COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN PUBLIC JUNIOR SCHOOLS IN MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA

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International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education (IAJSSE) | ISSN 2518-2412

Received: 16th October 2026

Published: 14th November 2026

Full Length Research

Available Online at: https://iajournals.org/articles/iajsse_v2_i5_101_115.pdf

Citation: Murithi, B., Mbirithi, D. M. (2026). Community engagement in school administration and students' academic achievement in public junior schools in Mombasa county, Kenya. *International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education, 2*(5), 101-115.

ABSTRACT

Students' educational success in public junior schools is declining by reason of excessive or intrusive community engagement in school administration. Sometimes, community engagement becomes too intrusive and influences school decisions in ways that are not helpful. The research undertaken intends to investigate the influence of negative community engagement in school administration, on students' educational success in public junior schools in Mombasa County, Kenya. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence (1995) guided the research. The exploratory sequential research methodology was used. The sample included 572 participants: 394 students, 129 Board of Management members, 40 teachers, and 9 school heads from a larger population of 26,575 people. Gathering of data were done through focus group discussions, questionnaires and interviews. Thematic review was used to examine qualitative data. Inferential analysis and descriptive analysis were used to evaluate quantitative data with SPSS software. The study followed all ethical, legal, and logistical requirements, including obtaining permission from relevant authorities. Outcomes of this study indicated the following: the nature of community engagement adversely affected school administration and teachers felt that intrusive community engagement compromised their professional autonomy and undermined the students' scholastic achievement. A number of potential solutions to reduce the influence of negative community engagement in school administration were also identified. This study concluded that excessive and intrusive engagement in matters concerning the school administration by the community detrimentally compromised the students' educational success. The research undertaken recommends the M.O.E. and T.S.C establish policies detailing what needs to be done to manage negative engagement by the community in the affairs of the school administration and protect the teachers and heads of institutions from the adverse effects of excessive and intrusive community engagement in school administration.

Keywords: Community Engagement, School Administration, Students' Achievement, Public

Junior Schools.

INTRODUCTION

As a universal endeavor, schooling and instruction is the basis for the advancement of society. By offering the means to further sustainable development, it acts as a link to a brighter future. The Education Policy Framework formulated to be used from 2023 to the end of 2027 is a five-year plan created by the Ministry of Education in Kenya to provide inclusive and fair high-quality education. The plan aligns with international goals such as Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). Community participation and involvement are key parts of this strategic plan (*National Education Sector Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027,* 2024).

Community engagement is however, a double-edged sword and if not carefully managed, executed and well balanced, community engagement now becomes community interference. (Martin, 2024). Excessive and Intrusive community engagement in school administration is slowly becoming a menace that if not addressed will have detrimental effects on the education sector. This intrusive or excessive community engagement stems from the parents, political class, sponsors and other stakeholders as discussed below.

In America, the academic sector is continually under attack from parental and community groups that seek to dictate the curricula taught in schools (Ward, 2022). In Turkey, teachers are appalled by the level of excessive and intrusive parental involvement in the educational process as teachers are maligned, intimidated and falsely accused with the parents' exaggerating issues on teacher's conduct (Aslan, 2016). Political class meddling in school administration issues, such as hiring, promoting, and assigning staff members duties meant for the administration, has negatively influenced administrative choices and school policies in Nigeria's public secondary schools (Nwisane, 2023). An article by the National Center for Education Statistics, reveals that the schools with high tendencies of negative community engagement in school administration more often than not post poor students' academic achievement (Martin, 2024).

This menace is also persistent locally, for instance, in Kakamega county, Kenya, the community intrusively engaged with the school administration, when the residents of Shabinga forcefully removed the principal of St. Gabriel Isongo Secondary School from the school premises over what they termed as poor results in the summative assessments (Wanjala, 2024). In Mombasa County, public junior schools are reporting excessive and intrusive community involvement especially in school-based management and this negatively undermining students' scholarly accomplishments in the region. Cases have been reported of community members around schools forcefully initiating students into gangs in Mombasa County (Richard, 2024). There is need to pursue this invasive community engagement in school administration since its effects on students' academic results still remains underexplored. Thus, this research which will seek to comprehend how the community engages with the school administration and the effect that this type of engagement has on the learners' performance.

Statement of the Problem

It's crucial to comprehend how overbearing and invasive community engagement may disrupt the nation's educational system and adversely affect learners' academic success. In spite of the policy recommendations on stakeholder engagement, public junior schools in Mombasa still report excessive or intrusive engagement from the community especially in the administrative process. Nevertheless, the ramifications of this intrusion on students' scholastic achievement remains insufficiently explored.

Purpose of the Study

The research undertaken aimed to investigate how excessive and intrusive engagement by the society in school-based management of public junior schools especially in Mombasa County, negatively affects students' academic achievement in these institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ramifications of excessive and intrusive community engagement on students' scholastic achievement remains insufficiently explored. As such it is of paramount importance to first explore how the community has engaged with the school administration in the different contexts. A study by Haile and Smit (2021) in Ethiopia noted that despite having four leaders; one head principal and three vice principals, the schools were operated and managed by political organizations that had to approve all of the principal's decisions. Teachers who did not belong to the ruling party were denied the same possibilities for professional growth as their ruling party peers.

Andambi (2023) asserted that secondary school principals of schools funded and managed by the church in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, complained about the sponsors' excessive meddling in their daily operations. Harassment and intimidation of the school principals coupled with unnecessary transfers interfered with the school's administration. It is relevant to point out that community engagement across various countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia are more often than not micromanaged and influenced by various stakeholders, hence resulting in decision making challenges by the school administration (Andambi, 2023; Haile & Smit, 2021). Nonetheless, there is limited research investigating the part the school administration plays in overseeing that the engagement is done constructively.

Teachers are appalled by the level of excessive and intrusive parental involvement in the educational process. Hibi & Assadi (2021) in their study found that teachers were upset because parents and community members interfered with their teaching, hence infringing on their space and freedom. Sharabi and Cohen-Ynon (2022) further asserted that teachers were hesitant concerning parental interference in pedagogical issues. Although the studies depicted teacher's opinions on invasive community engagement throughout the different contexts (Hibi & Assadi, 2021; Sharabi & Cohen-Ynon, 2022), there still exists inadequate

documented proof of the effects of overbearing and invasive community engagement on students' outcomes.

Excessive and Intrusive community engagement has adversely influenced learners' academic success. Ajani, Nyawo, Buthelezi, & Khumalo (2024) revealed clearly that school supervisory bodies in South Africa had been thoroughly wrecked with political interferences, to an extent that headteachers had no powers to make decisions. Corruption, unfair and prejudiced activities against students by politicians affected their academic achievements. According to a study by Adzongo, Kintum, & Chafa (2022) in Nigeria, there was a great deal of political interference in secondary school administration, with principals being viewed as inert machines incapable of enacting significant reforms. As noted above, community engagement across different settings such as South Africa and Nigeria has been politicized hence resulting in a decline in students' performance (Ajani et al, 2024; Adzongo et al, 2022). However, there is no sufficient empirical evidence linking excessive or intrusive community engagement to poor students' results.

This study also discussed potential solutions to reduce the influence of negative community involvement on school management. A study by Lema, Priscila & Mwila (2022) found that for schools to achieve high academic performance, they needed to establish a solid alliance between all stakeholders and school officials. A study by Ngobeni (2024) identified two effective solutions. These solutions are two-way communication and negotiated agreements. Both help in forming lasting associations between educational institutions and the public. The studies above give crucial remedies to the negative effects of community engagement (Lema et al, 2022; Ngobeni, 2024). Nonetheless, negative community engagement differs across the various countries and as such it is prudent to have remedies tailor made to suit the problem of negative community engagement present in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a composite approach called the exploratory sequential approach. This method involves accumulating and analyzing qualitative data first. Supplementing the results from the qualitative part, the researcher administers a subsequent phase that involves accumulation and analyzing of quantitative data so as to evaluate and infer the preliminary qualitative results (Orodho et al., 2016). The investigator chose this research strategy because it is suitable for an intricate and underexplored research problem such as the one studied. Sampling was done purposefully and randomly. The sample included 572 participants: 394 students, 129 Board of Management members, 40 teachers, and 9 school heads. These were selected from a larger population of 26,575 people, which included students, management members, teachers, and heads of schools.

Gathering of data were done through focus group discussions, questionnaires and interviews. Research tools were tested beforehand to ensure they were reliable and valid. Validity was checked by experts, and reliability was tested through a test-retest method,

with correlation coefficients calculated at 0.75 or higher. The pilot study also called a feasibility study was executed in 6 Public Junior Schools in the County of Mombasa and comprised of 20 participants who did not take part in the main study. Thematic review was used to examine qualitative data. Inferential analysis like correlation and regression and descriptive analysis like means, frequencies, and percentages was used to evaluate quantitative data with SPSS software. Following the analysis, textual data was outlined in narrative summary style and numerical data in tabular form. The study followed all ethical, legal, and logistical requirements, including obtaining permission from relevant authorities. The participant's identity was withheld and their privacy preserved all through this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section dispenses results on community engagement in school administration and students' academic achievement in public junior schools in Mombasa County, Kenya. The findings herein were examined and evaluated so as to respond to the goals of this research which included:

To establish how nature of community engagement influences school administration and learners' academic performance; To examine teachers' opinions on community engagement in school management and learners' achievement; To assess how community engagement in school administration affects learners' academic success; To identify potential solutions to reduce the influence of negative community involvement on school management and students' educational achievement.

Nature of Community Engagement in School Administration

This research ascertained that nature of community engagement influenced school administration in a number of ways: First and foremost, violation of the professional autonomy of the school administration by members of the community interfered with the school's administrative processes. For instance, ousting the head of institution from office before her tenure was over interfered with the school's administrative processes. Head of institution 1 noted, "*They removed my predecessor from office simply because she was not a local from this community.*" Secondly, the political class violation of the professional autonomy of the school administration influenced the school administration through politicizing school projects and micromanaging the school's administrative policies leading to stalled projects and embezzlement of funds meant for school projects. Head of institution 2 noted, "*I got a sponsor willing to build the school a perimeter wall. Soon afterwards the local member of parliament reached out insisting that the funds go to his account and he will do the project. To date the project has not started*."

Thirdly, disruption of the educational process by the community who sought to influence certain school administrative policies such as instructing their children not to attend afternoon lessons, but instead go for madrassa, negatively influenced school administration. Head of institution 3 revealed, "*We have very minimal learning in this school in the*

afternoon. When learners go for lunch, they never come back. They are forced by their parents to attend madrasa in the afternoons." Lastly, parental interference in classroom management influenced school administration since parents sought to influence the school policy on punishment of indiscipline cases. Parents dictated how the students ought to be punished leading to a rise in student indiscipline. Head of institution 4 revealed, "*Some parents make impromptu visits to the classes to remove the teacher from class just to publicly reprimand and shout him/her down in front of the learners for punishing their children*."

Quantitative Phase

This step involved harnessing the qualitative outcomes to develop a questionnaire so as to elaborate on the primary qualitative phase results. Teachers indicated their perspectives in the survey scale provided in relation to the statement on how the nature of community engagement influences school administration. The Likert scale employed was *C.A = Completely agree, M.A = Moderately Agree, UN = Undecided, M.DIS = Moderately Disagree, C.DIS = Completely Disagree.*

Table 1: Nature of community engagement in school administration.

Nature of how community engaged in school administration.	**C. A F (%)**	**M.A**	**UN**	**M.DIS**	**C. DIS**	**MEAN**
1.The Community engages frequently in the school administrative decision-making process	8 20%	30 75%	2 5%	0 0%	0 0%	4.15
2. Intrusive community engagement has compromised the professional autonomy of the school administration	15 37.5%	23 57.5%	0 0%	2 5%	0 0%	4.28
3. Educational Process is disrupted due to negative community engagement	10 25%	27 67.5%	0 0%	3 7.5%	0 0%	4.10
4. There is parental interference in classroom management.	0 0%	23 57.5%	0 0%	17 42.5%	0 0%	3.15

In reference to table 4.5 above, a multitude of 30 (75%) teachers moderately agreed that the populace frequently engaged in administrative decision-making process of the schools. This converted to a mean of 4.15. 23 (57.5 %) teachers moderately agreed that intrusive community engagement compromised the professional autonomy of the school administration. 27 (67.5%) were in unison that the educational process is disrupted due to negative community engagement while slightly over half of the total population of teachers (23) (57.5%) were in alignment with the assertion that there is parental interference in classroom management.

Teachers' Opinions on Community Engagement in School Management.

Instructors stated their level of consensus in the opinion scale provided in relation to the statements on teachers' opinions on community engagement in school management. The Likert scale employed was *C.A = Completely agree, M.A = Moderately Agree, UN = Undecided, M.DIS = Moderately Disagree, C.DIS = Completely Disagree.*

Table 2 Teachers' opinions on engagement in management of the schools by the community.

Teachers' opinions on community engagement in management of schools.	**C. A F (%)**	**M.A**	**UN**	**M.DIS**	**C. DIS**
1.Intrusive community engagement compromised our professional autonomy as teachers.	7 17.5%	31 77.5%	2 5%	0 0%	0 0%
2.The community is putting pressure on teachers to adjust their pedagogies to accommodate the needs of the community.	0 0%	22 55%	0 0%	12 30%	6 15%
3. Autocratic parental interference in school administration leads to delays in syllabus completion.	12 30%	25 62.5%	0 0%	3 7.5%	0 0%
4. Teachers are stressed and experience burn out due to excessive community engagement in school administration.	24 60%	14 35%	2 5%	0 0%	0 0%
5. Teachers are demotivated, dissatisfied with their jobs and discontented with their careers due to negative community engagement in school administration.	11 27.5%	29 72.5%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%

31 (77.5%) teachers concurred with the assertion that intrusive community engagement compromised their professional autonomy. 22 (55%) teachers were of the opinion that the community is putting pressure on teachers to adjust their pedagogies to accommodate the needs of the community. A large number of the teachers, 25 (62.5%) moderately agreed that autocratic parental interference in school administration leads to delays in syllabus completion while over half of the sample population of the teachers, 24 (60%) completely agreed that teachers are stressed and experience burn out due to excessive community engagement in school administration. 29 (72.5%) teachers were of the opinion that teachers are demotivated, dissatisfied with their jobs and discontented with their careers due to negative community engagement in school administration.

Influence of Community Engagement on Learners' academic Success

Empirical evidence established that excessive and intrusive societal engagement in how schools are managed influenced learners' achievement in more ways than one: Firstly, community member's violation of professional autonomy of the school administration resulted in a decrease in learners' academic attainment. The community ousting a head of institution from office and withholding resources from the school brought the school

operations to a halt. Focus group discussion member 4 noted, "*We had to let the B.O.M teachers go since the parents refused to pay them leading to unfinished syllabus and hence poor performance*."

Secondly, political intrusion in the school administration's professional autonomy adversely influenced learners' academic success. Stalled school projects by local politicians have sabotaged the effectiveness of the school administration. Head of institution 5 revealed, "*Learning is disrupted as the community is constantly trespassing through the school with boda bodas and tuk tuks due to the delayed construction of a school perimeter wall.*"

Thirdly, community's disruption of the educational process has led to learners achieving subpar grades. The community's attempt to influence certain policies within the school such as consenting to their learners missing afternoon lessons to attend madrasa led to loss of learning content and hence subpar performance. Head of institution 6 noted: "*This school performs poorly because the community is okay with students missing classes. Most students don't complete the syllabus of the term and its never the teacher's fault.*" Lastly, Students' indiscipline due to parental intrusion in classroom management has negatively affected students' performance as parents seek to influence the school's policy regarding students' discipline. Focus group discussion member 5 asserted, "*Some parents are connected to friends and relatives in senior government positions and threaten to have the teachers transferred or even sacked for punishing their children*."

Quantitative Phase

This numerical step involved drawing on findings from the qualitative stage to develop a questionnaire so as to elaborate on the primary qualitative phase results. Teachers were required to reveal their degree of concordance in the Likert scale provided with regard to the statement, the influence of how the community engaged in school administration on learners' academic success. The Likert scale employed was *C.A = Completely agree, M.A = Moderately Agree, UN = Undecided, M.DIS = Moderately Disagree, C.DIS = Completely Disagree.*

Table 2: The Influence of Community Engagement on learners' academic success.

Influence of how the Community Engaged in School Administration on learners' academic success.	C. A F (%)	M.A	UN	M.DIS	C. DIS
1.Educational Process Disruption has led to Subpar Performance by the Students.	23 57.5%	15 37.5%	2 5%	0 0%	0 0%
2.Students' Indiscipline has negatively influenced Students' Academic Achievement.	14 35%	26 65%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
3.Political Intrusion in the Professional Autonomy of the School Administration Negatively Affected Students' Academic Achievement.	13 32.5%	23 57.5%	0 0%	4 10%	0 0%
4.Community Members' Violation of the Professional Autonomy of the School Administration resulted in a decrease in learners' academic attainment.	22 55%	18 45%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%

Over half the total sample population of the teachers, 23 (57.5%) completely felt that the disruption of the educational process has led to subpar performance by the students. 26 (65%) of the teachers moderately agreed that students' indiscipline has negatively influenced students' academic achievement. 23 (57.5%) of the teachers moderately agreed that political intrusion in the professional autonomy of the school administration negatively affected students' academic achievement while 22 (55%) of the teachers completely felt that community's violation of the professional autonomy of the school administration resulted in a decrease in learners' academic attainment.

Descriptive Statistics.

Descriptive statistics analyzed the students' standardized test scores to investigate influence of intrusive community engagement on students' school success. Below are the tabulated results.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Learners' Standardized Test Scores.

Mean	248.99
Median	225.50
Mode	141
Standard Deviation	132.89

The table depicts that out of a possible maximum mark of 900, the 394 student's average score was 248.99 marks and standard deviation, 132.89. This according to the grading standards for the Kenya Junior School Education Assessment (KJSEA) by KNEC predicts a poor performance (Teachers Arena, 2025). The researcher also analyzed attendance records to determine if school attendance had influence on students' academic achievement.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of Students Attendance Rates.

Attendance Group	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Students' Attendance Rates Mean	Students' Standardized Test Scores Mean	Standard Deviation
Strong Attendance	101	25.6%	119.01	433.92	56.72
Fair Attendance	73	18.5%	106.82	298.42	27.39
Low Attendance	220	55.8%	78.65	147.69	55.49
Total	394	100%	94.21	248.99	132.89

The table above depicts that 101 (25.6%) of the students consistently attended school (mean attendance rate = 119.01 sessions) and obtained a test score mean of 433.92 with standard deviation being 56.72. 73 (18.5%) students fairly attended school (mean attendance rate = 106.82 sessions) and acquired an average score of 298.42 with standard deviation about 27.39 while majority of the students ,220 (55.8%) had low attendance (mean attendance rate = 78.65 sessions) with mean test values totaling 147.69 and standard deviation, 55.49. Although general performance of the students was poor (mean test score = 248.99), it can be deduced from the table that students with low attendance performed more poorly than their counterparts (mean attendance rate = 78.65 sessions), thus low school attendance ultimately led to low learners' academic achievement.

Inferential Statistics

To further evaluate the effects of the community engaging negatively in school administration on learners' academic achievement, the researcher conducted a correlation analysis. The conclusions are displayed below.

Table 5: Correlation of Community Engagement and Students' Academic Achievement.

Correlations

		Community engagement in School Administration	Students' Academic Achievement
Community engagement in School Administration	Pearson Correlation	1	-.792**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	394	394
Students' Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-.792**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	394	394
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The data matrix above depicts a negative or inverse correlation of – .792 at a significance level of 0.01 between community engagement in school administration and students' academic achievement. These results entail that as community engagement increases, academic achievement of the students continues to decline. To demonstrate factual and tangible proof of this effect, the researcher conducted a linear regression and the outputs are provided below:

Table 6: Coefficients of the Linear Regression Model

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	697.587	17.918		38.932	.000
	Community engagement in School Administration	-252.496	9.819	-.792	-25.715	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Students' Academic Achievement						

The table above depicts that the linear equation is Y = b_0 +b_1X , where y = students' academic achievement, $b_{0=}$ 697.587 *and* $b_1 = -252.496$. The table also depicts that community engagement in school administration is a reliable indicator of students' academic achievement at .000 significance level. The coefficient for community engagement in school administration is – 252.496. This entails a negative correlation which means that in the event there is a rise in community engagement in school administration, there will be a forecasted decline of 252.496 units in students' academic achievement.

Potential Solutions to Reduce the Influence of Negative Community Involvement on School Management

These resolutions included: The creation of policies that encourage active community participation in management of schools. This entailed stakeholders establishing policies and guidelines that will govern how the community will engage positively and constructively with the school administration. Focus group discussions member 9 noted, "*Policies have to be passed at the national level to curb this problem of intrusive community engagement especially from the local politicians*." Secondly, the community needs to be sensitized on balanced and rational community engagement. Seminars and workshops need to be organized to sensitize the community on the pitfalls of negative community engagement and the need of a balanced community engagement in school administration.

Thirdly, school administrators and teachers should be provided with continuing career growth prospects as this will endow them proficiently to oversee and limit excessive and intrusive community engagement in school administration. Head of institution 5 noted: "*We as administrators and the teachers should be retooled on how to handle these cases of intrusive and excessive community engagement. Most of us are not well equipped to handle this threat.*" Lastly, School administrators should promote genuine and all-round engagement so as to avert excessive and intrusive engagement. The school should adopt a positive, transparent and authentic collaborative culture with the community if it intends to avert excessive and intrusive engagement. Focus group discussions member 9 noted, "*The administration is supposed to be authentic and intentional in its mandate to foster collaborations with the community that will work*."

Conclusions

This study concluded that community engagement in school administration affects learners' academic success in public junior schools. Firstly, community member's violation of the professional autonomy of the school administration resulted in a decrease in learners' academic attainment. Secondly, political intrusion in the professional autonomy of the school administration has had negative consequences on learners' academic success. Thirdly, the community's disruption of instructional delivery produced subpar school success by the students and lastly, students' indiscipline as a result of societal intrusion in classroom management has negatively affected students' performance.

The present study also concluded that the potential solutions to curb negative community engagement included: The creation of policies that encourage active community engagement in school administration, sensitization of the community on balanced community engagement, provision of continuing professional development opportunities to school administrators and educators to empower them with capacity to effectively manage excessive and intrusive community engagement and lastly promotion of genuine and all-round engagement to avert excessive and intrusive engagement.

Recommendations

The current investigation suggested the ensuing proposals consistent with its objectives:

Policy Recommendations

The ministry of education, science and Technology (MOEST) should establish policies that are opposed to excessive and intrusive community engagement in school administration, detailing what needs to be done to manage negative community engagement in school administration. The Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) should formulate directives that shield and protect the teachers and heads of institutions from the adverse effects of excessive and intrusive community engagement in school administration.

Recommendations Related to Practice

The TSC should introduce training programs to the teachers and heads of institutions that inculcates skills necessary in managing excessive and intrusive community engagement in school administration. The TSC and MOEST should make it mandatory that all teachers and heads of institutions go through this training program. The Ministry of Education, through heads of institutions, should see to it that the public are sensitized on the importance of having a balanced engagement with the school administration.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research was carried out in Public Junior Schools in Mombasa County and hence necessitates the need for a comparative study to be done in other counties so as to enable the generalizability of this research's findings and hence propose remedies that are tailor made to suit the problem of negative community engagement in Kenya.

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