

Strategies to Enhance Involvement of Single Parents in their Children's Education in Zvimba District

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the strategies that enhance single parent involvement on their children's academic performance in Zvimba District, Zimbabwe. The study was based on Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence. Data was collected from sixty respondents who included twenty-four parents, eighteen school heads and teachers and eighteen learners from three schools in Zvimba District. The respondents were chosen using purposive sampling procedures. Semi structured interview guide and focus group discussions were used to collect primary data. Tables and snippets were used to present the data. The study established that collaboration as a strategy of parent involvement contributes significantly to performance of a child's education as in line with Epstein (2017), the concept of overlapping spheres of influence. Open communication, volunteering and school decision making and home learning are key elements and strategies for single parental involvement. These are some strategies that are being adopted by some parents but still need to improve to enhance their involvement. The study suggests that schools should set up support groups for single parents so that they can exchange knowledge on coping strategies. The study also urges that there be open communication between school teachers and single parents, single parents should have direct contact with the teachers so as to have a better understanding of the education of their child. Schools should also provide open on open door communication policy.

Key words: Strategies, Involvement, Single parent, Children's Education, Zvimba

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Background of Study

Single-parent families are on the rise globally, with an increasing number of children being raised by a single parent. Parental involvement in education plays a crucial role in child's academic success and overall well-being. However, single parents often face unique challenges that can hinder their active participation in their children's education. Understanding and addressing these challenges is essential to support single parents effectively in engaging with their children's educational journey. Single parenting refers to a situation where mothers or fathers raise their children without the presence of a spouse (Ferrel, 2019). There are different reasons why a person becomes a single parent. They may choose this lifestyle or they may have been in a relationship that they left, or perhaps their partners have died or left them (Benokraitis, 2016). Developed countries, in particular, experience an increase in single-parent families as divorce becomes more common (Mrinde, 2017).

The UK has over one million single-parent families; this gives one family in seven to be a single-parent family. Most single-parent families come into being as a consequence of marital breakdown, separation or divorce, but the increasing proportions are the result of births out of wedlock (Smith, 2018). According to the United States Census, the figure of children who are dependent and live with only one parent rose every year, causing considerable concern among policymakers and the public (Mrinde, 2017). In developing countries, divorce has not been a common phenomenon but desertion, death, and imprisonment produce single-parent families, primarily headed by women. The rates vary from country to country for example in Kuwait the rate is less than 5 percent while the rate is over 40 percent in Botswana. In countries such as Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda more than 25 percent of households are headed by women (Mrinde, 2017). In East Africa, Uganda has the largest number of single-parent families living in poverty with no state welfare. Among the causes are deaths through HIV/AIDS, malaria, and abandonment (Uganda Reflex, 2011). On the other hand, Tanzania is one of the countries facing a growing rate of single-parenthood and the negative effects of single-parented life. For example, the number of secondary school students who are living in a single-parent household rose from 149,239 in 2009 to 177,465 in 2012 (BEST, 2012).

Experts in children's development have revealed that children who grow up with single parents are likely to experience trauma and develop bad behaviour which may affect such children throughout their lives (Tesda, 2011). Benokraitis (2016) argues that the absence of one parent has serious effects on the child which consequently influence the educational achievement of their children in school. There is a relationship between parenting and students' academic achievement. Parents play a major role in the academic achievement of children because they can influence their child's thinking and learning during their development (Sulaiman, 2018). In Nyarko's (2011) study, the findings showed that to alleviate the problems that plague the educational system today the right parenting should be given to children to help raise the

standard of quality education. The study revealed that parenting is crucial in developing the right human resources who can take part in national development. If the child's cognition may develop positively or negatively and affect educational attainment, it is based largely on the type of parental care the child is given.

Problem Statement

Despite the importance of parent involvement in children's education, single parents often face unique barriers to involvement. Single parents often face time constraints, financial pressures, and emotional stress, which can make it challenging for them to actively engage in their children's education. This may result in lower levels of involvement, which in turn may negatively impact their children's educational outcomes, lower academic performance, decreased motivation, and higher probability of dropping out. Therefore, there is a need for research on the strategies single parents are employing and should employ in order to enhance their involvement in the education of their children.

Objectives

1. To explore effective strategies to enhance the involvement of single parents in their children's education.
2. To assess the impact of increased parental involvement on the academic achievement and well-being of children from single-parent families.

Research questions

- What are the strategies single parents are using and should use in order to enhance their involvement on the education of their children?
- What is the impact of increased parental involvement on academic achievement on children coming from single parent households?

Significance of Study

The study may help single parents to identify and understand their role in helping their children attain educational goals. The findings will inform teachers and parents about the importance of bringing schools and homes together to help children succeed in their learning. The findings of the study might give insight to school administrators as well, on how important parental involvement is in influencing their children's' education. Parental involvement is a strong indicator of how well children will perform academically. With consistent support from school personnel as well as support from the home environment, research shows that there is better overall academic achievement. This study is also important to other stakeholders such as educational officers, government and non-governmental organisations.

Literature Review

A family becomes a single parent family when the parental link is severed. A single family is defined by Sibanda, Chingove and Munyati (2016) as a family where either the father or mother lives alone with their children from a prior marriage. In his research on the causes of single parenting, Tassoni (2016) families in the US cite death and divorce as two of the main reasons of single parent households. The New York Times (2017) conducted research in southern Africa

and discovered that teen pregnancies and poverty increased the number of single parent homes. Zirima (2022) went further asserting that divorce, poverty, urban migration, HIV/AIDS pandemic and the recent Corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic are contributing to the breakdown of the family. Research from the National Statistics Survey 2016 has shown that 30% of white children, 54% black children and 38% Hispanic children live in single-parent homes. Most children from such backgrounds do not perform well academically.

Intact married family delivers fundamental educational benefits to children, hence, the breakdown of such a family impacts children's achievement and attainment in school (Abudu & Fuseini, 2018). Abudu and Fuseini (2019) went further by saying, 'When one of the parents is absent in a child's life, a gap is created as the child would lose the support that would have emanated from that parent'. Intact families play a crucial role in the socialisation of children; therefore, single parenthood has a great impact on educational outcomes. Bruce and Meggit's (2016) notes that the most crucial duties of parents include raising their children providing their requirements in terms of care, support and promoting their education. Craig (2016) further argues that providing effective child care entails consistently responding to children's cues, being approachable, reducing stress, and laying the groundwork for a strong attachment with the child. When a child receives quality childcare, they can confidently interact with teachers, as well as with their parents and other caregivers. According to Musiiwa and Muzembe (2018), Mary Ainsworth's ethological theory supports Craig (2016) in that a child has to have a positive attachment link with their parents in order to grow up feeling secure and trustworthy. The parent must be present for the growth and well-being of the child.

In their studies, Anthony, Glanville, Naaman, Waander and Shaffer (2016) assert that children learn better when they have access to sufficient learning and development resources and psychosocial support. Catering for children's learning and development is likely to be difficult for single parents. According to Tassoni (2016), the majority of single-parent households in the USA are in the low-income areas and rely on menial labour to supplement their income. Tassoni also contends that most single parent families may not be able to afford to pay their bills, buy food or adequately provide their children with educational resources like computers and books. According to Marther (2019), some single parents may be unable to provide for their children's fundamental needs because of unemployment. The research shows that some single parents do not have the chance to take their children to different educational locations like museums, zoos, and educational centres to expose them to topics taught in school.

According to Case (2019), family size and the nature of parent-child relationships also contribute to single parent family challenges. Big family sizes make it more difficult for single parents to meet their children's educational needs. According to Kail (2017), single parents with numerous children find it challenging to effectively support their children's education, this is mainly common in Asian and African regions, so they often turn to outside sources for help. Therefore, it follows that single parents will have an easier time affording to meet their children's educational needs the smaller their family is. Case (2019) is supported by Anthony (2017) who maintains that healthy parent-child relationships positively affect children's learning and development.

The goal of the current study was to identify some challenges faced by single parents and to investigate the strategies they use and they can use to improve their involvement in the

education of their children. The study analyses single parents in the Zimbabwean context focusing on Zvimba District schools to how they participate in the learning and education of their children. This is so as to get information that is specific to the Zimbabwean context as generalizations based on international studies may prove to be inadequate and even misleading due to differences in the socio-geographic context.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory. Bronfenbrenner's theory suggests that a person's surroundings, including his/her home, school, work, church, neighbourhood, culture and government, all have an influence on the way one develops. The ecological perspective can be defined as an interaction between an individual and the environment. The ecological perspective by Bronfenbrenner (2016, 2018), provides a framework from which multiple contextual factors affect the academic performance of a child. According to Bray, Gooskens, Khan, Moses and Seekings (2016), the system is greater than the sum of its parts. So, how a child thinks, feels, behaves and develops as a person is inevitably linked to the social grouping, forces and relationships that make up their environment for example, families, peer groups, the school and other social groupings, the socio-economic forces and the interpersonal, cultural, political and power relationships. To study a child's development, then, one must look not only at the child and his/her immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory of child development has five systems that greatly impact the development of children. These systems consist of rules, norms and 'roles that are responsible for shaping children's development. The systems are micro-system (immediate environment in which the teenager lives for example, home, school, peer group or community environment), meso-system (the interaction of the different micro-systems which the teenager finds herself in.), exo-system (factors that indirectly affect the child), macro-system. This framework is crucial as it will inform the study in theory on how a child can be affected by his/her immediate environment that is the family and its setup.

Methodology

This study was informed by the interpretivism paradigm and the qualitative approach was used. The purpose of the study was to examine strategies used to enhance the involvement of single parents in the education of their children. The interpretivism paradigm was relevant because it derives constructs from the field of an in-depth examination of the phenomena of interest (Abbadia, 2020). According to Brick and Green (2017), interpretivism believes that there are multiple realities and they endeavour to understand and interpret the meaning attached to the action. Interpretivism allows the researcher to interact with respondents through interviews.

In the current study, the researcher was able to interview school heads, teachers, parents and learners from different schools. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), the premise of interpretive research is to access reality through social constructions such as language consciousness and shared meaning. So, in this case, information about strategies to enhance single parent involvement in learner education and how they are implemented was collected and interpreted. Using the interpretivism paradigm the researcher was able to interpret different views from respondents.

Research Approach and Design

The current research study employed the qualitative approach. The qualitative approach was relevant to this study because it allowed the researcher to ask questions which call for inductive reasoning where specific objects were observed in their natural setting. (Brick and Green, 2017). The researcher was able to ask questions on how single parenting affects a child's education and what strategies were being and can be employed by single parents to enhance their involvement in their child's education. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), qualitative approach understands meaning by looking at and describing experiences, ideas, beliefs and values. Thus it takes into cognisance the cultural standards that frequently weigh the data against current social norms.

In the current study, the researcher was able to explore the experiences of different parents and learners. The participants sampled for this research have different views about the influence of single parenting on a child's education this had an influence on the strategies to be used to enhance the involvement of single parents in the education of their child. Using the qualitative approach, it was possible to interpret the thinking of the participants. For this study, the phenomenological design was used. Qualitative phenomenological case study approach is used to highlight the specifics and to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in the situation.

One of the advantages of this approach is that it allows the researchers to gain an understanding of social phenomena from participants' perspectives in their natural settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2016). Qualitative phenomenological case study approach is used to highlight the specifics and to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in the situation. One of the advantages of this approach is that it allows the researchers to gain an understanding of social phenomena from participants' perspectives in their natural settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2016). In the current study, the research design was used to obtain information about the strategies single parents are using to enhance their involvement in the education of their children

Sample

In the research, the sample is 60 consisting of twenty-four parents, eighteen faculty members and eighteen learners. The sample consisted of three primary schools found in Zvimba District. Margolis (2016) defines a sample as a subject of a population. According to Weiss (2018), a sample is a part of a large population.

Three schools were selected so as to get an extensive understanding of challenges faced by children from single parent households and the strategies the parents use and can use to be more involved in their child's education. Along with the learners and their parents, school heads and teachers were also chosen as part of the sample as they have in depth information as like the parents have a direct responsibility to the education of the learners and work with them every day therefore are in a position to describe and explain the problems faced by single parents and the learners from single parent households and the strategies they use to address these challenges.

Instrumentation

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from parents, and school faculty and focus group discussions were adopted for the learners. The semi-structured interview approach was

convenient for this study because the researcher was able to get first-hand information from the participants the researcher was also able to make follow-ups on specific issues and probe further, more open-ended questions will be used. Thus, enabling discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee. According to Merriam (2018), semi-structured interviews enable the provision of detailed information about the feelings and perceptions of participants on the topic. The semi-structured interview method was also relevant for this study as it allowed the interviewer to ask questions on the strategies employed by single parents to improve their involvement in their child’s education. However, this data elicitation method has its disadvantage in that it is time-consuming. The interview may also be biased. For example, some participants may not disclose what exactly will be happening and may pretend to be doing what they are not doing. Nevertheless, all the precautions were taken to ensure bias-free interviews by accepting the information given as it is. Enough time was also scheduled to visit all the participants.

For the learners focus group discussions were adopted. A focus group is a method of qualitative research that is an organized discussion though structured flexibly (Melos, 2016). This technique was used for the learners so that they would be free to open up and express themselves around people with similar backgrounds, and through the sharing of points and ideas can express themselves better.

Data Analysis

Given the interpretive stance that was adopted by the current study, the Grounded Theory method of data analysis was relevant. Grounded theory was employed to select themes using thematic content analysis. The questions used in the interviews were drawn from the research objectives and each objective had a question formulated to address it.

Presentation of Research Findings and Discussion

Table 1 Single parent responses on strategies of parental involvement (N = 24)

Strategies	SD(%)	D(%)	A(%)	SA(%)
I always help my child in homework after school and when schools are closed	1 (4.1)	2 (8.3)	15 (62.5)	6 (25)
When called by the teacher, I make sure I respond to the call	3 (12.5)	3 (12.5)	14 (58.3)	4 (16.6)
I follow my child’s progress by consulting the teacher and checking the report book	4 (16.6)	4 (16.6)	10	6 (25)
Always attend parent meetings in school	3 (12.5)	11 (45.8)	6 (25)	4 (16.6)
I like discussing my child’s strengths and weaknesses with the teacher	5 (20.8)	10 (41.6)	7 (29)	2 (8.3)
I read with the child at home when free	3 (12.5)	8 (33.3)	11 (45.8)	3 (12.5)

Source: Field Data 2024

Data in Table 1 indicates that majority of the parents help their children in homework and help their child read when they are free. However, there is very little follow up on their child’s progress with the teachers interms of consulting with them, to discuss their child’s strengths and

weaknesses and areas that require their attention. Also, from the data shows that most single parents do not attend parent meetings.

Table 2 Teachers and school heads responses on strategies of parental involvement (N = 18)

Strategies	SD(%)	D(%)	A(%)	SA(%)
Parents help their children to do homework after school and when schools are closed	5 (27.7)	7 (38.9)	5 (27.7)	1 (5.6)
Parents come to school whenever they are called	6 (33.3)	7 (38.9)	4 (22.2)	1 (5.6)
Parents follow-up their children’s progress by consulting the teacher and checking the report book	10 (55.5)	4 (22.2)	2 (11.1)	2 (11.1)
Parents always attend parent meetings at school	10 (55.5)	2(11.1)	6(33.3)	0
Parents discuss their children’s strengths and weaknesses with the teacher	8(44.4)	9 (50)	1 (5.6)	0
We call parents to discuss their children’s progress and discipline	8(44.4)	7 (38.9)	3 (16.6)	0

Source: Field Data 2024

Data in Table 2 shows that teachers are of the view that most single parents do not assist their children with their homework or encourage and assist them to read when they are free. Faculty is also of the view that there is very little follow up on learner progress by the single parents with the teachers in terms of consulting with them, to discuss their child’s strengths and weaknesses and areas that require their attention., their progress and discipline. Additionally, the teacher’s responses show that most single parents do not attend parent meetings.

Table 3 Learners responses on strategies of parental involvement (N = 18)

Strategies	SD(%)	D(%)	A(%)	SA(%)
Parents help me to do homework after school and when schools are closed	4 (22.2)	6 (33.3)	6 (33.3)	2 (11.1)
Parents come to school whenever they are called	6 (33.3)	7 (38.9)	5 (27.7)	0
Parents follow-up on my progress by consulting the teacher and checking the report book	4 (22.2)	8 (44.4)	4 (22.2)	2 (22.2)

Source: Field Data 2024

Data in Table 3 from the responses of the learners indicate that some single parents do assists their children interms of their homework which concurs with the parent responses. However, from the learner responses most single parents do not attend school meetings or come to school when they are called.

The data was compiled from single parents and faculty through structured interviews and grade seven learners through focus group discussions. The thrust of the study was to investigate the strategies to enhance the involvement of single parents in their child's education in Zvimba district. When looking at involvement displayed by parents, it can be broken up into multiple categories. However, for the purpose of this study, it has been separated into three categories: Communication with teachers, Home learning and Volunteering and decision making.

The first theme identified from all the participants involved in the research that is from the parents the faculty and learners is that of communication and collaboration with teachers. From the interview administered with the participants most of them pointed out that there was no adequate communication and collaboration between single parents and the teachers.

P1

.....the teachers do not communicate with me directly if there are any issues with my child at school, if that was the case it would have been much easier to help the learning of my child

The parent response shows their frustration with the lack of direct communication from teachers regarding their child's issues at school. The parent believes that if teachers communicated concerns directly, it would facilitate better support for their child's learning. The main or underlying issue is a communication gap that exists between teachers and parents, which hinders effective collaboration in addressing the child's educational needs.

P2

.....the school does not encourage us to communicate with the teachers directly, some teachers do not want parents to have their private number for fear of being disturbed all the time.

The response from the participant reflects that there is a barrier in parent-teacher communication within the school, the point of view of the parent indicates that the school discourages direct contact with teachers, and some teachers are hesitant to share their private numbers to avoid constant disturbances. This situation indicates a lack of open communication. This echoes the response given by P1. There exist poor communication channels between parents and teachers, potentially leading to reduced parental involvement and support in their children's education. The response also highlights the need for a structured yet accessible way for parents and teachers to communicate effectively without infringing on personal boundaries.

P3

.....the only way to communicate with the teachers is to go to the school directly, the school should do something to make it easier to communicate with the teachers about issues to do with our children's education.

Open communication between teachers and parents is essential as a strategy to enhance the involvement of single parents in the education of their children. If there is clear communication

between parents and teachers, they can effectively collaborate for the academic achievement of the child. Areas of concern in the child's learning can be communicated and both parents and teachers can work together to assist the child. To support these previous studies by Epstein (2005), Jenkins (2017) and Sheldon (2022), identify parent involvement as having a strong impact on student academic achievement, when a positive relationship between the parent and school is created and maintained. It is believed that establishing open communication between parents and the school, teachers in particular, can benefit the academic achievement of students. From the responses of the faculty, they also share the same sentiments

T1

....single parents must openly communicate with us their situations at home so that we will understand the child better, but if the parents do not openly communicate with us then we will not know the situation of the child at home.

The insert emphasizes the importance of open communication between single parents and the school. The speaker suggests that understanding a child's home situation is crucial for the school to provide appropriate support. Without this communication, the school may lack crucial context about the child's circumstances, potentially impacting the child's educational experience and well-being. The sentiment provided by the participant underscores the need for transparency and collaboration to ensure the child's needs are met effectively.

T2

.... the communication with parents is very poor some do not come to see us on issues to do with their children and even on consultation days some still do not come so there is very little communication.

The importance of communication has been established throughout research; it is also supported by the research's theoretical framework that is Epstein's (1987) the concept of overlapping spheres of influence. The theory is based on the need for social organization and it posits that the most effective families and schools have overlapping, shared goals and mission concerning children and conducts some work collaboration. It developed a framework of five major types of involvement which include style of parenting, level of communication from school and to school, volunteering, learning activities at home and decision making. From the research and responses provided both parents and faculty have an understanding on the importance of communication between themselves for better educational outcomes for the child. However, there seems to be a misunderstanding on who has to initiate the communication and how to act on the communication. Parents are mainly of the view that schools do not create an environment that is conducive for them to openly communicate with them on issues to do with their child's learning and education. This view is supported by Epstein (2016) who is of the view that Schools also have an effect on whether or not parents choose to be involved in the educational setting. If there is a lack of communication or lack of encouragement for parents to become more present in the school, they simply do not do so. Teachers will need to be more transparent when speaking to parents about student's, in order to get more of a presence within the school.

In addition, teacher efficacy influences the involvement of parents. Teacher efficacy refers to a teacher's ability to judge their own ability to influence student motivation and learning. Teachers who feel like they connect with parents with regard to involvement, will be more inclined to reach out to those parents, make contact, and include them into more family-oriented activities that occur within the school. Teachers that feel more of the cold shoulder, will shy away from seeking parent participation from that specific family. Henceforth parents should also play an active role in the education of their child and try and create a relationship with their child's teacher so to create better and open communication.

The second theme identified from all the participants involved in the research that is from the parents the faculty and learners is that of home learning as an important strategy in enhancing the involvement of single parenting in the education of their children. Most of the parents in their responses pointed out that they assist their children with their homework and encourage them to read at home

P4

.....I assist my child with their homework, i try to help her whenever i can because homework is very important for the learning of my child.

The sentiment provided by the parent illustrates the parent's active involvement in their child's education, particularly through assistance with their homework. The parent recognizes the significance of homework in reinforcing learning and is committed to supporting their child's academic efforts. This involvement not only helps the child understand and complete assignments but also fosters a positive attitude toward education therefore providing a conducive environment for learning in the household, additionally strengthening the parent-child relationship. The statement also highlights the crucial role of parental support in enhancing a child's educational development and overall academic achievement

P6 added

.....when my child needs assistance with their school work i try and assist them the best i can because homework is important for their performance at school.

Parental involvement at home is defined as parent-child interactions on school related or other learning activities and represents the direct investment of a parent's resources in his or her child's education (Sheldon, 2022). This could include activities like assisting their child with homework and other school related work and having discussions on school related issues. Such discussion between parents and their children about school related issues contribute to better academic successes. This view is also supported by faculty respondents.

SH 1:

.....it is important for single parents to continue to educate their children at home and continue the work the teachers would have started at school, through that collaboration between home and school can a child achieve academic success.

Single parents play a critical role in extending their children's education beyond the classroom. From the response there is also an emphasis that the continuity of learning at home complements

and reinforces the work initiated by teachers at school, therefore parent and teacher playing a complimentary role in the education of learners. By actively participating in their child's education, single parents help bridge the gap between home and school, creating a collaborative environment that supports the child's academic success.

T5;

.....parents should make sure to help their children at home and encourage their learning and education, school work does not only end at school.

As families become more involved within their child's education, students, schools, and communities all benefit. Students whose families are involved in their education, typically receive higher grades, test scores, complete more homework, have better attendance, and exhibit more positive attitudes and behaviours. Research has found that when parents are involved, they exude more confidence in being able to assist their children with classroom assignments (Nistler & Maiers, 2020). However, the education level of the parent plays a role in the degree of involvement that they display. As students continue upper grades, the subject material increases in difficulty, thus making it more of a challenge for parents with a lower level of education themselves, to assist in assignments. Due to parents, not being able to assist students with assignments, they may shy away from anything school related for fear of being inadequate. Parents who have more of an educational background, tend to be more involved with school activities like parent-teacher conferences and the parent-teacher association. This sentiment was shared by some learners in the focus group discussions.

Learners and echoed the following sentiments

L1 posits that:

.....parents sometimes helps with homework when they have the time, but most times they do not understand the work so sometimes we end up writing the wrong things or even not doing the homework.

Parents sometimes face challenges in helping their children with homework. While parents try to assist when they can, they often struggle with understanding the material. This can lead to incorrect completion of homework or it being left undone. The learners' response brings out a gap between the parent's ability and the academic demands placed on the child, suggesting a need for better resources or support for parents to effectively help their children. There is a need of accessible guidance and communication from schools to empower parents in their supportive role of their child's learning and academic achievement.

L13 added:

.....my parent says that my homework is too difficult that i will have to copy others early in the morning when i get to school.

Dontor (2020) indicates that parents are aware that poor performance of their children emanates from the lack of proper supervision of their homework and assignments by the parents

themselves. This lack of supervision by parents becomes worse with single parents who have so many responsibilities. Single parents must find time and prioritise their child's home learning as it plays an integral part in the overall academic performance of their child. Parents must build a culture of learning at home so that children may become accustomed to continue with their school work even at home.

The third theme identified from all the participants involved in the research that is from the parents the faculty and learners is that of volunteering and decision making as an important strategy in enhancing the involvement of single parenting in the education of their children. In most of the responses provided by the respondents it was brought out that volunteering and making decisions that have to do with the school and the education of their child increased the level of involvement for a parent

SH3:

.....single parents should make it a point to participate in school meetings and volunteer in school projects, this will allow them to have an understanding of the issues that affect their child's learning and make decisions on such issues.

T7 added:

.....parents are not committed to volunteering on school projects or even attending meetings therefore they miss out on discussions and decisions made on the education of their children.

Parental involvement at school can be interpreted as parent participation in their children's schooling by encouraging good study habits, communicating with school personnel, attending school activities, and teaching behaviour that is essential to academic success (Jenkins, 2017). By there being parent interactions within the school, parents are better able to build a connection based on first hand experiences with the school environment. Parents will be better able to support their children in their learning experiences. Single parents being directly involved in issues and decisions that have to do with the school will mean that they have an indirect involvement on issues to do with their child's learning and education. This is so as during school meetings decisions are made and information is given that has a direct influence on children and the learning. From the responses given by the parents most cited that they know the importance of being involved and on decision making at school and volunteering for committees and meetings but gave reasons why most do not participate.

P12:

.....being present and participating in meetings is very important as this is where decisions are made that affect our children and their education, but because i am a single parent sometimes i do not have the time to attend such meetings.

Most single parents are faced with a dilemma regarding school involvement. Parents acknowledge the importance of attending meetings where crucial decisions about their child's education are made. However, as a single parent, time constraints and responsibilities often

prevent them from participating in these meetings. The challenge single parents face in balancing work, caregiving, and active involvement in their child's education. There is a need for schools to find more flexible ways to include and support single parents in the decision-making process of their child's learning and education in order to improve their academic achievement

P15:

.....single parents have it difficult because we have to be many places at once, a lot of things need my attention so most times i will have to prioritise and choose were to be and in most cases I won't be able to be involved in school projects.

From the above responses given by most parents it is evident that single parents know the importance of being involved in issues that have to do with the school but however by virtue of being a single parent they face various challenges in doing so. Single parents tend to have less time to participate in school activities as compared to when both parents are available. This in turn affects the learning and academic achievement of their child. This view is supported by Green (2017). who asserts, because some single parents simply do not have the time, they cannot participate; hence, they may not be aware of the issues affecting their children academically. For parents that do multiple jobs, there is often less time available for both home-based and school-based parental involvement. Single parents should find ways prioritise and participate in issues that affect their children. According to the chosen theoretical framework for this research Epstein's (1987) the concept of overlapping spheres of influence, volunteering and home and school decision making are key elements in parental involvement in a child's education. It is important that single parents find time in their schedules to prioritise their presence and input in the decisions made at schools they will ultimately affect their child's education

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Study

Conclusion

The study established that collaboration as a strategy of parent involvement contributes significantly to performance of a child's education as in line with Epstein's (1987) the concept of overlapping spheres of influence. Volunteering and home and school decision making, open communication and home learning are key elements in parental involvement. This implies that teachers provide learning opportunities for children whereas parents support their development in learning and both should collaborate or integrate their efforts for better learning for the child. The study established that there are a number of strategies to implement so as to increase parent involvement in their child's education. For instance, teachers can engage parents and share children's progress. Also, regular updates on children's performance can encourage families to engage in more learning-related activities at home. Further hosting special events in school, frequent communication with parents and identifying and making useful resources available to parents and teachers are some of the strategies that can be used to enhance the involvement of single parents in their child's education.

Recommendations of the Study

There is need for single parents to track their child's academic progress by consulting with the teacher and checking the report books regularly. There should be a collaborative approach

between all the parties involved so that the learners can well academically. There should also be recognition and celebrating of the contributions of single parents in their children's education to boost their confidence and motivation to collaborate with the teachers more.

In line with the above there is need for schools to improve communication between parents and teachers to play a key role in enhancing parent involvement. For instance, communication through parent-teacher meetings through printed materials or use of internet platforms or media such as WhatsApp. There is need for single parents to be involved in discussions with their children about education and their interests. In order to improve single parent involvement in childhood education there is need to encourage parents to engage in more learning related activities at home. Also encouraging community involvement and partnerships to offer additional support and resources to single-parent families.

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