

The Assessment of the Parental Involvement on Academic and Personal Development of Students in Tertiary Education: A Case of Tanzania Public Service College, Mtwara Campus

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Abstract

This study examined parental involvement in the academic and personal development of students at Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC), Mtwara Campus, focusing on three departments: Records and Archives Management (RAM), Office Management and Administration Studies (OMAS), and Public Administration, Leadership, and Management (PALM). Guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory, the study investigated students' perceptions of parental involvement, department members' views on parents' roles in supporting students, and the current level of parental engagement at TPSC. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving structured questionnaires administered to 80 students and semi-structured interviews with 20 department and administrative staff, for a total sample size of 100 participants. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS, while qualitative data from interviews were subjected to thematic analysis. The findings reveal that students primarily experience parental involvement through financial support, although they value emotional and academic guidance. Department members emphasised the importance of parental participation in non-financial areas, such as mentoring, career guidance, and personal development. However, overall parental engagement remains limited, partly due to the lack of formal communication channels between parents and the college. The study recommends developing structured parental involvement programmes, regular workshops, and improved communication mechanisms to foster a more supportive learning environment and enhance students' academic performance and personal growth at TPSC-Mtwara.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Tertiary Education, Student Development, formal Communication, career Guidance.

1.0 Introduction

Parental involvement in education refers to parents' active engagement in their children's academic, emotional, and social development.(Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017) This involvement ranges from attending school meetings and providing moral support to participating in decision-making processes and offering financial assistance. While this concept is commonly associated with primary and secondary education, its relevance in tertiary

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education is increasingly being recognised. (Kwarteng et al., 2022). At this level, students face new challenges, including independence, academic pressure, identity formation, and future career planning, which can be better navigated with continued parental support.

Globally, several higher learning institutions in developed countries have acknowledged the role of parents in supporting student success beyond high school. In countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, structured efforts are made to involve parents through newsletters, orientation programs, academic updates, and student counselling sessions (Cole, 2021). Research in these contexts has shown that students whose parents remain involved in non-intrusive, supportive ways often exhibit better academic performance, lower dropout rates, and greater emotional resilience. (Pusztai et al., 2023; Smith et al., 2019). These institutions have developed policies and communication frameworks that enable parents to stay informed and participate constructively in their children's college experience.

At the regional level, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the concept of involving parents in tertiary education remains in its infancy. Most policy discussions and research on parental engagement focus on primary and secondary education, with minimal attention to the higher education sector. For instance, while the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016) emphasises the importance of parental involvement in early and secondary education, it does not explicitly address this aspect within tertiary education. Similarly, national policies in countries such as Malawi and Zimbabwe have focused on parental involvement at the primary and secondary levels, leaving a gap in higher education. In countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana, the prevailing view is that college students are adults and should manage their academic and personal affairs independently. (Darko-Asumadu & Sika-Bright, 2021). As such, higher education institutions rarely provide avenues for parents to participate in institutional activities or student development initiatives.

In Tanzania, the situation is not different. Educational policies and national strategies emphasise the role of parents in early education, but their role diminishes significantly once students transition to tertiary institutions. Colleges and universities tend to treat students as autonomous individuals, and therefore rarely involve parents beyond financial matters such as fee payments. At the Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC), particularly at the Mtwara campus, students often face a range of challenges, including academic stress, limited career guidance, and personal struggles. Despite these realities, there are no formal mechanisms to involve parents in addressing these issues, nor are there policies that encourage parental involvement in students' holistic development at this level. This gap underscores the need to initiate parental involvement in higher learning institutions. Engaging parents beyond financial support can provide students with emotional stability, academic mentorship, and career guidance, which are critical for navigating the transitional period of tertiary education (Kwarteng et al., 2022).

The academic gap lies in the limited research and policy attention given to parental inclusion in tertiary education within Tanzania. While global studies and a few regional conversations have started to highlight its importance, Tanzanian literature remains largely silent on this subject. There is insufficient understanding of whether parents wish

to be involved, how students perceive such involvement, and how institutions like TPSC-Mtwara could facilitate it. Most existing studies focus on academic performance or student welfare in general, but not through the lens of family or parental participation. This study aims to address this gap by examining the scope and nature of parental involvement, which remains a largely overlooked and under-researched aspect of student support systems in Tanzanian tertiary education. (Ni et al., 2021).

Despite the increasing challenges faced by students at the tertiary level, such as academic stress, financial instability, mental health issues, and career uncertainty, parents continue to be excluded from the educational experience beyond their financial contributions. TPSC-Mtwara Campus provides guidance to students through academic advising, counselling, career guidance, and mentorship programmes. These services help students handle academic challenges, plan careers, and manage personal or emotional issues. However, many students still face problems like academic stress, money worries, and mental health challenges. This shows that the college's support alone is not enough. Involving parents can help fill these gaps by giving emotional support, academic advice, and guidance outside the college. Structured parental involvement can strengthen support for students and improve their academic performance and personal growth. This study explores the role of parental involvement in tertiary education at TPSC Mtwara Campus, the study specifically aims to examine the perceptions of students at TPSC-Mtwara Campus regarding parental involvement in their education; investigate the perspectives of department members on the role of parents in supporting students' academic and personal growth and assess the level of parental involvement currently practiced at TPSC- Mtwara Campus, focusing on how and when parents are engaged in students' educational processes.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in the late 1970s and refined through the 1980s. The theory posits that human development is shaped by multiple layers of environmental systems, ranging from immediate settings such as the family and school (microsystem) to broader societal influences such as culture and government policies (macrosystem). Among these, the family is one of the most immediate and influential systems, providing emotional, social, and academic support that shapes a student's development. Even though college students are legally and socially recognised as adults, parental involvement within the microsystem continues to influence their behaviour, coping strategies, decision-making, and academic performance.

In the context of this study, Bronfenbrenner's theory helps explain how parental engagement, or its lack, affects students at TPSC-Mtwara Campus. For example, students whose parents actively support their academic and personal growth may exhibit better coping mechanisms, higher motivation, and improved performance, reflecting the direct impact of the microsystem. Conversely, limited parental involvement may weaken these outcomes. This theory is particularly tied to Objective One (examining students' perceptions

of parental involvement) and Objective Three (assessing the level and nature of parental engagement), as it provides a framework for understanding how family interactions influence students' academic and personal experiences in tertiary education.

2.1.2 Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory

Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory, developed by Lev Vygotsky in the 1930s and 1940s, emphasises that learning is inherently social and that knowledge is constructed through interactions with more knowledgeable others, such as parents, teachers, or peers. The theory highlights the importance of guidance, scaffolding, and collaboration in the learning process, suggesting that students develop cognitively and socially through supportive relationships. In the context of tertiary education, although parents may not be physically present in the college environment, they still serve as mentors, emotional guides, and moral anchors, influencing students' attitudes, motivation, and decision-making.

Applied to this study, Vygotsky's theory helps explain how parental involvement can enhance students' academic and personal development at TPSC-Mtwara Campus. Parents' guidance, encouragement, and feedback can provide scaffolding to help students manage academic challenges, develop discipline, and internalise positive values. This theory aligns closely with Objective One (examining students' perceptions of parental involvement) and Objective Two (investigating department members' perspectives on parental roles), as it frames parental engagement as a key factor in shaping students' learning, emotional resilience, and overall development within the tertiary education setting.

2.2 Empirical Review

Parental involvement in education has been extensively studied at the primary and secondary levels, but research focusing on tertiary education remains limited, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Tanzania. Globally, studies have consistently highlighted that parental engagement positively influences students' academic performance, motivation, and personal development. For instance, Kumah et al., (2024) Examined parental involvement at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana and found that students whose parents actively participated in their academic journey through guidance, emotional support, and mentorship demonstrated higher levels of academic achievement and personal confidence. This demonstrates that parental influence does not cease at the secondary level; instead, it continues to shape decision-making, goal orientation, and coping strategies in higher education.

In the African context, research indicates limited parental engagement at the tertiary level, often restricted to financial contributions and oversight of key academic milestones. For example, Boonk et al., (2021) explored vocational education in the Netherlands and included comparative African perspectives, reporting that parents in many African countries rarely participate in direct academic guidance once students enter tertiary institutions. Similarly, Oranga et al., (2023) observed that in Kenya, parents' involvement in higher education was primarily financial and episodic, with minimal engagement in career planning, academic mentorship, or emotional support. These findings resonate with the current situation in

Tanzania, where tertiary institutions like the TPSC primarily treat students as autonomous individuals, and formal channels for parental involvement beyond financial support are scarce.

Empirical literature also suggests that structured engagement strategies can significantly enhance parental participation at the tertiary level. Liu et al. (2025) examined the impact of parental involvement on student engagement using learning management system data and found that proactive communication and mentorship significantly improved academic performance. Similarly, Pusztai et al., (2023) highlighted that facilitating direct parent-institution interactions, such as parent-teacher meetings, career counselling sessions, and online academic portals, encourages consistent parental involvement, contributing to student accountability, motivation, and overall performance.

In Tanzania, empirical evidence remains sparse, but existing studies suggest patterns similar to those of other Sub-Saharan African countries. For instance, Ralejoe, (2021) observed that in Lesotho's inclusive secondary and tertiary educational settings, parental involvement diminished as students advanced to higher levels of education. Lack of formalised policies and structured engagement mechanisms results in limited parental input beyond financial contributions, a situation similar to that reported at TPSC-Mtwara. This gap underscores the need to explore how parental engagement could strengthen students' holistic development, including emotional, academic, and career-oriented aspects.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the interrelationship between parental involvement and students' academic and personal development at TPSC-Mtwara Campus. Drawing from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory, the framework posits that students' learning and well-being are influenced by both the direct support provided by parents (microsystem) and the guidance that shapes their cognitive and social development. Parental involvement is conceptualised in four main dimensions: academic support (e.g., guidance on studies and learning strategies), emotional guidance (e.g., encouragement and moral support), financial contribution, and career mentorship.

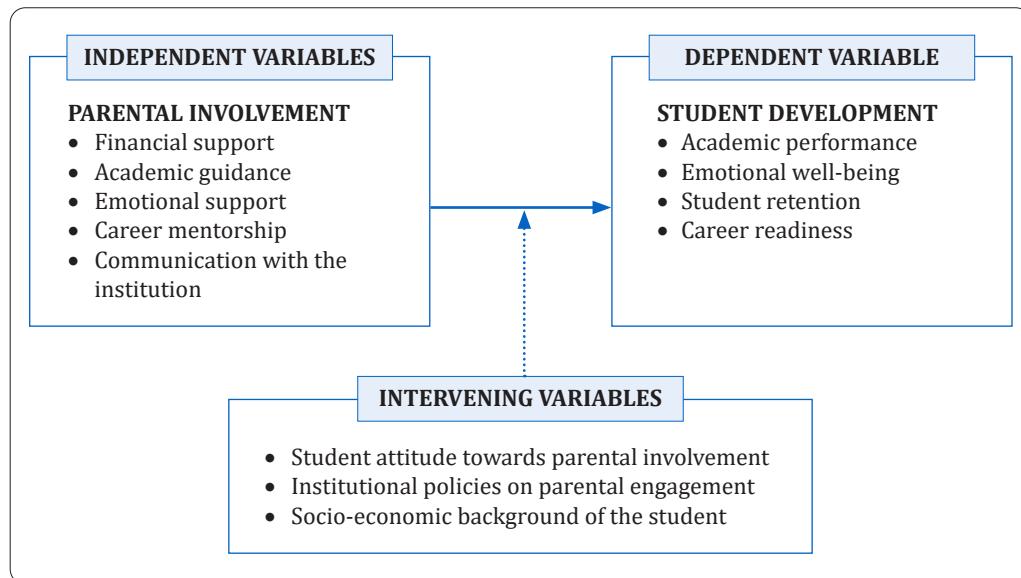


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

3.0 Methodology

The data for this study were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of parental involvement in students' academic and personal development. Quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered to 70 final-year students across the three academic programs: Records and Archives Management (RAM), Office Management and Administration Studies (OMAS), and Public Administration, Leadership, and Management (PALM). These questionnaires captured information on students' academic performance, parental involvement, and socio-economic backgrounds. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, to summarise demographic characteristics and identify general patterns and trends in students' perceptions of parental involvement.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 parents and 10 academic staff members purposively selected for their direct engagement in students' academic and personal development. The interviews focused on capturing participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding parental support, guidance, emotional encouragement, and career mentorship. The qualitative data were analysed thematically, involving careful coding of interview transcripts, identification of recurring ideas, and categorisation into meaningful patterns related to the study's objectives. The thematic analysis enabled a nuanced understanding of how parental involvement, in combination with academic staff support, influenced students' academic performance and personal growth.

4.0 Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's findings based on data collected from both students and department members at TPSC in Mtwara Campus. The results are organised according to the key research objectives and are intended to offer insights into how parental inclusion is perceived, practised, and valued within the context of tertiary education at the institution

4.2 Background Profile of the Respondents

This study recruited 100 participants, comprising 70 full-time diploma students and 30 departmental staff members. Among the student respondents, 40 (57.1%) were female, and 30 (42.9%) were male, while the departmental staff included 18 (60%) males and 12 (40%) females, providing a relatively balanced gender representation. In terms of age, the majority of students, 52 (74.3%), were aged 19 to 24, which aligns with typical tertiary education populations, while the remaining 18 (25.7%) were aged 25 to 29. Departmental staff members were older, ranging from 30 to 54 years, reflecting their substantial experience in teaching and student mentorship. This age diversity contributed to richer insights into the intergenerational dynamics of parental involvement in higher education.

The participants occupied varied roles within the institution. Students were enrolled in academic programs including Public Administration, Community Development, Records Management, and Human Resource Management, whereas departmental staff included academic personnel ranging from assistant lecturers to senior instructors. These staff members were directly involved in student instruction, support, and guidance, positioning them as informed respondents on the potential role of parents in students' academic and personal development.

Table 4.1: Respondents' Profile

Characteristic	Category	Students (n=70)	Departmental Staff (n=30)
Gender	Male	30 (43%)	18 (60%)
	Female	40 (57%)	12 (40%)
Age (Years)	19–24	52 (75%)	–
	25–29	18 (25%)	–
	30–54	–	30 (100%)
Academic / Professional Role	Programs / Positions	Public Administration, Community Development, Records Management, Human Resource Management	Assistant lecturers to senior instructors involved in teaching and student support

Source: Field Data (2025)

4.3 Students' Perceptions on Parental Involvement

The results presented in Table 4.2 reveal varying levels of parental involvement across five key dimensions in tertiary education at TPSC–Mtwara Campus. The dimension of financial support emerged as the most prominent form of parental involvement, with students

strongly agreeing that their parents or guardians regularly provide financial assistance for tuition and other college-related expenses. The mean score for this statement was 4.2, while the statement regarding the ability to meet financial needs due to parental support scored a mean of 4.05. These high means and relatively low standard deviations indicate strong consensus among students about their parents' or guardians' consistent financial contributions.

In contrast, academic guidance and emotional support received slightly lower yet still positive ratings. Students reported moderate levels of parental engagement in their academic progress, with mean scores of 3.8 and 3.65 for statements related to academic interest and goal orientation, respectively. Similarly, emotional support was fairly well acknowledged, with scores of 3.9 and 3.7 indicating that many parents provide encouragement and understand the emotional pressures students face in college. These findings suggest that while emotional and academic involvement are present, they are not as dominant as financial support and may vary among students depending on family dynamics or socio-cultural factors.

The career mentorship and communication with the institution dimensions received the lowest mean scores. Career guidance scored moderately, with mean values of 3.5 and 3.45 indicating that although some parents discuss plans and career options, this support is less consistent. Communication with the college had the lowest scores, with mean values of 2.8 and 2.65, suggesting that direct parental engagement with institutional staff or participation in academic affairs is minimal.

Table 4.2: Students' Perceptions on Parental Involvement

Dimension	Statement	Mean	STD
Financial Support	1. My parent(s)/guardian regularly provide financial support for my tuition and college expenses.	4.2	0.76
	2. I can meet my financial needs at college because of support from my parent(s)/guardian.	4.05	0.83
Academic Guidance	3. My parent(s)/guardian show interest in my academic progress at the college level.	3.8	0.9
	4. My parent(s)/guardian help me stay focused on achieving my academic goals in tertiary education.	3.65	0.95
Emotional Support	5. I receive emotional encouragement from my parent(s)/guardian to persist through academic stress.	3.9	0.88
	6. I feel that my parent(s)/guardian understands the emotional challenges I face in college.	3.7	0.91
Career Mentorship	7. My parent(s)/guardian advise me on career choices related to my college program.	3.5	0.97
	8. My parent(s) discuss my plans and provide support for my professional development.	3.45	1.02
Communication with Institution	9. My parent(s)/guardian has contacted the college to inquire about my performance or well-being.	2.8	1.1
	10. My parent(s)/guardian is informed about key college events or decisions that affect me.	2.65	1.15

Source: Field Data (2025)

4.4 Department Members' Perspectives on the Role of Parents in Supporting Students' Academic and Personal Growth

The results from the department members' perspectives on the potential role of parents in supporting students' academic and personal growth reveal a nuanced view of parental involvement. The data shows strong agreement among departments that parents play a crucial role in supporting students' academic performance, with a mean score of 4.3. This suggests that departments recognise the positive impact parents can have on a student's academic success, particularly in providing support and guidance. This is further reinforced by the high mean value of 4.5 for parental involvement in offering emotional support during exams. Department members believe that parental emotional support helps students manage stress and perform better academically. Furthermore, the statement "Parents should be actively involved in their child's academic progress" received a mean score of 4.2, indicating that the department values parents taking an active role in tracking academic achievements and challenges.

A notable finding is the strong agreement among departments with the statement that "Parental involvement enhances students' sense of responsibility and accountability" (mean = 4.1). This suggests that departments perceive parents as key players in encouraging students to take ownership of their academic pursuits. Parental expectations are seen as positively influencing students in fostering a sense of responsibility. However, while parental influence is generally regarded as beneficial, there is variability in how much departments believe parental expectations should align with institutional academic goals (mean = 4.0). The moderate standard deviation here indicates that department opinions on aligning parental expectations with academic goals are mixed, and there may be disagreements about the appropriate degree of parental input in institutional matters.

The findings also highlight concerns regarding excessive parental involvement. For example, department members generally agree that "Too much parental involvement in academic matters could negatively affect student independence" (mean = 3.4). This lower mean and relatively higher standard deviation indicate that some department members believe that excessive parental control could hinder students' development of autonomy. This is a significant insight, suggesting that while parental support is valued, there must be a balance to ensure students' growth in independence.

Another area of focus is the role of parents in providing financial support and career mentorship. Department members expressed a mixed view on the importance of financial support, with a mean of 3.6. While financial backing is acknowledged as important, there is variability in how much departments think it should influence academic success, indicating a potential concern about over-reliance on parental financial assistance. On the other hand, the statement "Career mentorship from parents is essential in helping students choose career paths" received a mean score of 4.1, showing department members' belief in the value of parental guidance in career planning.

Table 4.3: Department Members' Perspectives on the Potential Role of Parents in Supporting Students' Academic and Personal Growth

Statement	Mean	STD
Parents play a crucial role in supporting students' academic performance.	4.3	0.7
Parents should be actively involved in their child's academic progress.	4.2	0.6
The department should engage with parents to discuss students' performance.	3.8	0.8
Parents can provide valuable emotional support for students during exams.	4.5	0.5
Parental involvement enhances students' sense of responsibility and accountability.	4.1	0.9
Parents should provide financial support but should not interfere in academic decisions.	3.6	1.0
Parents' expectations should align with the institution's academic goals.	4.0	0.7
Too much parental involvement in academic matters can undermine students' independence.	3.4	0.8
Career mentorship from parents is essential in helping students choose career paths.	4.1	0.6
Students should have a direct channel of communication with the department without parental interference.	3.9	0.7

Source: Field Data (2025)

Interviews with department members revealed a nuanced understanding of parental involvement in students' academic and personal development. Participants acknowledged the importance of parental support, particularly in providing guidance and motivation, but emphasised the need to maintain a balance to protect students' independence. Several department members highlighted the dual nature of parental involvement: it can be beneficial when supportive, but excessive control can limit student autonomy. A lecturer noted:

"Parents are very important in providing both financial and emotional support. However, I have observed that some students become overly dependent on their parents, especially when parents call frequently about academic issues. This sometimes prevents students from taking responsibility for their own studies. Ideally, we need parents to be involved, but without controlling the student's decisions. Regular orientation sessions for parents could help clarify these boundaries and encourage them to support students constructively." (Lecturer, Interview, 22/06/2025).

Participants also observed that parents often lack structured avenues for meaningful engagement with the college, which limits their ability to contribute to students' holistic development. An assistant lecturer explained:

"Many parents are willing to offer advice about career choices and future planning, but they rarely have a formal way to communicate with the college. This limits their ability to provide meaningful mentorship. If we can create structured channels like parent-teacher meetings or online platforms, parents can actively contribute to both academic and personal development without interfering with students' independence." (Lecturer, Interview, 23/06/2025).

Conclusively, the qualitative findings indicate that while parents are recognised for financial, emotional, and career support, direct engagement with academic staff is minimal. Department members argued that establishing structured communication channels, orientation programs, and clearly defined roles for parents could enhance involvement while safeguarding students' independence. These insights provide a foundation for designing policies that integrate parents more effectively into the tertiary education experience

4.5 Assessment of Current Parental Involvement

The survey and department interviews provide valuable insights into the current level of parental involvement at TPSC-Mtwara Campus, focusing on how and when parents engage in students' educational processes. The data shows a mixed level of involvement, with department members indicating that while some aspects of parental engagement are well established, others are either underdeveloped or minimally practised. The survey revealed that parental involvement at TPSC-Mtwara Campus primarily occurs at key academic milestones, such as examinations or when students face academic difficulties. The mean score for the statement "Parents are involved in discussions about students' academic progress at least once a semester" was 3.5. This suggests that while there is some involvement, it is not frequent or consistent.

Regarding engagement types, the findings indicated that the majority of parental involvement was focused on providing financial support (mean = 4.0). Department members noted that while this support is crucial, it did not extend beyond financial contributions, with limited engagement in students' academic or extracurricular activities. This suggests that although parents were financially involved, they rarely involved in non-financial aspects of students' education, such as mentoring or offering academic guidance. The survey results indicated a limited role for parents in direct communication with department members. The mean score for the statement "Parents communicate directly with the department about their child's performance" was 2.8, indicating a low level of direct interaction between parents and instructors.

On the other hand, parental involvement in extracurricular and social activities, which are important for students' personal development, also appears to be minimal. The statement "Parents participate in extracurricular activities or student social events" had a mean score of 2.5, highlighting a general lack of involvement. Department members noted that while some parents attend graduation ceremonies or occasional open house events, consistent participation in sports, cultural activities, or student clubs is rare. This limited engagement could indicate that parents are not fully aware of the broader educational experience at TPSC-Mtwara Campus, which includes personal development through extracurricular engagement.

Lastly, department members also provided valuable feedback on potential improvements. The majority of the department agreed that more structured and proactive communication with parents could enhance students' academic experiences. A recommendation that received significant support was the establishment of regular parent-teacher meetings or online platforms to keep parents informed about their child's progress (mean = 4.2).

Additionally, the department suggested that parent orientation programs could help parents understand their role in supporting their children's academic and personal development throughout the year.

Table 4.4: Assessment of Current Parental Involvement

Survey Statement	Mean	SD
Parents are involved in discussions about students' academic progress at least once a semester	3.5	1.2
Parents provide financial support for students' education	4.0	0.8
Parents communicate directly with the department about their child's performance	2.8	1.1
Parents participate in extracurricular activities or student social events	2.5	1.0
There should be regular parent-teacher meetings or an online platform for communication	4.2	0.9
Parents offer academic guidance or mentoring to students	3.0	1.3
Parents are aware of their child's academic progress and challenges outside exam periods	3.2	1.0
Parents play an active role in both academic and social aspects of student life	2.7	1.2
Parents contribute to the emotional well-being and personal growth of their child	3.6	1.0
More structured communication channels (e.g., regular meetings) would enhance parental involvement	4.3	0.8

Source: Field Data (2025)

The qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with departmental staff and a sample of parents provided in-depth insights into parental involvement at TPSC–Mtwara Campus. Department members consistently noted that while financial contributions from parents were reliable, engagement in academic guidance, mentorship, and emotional support was limited. One lecturer reflected:

"Most parents focus on ensuring that fees are paid on time and occasionally provide financial support for books or transport. However, they rarely inquire about their child's academic progress or participate in mentoring sessions. They tend to rely entirely on the students to communicate updates, which often results in delayed or incomplete information. This makes it difficult for staff to involve parents in any meaningful way regarding their child's development." (Lecturer, Interview, 15 June 2025)

Parents who were interviewed expressed a desire to be more actively involved but cited the absence of formal communication channels as a significant barrier. One parent stated:

"I want to know how my child is performing academically and socially, but there is no structured system for me to contact lecturers or administration directly. Most of the time, I only hear about issues when my child decides to share them, and by then, it may be too late to provide support or guidance. I feel that more organised communication from the college could help us participate meaningfully in our children's education." (Parent, Interview, 18 June 2025),

The qualitative findings reinforced the quantitative results: parental involvement at TPSC-Mtwara Campus is primarily financial, with limited engagement in academic guidance, career mentorship, emotional support, or extracurricular activities. Interviewees also provided actionable suggestions to improve parental engagement, including introducing regular parent-teacher meetings, creating online platforms for updates, and offering orientation programs for parents.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

The students at TPSC-Mtwara Campus generally perceive parental involvement as crucial for their academic success, with a strong emphasis on financial support. This aligns with the findings of Nunes et al. (2023) and Kwarteng et al. (2022), which show that parental financial backing positively influences students' academic performance. Students reported that financial assistance allowed them to focus on their studies without being distracted by economic constraints. However, students also expressed a need for more emotional and academic support from their parents. This finding aligns with Cole's (2021) study, which identified parental empowerment and efficacy beliefs as key factors in fostering academic engagement.

Although students recognised the importance of parental involvement, they highlighted a gap in their parents' direct academic mentorship or career guidance. This is consistent with the study by Christoph et al. (2024), which found that while parental influence is significant, the extent of their engagement in day-to-day academic processes is often limited. The overall sentiment among students at TPSC-Mtwara Campus suggests that while financial support is highly valued, a more holistic approach, including academic advice and personal mentorship, could be beneficial.

Department members at TPSC-Mtwara Campus recognised the importance of parental support, particularly financial backing. However, they also emphasised the need for a broader, more active role for parents in supporting students' academic and personal growth. This aligns with findings from Darko-Asumadu & Sika-Bright (2021), which highlighted the positive impact of parental involvement in non-financial aspects, such as attending Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings and engaging in academic discussions with teachers.

Department members also noted that students from more engaged and supportive family backgrounds often showed better academic performance and greater emotional well-being. Similar to Kwarteng et al. (2022), department members at TPSC-Mtwara Campus suggested that parents' involvement in providing both academic resources and emotional support could play a crucial role in enhancing students' academic outcomes. However, they acknowledged that parental engagement was limited, particularly due to the lack of structured channels for communication between parents and the department. This finding is supported by Christoph et al. (2024), who observed that while parental influence is significant, the lack of institutional frameworks for interaction can limit its effectiveness.

The current level of parental involvement at TPSC-Mtwara Campus is primarily centred on financial support, with parents providing the necessary resources for tuition,

accommodation, and other academic expenses. This aligns with the findings of Kwarteng et al. (2022), who found that parental socio-economic status was positively associated with academic performance. However, the study reveals that beyond financial contributions, parental involvement in students' day-to-day academic and personal lives is minimal.

The students' perceptions and department members' feedback suggest that while parental involvement is evident in financial matters, there is little engagement in academic support or extracurricular activities. Parental attendance at institutional events, such as meetings with the department or academic progress discussions, remains infrequent. This gap in parental involvement aligns with Semali and Meena's (2019) findings, which show that parental involvement in Tanzanian secondary education is associated with better academic outcomes. However, in tertiary education, the lack of active parental participation is a challenge. This suggests that institutions such as TPSC-Mtwara Campus need to develop more structured mechanisms to engage parents in their children's education, beyond financial support.

6.0 Conclusion

The study sought to examine students' perceptions regarding parental involvement in their education at TPSC-Mtwara Campus. Based on the findings, students recognised the importance of parental support not only financially but also emotionally and academically. Therefore, it can be concluded that students perceive parental involvement as a key contributor to their academic motivation, emotional resilience, and overall personal development, even though such involvement is currently limited.

The study investigated department members' perspectives on parents' roles in supporting students' academic and personal growth. Department members emphasised that while financial contributions are important, parental engagement in academic guidance, career mentorship, and emotional support is insufficient. Therefore, it can be concluded that academic staff view active parental participation as essential for fostering students' responsibility, autonomy, and holistic development, but recognise that current engagement practices are inadequate.

The study assessed the level of parental involvement currently practised at TPSC-Mtwara Campus, including the ways and frequency of engagement. The evidence indicated that parental involvement was primarily financial, with minimal interaction in academic or extracurricular activities. Therefore, it can be concluded that TPSC-Mtwara lacks structured mechanisms to facilitate meaningful parental engagement, highlighting a critical gap that limits parents' contributions to students' academic and personal growth.

7.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings, TPSC-Mtwara Campus should implement a comprehensive parental engagement strategy that combines structured programs, support workshops, and mentorship initiatives. Structured programs, such as regular parent-teacher meetings, academic progress updates, and mentorship opportunities, would help bridge the gap between students, the department, and parents, creating a more holistic support system. In addition, workshops or seminars could educate parents on supporting their children's academic success beyond financial contributions, covering areas such as academic guidance, mental health support, and fostering productive study environments at home. Furthermore, the institution should promote active emotional and academic mentorship by encouraging parents to engage in their children's personal and academic development, supported by departmental resources or training to enhance parental involvement.

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