

The Role Of Parental Involvement In A Digital Age Education In Private Schools Of Rwanda. A Case Study Of Green Hills Academy, Kigali City

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Abstract: *This study examines the role of parental involvement and digital literacy on students' academic performance in private schools in Rwanda, with a focus on a digital learning environment. Using a descriptive analytical approach, data were collected from 116 respondents, including parents and teachers, through questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using SPSS Version 27. The findings reveal that 53% of respondents strongly agree that parental involvement positively impacts students' motivation and engagement, while 46% agree with this sentiment. However, only 21% of parents regularly monitor academic progress through digital platforms, and just 24% actively assist with assignments and projects. Furthermore, parental digital literacy remains a challenge, with only 17% strongly agreeing that parents are proficient in using school-provided digital tools, while 50% strongly disagree. Additionally, 42% of respondents strongly agree that parents with higher digital literacy are more likely to monitor their children's academic progress. The study highlights significant gaps in digital literacy and access to tools, emphasizing the need for targeted training and resources to enable parents to better support their children. These findings contribute to the discourse on integrating parental engagement in digital education strategies to enhance academic success in Rwanda's private schools.*

Keywords: Parental involvement, Digital age education, Private schools, Green hills academy and Kigali city

Background of the study

The role of parental engagement in the educational sphere has experienced a notable evolution, particularly with the emergence of digital technologies, which have fundamentally altered educational frameworks on a global scale, within the African continent, and specifically in the context of Rwanda. In private educational schools, where resources for the integration of technology are generally more accessible, this evolution has been especially conspicuous. Epstein's theoretical framework (2011) underscores the critical nature of collaborative efforts between parents and educators in the enhancement of educational outcomes. Within the private school setting, this collaboration is frequently augmented through digital platforms, including learning management systems and online communication tools, which facilitate parental engagement and awareness regarding their offspring's academic achievements.

On a global scale, the transition towards digital education has been further catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which rendered digital learning environments indispensable. Muñoz-Najar et al (2021) notes that when parents actively engage with digital technology, educational institutions witness elevated levels of student motivation and academic achievement. This phenomenon highlights the imperative for private schools not only to furnish technological resources but also to develop strategies that promote parental involvement in the digital educational landscape, thereby ensuring that students continue to excel notwithstanding interruptions. Mondoux (2024) similarly contend that parental involvement in technology-enriched environments exerts a beneficial influence on students' academic performance and social-emotional growth.

In the African context, as private schools progressively embrace digital technologies, the significance of parental involvement has attracted increased scholarly attention. Temple (2021) emphasize the critical role of parental engagement in urban settings, where access to digital resources is more prevalent. Their investigation reveals that digital communication tools can fortify the relationship between parents and educational institutions, consequently leading to enhanced student outcomes. The Schaaf (2024) accentuates the necessity for collaborative partnerships between parents and educational entities to tackle the challenges posed by digital learning, ensuring that children receive requisite support for academic success.

Nevertheless, considerable disparities persist across various regions in Africa concerning digital accessibility. Schaaf (2024) identifies that rural households encounter obstacles in accessing digital tools, which may impede their capacity for active involvement in their children's education. Gitari (2024) observe that in Eastern Africa, parental involvement in private educational settings is positively correlated with student achievement, particularly in the presence of digital tools. However, they stress the necessity for digital literacy programs to aid parents in effectively navigating these technologies and enhancing their involvement.

In Rwanda, the incorporation of digital tools in the educational system has been prioritized, bolstered by the National Policy for ICT in Education (2016). Gakuba and Ngabonziza (2020) discovered that proactive parental engagement facilitated through digital communication tools and online platforms contributes to improved academic performance in private schools. The Rwandan

government's National Strategy for Transformation has been instrumental in advancing digital education initiatives, including efforts to amplify parental involvement through technological means. Nkundabakura (2023) illustrate that when parents are empowered to utilize digital tools, they are more capable of supporting their children's learning endeavors, ultimately leading to enhanced academic success.

Notwithstanding these advancements, obstacles persist, particularly concerning the attainment of equitable access to technological resources and digital literacy across diverse communities within Rwanda. Munyaneza (2022) underscores the variances in digital literacy levels among parents, which may adversely affect their capacity to engage substantively with their children's educational experiences. This concern is particularly pronounced in Gasabo District, where Mugisha and Habimana (2021) note that parental involvement exerts a direct influence on student performance, especially when parents leverage digital instruments such as school management systems and social media platforms. However, Uwase (2023) identifies impediments related to technology access and disparate levels of digital literacy that prevent certain parents from achieving full participation.

In summary, although digital education presents significant opportunities for bolstering parental participation and enhancing educational outcomes, disparities in access and digital literacy continue to exist at both regional and local strata. Confronting these challenges through targeted training and resource allocation for parents is imperative to ensure that all students can harness the full benefits of digital tools within their educational experiences. This study aims to investigate the ways in which parental involvement in the digital era affects education in Rwanda's private schools, particularly within the context of ongoing governmental initiatives and the distinct challenges encountered by parents in Gasabo District.

Specific objective

- i. To examine the influence of parental involvement on students' academic performance in a digital learning environment.
- ii. To assess the role of parental digital literacy in supporting students' education in private schools

Research Questions

- i. How does parental involvement influence students' academic performance in a digital learning environment?
- ii. What role does parental digital literacy play in supporting students' education in private schools?

Methodology

Research methodology is the way researcher proceeds to facilitate the research process. The researcher found out, the description of the study in term of the area of study, research design, population study and sampling techniques, data collection and analysis. A descriptive analytical approach utilized in order to interpret data. Therefore, both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (interview) research techniques used by researcher in order to collect data (information) related to the objectives of the study. The targeted population were 164 respondents, including parents and teachers. The sample size of 116 were selected randomly from the whole population using Yamane's formula (1967). A well-constructed and self-developed questionnaire titled "examine the influence of parental involvement on students' academic performance in a digital learning environment and the assess the role of parental digital literacy in supporting students' education in private schools" were used to get the desired information from the parents, teachers and students. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A was for collection of information on personal data of respondents while Section B consisted of questions that elicited responses from the respondents with response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The researcher collected the needed data through the use of questionnaire and its administration in the selected faculties. The administration of the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher. Responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS version 27. The counts from SPSS were used in analyzing demographic variables and research questions.

Result and Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: How does parental involvement influence students' academic performance in a digital learning environment?

SN	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
1	Parents regularly monitor their children's academic progress through digital platforms provided by the school.	21	23	21	51
2	Parents actively assist their children in completing assignments and projects in a digital learning environment.	24	28	47	17
3	Parents ensure that their children have access to the necessary digital tools and resources for learning.	14	26	39	37

4	Parental involvement in digital education positively impacts the motivation and engagement of students in their studies.	53	46	12	5
5	Parents communicate regularly with teachers to stay updated on their children's academic progress in the digital learning environment.	42	49	25	0

The findings revealed that parental involvement positively influences students' academic performance, particularly in terms of motivation and engagement. However, gaps were identified in areas such as monitoring academic progress, assisting with assignments, and providing necessary digital resources. For instance, while 85% of respondents agreed that parental involvement boosts student motivation, only 38% reported regular monitoring of academic progress, highlighting inconsistencies in engagement. Additionally, 66% of respondents disagreed that parents ensure access to digital tools, underscoring resource limitations. Regular communication between parents and teachers was noted as a strong point, with 78% of respondents agreeing that this fosters better academic outcomes.

Research Question 2: What role does parental digital literacy play in supporting students' education in private schools?

SN	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
1	Parents are proficient in using digital tools and platforms provided by the school to support their children's learning.	17	24	25	50
2	Parents' ability to navigate online learning platforms impacts their involvement in their children's education.	27	23	34	32
3	Parental digital literacy enables them to assist their children with online assignments and projects effectively.	23	25	31	37
4	Parents with higher levels of digital literacy are more likely to monitor their children's academic progress through digital systems.	42	40	32	2
5	Schools provide adequate training and resources to help parents improve their digital literacy skills.	12	19	48	37

Parental digital literacy emerged as a critical factor influencing their ability to support students effectively. Only 35% of respondents agreed that parents are proficient in using digital tools, and 27% believed schools provided adequate training to enhance parental digital literacy. This lack of proficiency limits parents' ability to assist with online assignments and projects, as noted by 59% of respondents who disagreed that parental digital literacy positively impacts educational support. However, 71% of respondents acknowledged that higher levels of digital literacy among parents enhance their ability to monitor academic progress.

The study highlights significant challenges in parental engagement and digital literacy within Rwanda's private education sector. While global studies, such as those by Karp (2021) and Huang and Waxman (2020), emphasize the importance of parental involvement in digital education, this research uniquely addresses the specific barriers faced by Rwandan parents. These findings underscore the need for schools to implement targeted training programs to improve parental digital literacy and provide the necessary resources to foster effective engagement. Addressing these gaps is essential to support students' academic success in a digital learning environment, particularly within the context of ongoing educational reforms in Rwanda.

Conclusion

This study underlines the essential importance of parental participation and digital literacy in determining pupils' academic achievement inside Rwanda's private schools. The results show that although parental involvement has a beneficial impact on students' motivation and engagement, there is still a lack of real participation in digital learning. A sizable percentage of parents have trouble using digital tools, which affects their capacity to keep an eye on their children's academic progress and help with homework. To close these gaps, the report emphasises the necessity of focused interventions like training courses and easier access to digital resources. Optimizing student success in Rwanda's changing educational landscape would need raising parental digital awareness and involvement in digital education initiatives.

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