents with average mean score (4.05) standard deviation (1.043). It is also noticed that the magnitude of standard deviation of individual items was moderate; an indication that views of individual respondents spared moderately from the general average view of individual respondents. The findings indicate that parents visit their children during school visitation mean score (4.57), assist their children whenever called upon by the school mean score (4.50) and contribute to the academic development of their children mean score (4.16). In addition, parents attend parents' meetings at school mean score (3.95), participate in school guidance and counselling sessions mean score (3.57) and communicate regularly with teachers about school activities mean score (3.55). The overall rating of participation in school activities as a predictor for academic achievement is high mean score (4.05) standard deviation (1.043) though, there is a slight spread of the views of the respondents away from the mean.

5.5. Academic achievement

This sought to examine the perceived level of academic achievement of the children. The findings are indicated in Table 5.

Construct	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I attend school regularly	105	4.93	.252
I seek out academic assistance from Parents/ Guardians & Teachers	105	4.42	.678
I participate in academic work such as group discussions, seminars and debates	105	4.27	.937
I do my school work regularly most of the time	105	4.41	.719
My subject grades are always good	105	4.13	.837
My overall class performance keeps improving	105	4.28	.864
Aggregate mean		4.41	.715
Valid N (list wise)	105		

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Academic Achievement

Source: Primary Data

Findings in Table 5 indicate that most of the academic achievement indicators registered high mean score above 3.5. It is also noticed that the magnitude of standard deviations of individual items was small; an indication that the views of the individual respondents spread less from the general average view of the respondents. The learners indicated that they attend school regularly mean score (4.93), seek out academic assistance from the parents and teachers mean score (4.42), do their homework correctly mean score (4.41), over all class performance keeps improving mean score (4.28), participate in academic work such as group discussions, seminars and debates mean score (4.27) and that the subject grades are always good mean score (4.13). It can be inferred from the descriptive statistics that there is a high perception of academic achievement among the learners.

5.6. Correlation Analysis Results

A correlation analysis was done to establish the relationship between the independent variable parents as enablers and the dependent variable academic achievement. The findings are presented in Table 6.

Variables	Correlation	Parents as Enablers	Academic Achievement
Parents as Enablers	Pearson Correlation	1	.498
	Sig. (2 tailed)		.000
	N	105	.105
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.498**	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	
	N	.105	105

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table 6: Correlation Matrix between Parents as Enablers and Academic Performance

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 shows the Pearson's correlation coefficient $r = .498^{**}$ between Parents as Enablers and Academic Achievement are positively related. The Pearson's correlation $r = .498^{**}$ and sig. value (sig.000) show that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between Parents as Enablers of academic achievement and Academic Achievement. This relationship shows that a directional change in Parents as Enablers variable leads to directional change in Academic Achievement. Therefore, this positive relationship between the variables confirms that parents are enablers of academic achievement of their children through establishing a good home environment, participating in academic work and participating in school activities. In Table 7, the findings reveal that parents enable up to 22.5% of the child's academic achievement through the investigated variables (Adjusted $r^2 = .225$, $p = .000$).

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig. F Change
Dimension 1	.498	.248	.225	.000

Table 7: Coefficient of Determination (R^2)
Predictors: (constant), Parenting as Enablers
Source: Primary Data

As earlier argued, that a parent plays a big role in the academic achievement of the child, a contribution of 22.5% in academic achievement from parents playing their enabling roles is a desirable boost in improving academic achievement.

6. Summary, Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Summary

The existing literature indicates that parents are critical actors in the learning process of their children. The parents contribute to the learners' development physiologically, emotionally and cognitively. It is claimed that parents that participate in their children's learning process contribute positively to their children's academic achievement. Contributing to this claim, this study established that parents of learners in the studied schools are perceived to provide an enabling home environment with mean score of (4.48), participate in academic work mean score of (3.86) and participate in school activities mean score (4.05). In addition, the learners perceive their academic achievement to be high with mean score of (4.41). It is also revealed that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between the activities of the parent as an enabler of academic achievement and the perceived academic achievement of children Coefficient Correlation ($r = .498$, $p = .000$) tested at .05 level of significance. Further, regression analysis shows that the studied parenting activities contribute 22.5% to the learners' academic achievement (Adjusted $r^2 = .225$). Therefore, the findings confirm the claim that parents are enablers of their children's academic achievement through involvement in the activities related to learning such as establishing an enabling home environment, participating in children's academic work and participating in school activities.

6.2. Discussions

The role of parents in the academic achievement of their children has been a subject of much practitioner and scholarly discourse since the end of World War I. Since then, to bring parents into the proximity of their children's academic environment to enable them contribute to their children's learning, several interventions have been advocated, that, inter alia, include encouraging parents to establish and sustain an enabling home environment, participating in academic work and participating in school activities. Correlation studies have established a positive and significant relationship between these parental interventions in the children's learning process and the children's academic achievement. Contributing to these debates, the researchers attempted to ascertain whether, in Uganda, at the secondary school level, parents enable academic achievement of their children.

6.2.1. Home Environment

Parents in the studied schools are considered to provide a home environment that enables academic achievement mean score (4.48). The parents encourage good values, provide adequate feeding for the children, protect the children from distractions, provide necessary requirements and make children feel appreciated. Supporting the aforesaid, learners during the focus group discussions indicated that parents encourage children to exhibit good social manners thus setting the tone for good conduct at school that leads to higher participation in academic related activities and hence better grades in class. Learners argued that students from homes whose parents care about good character development are less distracted from academic activities. Such students do not escape from school for discos, drinking, substance abuse or other unacceptable forms of behaviour. Learners indicated that due to positive behaviour, their academic achievement is usually above average. One learner expressed her perspective thus: "My parents are traditional. They trained us as children to respect others. I have never been found in any controversy that could undermine my academic work. My school reports always show that I am a well-behaved student and my academic results get better every exam." The findings support the claims by Shute et al (2011) and Dzever (2015) that a home environment that inculcates good social values and behaviours enables children to develop a persona for better academic achievement. Emotionally and physically supportive parents build emotionally stable learners who are able to concentrate on their academic work. Some learners however indicated that their parents are not supportive physically and emotionally. They indicated a lack of adequate scholastic materials, food, and a comfortable living environment as factors affecting their scholarly capacity. Learners also claimed that a home environment that is characterized by quarrelling, fighting, and excessive drinking by parents affects their learning abilities. Further, parents that do not appreciate their children's achievement and or set higher targets than learners are able to meet subject learners to stress. Learners indicated that they

spend much time thinking about the home environment than reading or participating in academic related activities. The learners claimed that lack of physical and emotional support exposes them to physical and mental stress and are easily driven into distractions such as watching movies during school time, gambling and substance abuse, which affect their ability to concentrate on academic work. These claims support the postulations of Shute et al (2011), Adewumi et al (2012) and Dzever (2015) that children from homes that provide basic requirements and emotional support concentrate more and attain better grades at school than those that are not from physically and emotionally supportive homes.

6.2.2. Participation in Academic Activities

The findings indicate that there is a high level of participation by parents in the academic work of their children mean score 3.86. The findings indicate that parents encourage learners to complete school work in time, discuss with teachers the pupils' learning challenges, follow up to ensure that pupils hand in school work in time, inspect schoolwork regularly, sign off schoolwork all the time and help the learners do home work. The learners reported improved academic achievement. The findings support the existing literature, which claims that parents who help their children complete their homework and discuss academic challenges build confidence in the children and the capacity to excel (Marphatia et al., 2013 and Nsubuga et al., 2015). This is further emphasized by the focus group discussions where learners indicated that parents always remind them to complete their homework in time, check it for completeness, and reach out to teachers to share learning challenges of their children about specific subjects. The learners claimed that they feel more encouraged when parents check their homework, share their findings with their teachers and provide feedback about how they feel when learners pass their homework. In agreement with claims by Shute et al (2011), learners suggested that sharing of the learning challenges between the parents and the teachers encourages them to be better performers academically. One learner during the interview said, *"My father develops friendship with my class teachers in every class I join. He calls them or they call him whenever I have a challenge with my academic work. This strategy has greatly kept me focused on my studies and improved my academic achievement"*. Existing studies complement the findings that performance of the aforesaid activities by the parents improves academic achievement of their children (Marphatia et al, 2010, Shute et al, 2011 and Wamala et al, 2013). Learners suggested that signing off schoolwork, following up learners to ensure that the work is handed in and regular inspection of their academic work encourages them to work harder, complete in time, and hand in the work in time. The parents do not only encourage their children to complete their work, but also make sure that the work is correct to avoid embarrassment.

However, some learners claimed that to them, parental involvement in academic work does not help much. These learners indicated that they are discouraged when their parents turn themselves into "close range" supervisors without giving them breathing space. This observation is supported by Tizard et al (1994) who claim that the parent's style of helping learners may make them discouraged than encouraged to be better learners. In addition, learners noted that factors such as literacy levels of parents limited their capacity to help their children. Some parents who are either illiterate or semi illiterate have limited capacity to make a direct contribution to their academic work. Moreover, some learners suggested that some parents complain about some school authorities not treating them as contributors to academic achievement beyond meeting the basic requirements. Therefore, some parents are sceptical about involvement in academic work of their children. The three observations, that is, the style of involvement, the ability of parents and scepticism about their role in academic work could be serious hindrances to meaningful participation of parents in their children's schoolwork. One learner during the interview said, *"I attend PTA and class meetings with my parents. Teachers only thank parents for paying school fees in time and providing scholastic materials. The teachers' messages seem not to recognise the direct support our parents provide in enabling our academic achievement. Moreover, they do not hold seminars or workshops to guide our parents on how they could effectively participate in enabling our academic work"*. This observation is in agreement with studies by Marphatia et al (2010) and Shute et al (2011) that parents participate when they believe it will make a positive change, they feel invited and receive feedback about their efforts. Therefore, a lower level of education, not feeling invited and not obtaining feedback about the importance of their academic support are likely to make parents withdrawn from effective participation in their children's academic work. This observation further lends credence to the claim by Tizard et al (1994) that in some cases, parental participation in academic work is weakly correlated with academic achievement.

6.2.3. Participation in School Activities

The findings indicate that there is a high level of parental participation in school activities mean score (4.05). The findings indicate that parents visit their children during visitation time, assist the learners whenever called upon by the school, contribute to academic development of the learners, attend parents' meetings, communicate regularly with teachers and participate in school guidance and counseling sessions. The interest by most parents to keep a closer relationship with the school authorities is supported by the findings of Hill and Tyson (2009) that school activities offer an opportunity to discuss academic ambitions of their children and draw strategies to help them improve their academic standards. Learners claimed that parents like meeting their children and interacting with them on visitation days. It is claimed that unlike PTA meetings that some parents dodge, most parents are enthusiastic to visit their children on visitation day. In addition, learners claim that school authorities use this day to share with parents and learners the academic progress. This claim supports the argument by Epstein (2011) that school visitations provide a forum for interaction between the teachers, parents and learners. The relationship built during such occasions creates trust among the three parties (Marphatia et al, 2010). Further, in support of visitation, Hill and Tyson (2009) claim that when parents are informed of their children's needs, they become more supportive especially on those matters that they know will make their children excel academically. The findings also confirm that as claimed by Hill and Tyson (2009), parents can participate in their children's learning process through conducting lessons in their fields of specialization, attending guidance and counseling sessions, communicating regularly with teachers and attending

meetings. Learners claim that these activities help the parents to share with their teachers and appreciate their challenges. This practice builds trust between the teachers, parents and the learners. The teachers become more willing to help such learners whose parents commonly participate in school activities while learners feel obligated to perform better to honour their parents. However, learners cautioned that some parents do not attend PTA meetings. In addition, those who have been invited to school over their children's behaviour mainly attend guidance and counselling sessions. Learners indicate that most parents go to school when there is a specific purpose that concerns their child. Similarly, communication with school authorities' is triggered by an extreme occurrence that parents feel they should share with the school management. Learners indicate that weak academic performance is one aspect that makes some parents go to school to ascertain what is happening. Therefore, it can be inferred that some parents whose children have no academic or behavioural challenges, may have limited interest in participating in some school activities thus rendering this activity less effective at enhancing academic achievement.

6.2.4. Academic Achievement

The findings indicate that there is a perceived high academic achievement among the learners covered mean score (4.41) standard deviation (.715). Learners claim that they attend school regularly, seek academic assistance from parents and teachers, participate in academic work, regularly do schoolwork in time, register better class grades and register a continuous improvement in the academic achievement. These claims support the existing studies such as Marphatia et al (2010), Echuane et al (2010), Epstein (2011), Nyarko (2011) and Ampofo & Osei- Owusu (2015), which indicate that the academic achievement of children is enhanced by parental involvement. Focus group discussions and interviews further complement the existing literature. Learners claim that when their parents pay school fees in time and provide scholastic materials, their attendance at school becomes regular. They also indicate that their academic achievement gets better. This finding is supported by the arguments of Epstein (2011) and Rulinda et al (2013) that when parents provide the basic necessities and a conducive home environment, children are encouraged to go to school. From a different angle, Epstein (2011) and Shute et al (2011), indicate that when parents assist their children with homework, have developed positive social skills and are motivated to learn, such children become more interested in attending school. Learners during the focus group discussions claim that when their parents have met all the school requirements in time and have no distractions, they have no excuse to leave school. In addition, when parents show interest in knowing what their children do at school, they are encouraged not to indulge in activities that will embarrass them. Learners also claim that children from parents that are friendly to teachers benefit from the close interest both parents and teachers cultivate and tend to receive more academic enhancing assistance than those whose parents are less known or perceived to be less friendly. Parents develop and sustain the learners' assistance seeking behaviour when they call teachers asking about their children's performance, request the teachers to help with difficult topics, encourage learners to meet their teachers and seek clarification about unclear issues and appear more concerned about the academic achievement of the children.

6.2.5. Correlation Analysis Results

Findings indicate that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between parents as enablers of academic achievement and the academic achievement of learners as an outcome ($r=.498$, $p=.000$). Therefore, it can be inferred that the studied constructs of parents as enablers of academic achievement are associated with academic achievement facets tested. Academic achievement represented by regular school attendance, assistance seeking behaviour, participation in academic work, doing school work regularly, better class grades and continuous improvement in the academic achievement will be present where parents: provide a home environment that is supportive of learning, participate in the academic work of their children and participate in the school activities. Further, findings indicate that the two variables are not only associated, but, parents enable up to 22.5% of the learner's academic achievement (Adjusted $r^2=.225$). The study confirms the existence of a positive and significant relationship between parental participation in the academic activities and academic performance and that parents are enablers of their children's academic achievement as claimed by Hill and Tyson (2009), Marphatia et al (2010), Epstein (2011), Nyarko (2011), Shute et al (2011), Kaberere et al (2013) and Echuane et al (2015).

6.3. Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from this study indicate that consistent with the existing regression studies, there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between parents as enablers of academic achievement and the academic achievement of the learners at secondary school level in Uganda. Further, parents contribute to better academic performance by way of providing an enabling home environment, participating in school activities and participating in academic work. It is also noted that the home environment is considered the most important element in enabling learners to improve their academic performance. Therefore, parents need to ensure that they set a conducive home environment that will enable learners perform better academically. Overall, the three facets of parents as enablers of academic performance ensure that learners grow socially, emotionally and academically; develop the abilities and attitudes to complete their schoolwork in time; attend school regularly; build confidence to participate in academic and non-academic activities and relate well with teachers. The parents' role in the academic value chain is more than just paying school fees, providing accommodation and scholastic materials. Parents therefore are a key input to the academic success of the learners.

6.4. Recommendations

Educational policy framers and implementers need to devise means of increasing awareness about the critical role of parents in the academic achievement of their children. School heads and Parents, Teachers' Committees need to sensitise parents about how they could contribute to the learners' academic achievement. The school authorities and policy makers also need to engage the parents

constructively and build relationships between the school, the home and the government agencies in charge of education to harness the ability of parents to foster better academic achievement of children. Therefore, traditional mechanisms such as PTA meetings need to be strengthened to include sensitisation sessions to build the parents capacity to play their role in the learning process of their children. In addition, school authorities need to organise regular best practices meetings with parents to appreciate their contribution to the children's academic achievement and to build better relationships with the child and the school. Further research is needed to ascertain other factors that contribute to academic achievement and the actions that are needed to remedy the declining performance in secondary schools in Uganda.

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