

# The Status of Parental Participation in School and Its Impact on the Students Learning in Amuru Woreda Schools

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## Abstract

The primary goal of education in a free society is to help the individuals to realize his/her potentials and to develop him/her capacity to make wise decisions. With a high connection between academic success and parental involvement, alternative methods must be established that will assist parents in supporting their children with the current family structures in place. The objective of this study was to assess the status of parental participation in school and its impact on the students learning in Amuru woreda schools. By employing purposive sampling due to the nature of the study whereby teachers, students and parents were purposely selected to provide reliable information to the researcher, The study was conducted in four (04) selected public primary schools at Amuru Woreda Respondents included 40 students, where by 10 students were selected from each school and five of them were from four and other five were from three. From each school 12 teachers were selected while three teachers were selected including academic master, discipline masters and teachers on duty. In addition, four head teachers were selected one in each school and 40 parents were selected. Total sample were 96 respondents. The finding shows that, in most cases, great numbers of parents are not attending school meetings and others do not know school programmes at all. Also it reveals that large number of parents do not check their children exercise books because they do not know the subject matter which was used in school curriculum. Some parents do not cooperate with school to look education matters of their children which lead to poor performance. Also poverty in students' families leads to frequent and prolonged participation in domestic works. As a result, they left with limited time for doing school activities like revision, private study and homework. This indicates that children rights are violated at household level, parents are answerable for this. As a recommendation, School system should introduce and make sustainable counseling unity to deal with students. Local government at ward level should advise parents to cooperate with school administration through close supervision of their children academic progress and through balancing of domestic chores with studies at home. Government under the Ministry of Education should make sure that the students who are selected to join form one are selected in the schools around their ward to avoid long distance from home to school.

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## 1.1 Background

Education serves societies in several ways. The most important ones being its role as a means for social development and democratic empowerment, advancing of the general wellbeing, economic competitiveness, accumulating and sharing knowledge, cultural capital as well as personal growth and wellbeing. With regard to today's modern society, education at least in the formal sense is necessary (watt, 2001). Within the context of the societal norm of the time, children were collectively reared by a cooperative of mothers who provided a nurturing environment for children in the community (Frances L.*et.al* 2013).

With the shift in financial responsibilities, many families are unable to support their children when it comes to parental involvement in schools, in the traditional sense. Consequently, the school system has switched roles with the parents and is now granted the integral responsibility of being the primary caregiver of a child, instead of being mere supporter (McNeal 1999).

Whereas parental involvement is not a mandate in public education, it should be seen as a viable resource based on data revealing the significant impact on student achievement. Parental involvement in schools has been a focus of discussion since the mid-1800s with the establishment of the Parent Teacher Association that was designed to build a healthy supportive relationship between the parents and teachers in an effort to increase student achievement. It has been suggested that through parental involvement a student may see the importance of education.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Parents are their children's first teachers. The single most important factor in a child's achievement in school and life is the home background (Nedler, 1979). Parent involvement is critical to successful students. Effective methods of parent involvement must be implemented in schools to assure the academic success of children.

The children indeed are the hope for the future, if they are not taken care of today, the future may be bleak for them. Many of the parents have never seen the state of the school buildings, the library or the compound of the school. Thus, without even the contributions of the parents (fathers and mothers) who are expected to exert not only influence on the lives of their children but also be role models, motivators of learning, providers of the necessary materials and environment for learning; children in school are bound not to meet the goal of education and education by itself cannot be a reality education.

In Ethiopia the weak parental participation and involvement capacity at school level was one of the main barriers to access, equity and quality in secondary education (MoE 2014). Therefore, the government acknowledged the importance of parental participation and involvement at school management for school-based decision-making.

Despite the availability related studies on the issue in other parts of Ethiopia, the status of parents participation in school and its impact on students learning in Amuru woreda H/Guduru wollega Zone, to the best knowledge the researcher, have not been investigated.

Therefore, this study attempted to examine the status of parental participation in school and its impact on the students learning in Amuru woreda schools.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to assess the status of parental participation in school and its impact on the students learning in Amuru woreda schools. And specifically,

- ❖ To assess parents' level of education and participation in school with students' academic performance in school in Amuru woreda at selected primary schools.
- ❖ To assess how communication between teachers and parents affect the students' academic performance in Amuru woreda at selected secondary schools.
- ❖ To assess how home environment affects students' academic performance in Amuru woreda at selected secondary schools.

## 1.4 Research questions

1. To what extent is parent's level of education and participation in the school affect the academic performance of students?
2. How does parents participate, perceive its roles, duties and responsibilities in schools?
3. What major challenges are perceived to have limited the participation of parents participate in school activities in relation to home environment?

## 1.5 METHODOLOGY

### 1.5.1 Research Design

This study employed the case study design in order to get description of the characteristics of parental participation in their children academic performance. Thus, the researcher collected in depth information from the respondents and analyzed it in order to be able to explain how parents' participation and its impact on the students learning.

### 1.5.2 Target Population and Sample

The targeted population, in this study included four public primary schools, head of schools, teachers, selected students in those 4 primary schools, and parents of the students around the school. By employing purposive sampling due to the nature of the study whereby teachers, students and parents were purposely selected to provide reliable information to the researcher, The study was conducted in four (04) selected public primary schools at Amuru Woreda Respondents included 40 students, where by 10 students were selected from each school and five of them were from four and other five were form three. From each school 12 teachers were selected while three teachers were selected including academic master, discipline masters and teachers on duty. In addition, four head teachers were selected one in each school and 40 parents were selected. Total sample were 96 respondents.

### 1.5.3 Data sources and Collection Techniques

The study uses both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data is collected through a questionnaires, interviews and observation of existing condition in a selected schools. The secondary data is obtained from related literatures and annual reports and school document reviews.

### 1.5.4 Data Analysis

The data obtained through questionnaire were organized and computer excel programme was used to convent the

data to graphs showing the level of the academic achievement at various schools in Amuru Woreda primary schools. The interviews were read first, then the responses were organized around four themes and the report of the interview was supported by quotes from informants. The interviews followed the thematic approach.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Approaches to parents Participation in school**

High level of parent's participation is an evolutionary process that goes up from the lower level of participation to higher level with different speed and outcome at various level of governance (Shaeffer, 1994). Participating parents vary from place to place; nevertheless, they have some shared features (Reid, 2000): firstly, many peoples in the parents of the students are involved and not just an elite family. Second, involvement is open for all groups, responsibility is shared with in the community, and ideas and talent are treated equally. Third, activities are carried out openly and publicized widely so that everyone gets informed. Forth, all individual are welcomed regardless of color, age, race, past member ship, level of education, occupation, personal reputation ...etc. Besides, the members do not sit passively and wait for others to take the initiative; rather everybody involves and provides their support. Fifth, citizens are encouraged to offer or contribute their best for a common good. Finally, the parents operate with an open minded; they are not externally influenced by anybody; and leaders do not champion their own personal interest rather they focus on high equality democratic decision- making process.

### **2.2 Types of parental participations**

A number of writers and researchers have attempted to categorize various types of parental participation in school. Jackson et.al (1976) categorized parental participation in to five types; (1) parent as recipients and supporters, (2) parents as educators and learners, (3) parents as non-instructional volunteers, (4) parents as instructional volunteers, (5) parents as decision makers. Bloom, (1992) proposes a comprehensive categorization of the types of parental participation. Parents, in her model, can play seven types of critical roles at three levels; the levels are: 1) participation with their own child's education, 2) participation in school life, and 3) advocacy.

### **2.3 Barriers to parental participation**

Some literatures points out that all children are at risk at some time or another. Common causes of this condition are the increasing divorce rate, growing number of single parent families, families in which both parents work, as well as families experiencing high level of stress because of the very complexity of modern life. Many of the traditional methods of parental participation do not work with at risk parents. In order to go beyond the restrictive scope of parental participation, many different hurdles need to be removed.

#### **Parent's perception of barriers to parental participation**

Research provides us with evidence that parents associate some of the barriers to themselves. For example, these may be attributed to health problems, economic differences between parents and teachers, and work responsibilities. This includes parents having feeling of inadequacy, failures, and poor self-worth, as well as negative experiences with schools as barriers. Leitch further suggests that parents with certain cultural backgrounds as well as many low-income parents consider schools as institutionalized authority, hence leaving the responsibility solely to the teachers to educate their children.

#### **School Administrator's perception of barriers to parental participation**

Administrator's perception of barriers to parental participation research reveals that although administrators support the general idea of parental participation, they consider parental involvement worthwhile only if it relates to their own children rather than to the broader issues relates to the school at large. They do not support parental participation in school policy decisions such as the hiring and firing of teachers and principals or in the determination of priorities for the school budget. They perceive a lack of training on the part of parents to make decision as one of the barriers in participating parents in shared decision making activities.

## **3. DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS**

### **3.1 Characteristics of the Respondents**

This section represents respondents' information in the study; head of schools, teachers, parents/guardians and students. These respondents come from public primary schools.

**Table 3.1 Heads of school profile in the sample schools**

School Codes	School Name	Sex	Professional Qualification	School Leader Experience by Years
A	Welege	Male	Degree	10
B	Obora	Female	Diploma	16
C	Sidan	Female	Degree	4
D	Agemsa	Male	Degree	2

Source: Survey Data

Table 3.1 represents numbers of head of school. Years of experience as heads of school range from two to sixteen and there were two males and two females. Although a head teacher in school B was diploma holder while the rest three were degree holders.

### Teachers

Twelve teachers participated in this study. In each school, three teachers were selected including academic master, teacher on duty and discipline master. Table 3.2 represents characteristics of sampled teachers with regards of sex, professional grade, and years of teaching experiences.

**Table 3.2 Characteristics of Sampled Teachers**

Sex	Number	Percent
Male	08	66.7
Female	04	33.3
Total	12	100
Professional grade	Number	Percent
Diploma	05	41.7
Degree	07	58.3
Total	12	100
Years of teaching experience	Number	Percentage
1-10	09	75
11-20	03	25
Total	12	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 3.2 indicates that there were 12 teachers including 08 (66.7%) males and 04 (33.3%) females. However, 05 (41.7%) of them are diploma holders and 07 (58.3%) are degree holders and they have one to twenty years of teaching experiences.

### Students

There were 40 students whereby 22 (55%) were males and 18 (45%) were females. All students selected in form three and form four classes whereby 05 students were selected in form four and 05 students were selected in form three in each school.

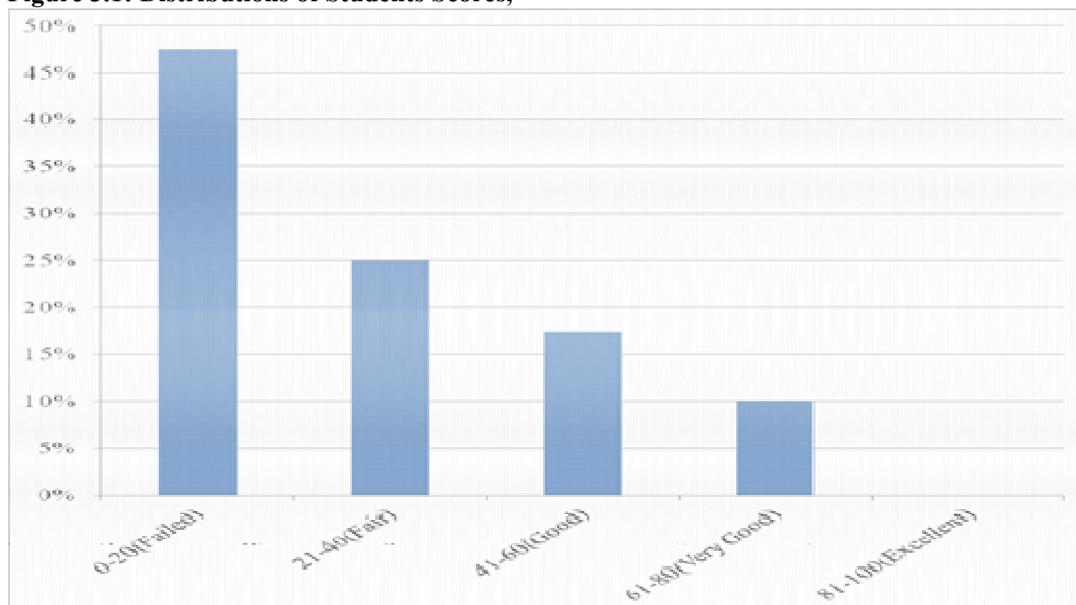
### Parents

There were 40 parents who participated in the study where by 25 were females and 15 were males. Their educational experience ranges from non-formal education to higher learning.

### 3.2 Students' Academic Performance

Students' academic performance was assessed on the basis of midterm tests and terminal examination results for the year 2016/17. Data were collected through the documentary review at school. To assess the level of academic performance students' scores were categorized into five groups as follows A' 81-100% (Excellent) B' 61-80% (Very Good) C' 41-60 (Good) D' 21-40 (Fair) F' 0-20 (Failed). Data was finally summarized and presented in Figure 3.2 as follows:

**Figure 3.1: Distributions of Students Scores,**



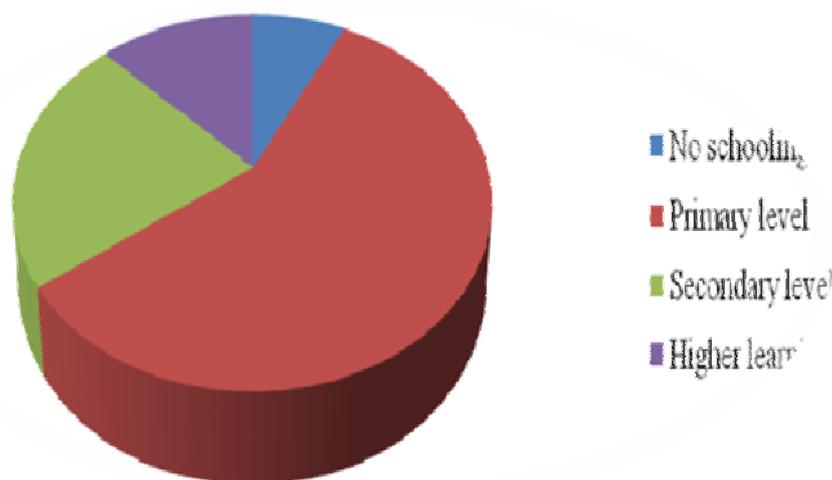
Source: Survey Data

The findings summarized in Figure 4.1 indicate that majority of students 47.5% scored grade F' which is the lower grade and failure. Also 25% of the students scored grade D' and 17.5% scored grade C' only 10% of the students scored grade B', however, no any student who scored grade A' in the terminal examination. Generally examination performance was not good as there was no any student who scored grade A' and only few scored B'.

### 3.3 The Parents Level of Education

This objective was meant to investigate the parents or guardian education level on the involvement of students' academic performance. Data were collected using interview from parents and questionnaire from students. Therefore parents/guardians were interviewed to indicate the different levels of education they had reached in order to determine how it influenced academic achievement of the learners.

**Figure 3.2: Responses from Parents**



Source: Survey data

Data on education levels as shown in Figure 3.2 indicate that out of 40 (100%) parents interviewed 23 (57.5%) had a primary level of education, 09 (22.5%) of them have secondary education and only 05 (12.5%) had higher learning level of education. However, 03 (7.5%) parents had never received any formal education.

Also, students were asked through questionnaire education level of their parents so as to know how it can lead to their school performance. Data shows that 4.5% of their parents did not attend to any formal learning

while 59.5% have primary education although 24.5% have secondary education and 11.5% of the students show that their parents have higher learning.

These findings indicate that majority of parents had a primary education level while others did not attend to any formal education.

Both illiterate and semi illiterate parents with feeling of poor performance may not be able to encourage their children on their studies. Thus, the academic performance of such children is greatly or significantly hindered. It could be interpreted that the parents that were with low level of education might be sufficient enlightened about the needed success of their children education. In such a case, they assist and encourage their children to be adequately involved in their academic activities and hence provide them with basic needs that might enhance their performance. In the same community both categories (low and high income) knew each other and educating the children might become competitive to close gap of disparity among the children in the same community. Moreover, Craig and Ronald (2004) show that parent cognitive ability was substantially associated with parental education and parental occupation only to some extent associated with offspring.

### 3.4 The Communication between Teachers and Parents

Two important aspects of school and parents partnership were examined in this objective. The first was the extent to which parents were attending to schools so as to look for the continuation of their students and secondly, the approach used by the teacher to influence parents to attend school in order to cooperate with the teachers about their children academic achievement. Data were gathered through interview and questionnaire.

Through interview with parents' researcher asked, if they were active to the issue of follow up their children academic progressiveness. Very few parents this is 09 out of 40 parents show that they were attending school meetings and were going to take academic report of their children but 31 parents out of 40 parents were not attending to school at all. One of the parents with a child in school A supported school and parent partnership and said that:

*I usually go to school to look for my children because you may find that some students are walking around the town up to 8.00 am. When you ask them why they are there, they will tell you that, there is no transport for them to go to school.*

This findings show that some parents are following their children to school so as to make sure that they are attending to school and they are performing better in their studies. However, other parents were not willing to go to school to follow academic performance of their children; this is shown by evidence of interview of both parents and students. This comments proved that parents ignored their responsibilities of making follow up of academic progress of their children. One of the parents with a child at school B complained that she does not have time to go to school and said:

*Why should I lie, I do not have any time to go to school. It is not possible for me to leave my duties and attend to parents' meeting or to take report of my child. My child attends school every day.*

Another parent in school D complaining that:

*How can I attend the school meetings while I do not see the importance of education to our children? Since I started teaching for my first and second born, one of my daughters became pregnant when she was in form two and my son failed examinations. He decided to leave home finding money in Nekemte town.*

Not only parents that revealed they were not attending to school meetings but also students were reported through questionnaire that their parents were not attending to school where they were required. It was shown that 15(37.5%) were attending to school but 25(62.5%) were not attending to school.

Through interview, heads of schools said that they used to have school meeting in their schools, which made them to meet with parent to talk about studies and all issues relating to education of their children. The finding shows that, in most cases, great numbers of parents are not attending school meetings. Also teachers through their interview revealed that, most of parents are not fully involved in children's school progresses they are busy with their own activities. One of the teachers in school C insisted that:

*Parents are not involved fully in their children academic matters, hoping that teachers are the only ones to make sure students' are doing well in academics. They are busy with their duties and forgot even to attend to school meetings. Only 30% of parents used to attend to school when they are required. Some of parents do not even buy for their children the necessary school facilities including exercise books, pens and pencils.*

The result from the findings shows that some parents do not cooperate with school to look education matters of their children. This situation leaves students' problem unsolved and in long run, it can lead to failure in academics. However, when students performs poorly in their final examinations, the parents used to turn all their eyes and fingers to teachers forgetting that parents are part of the cause of children's failures. Frequency communication is required between school staff and parents to discuss ways to help their children. Jubber (1994) reported that parents and teachers are most influential from early period of schooling in child life. Parents normally start emphasis of education to children and teachers extend it. He emphasize the importance of home cooperated with school and establish good education relationship with teachers. This means that children

intellectual potential for successes in school education depend initial efforts of parents in cultivating this potential so as to prepare conducive environment for learning.

The fourth objective was to establish whether learning at home has effect on academic achievement of the students. This objective intended to look if parents are checking exercise books and assisting their children in their studies at home and if there is any supporting materials which help children to study at home and what kind of activities do students do when they are at home.

### 3.5 Learning at Home and Students' Academic Performance

#### Checking Exercise Books and Assisting Children in Their Studies At Home

The research findings reveals that large number of parents do not check their children exercise books because they do not know the subject matters which is used in schools learning, this is due to low level of education. However, other parents do not have time to help children in their studies. During interview, parents were asked if they help their children in their studies but one of parents in school C explained:

*I do not help my son because he knows everything that they have been taught at school by the teachers. I hold just basic level of education. How can I help someone who is studying at a higher than my knowledge?*

Another parent revealed this in relation to parent's support at home on the assignments:

*I used to look the exercise books for my children and assist them in their home works. My first born helps his young brother too, because he has finished secondary school and is now waiting to join the university.*

A student revealed that parents do not help them in their studies. Therefore 22(55%) out of 40 students were not getting any academic support at home and only 18(45%) were getting academic support at home although others were getting support from their relatives.

The response from parents and students revealed that most students are not getting support from their parents due to low level of education of their parents. Other children got support from their elder siblings or relatives while at home. It was found that parents with low education neglect to make follow up of their children's education. When children return from school such parents are not in a position to see what students were taught in schools and identify mistakes in their children works or discover whether students works have been marked. They were not in a position even to read together a book with their children and to see how conversant children are in reading information from the book. All these problems lead to deterioration of the students and hence poor performance.

#### Talking with Children on the Importance of Education and Provide Assisting Materials

Researcher wanted to know if parents were talking with their children about the important of education and providing assisting materials related to academic issues. Also researcher wanted to know if they were encouraging their children to study at home. The findings show that most of the parents were talking with their children about the importance of education. Example one parent reported:

*I used to talk with my children about the important of education and gave them many examples of other people who have studied and they have good life. One of the examples I gave was our neighbor who has good and strong house because invested in education. Further I informed that we cannot even afford to have three meals per day because we don't have income to buy food and good income comes from good education.*

Another parents said:

*I discussed with my children and told them that without education they will suffer much and they will blame others and seek assistance all the times. Also, I told them that they can own their own property if they work hard at school.*

Although most of parents were talking the important of education to the children, but there were other parents who they have no time to discuss with their children anything about their studies. Almost all students supported that their parents told them the importance of education.

On the other hand parents do not buy books and other materials which are needed by their children to support them in their academic issues. This support depends on parents' education, income and how they value education. Some students blamed their parents, they said that, at school they were getting everything from their teachers, but they were not getting the money to buy books and other materials for studying from their parents.

According to the questionnaire by students, 22(55%) students out of 40 students complained that no any supporting material at home that can help them in their studies. While only 18(45%) students out of 40 reported that, they have materials in their home that can help them in their studies. Those materials include books, pamphlets and exercise books from their relatives who have already completed ordinary level of education.

This finding implies that most parents were talking the importance of education to their children but they were not buying them supporting materials' at home and this is due to low level of education and poverty among the families. The availability of children's books was a problem and learning material in home was scanty. This shows that parents think that what their children get from school were enough to make them to have good academic performance. Further, such parents provide minimal support to their children education. Buying a book to a child is a problem.

### Other Activities Performed By Students At Home

It was seen that most students during weekends and after school hours participates in households' activities rather than studies. Most common domestic works performed at home were cleaning the house, cleaning of utensils, fetching water, income generating activities, keeping after Animals and petty business. According to the field data, through interview by parents and teachers and questionnaire from students show that, most activities performed include keeping Animals, cleaning of utensils, cooking, fetching water and income generating activities. Some of the interviewed parents noted that they ordered their children to do much of their work during weekends because in those days they were available at home. A parent in Agemsa place had said:

*I have small tea house. During weekends my children do farm works, washing their clothes, and help me in my petty business (prepare and selling food near our home). Nevertheless, my last born is not involved in this, as she goes to Shambu, the capital of Horo Guduru Wolegga Zone.*

Another parent told the researcher:

*When my children are back from school and during weekends, they fetch water, clean the house, and wash clothes, cooking, going to the market and doing other home activities. They have to assist us because their mother has a baby to attend to.*

In order to prove the information obtained from students' interview was done by 12 (100%) teachers from each selected schools. They were asked to explain from their experiences what do students perform at home after school hours but 11(91.7%) teachers said that students are doing domestic activities, others are playing only, looking television, care for their young brother and sisters, and others doing income generating activities. Only 1 (8.3%) said that they were studying and doing school activities. One of the teachers in school A commented: *They spent much of their times on keeping Animals and helping their families other farming activities and engage in other income generating activities like making and selling charcoals to earn additional income for their families and themselves. Most of them concentrate in earning money and others are allied with groups to generate petty incomes.*

Another teacher in school C explained:

*They do activities such as cooking, washing, taking care of their young brother and sisters cleaning, attending petty business and sometimes doing homework for the few hours.*

The researchers noted through observation that amount of works vary from one family to another depending on number of children in the family, which range between two and seven. It was observed that, home works habits depend on the number of siblings and age. Those families where there more than one growing children works was normally shared, but when he or she was alone he or she have to fulfill all role by her or himself.

This comment proves truth that learners are performing many domestic works and they do not have the time to study at home. However, it was found that domestic works were related to academic achievement of the students it was proved that participation in domestic works alone would not affect students' performance what matter most was the extent and duration of participation. The researcher asked parents and students whether domestic works affect academic performance but most of them said that it is not affecting academic achievement of the learners but other agreed that it effect while other were not knowing at all.

It was clearly shown that the way of bringing up children differs from one society to another. At the same time, the value and norms of society are transmitted from one generation to another, it has been revealed that in Sidan as in other societies parents are responsible for management and guidance of their home places, that is to say parents are responsible for day to day running of their households. The training of those who stays with parents that is children starts from early age, until they grow up, and these children imitate the adult members.

In addition to that, the above explanation revealed that parents and other members of the family believed that those pupils had to participate fully in family activities. There is also a certainty that participation in those activities help to prepare children for the future lives. In that case most parents regard the failure to participate in those activities as a wrongdoing and they have to be punished. However, there are some works, which are fulfilled according to gender like fetching water for girls and income project for boys. Therefore, it could be said that domestic works are part and parcel of lives of children. Domestic works more often burden students because they do not get enough time to study at home.

## 4. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study it is concluded that parents' involvements in academic achievement of the students is very important. Both low and high-income students need cooperation from their parents that could promotes effective learning and their happiness. Factors like income, education level of parents, domestic works and home environment affect academic achievements of the learners. The low income and low level of education of parents made home environment less conducive as family fail to provide sufficient material and support necessary for students' academic achievements.

In addition, some parents do not cooperate with school to look education matters of their children which

lead to poor performance. Also poverty in students' families leads to frequent and prolonged participation in domestic works. As a result, they left with limited time for doing school activities like revision, private study and homework. This indicates that children rights are violated at household level, parents are answerable for this.

#### 4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study the researcher recommendations are as follows:

- ❖ School system should introduce and make sustainable counseling unity to deal with students. This will help to solve some of the problems originating from their parents as well as helping them to cope with those problems. This has to mean that school guidance and counseling has to be strengthened in secondary schools to respond to the needs of students who their home settings do not encourage home learning.
- ❖ Local government at ward level should advise parents to cooperate with school administration through close supervision of their children academic progress and through balancing of domestic chores with studies at home. This will improve performance of students.
- ❖ Government under the Ministry of Education should make sure that the students who are selected to join form one are selected in the schools around their ward to avoid long distance from home to school. Otherwise, the government should provide school buses for students to avoid waste time in between homes and schools. Alternatively, provision of hostels for students in public primary schools is recommended for students who otherwise walk long distances to school. Lastly, the government should also provide education to the parents and community so as to know the importance of education for their children.

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