

Parental Supervision of Homework and Learners' Academic Performance in Public Junior Schools in Keiyo South Sub-County, Kenya

¹Catherine Jepchumba Kiptoo

Faculty of Education
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

²Celestine Ndanu

Faculty of Education
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

³Jenifer Munyua

Faculty of Education
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya



ABSTRACT

Homework is the main bridge between classroom instruction and the home, yet little is known about how parents in rural Kenya supervise it under the Competency-Based Curriculum and whether such supervision improves learners' outcomes in the new junior school tier. This study examined the influence of parental supervision of homework on learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Keiyo South Sub-County, Kenya. Guided by Epstein's framework of parental engagement, specifically the "learning at home" dimension, the study adopted a convergent mixed method design that combined a descriptive survey with a phenomenological strand. Quantitative data were collected from 202 junior school teachers (response rate 87.45%) using a structured questionnaire, while qualitative data were collected through interviews with 12 heads of institutions and 12 parents. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression, and thematic analysis. Parental homework supervision was practised often (item means 3.71–4.01 on a five-point scale), with provision of learning materials rated highest ($M = 4.01$) and learners' ability to explain their homework lowest ($M = 3.71$). Homework supervision had a moderate, positive and significant relationship with academic performance ($r = .524$, $p < .001$), accounting for 27.5% of its variance on its own. When participation in school meetings, parent–teacher communication and engagement in school governance were held constant, the effect remained positive and significant but smaller ($B = 0.121$, $\beta = .130$, $p = .047$), and the null hypothesis was rejected. Interviews showed that signing exercise books, buying materials, evening routines and referring learners back to teachers were the main supervision practices. The study concludes that homework supervision is a significant but partly shared pathway to achievement, and recommends that schools train parents in supportive, low-literacy-friendly supervision strategies and link homework to regular parent–teacher contact.

Keywords: parental engagement; homework supervision; academic performance; junior school; Competency-Based Curriculum; Kenya

1. Introduction

Parental engagement refers to the attitudes, behaviours and activities of parents, both within and beyond the school gate, that are purposefully directed at supporting children's learning and development (Jones & Palikara, 2023). It is a multidimensional construct, and among its forms, supervision of homework is the most direct and frequent point at which parents meet the school curriculum. Through homework, the school extends learning into the home, and the quality of adult support available there can either consolidate or undermine what was taught in class (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Yang et al., 2023).

International evidence generally links parental homework involvement to better learning outcomes, although the strength and direction of the relationship depend on how parents engage. In Croatia, parental supervision predicted primary pupils' school achievement, but with a smaller

effect than other forms of involvement (Brajša-Žganec et al., 2019). In Mexico, parental autonomy support during homework improved achievement indirectly through self-efficacy and self-regulated learning, whereas controlling behaviour was harmful (Grijalva-Quiñonez et al., 2020). A meta-analysis of large-scale assessments in China reported a positive but small effect of parental engagement, including homework supervision, which was stronger among younger learners (Cui & Liu, 2025). Earlier syntheses reached a similar conclusion: parental homework involvement matters, but its value depends on whether it is supportive, informed and matched to the learner's level (Patall et al., 2008; Pomerantz et al., 2007).

In sub-Saharan Africa, the question takes on added significance because many parents face poverty, heavy work demands and limited formal education, all of which constrain their ability to help with schoolwork (Ayimbila et al., 2022; Kahunzire et al., 2023). A Zambian intervention showed that sensitising rural parents to homework interaction raised learners' scores in mathematics and literacy (Simweleba & Serpell, 2020), while qualitative work in South Africa found that effective homework support was concentrated in better-resourced households (Letswalo & Rapeta, 2025). In Kenya, studies in Nairobi have found that homework supervision correlates with and predicts pupils' achievement (Indimuli, 2022; Kanyoi & Kirimi, 2025), but these studies were conducted in urban primary schools and treated supervision alongside other forms of support.

Kenya's shift to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) has made the home-school partnership an explicit policy requirement. The Basic Education Act (Republic of Kenya, 2013) and CBC guidelines position parents as partners in learners' development and assign them a role in guiding take-home activities and projects (Ministry of Education, 2019). Yet parents report that lack of time, lack of orientation to the curriculum and inadequate knowledge limit how far they can help (Mwarari et al., 2020). These pressures are likely to be sharper in rural areas such as Keiyo South Sub-County in Elgeyo Marakwet County, where households depend largely on agriculture and small businesses and parental literacy varies widely. Public junior schools, which serve Grades 7 to 9 and were introduced only recently, continue to record uneven learner performance. Little empirical evidence exists on how parents in this setting supervise homework, or whether such supervision contributes to achievement once other forms of engagement are taken into account.

This paper addresses that gap. It reports the first objective of a broader study on parental engagement and learners' academic performance in Keiyo South Sub-County, and it was guided by the following research question: *To what extent does parental supervision of learners' homework influence their academic performance in public junior schools in Keiyo South Sub-County?* The corresponding null hypothesis was:

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of parental supervision of learners' homework on learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Keiyo South Sub-County.

2. Theoretical Framework and Related Literature

2.1 Epstein's framework of parental engagement

The study was grounded in Epstein's framework of school, family and community partnerships, which holds that learners do best when the spheres of home and school overlap and work towards shared goals (Epstein, 2018). The framework identifies six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community. Homework supervision falls under *learning at home*, which covers the ways in which schools help families support curriculum-related activities, such as homework, goal setting and study routines (Salac & Florida, 2022). The framework assumes that most families can support learning effectively when schools give them appropriate guidance (Ramanlingam & Maniam, 2020).

The framework has been criticised for assuming that all parents have equal capacity to participate, overlooking the effects of poverty, low literacy and long working hours that are common in rural and marginalised settings (Harris, 2023). This criticism is directly relevant to homework: the parent who is asked to "help" with an assignment may lack the subject knowledge, time or materials to do so. For this reason, the study operationalised supervision broadly, to include monitoring, signing, providing materials and encouraging completion, rather than only direct instruction. This broader operationalisation allows parents with limited formal education to be counted as engaged.

2.2 Empirical studies on homework supervision and achievement

Studies differ in how they conceptualise homework involvement. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) distinguish among creating structure, monitoring, direct instruction and interacting with teachers about homework, and argue that each works through different mechanisms such as modelling, reinforcement and instruction. Patall et al. (2008), synthesising research on parent involvement in homework, found that rule-setting about homework was associated with higher achievement, while direct help had mixed effects depending on the learner's age and the quality of the help. Pomerantz et al. (2007) similarly concluded that the "how" of involvement, whether it is autonomy supportive, process focused and positive, matters as much as the "how much".

Teacher-based studies provide further evidence. In Türkiye, classroom teachers reported that learners whose parents supervised mathematics homework and maintained consistent study habits completed more work and understood concepts better (Ergen & Durmuş, 2021). In the

Philippines, teachers of junior high school learners identified material and emotional support as the main forms of home involvement and linked them to engagement and classroom performance (Miguel et al., 2021). In the United States, teachers explained unequal homework completion in terms of parents' work demands and resources, showing that homework can widen gaps when home support is uneven (McCrorry Calarco et al., 2022). In a large sample of Grade 6 and 7 learners, parental involvement in academic activities predicted performance, although learners' self-discipline was the stronger predictor (Mbaluka et al., 2021).

African and Kenyan evidence points in the same direction. In Ghana, parents who monitored learning at home and supported assignments contributed to children's progress (Wolf, 2020). In Uganda, pupils from highly engaged families outperformed their peers, although low income and negative attitudes limited engagement (Kahunzire et al., 2023). In Kenya, Indimuli (2022) found that parental support, communication and homework supervision each predicted Standard Seven pupils' achievement in Nairobi, and Kanyoi and Kirimi (2025) identified thoughtful homework supervision as one of the contributors to achievement in Makadara Sub-County.

Three gaps emerge from this literature. Contextually, the Kenyan studies are urban and predate the junior school tier created under the CBC. Conceptually, homework supervision is often merged with other forms of engagement, so its unique contribution is unclear. Methodologically, most studies are either quantitative or qualitative, which limits understanding of what supervision looks like in practice and why it works. The present study addresses these gaps by examining homework supervision among rural public junior schools, estimating both its bivariate and unique associations with performance, and integrating teacher survey data with the accounts of school heads and parents.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study adopted a convergent mixed methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analysed separately and integrated at the interpretation stage (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative strand used a descriptive survey design to describe the level of parental homework supervision and to test its relationship with performance. The qualitative strand used a phenomenological design to explore heads' and parents' lived experiences of homework supervision.

3.2 Study area, population and sample

The study was conducted in Keiyo South Sub-County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, a predominantly rural area. The target population comprised 544 teachers, 123 heads of institutions

and 123 parents from the 123 public junior schools in the sub-county, giving a total of 790. Using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 0.05 margin of error, a sample of 231 teachers was drawn by simple random sampling. Twelve schools (10%) were randomly selected, and the head of each school and one parent per school were selected purposively for interviews, giving 12 heads and 12 parents. The total sample was 255 respondents (Table 1).

Table 1

Target Population and Sample

Respondent group	Target population	Sample	Sampling technique
Junior school teachers	544	231	Simple random
Heads of institutions	123	12	Purposive
Parents	123	12	Purposive
Total	790	255	

Source: Field data (2026).

3.3 Instruments

Teachers completed a structured questionnaire. The section on homework supervision contained seven items describing homework practices at the interface of home and school, rated on a five-point frequency scale (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always). Mean scores were interpreted as follows: 4.50–5.00 Always, 3.50–4.49 Often, 2.50–3.49 Sometimes, 1.50–2.49 Rarely and below 1.50 Never. Learners' academic performance was measured by seven items rated on the CBC five-point competency scale (1 = Way Below Expectation to 5 = Exceeds Expectation), covering assessment scores, participation in class, improvement, timely submission of assignments, preparedness and examination performance. Semi-structured interview guides for heads and parents explored how homework was supervised, the challenges parents faced and perceived effects on learning.

Content and face validity were established through review by education experts, including the university supervisors, and through a pilot study with 23 respondents in schools outside the main sample. Reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha, with 0.70 taken as the minimum acceptable coefficient [insert the α values obtained for the homework supervision and academic

performance scales]. The trustworthiness of the qualitative data was supported through credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability procedures.

3.4 Data collection, analysis and ethics

A research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), and approval was sought from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and county education authorities. Participation was voluntary and informed, and codes (e.g., HOI 3, Parent 9) were used to protect anonymity. Of the 231 questionnaires, 202 were returned (87.45%), and all 24 interviews were completed. Quantitative data were analysed in SPSS version 25 using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, Pearson's correlation, and multiple linear regression at $\alpha = .05$. The regression model was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon$$

where Y is learners' academic performance, X_1 is parental supervision of homework (the focus of this paper), and X_2 , X_3 and X_4 are parents' participation in school meetings, parent–teacher communication and engagement in school governance, entered as controls. Interview data were transcribed, coded and analysed thematically, and illustrative quotations were used to explain the quantitative results.

4. Results

4.1 Respondents' characteristics

Of the 202 teachers, 52.0% were female and 48.0% male. Most were aged 36–45 years (43.6%) or 25–35 years (32.7%), and 92.6% held at least a diploma, including 42.6% with a degree and 16.8% with a postgraduate qualification. Most taught in day schools (79.2%). Eight of the 12 heads were male, and all 12 held at least a certificate, with nine holding a degree or higher. Parents' education ranged from no formal schooling (one parent) to a degree (one parent), with most having secondary or certificate level education. This spread is important because it means that parents with limited schooling were represented in the qualitative accounts of homework supervision.

4.2 Level of parental supervision of homework

Table 2 presents teachers' ratings of homework supervision practices. All seven items fell within the "Often" band, with means ranging from 3.71 to 4.01 and a composite item mean of 3.81.

Table 2

Teachers' Ratings of Parental Supervision of Learners' Homework (n = 202)

Statement	Never/ Rarely %	Some- times %	Often/ Always %	M	SD
Parents provide practical materials when needed	15.8	2.0	82.2	4.01	1.18
I educate parents in my class to keep their children's books neat	18.3	3.5	78.2	3.95	1.23
As a subject teacher I ensure learners hand in completed homework on time	20.8	2.5	76.7	3.80	1.24
Learners say that parents help them with homework	19.8	8.9	71.3	3.77	1.29
I check learners' homework to make sure the parents have signed	24.2	4.0	71.8	3.73	1.29
I encourage parents to assist learners with their homework	22.3	6.4	71.3	3.72	1.26
Learners explain their homework clearly in class	23.3	4.5	72.3	3.71	1.28
Composite item mean				3.81	

Note. Items are ordered by mean. Scale: 1 = Never, 5 = Always. *Source:* Field data (2026).

The highest rated practice was parents' provision of practical learning materials ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.18$), reported as frequent by 82.2% of teachers. Teachers also frequently sensitised parents on keeping learners' books neat ($M = 3.95$) and followed up on timely submission ($M = 3.80$). The lowest rated items were those that most directly reflect the quality of home support: learners' ability to explain their homework in class ($M = 3.71$) and teachers encouraging parents to assist ($M = 3.72$). Standard deviations of 1.18 to 1.29, and the fact that roughly one in five teachers reported that each practice occurred rarely or never, point to considerable variation between households.

The interviews confirmed that supervision was common and revealed its practical forms. Signing and checking exercise books was the most widely described routine:

“Most parents monitor their children’s homework and teachers regularly confirm this by checking whether homework has been completed and signed. Learners whose parents receive consistent supervision at home tend to complete assignments on time and show greater responsibility in class.” (HOI 8)

“I always supervise my child’s homework every evening. After the assignments are completed, I check the work, sign the exercise books where necessary, and encourage my child to do better in the next assignment.” (Parent 3)

Provision of materials was described as a way in which parents could support learning regardless of their own schooling. As Parent 12 explained, “Whenever possible, I buy the required books and stationery because they help my child complete assignments comfortably.” Parents who could not answer questions themselves described a strategy of referring the learner back to the teacher:

“Most parents assist their children with homework according to their level of understanding. Where they are unable to help directly, they encourage the learners to seek clarification from teachers, which still promotes learning.” (HOI 10)

“I always assist my child with homework whenever I can. If there is a question I cannot answer, I encourage my child to ask the teacher rather than leave the work incomplete.” (Parent 9)

Heads also linked supervision to learners’ confidence in class. HOI 3 observed that learners who receive support at home “are usually able to explain their homework confidently during classroom discussions because they have understood the assignments before coming to school.” Some parents, however, were described as unable to supervise consistently because of work demands and limited knowledge of the content.

4.3 Learners’ academic performance

Teachers rated learners’ academic performance within the “Meets Expectation” band on all seven indicators (means 4.15–4.33; composite 4.24). Learners were rated as meeting or exceeding expectations in academic assessments by 91.5% of teachers ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.87$), in showing improvement by 91.6% ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.82$) and in submitting assignments on time by 89.6% ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.87$). The lowest means were for examination performance ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.96$) and coming to class prepared ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.96$).

4.4 Relationship between homework supervision and academic performance

Table 3 shows the Pearson correlations between homework supervision, the other engagement dimensions and academic performance.

Table 3

Pearson Correlations Among Study Variables (n = 202)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Academic performance	—				
2. Homework supervision	.524**	—			
3. Participation in school meetings	.593**	.526**	—		
4. Parent–teacher communication	.564**	.575**	.526**	—	
5. Engagement in school governance	.600**	.477**	.570**	.485**	—

Note. * $p < .01$ (two-tailed). Source: * Field data (2026).

Homework supervision had a moderate, positive and statistically significant correlation with academic performance ($r = .524$, $p < .001$). The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = .275$) indicates that homework supervision on its own shared 27.5% of the variance in teachers' ratings of learners' performance ($t(200) = 8.70$, $p < .001$). Homework supervision was also moderately correlated with the other three dimensions of engagement, most strongly with parent–teacher communication ($r = .575$), which suggests that parents who supervise homework also tend to be engaged in other ways.

4.5 Regression analysis and hypothesis testing

To estimate the unique contribution of homework supervision, it was entered into a multiple regression model together with the other three engagement dimensions. The model was significant, $F(4, 197) = 51.58$, $p < .001$, and explained 51.2% of the variance in academic performance ($R = .715$, $R^2 = .512$, adjusted $R^2 = .502$, $SEE = 0.748$). Table 4 presents the coefficients.

Table 4

Multiple Regression of Learners' Academic Performance on Parental Engagement Dimensions

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	0.808	0.170		4.742	< .001
Homework supervision (X_1)	0.121	0.061	.130	1.996	.047
Participation in school meetings (X_2)	0.248	0.068	.241	3.628	< .001
Parent–teacher communication (X_3)	0.209	0.062	.219	3.351	.001
Engagement in school governance (X_4)	0.279	0.060	.295	4.627	< .001

Note. $R^2 = .512$; adjusted $R^2 = .502$; $F(4, 197) = 51.576$, $p < .001$. Source: Field data (2026).

Holding the other dimensions constant, homework supervision had a positive and statistically significant effect on academic performance ($B = 0.121$, $SE = 0.061$, $\beta = .130$, $t = 1.996$, $p = .047$). A one-unit increase in homework supervision was associated with a 0.121-unit increase in academic performance. Because $p < .05$, the null hypothesis H_{01} was rejected. The fitted model was:

$$Y = 0.808 + 0.121X_1 + 0.248X_2 + 0.209X_3 + 0.279X_4$$

Two features of the results deserve attention. First, the unique effect of homework supervision ($\beta = .130$) was much smaller than its bivariate correlation ($r = .524$), and it was the smallest of the four coefficients. Much of the association between supervision and performance is therefore shared with the other forms of engagement, particularly parent–teacher communication. Second, the effect nevertheless remained significant after controlling for the other dimensions, indicating that supervision at home adds something to achievement that school-based engagement does not fully capture.

5. Discussion

The first finding is that parental supervision of homework is a frequent practice in public junior schools in Keiyo South, even in a rural setting where many parents have limited schooling. This finding is noteworthy because the literature often portrays rural African parents as largely absent from homework (Ayimbila et al., 2022; Kahunzire et al., 2023). The explanation appears to lie in

the forms supervision took. The most frequent practices, providing materials, signing books and ensuring timely submission, are monitoring and structuring activities that do not require subject expertise. This is consistent with Miguel et al. (2021), who found material and emotional support to be the primary form of home involvement, and with Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001), who note that structuring and monitoring are accessible to parents regardless of education. The parents' strategy of sending learners back to the teacher with unanswered questions is a practical adaptation that deserves recognition: it keeps the learner accountable while acknowledging the limits of the parent's knowledge.

The second finding is that homework supervision was significantly and positively related to academic performance. The moderate correlation ($r = .524$) agrees with Kenyan evidence from Nairobi (Indimuli, 2022; Kanyoi & Kirimi, 2025) and with teacher accounts from Türkiye and the Philippines (Ergen & Durmuş, 2021; Miguel et al., 2021). The qualitative data suggest how the relationship operates. Heads described learners who were supervised at home as more responsible, more likely to submit on time and more confident when explaining work in class. These are the behavioural mechanisms, namely reinforcement of routines and consolidation of classroom learning, that the "learning at home" dimension of Epstein's (2018) framework anticipates.

The third finding, and the one with the most theoretical interest, is that the unique contribution of homework supervision was modest once other forms of engagement were controlled. This pattern mirrors Brajša-Žganec et al. (2019), who found supervision to have a smaller effect than communication, and Cui and Liu (2025), who reported a positive but small effect that weakened with learners' age. Two explanations are plausible. First, junior school learners are early adolescents, for whom parental control of homework may matter less than autonomy support and shared expectations (Pomerantz et al., 2007; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Second, homework supervision in this context appears to be embedded in a wider partnership. Teachers checked for parents' signatures and encouraged parents to help, which means that supervision is partly an outcome of parent-teacher communication. The strong correlation between the two ($r = .575$) supports this interpretation. Read through Epstein's overlapping spheres, the "learning at home" and "communicating" types reinforce one another rather than operating independently.

The findings also qualify some of the literature. Studies from the United States and South Africa warn that homework can widen gaps because support depends on household resources (McCrory Calarco et al., 2022; Letswalo & Rapeta, 2025). The large standard deviations in this study and the one fifth of teachers who reported rare supervision suggest that this risk also exists in Keiyo South. At the same time, the relatively low-cost practices observed here show that meaningful supervision is not limited to educated or wealthy parents. This supports the view, noted in the

critique of Epstein's framework (Harris, 2023), that schools must adapt what they ask of parents to what parents are able to give. The Zambian evidence that brief sensitisation improves outcomes (Simweleba & Serpell, 2020) suggests that such adaptation is achievable.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that parental supervision of homework has a positive and statistically significant influence on learners' academic performance in public junior schools in Keiyo South Sub-County. Supervision was practised often, mainly through the provision of learning materials, checking and signing exercise books, evening routines and encouragement of timely completion. Its unique effect was smaller than its overall association with performance, indicating that homework supervision works best as part of a broader home-school partnership rather than in isolation.

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Heads of institutions should organise short, practical orientation sessions for parents on supportive homework supervision, emphasising routines, monitoring and encouragement that parents with limited schooling can provide, rather than direct teaching of content.
- ii. Teachers should design CBC homework and projects that learners can complete with the guidance of a non-specialist adult and that use locally available materials, so that the requirement for purchased materials does not disadvantage poorer households.
- iii. Schools should link homework to parent-teacher communication, for example through homework diaries, signed exercise books with space for teacher feedback, and SMS reminders, given that the two forms of engagement were found to reinforce each other.
- iv. The Ministry of Education and county education offices should include guidance on parents' role in homework in CBC parental empowerment programmes, with specific attention to rural and low-literacy households.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

The quantitative data were teachers' reports, and academic performance was measured by teachers' ratings rather than by learners' assessment records. The cross-sectional design does not permit causal conclusions, and the qualitative sample of parents was selected purposively and is likely to over-represent engaged parents. Future research should use learners' actual assessment scores, collect homework supervision data directly from parents and learners, distinguish between controlling and autonomy-supportive supervision, and use longitudinal or experimental designs to test whether parent training on homework improves performance in junior schools.

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