

Influence of Parental Education Levels on Students' Completion Rates in Public Secondary Schools in Dadaab Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of parental education levels on students' completion rates in public secondary schools in Dadaab Sub-County, Kenya. Despite the government's implementation of free day secondary education, student retention and completion rates remain low, particularly in marginalized and economically disadvantaged communities. Anchored in Human Capital Theory, the study employed a descriptive survey research design targeting a population of 10,890 and a sample of 385 respondents comprising principals, teachers, parents, and students. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Chi-square to test the relationship between variables. The findings revealed a statistically significant association between parental education levels and students' completion rates ($\chi^2 = 362.883$, $df = 9$, $p < 0.05$). Students whose parents had attained post-primary or higher education were more likely to complete school due to stronger parental involvement, academic support, and positive attitudes toward education. Conversely, parents with no formal education were often unable to support schoolwork or prioritize learning, contributing to higher dropout rates among their children. Additionally, qualitative data from school principals and education officers confirmed that home-based learning environments and parental literacy directly impact school completion. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education enhance adult literacy programs in pastoral and refugee-hosting areas such as Dadaab. It also recommends that the Teachers Service Commission strengthen guidance and counseling departments to support at-risk learners. Furthermore, school principals should intensify parental sensitization on the value of education through regular school meetings and community outreach. These interventions are essential to reduce dropout rates and promote educational equity in low-literacy, low-income communities.

Keywords: Parental Education Levels, Student retention, School Completion Rates, Public Secondary Schools, Dadaab, Kenya.

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1.0 Introduction

In the USA, NCES (2022) data shows that students whose parents had a bachelor's degree or higher were significantly more likely to complete high school and transition to postsecondary education compared to students whose parents had not completed high school. Chetty, Friedman & Rockoff (2020), through the Opportunity Insights Project, highlighted that upward mobility and educational attainment are closely linked to parental education levels, which shape early learning environments and expectations. Hout (2018) argued that parental education influences students' completion by shaping attitudes toward schooling, availability of learning resources at home, and stability in academic support. In the United Kingdom, Anders and Micklewright (2019) found that children whose parents had university-level education were more likely to persist through A-levels and into higher education, with school completion disparities evident by age 16. Department for Education (2023) reported that students from homes where parents had no qualifications were significantly less likely to complete secondary education or achieve required GCSE scores. Sutton Trust (2021) noted that the "attainment gap" correlates strongly with parental education, influencing school readiness, homework support, and long-term academic commitment.

In China, Zhang, Luo, & Rozelle (2018) used national survey data to demonstrate that children of more educated parents were far more likely to complete junior and senior secondary school due to greater academic support and expectations. Li, Loyalka & Yi, (2020) found that parental education levels indirectly affected school completion by determining parental aspirations and involvement, especially in rural areas. A 2022 study by Stanford's Center on China's Economy and Institutions confirmed that higher parental education improves children's cognitive development, academic performance, and reduces dropout risk. In Canada, Statistics Canada (2023) reported that children whose parents held university degrees had much higher secondary school completion rates and were more likely to transition into postsecondary education. Frenette (2019) found that students whose parents did not complete high school had a 76% high school graduation rate, compared to 95% for those whose

parents had university degrees. HEQCO (2020) emphasized that parental education not only influences students' academic support at home but also affects aspirations and long-term engagement with school.

In Nigeria, Aliyu & Abubakar (2023) conducted a study in Adamawa State which revealed that students whose parents had secondary or tertiary education levels scored higher and had lower dropout tendencies than those whose parents had no formal education. Odeyemi (2024), in a study on parental involvement in Lagos State, noted that educated parents were more likely to monitor academic progress, attend school meetings, and provide a conducive learning environment, which improved student retention. In South Africa, Maphosa & Mudzielwana (2023) explored parental involvement in Mpumalanga province and found that parents with secondary or higher education were more actively engaged, resulting in better school attendance and lower dropout rates for their children. Van der Berg, Wills & Gustafsson (2022) argued that structural inequalities in South African education are exacerbated by parental illiteracy, which limits children's academic guidance and contributes to early exits from school.

In Egypt, Assaad, Krafft & Roemer (2020) found that mothers' education, in particular, played a critical role in students' progression to secondary education. Children of educated mothers were more likely to complete school. Elbadawy (2019) analyzed data from the Egypt Demographic and Health Survey and concluded that children of parents with no formal education were three times more likely to drop out before completing lower secondary school. In Ghana, Koomson & Asongu (2020) found that students whose parents attained post-primary education were 35% more likely to complete junior and senior high school. Acheampong & Essuman (2023) studied parental involvement in public schools and reported that better-educated parents were more likely to participate in school activities, leading to increased motivation and retention of students.

In Tanzania, Ndijuye & Dadi (2024) analyzed early learning among refugee and local Tanzanian children and found fathers' education significantly predicted literacy and numeracy readiness key precursors to sustained school participation. In Uganda, Enock & Ounyesiga (2025) examined Makindye Division data and found a strong correlation between parental education level and student academic performance in secondary schools; 66.7% of students attributed their learning success to parents' education, while lack of parental support (absent in 58.3%) led to higher absenteeism. Ayikoru (2024) in Terego District documented that parental financial support, communication, and home learning involvement each positively but modestly influenced secondary school performance ($R^2 \approx 0.026-0.057$). Sakaue et al. (2023) showed during COVID-19 school closures that higher parental engagement closely tied to parents' education substantially increased student engagement and continuity in learning in rural Uganda. In Rwanda, Ntahemuka, (2023) revealed that students whose parents had attained only primary education were more likely to perform poorly academically compared to those whose parents had secondary or tertiary education. Uwitonze & Uwizeyimana (2025) found a positive relationship between parental education levels and involvement in students' learning and parents with secondary or higher education were more likely to help with homework, attend school meetings, and encourage school attendance which contributed to higher school completion rates among their children.

In Kenya, Ochieng & Oduor (2024) analyzed socio-economic factors influencing dropout rates in public secondary schools and found that parental education level was a major predictor of student dropout and students whose parents had not completed primary or secondary education were more likely to drop out due to limited academic support and motivation at home. Ingosi, Chepkwony & Kikechi (2024) linked parental provision of academic tools to an indirect outcome of education level with improved academic performance and reduced dropout rates and found parents with higher education were more likely to provide educational materials, thereby supporting learning and encouraging school completion (Shikokoti, 2023). Kabugu & Olendo (2024) showed a strong relationship between parental involvement (closely tied to their education level) and students' academic achievement in biology and that parents with higher education were more engaged in supporting homework and encouraging performance, leading to higher retention and completion rate. Wambua & Mutua (2024) showed that parental involvement encouraged by headteachers contributed significantly to students' retention and completion and parents with more education were found to be more responsive and engaged, improving the likelihood of their children's school continuity (Shikokoti, 2016).

1.2 Statement of the problem

A report by Save the Children (2023) revealed that over 3.5 million children in Kenya are out of school, with the highest concentration found in northern Kenya. In Garissa County alone, where Dadaab Sub County is located, an estimated 289,410 children are not enrolled in school. Factors contributing to this include lack of school meals, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teachers, water shortages, resource-based conflicts, and climate-

related emergencies. The same report highlights that 460 schools in Northern Kenya have no water source, while 1,896 rely solely on rainwater harvesting further compounding the challenges facing students and schools in the region.

In Dadaab Sub County, the challenges are further complicated by its status as host to one of the world's largest refugee populations. The area is characterized by insecurity, extreme poverty, cultural barriers, and socio-economic marginalization. According to the 2019 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) report, Dadaab also has one of the highest numbers of uneducated parents in the country. Socio-economic factors such as low household income, early marriages, child labor, and low levels of parental education have created barriers to students completing their secondary education. These factors lead to high dropout and grade repetition rates, which directly impact the efficiency of the education system and increase educational wastage.

Although interventions have been implemented including school feeding programs, bursaries, cash transfer initiatives, and support from NGOs like UNHCR the completion rates in public secondary schools in Dadaab remain significantly lower than the national average. This indicates that the family income levels impeding completion may not have been fully addressed or understood in the specific context of Dadaab. Therefore, this study examined the influence of family income level on students' completion rates in public secondary schools in Dadaab Sub County. By identifying the most critical socio-economic barriers and evaluating the effectiveness of current interventions, this study aims to inform policy and practice to improve educational outcomes in the region.

1.4 Objective of the Study

2. To determine the influence of Parental Education level on students' completion rates in public secondary schools in Dadaab Sub-County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

2. H_01 : There is no significant relationship between Parental Education and students' completion rates in public secondary schools in Dadaab Sub-County, Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Concept of completion rates in public secondary schools

According to Bransberger, Falkenstern, & Lane, (2020) the reports on high school completion conducted in region across American States have concluded that approximately two thirds of final year students in their system of education get to complete their studies four years later than the expected period. In Canada, completion of high school education has been able to increase by about 11 percentages in the year 2017 and 2020 respectively, this is because the government of Canada has put completion of students' education as the first priority. Further, the education system has certainly encouraged "stay in school" programs, but broader economic and social factors have been more important than policy in contributing to Canada's impressive performance on completion (McCashin, Adams, Carbonaro, & Pedersen, 2023). Shikokoti & Imonje 2023) investigated factors influencing rate of completion of undergraduate students in public universities in Kenya. A case of University of Nairobi, Faculty of Education and concluded that both student factor, institutional factors and admission rate and its influence on the rate of completion of undergraduate students in institutions of Higher Education

Students' completion rates in secondary education are a crucial indicator of the effectiveness and equity of education systems globally. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2022), an estimated 244 million children aged between 6 and 18 are out of school worldwide. Alarming, Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for the highest number, with approximately 98 million children and youth still out of school (UNESCO, 2023). Kenya is no exception. Despite reforms by the Ministry of Education geared towards achieving the Education for All (EFA) goal such as the implementation of Free Day Secondary Education and affirmative action programs, significant disparities in student completion rates persist, particularly in marginalized and underserved regions. According to Khan & Ahmed (2021) the decline in enrollment and high dropout rate is most evident in counties that are affected by low income at the household level. In Dadaab Sub County, Garissa County, data on enrollment and completion rates is worrying According to a survey done by UNICEF (2022), the enrollment of pupils in secondary schools dropped from 21,584 in 2020 to 16,651 in 2022. The ministry of education has tried to address the challenges of completion by ensuring that those who go to school complete the cycle without dropping out. However, socioeconomic factors such as family income levels, family size, parental occupation and parental education levels influence succession rates of students in schools.

2.6 Influence of parental level of education on students' completion rates in public secondary schools

The education level of parents can be a motivational factor in the students' effort to learn. Students whose parents are educated are usually provided with the necessary learning resources and moral support to excel in their education. Their parents are role models to go by and even struggle to do better than them (Beswick, Wright, Watson, Hay, Allen, J& Cranston, 2019). In the general social and social- cognitive framework (Bandura, 1986), behavior is shaped in part through observation and direct learning. In this connection, educated parents are good models which children can copy and struggle also to excel at school. Children in educated families would like to be like their parents and would work hard not to drop out of school. They would like to complete school just like their educated parents did. Nzina, Kiilu & Muya, (2024) explored the influence of parental level of education on students' participation in public day secondary schools. It concluded that higher parental education levels were associated with increased student participation and reduced dropout rates. Koome, (2020) investigated the influence of parental socio-economic characteristics, including education level, on academic performance among secondary school students and found that a mother's level of education significantly affected the child's academic performance.

Kieti, (2021) investigated the influence of parents' level of education on quality education in public primary schools and highlighted that lower parental education levels were linked to decreased student completion rates. Mbugi, (2019) examined the contribution of parental socio-economic status, including education level, on pupils' KCPE performance and found that higher parental education levels positively influenced pupils' academic outcomes. Mwet, (2013) examined socio-economic factors influencing students' academic performance in public secondary schools and found that parental education levels significantly influenced students' academic outcomes. Kabugu & Olendo, (2024) examined the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance in biology in public secondary schools and found that parental involvement, influenced by education level, positively affected students' academic performance. Keri, Alice, & Mwangi, (2024) investigated the impact of parental deprivation on academic success among children in public primary schools and found that parental deprivation, often linked to lower education levels, negatively impacted students' academic achievement.

3.0 Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used as it allows the researcher to describe characteristics of an individual or group as they really are (Shikokoti, Okoth and Abungana, 2024). Descriptive surveys are only concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held and processes that are ongoing. The study targeted 10 public secondary schools 10 principals of secondary schools, 70 teachers, 6242 students and 4568 parents in Dadaab Sub-County, Garissa County. The sample size of 385 was attained using Yamane (1967) simplified formula. This formula was used to compute the size of the sample as illustrated Table 1:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where, **n** is the sample size, **N** is the population size, **e** is the margin of error (0.05).

$$n = \frac{10890}{1 + 10890(0.05)^2} \quad n = 385$$

. The ration in Table 1 was computed as follows: 385/10890= 0.353

Table 1: Sample Size

	Population	Ratio	Sample
Principals	10	0.353	4
Teachers	70	0.353	24
Students	6242	0.353	2203
Parents of students	4568	0.353	1612
Total	10890		3843

Stratified random sampling was used to obtain a sample from each stratum. The unbiased sampling method of stratified random sampling splits a heterogeneous population into homogenous subsets before selecting within each subset to achieve representativeness (Yin, 2017). The categories formed strata from which the study sample was obtained. The formation of strata was based on the category of respondents making each stratum a group of units with special characteristics. Then simple random sampling was used to pick respondents from each stratum. This approach ensured that all subgroups were proportionately represented in the final sample, thereby enhancing the generalizability and reliability of the study findings. Primary data was obtained using questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of questions that are both open and closed. The open-ended questions were utilized to motivate the respondent to respond in depth and without feeling hampered to illuminate information. As per Wang (2015), the open-ended questions allow for the profound answer of respondents giving their views based on their experiences. The questionnaires were preferred since they increased the chance of obtaining honest responses as they ensure anonymity of the respondents. They contained close-ended questions. Orodho (2009) further explains that questionnaires capture information on people's attitudes, opinions and habits. The questionnaires had two sections; Section A captured the background information which contained the gender Section B contained Influence of family income levels on Students' completion rates in Dadaab Subcounty, Kenya which on a likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree seeking information on the quality of education in higher education. The research also adopted an interview guide. The interview schedule was designed for the principals to shed more light on the subject matter. The schedules were designed to promote an opportunity for the researcher to establish a rapport with the respondents explain in person the nature and purpose of the study. The intention will be short and brief responses to research questions and provide room for the responses in the respondents words to later questions. To enhance the content validity of the instruments a pre-test of the instruments was carried out. Piloting aimed at testing the clarity of test items, suitability of language used and the feasibility of the study. The reliability of the instruments was determined using test-retest technique. Pearson product moment correlation was used to compute the reliability coefficient (Shikokoti, Okoth and Abungana, 2024). Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the data collected. For inferential statistics, Pearson product moment correlation was used for Hypothesis One to test the relationship between the variables. The hypothesis test was at 5% level of significance The null hypothesis was rejected and accepted if the p-value is greater than 0.05 ($P \geq 0.05$) or 0.01 ($P \geq 0.01$). It was rejected if the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 ($P \leq 0.05$) and 1% level of significance if the p-value was less than or equal to 0.01 ($P \leq 0.01$) The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), version 22, was used to code and enter the data into the computer for analysis after the questions were reviewed for completeness.

4.0 Results

4.1 Parental Education Levels and Students' Completion Rates

The researcher sought to determine the influence of parental education level and students' completion rates. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, Means and Standard Deviation were utilized. The rating was based on Likert Scale where 1=SD, 2=D, 3=UD, 4= A, 5= SA. The results of objective one was presented in Table 2 which shows the Parents' distribution of Parental Education Level and students' completion rates

Table 2: Parents' distribution of Parental Education Level and students' completion rates

Statement	SD f %	D f %	UD f %	A f %	SA f %	Mean	Sd
students with educated parents receive better support and complete school more	50 14.0	3 0.8	0 0.0	145 40.6	159 44.5	4.01	1.32
Students more motivated to finish school if their parents are well-educated	50 14.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	145 40.6	162 45.4	4.03	1.31
Educated parents emphasize the importance of completing secondary education	50 14.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	141 39.5	166 46.5	4.05	1.32
Parental literacy shape the home learning environment and student completion	50 14.0	9 2.5	0 0.0	154 43.1	143 40.1	3.92	1.34
Students with post-secondary educated parents have higher aspirations and completion rates	51 14.3	5 1.4	0 0.0	133 37.3	169 47.3	4.03	1.34
Educated parents more involved in schooling, improving outcomes and completion	50 14.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	138 38.7	169 47.3	4.05	1.32
Average Mean						4.02	1.33

Table 2 shows that 159(44.5%) of the Parents Strongly Agreed that Students with educated parents receive better support and complete school more while 145(40.6%) Agreed and 50(14.0%) Strongly Disagreed respectively with a mean of (M=4.01, SD=1.32). This implies that the students with educated parents receive better support and complete school more. The findings concur with Misiko, Kirwok & Kikechi, (2023) who established that higher parental educational levels positively influence pupils' academic performance, suggesting that educated parents provide better academic support, leading to higher completion rates.

On Students more motivated to finish school if their parents are well-educated 162(45.4%) of parents Strongly Agreed while 145(40.6%) Agreed with a mean of (M=4.03, SD=1.31). This implies that students are more motivated to finish school if their parents are well-educated. The findings are in line with Surum, Kiaritha & Mulambula, (2022) who indicated that parental involvement, often linked to higher education levels, fosters academic resilience and motivation among students to complete school.

Table 2 shows 166(46.5%) of the parents Strongly Agreed that Educated parents emphasize the importance of completing secondary education while 141 (39.5%) Agreed with a mean of (M=4.05, SD=1.32). This implies that Educated parents emphasize the importance of completing secondary education. The findings are consistent with Njogu, Kibaara & Gichohi, (2019) who highlighted that parents with higher educational qualifications have greater aspirations for their children's education, emphasizing the importance of completing secondary education.

On Parental literacy shape the home learning environment and student completion 154(43.1%) of the parents Agreed while 143(40.1%) Agreed and 51(14.3%) Strongly Disagreed respectively with a mean of (M=3.92, SD=1.34). This implies parental literacy shape the home learning environment and student completion. The

findings are in line with Misiko, Kirwok & Kikechi, (2023) who indicated that higher parental literacy levels contribute to a supportive home learning environment, enhancing students' academic performance and completion rates.

Table 2 shows 169(47.3%) of the parents Strongly Agreed that Students with post-secondary educated parents have higher aspirations and completion rates while 133(37.3%) Agreed and 50(14.0%) Strongly Disagreed with a mean of (M=4.03, SD=1.34). This implies that Students whose parents have post-secondary education have higher career aspirations, which increases their chances of completing secondary school. The findings concur with Abuya, Mumah, Austrian, Mutisya & Kabiru, (2018) who indicated that girls with mothers who have post-secondary education levels have higher career aspirations, increasing their likelihood of completing secondary education.

Table 2 shows 169(47.3%) of the parents Strongly Agreed that Educated parents more involved in schooling, improving outcomes and completion while 138(38.7%) Agreed with a mean of (M=4.05, SD=1.32). This implies that the Educated parents are more likely to be actively involved in their children's schooling, leading to better academic outcomes and completion rates. The findings are in line with Musau, (2018) who found that educated parents are more actively involved in managing students' discipline, contributing to better academic outcomes and higher completion rates. Table 3 shows Teachers' distribution of Parental Education Level and students' completion rates

Table 3: Teachers' distribution of Parental Education Level and students' completion rates

Statement	SD		D		UD		A		SA		Mean	Sd
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Students with educated parents receive better support and complete school more	6	28.6	1	4.8	0	0.0	6	28.6	8	38.1	2.43	1.33
Students more motivated to finish school if their parents are well-educated	6	28.6	1	4.8	0	0.0	6	28.6	8	38.1	2.43	1.33
Educated parents emphasize the importance of completing secondary education	2	5.7	5	23.8	4	19.0	7	33.3	6	28.6	2.57	1.54
Parental literacy shape the home learning environment and student completion	3	14.3	5	23.8	1	4.8	5	23.8	7	33.3	2.91	1.48
Students with post-secondary educated parents have higher aspirations and completion rates	7	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	33.3	7	33.3	2.33	1.28
Educated parents more involved in schooling, improving outcomes and completion	5	23.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	38.1	7	33.3	3.14	1.68
Average Mean											2.67	1.44

Table 3 shows that majority 8(38.1%) of the teachers Strongly Agreed that Students with educated parents receive better support and complete school more while 6(28.6%) Agreed and Strongly Disagreed respectively

with a mean of ($M=2.43$, $SD=1.33$). This implies that Students with educated parents receive better support and complete school more. The findings concur with Musau, (2018) who indicated that parents with higher education levels are more engaged in managing students' discipline, which contributes to better academic support and higher completion rates.

On Students more motivated to finish school if their parents are well-educated 8(38.1%) of teachers Strongly Agreed and 6(28.6%) Agreed and Strongly Disagreed respectively with a mean of ($M=2.43$, $SD=1.33$). This implies that Students more motivated to finish school if their parents are well-educated. The findings are in line with Abuya, Mumah, Austrian, Mutisya & Kabiru, (2018) who found that higher maternal education levels are associated with increased self-efficacy among girls, motivating them to complete their education.

Table 3 shows 7(33.3%) of the teachers Strongly Agreed that Educated parents emphasize the importance of completing secondary education while 6(28.6%) Agreed with a mean of ($M=2.57$, $SD=1.54$). This implies that Parents with higher educational qualifications tend to place greater emphasis on the importance of completing secondary education. The findings agree with Misiko, Kirwok & Kikechi, (2023) who indicated that educated parents place a higher emphasis on the importance of education, influencing their children's commitment to completing secondary education.

On Parental literacy shape the home learning environment and student completion 7(33.3%) of the teachers Strongly Agreed while 5(23.8%) Agreed and Disagreed respectively with a mean of ($M=2.91$, $SD=1.48$). This implies parental literacy shape the home learning environment and student completion. The findings are in line with Osabinyi, (2022) who found that parents' literacy levels significantly influence the home learning environment, affecting pupils' reading literacy skills and their likelihood of completing school.

Table 3 shows 7(33.3%) of the teachers Strongly Agreed, Agreed and Strongly Disagreed respectively that Students with post-secondary educated parents have higher aspirations and completion rates with a mean of ($M=2.33$, $SD=1.28$). This implies that Students whose parents have post-secondary education have higher career aspirations, which increases their chances of completing secondary school. The findings concur with Njogu, Kibaara & Gichohi, (2019) who revealed that students whose parents have post-secondary education exhibit higher career aspirations, positively influencing their completion of secondary school.

On Educated parents are more involved in schooling, improving outcomes and completion 8(38.1%) Agreed while 7(33.3%) Strongly Agreed and 4(19.0%) with a mean of ($M=2.62$, $SD=1.43$). This implies that educated parents are more involved in schooling, improving outcomes and completion. The findings are consistent with Ocharo, Itigi & Njoroge, (2024) who indicated that parental involvement in school leadership, often associated with higher education levels, positively influences pupils' academic performance and completion rates.

The researcher further used inferential statistics Chi-square test to analyse Objective three test. To test objective three Chi-square test was done to determine the relationship between Parental Education Level ($M=4.02$, $SD=1.33$) and Students' Completion Rate ($M=4.11$, $SD=1.34$)

Table 4 shows the Distribution of Students' Completion Rates

Table 4: Distribution of Students' Completion Rates

Statement	SD f %	D f %	UD f %	A f %	SA f %	Mean	Sd
Financial support like bursaries and scholarships increase student completion	50 14.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	132 32.0	175 49.0	4.07	1.32
A safe, supportive school environment improve completion rates	50 14.0	1 0.3	0 0.0	119 33.3	187 52.4	4.10	1.34
Parental involvement lead to higher student completion	50 14.0	2 0.6	0 0.0	127 35.6	178 49.9	4.07	1.34
High school fees hinder student retention and completion	50 14.0	1 0.3	0 0.0	133 37.3	173 48.5	4.06	1.33
Access to learning resources boost the likelihood of completing school	50 14.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	105 29.4	202 56.6	4.15	1.35
Lack of basic needs reduce school attendance and completion rates	50 14.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	91 25.5	216 60.5	4.19	1.36
Average Mean						4.11	1.34

Table 4 shows that 175(49.0%) of the financial support like bursaries and scholarships increase student completion while 132(32.0%) Agreed with a mean of (M=4.07, SD=1.32). This implies that availability of financial support (e.g., bursaries, scholarships) significantly increases student completion rates.

On A safe, supportive school environment improve completion rates 187(52.4%) of parents Strongly Agreed while 119(33.3%) Agreed and 50(14.0%) Strongly Disagreed respectively with a mean of (M=4.10, SD=1.34). This implies that a safe and supportive school environment positively affects the likelihood of students completing their education.

Table 4 shows 178(49.9%) of the parents Strongly Agreed that Parental involvement led to higher student completion while 127 (35.6%) Strongly Agreed and 50(14.0%) Strongly Disagreed respectively with a mean of (M=4.07, SD=1.34). This implies that High levels of parental involvement contribute to higher student completion rates.

On High school fees hinder student retention and completion 173(48.5%) of the parents Strongly Agreed while 131(37.3%) Agreed and 50(14.0%) Strongly Disagreed respectively with a mean of (M=4.06, SD=1.33). This implies that high school fees is a significant barrier to student retention and completion rates.

Table 4 shows Majority 202(56.6%) of the Parents Strongly Agreed that Access to learning resources boost the likelihood of completing school while 105(29.9%) Agreed with a mean of (M=4.15, SD=1.35). This implies that adequate learning resources (e.g., textbooks, computers) increases the probability of students completing their education.

Table 4 shows 216(60.5%) of the parents Strongly Agreed that Lack of basic needs reduce school attendance and completion rates while 91(25.5%) Agreed with a mean of (M=4.19, SD=1.36). This implies that the lack of basic needs reduces school attendance and completion rates.

Table 5 shows the Chi-square test between Parental Education Level and Students' Completion Rate

Table 5: Chi-square test between Parental Education Level and Students' Completion Rate

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	362.883 ^a	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	295.746	9	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	266.974	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	357		

a. 7 cells (43.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

The Chi-square result in Table 5 confirms that there is a relationship between Parental Education Level and Student Completion rates. Objective 1 was tested using Chi square ($df=9$, Pearson Chi square(χ^2) =362.883 and $p=0.000$ at 0.05 level of significance. This shows there is a relationship between Parental Education Level and Student Completion rates. This means that parental education level has a great influence on Students' completion rates. These findings are in line with research by A study by Mwangi and Wanjiru (2019) in Nairobi County, Kenya, investigated the effect of parental background characteristics on secondary school completion rates. Using a quantitative design with 450 student participants and 30 school administrators, the researchers employed chi-square analysis to examine the relationship between parental education and student outcomes and found a statistically significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 295.12$, $p < 0.05$) between parental education and student completion, concluding that students whose parents had completed at least primary or secondary education were more likely to remain in school. Similarly, Otieno (2021) conducted a study in Garissa County, including Dadaab, focusing on the socio-economic determinants of school completion among marginalized communities and reported that low parental education was significantly associated with high dropout rates, particularly among girls and emphasized that parents with higher education levels were more likely to value and invest in their children's schooling.

The principals were interviewed on Parental Education Level and Students' Completion Rates coded as P1-P4. Their responses were as follows:

"In our school, we've observed a direct link between the level of parental education and student discipline and retention and illiterate parents sometimes view education as a burden, especially when facing economic hardships, and may pull students out prematurely." (Principal 1, 2025)

"Educated parents tend to be more supportive of their children's schooling and provide better guidance and often create routines that support homework and revision at home, which increases the chances of students completing their education." (Principal 2, 2025)

"Many of our students come from homes where parents have no formal education. In such cases, education is not prioritized, and parents often fail to understand the importance of school completion and may withdraw children early for domestic chores, work, or early marriage." (Principals 3, 2025)

"In households where parents are educated, even just up to primary or secondary level, we notice that their children are more consistent in attendance and performance and parents regularly attend school meetings and follow up on their children's progress, which encourages learners to remain in school." (Principal 4, 2025)

The principals' responses imply that the significant influence of parental education level on student retention and completion, suggesting that improved parental literacy may be a pathway to better educational outcomes in Dadaab Sub County.

The Sub County Director of Education was interviewed on Parental Education Level and Students' Completion Rates. His responses were as follows:

"There is a noticeable trend where students whose parents have attained at least primary or secondary education are more likely to remain in school and complete their studies since educated parents tend to value schooling more and can offer the necessary encouragement and support to their children." (Sub County Director of Education, 2025)

The Sub County Director of Education's response implies that parental education level plays a pivotal role in shaping attitudes towards education, influencing students' persistence and motivation to complete school and higher parental literacy levels may enhance a supportive home environment that promotes learning continuity

4.0 CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSION

The study established that Parental Education levels significantly influence students' completion rates in public secondary schools in Dadaab Sub County, Kenya. The findings underscore that significant influence of parental education level on student retention and completion, suggesting that improved parental literacy may be a pathway to better educational outcomes in Dadaab Sub County since it plays as a pivotal role in shaping attitudes towards education, influencing students' persistence and motivation to complete school and higher parental literacy levels may enhance a supportive home environment that promotes learning continuity. Students whose parents attained formal education were more likely to benefit from cognitive stimulation, school encouragement, and academic role modeling at home. Simultaneously, students from higher-income families enjoyed greater access to learning materials, consistent attendance, and reduced vulnerability to dropout due to financial shocks. The study's quantitative results, backed by statistically significant Chi-square tests ($\chi^2 = 362.883$, $p < 0.05$), support the premise that parental education level is a strong predictor of student retention and completion.

Qualitative data corroborated these trends, revealing that parents' educational and economic capacity influences not only academic performance but also the prioritization of education amid competing life demands. Girls were found to be disproportionately affected by low parental education and income, often facing early marriage or domestic responsibilities. These findings imply that improving completion rates requires not only school-based interventions but also family-focused and community-driven strategies.

To address the dropout crisis in Dadaab, interventions must go beyond free tuition and address structural inequalities. Scaling adult education, enhancing financial aid, promoting income-generating activities, and fostering parental involvement will be key to building a sustainable educational pipeline for marginalized learners. If left unaddressed, the dual disadvantage of illiteracy and poverty may continue to suppress educational attainment and broader developmental goals in such regions.

RECOMMENDATION

- The Ministry of Education should expand and strengthen and scale up bursaries, scholarships, and cash transfer programs targeting students from low-income households
- Parents should be encouraged to join adult education training to improve their literacy levels to enhance a learning environment in their homes.
- The Teachers Service Commission should ensure equitable deployment and retention of trained teachers in schools with high dropout rates linked to poverty.
- The Ministry of Education should foster collaboration between schools, parents, local leaders, and donors to increase parent involvement in schools to enhance governance and success rate.
- Parents should be sensitized to cultural barriers that hinder learners' completion rate, especially girls and encouraged to support their children emotionally and academically even if they're financially constrained and have low educational levels.

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