

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN GOVERNMENT SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS: INSIGHTS FROM NIFAS SILK LAFTO SUB CITY

Addis Ababa University, College of Education and Language Studies,  
Department of Educational Planning and Management

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May, 2025

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial  
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In School Leadership

Addis Ababa University

May, 2025

## **Declaration**

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other University, and all sources consulted for this thesis have been properly acknowledged.

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## **Approval**

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my consent and approval as a thesis advisor.

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**Addis Ababa University**

**School of Graduate Studies**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Sisay Tilahun Abebe entitled: *Parental Engagement in Government Secondary Schools: Insights from Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city* submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for degree of Master of Arts in (School Leadership and Management) complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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## **Abbreviations**

DEEWR: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

MoE: Ministry of Education Ethiopia

PI: Parental Involvement

PSTAs: Parent-Student-Teacher Associations

PTAs: Parent-Teacher Associations

SIP: School Improvement Program

SMS: Short Message service

## Abstract

*Parental engagement in secondary education plays a crucial role in student success, yet its effectiveness varies depending on institutional practices, socio-economic conditions, and cultural factors. This study examines the barriers, and strategies for parental engagement from the perspectives of parents, teachers, and school administrators in selected secondary schools. A total of 370 participants contributed to the study, including 290 parents, 50 teachers, and 14 principals who completed structured questionnaires. Additionally, 4 school administrators (2 principals and 2 vice principals responsible for school improvement programs), 2 sub-city supervisors, and 14 Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) leaders (2 from each school) provided insights into school policies and engagement initiatives. The findings revealed a discrepancy between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of parental engagement in that principals rated engagement as high, with 42.9% rating it "Very High" and 28.57% as "High", teachers overwhelmingly assessed it as low, with 72% rating it "Very Low" due to limited homework assistance, weak communication, and inconsistent academic support at home. Parents, while expressing a strong willingness to participate (67.24%), identified time constraints (64.2%), work schedules (62%), financial challenges (58.6%), and ineffective communication (62.5%) as key barriers. Effective engagement strategies included flexible meeting schedules (100% agreement among principals), improved digital communication (85.7%), and financial assistance programs (71.4%), while community partnerships and parent workshops required stronger execution. This study underscores the need for aligning administrator and teacher perspectives, strengthening communication strategies, and expanding parental training initiatives. By addressing logistical, socio-economic, and cultural barriers, schools can develop more inclusive engagement models that foster sustained parent-school collaboration and enhance student academic outcomes.*

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Backgrounds of the Study**

Parental involvement and parental engagement are often used interchangeably in educational discourse; yet many scholars emphasize the distinction between the two. Parental involvement typically refers to parents' participation in school related activities, such as attending meetings and volunteering. In contrast, parental engagement encompasses a deeper, more meaningful interaction that extends to parents' active role in their children's learning and development both at home and in school. This distinction is well-articulated by Goodall and Montgomery (2014), who describe engagement as a shift from school-directed involvement to a parent-led commitment to learning at home and beyond.

This study adopted Waterford's (2018) definition of parental engagement, which emphasizes the continuous and collaborative partnership between parents and educators to support children's academic and social emotional growth. Parental involvement is the first step that leads to parental engagement. Parental engagement is the commitment that both parties - parents and educators - make to collaborate and prioritize the child's education (Waterford, 2018). This operational definition is crucial for examining the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city. By focusing on this comprehensive definition of parental engagement, the study aims to highlight the multifaceted nature of parent school interactions and identify specific challenges that hinder effective collaboration. Understanding these barriers is essential for developing strategies to foster a supportive and inclusive educational environment for all students.

Barriers to parental engagement in schools vary across cultures, economic statuses, and levels of education. A lack of understanding of these barriers creates a wall between parents and educators. Therefore, it is extremely important for educators and administrators to understand the community they work in, as well as the barriers parents face.

Laroque (2013) identified several barriers to parental engagement, including work schedules, language, cultural differences, and socioeconomic disparities between educators and families. Similarly, Keller and colleagues (2021) conducted a focus groups study on Spanish-speaking parents that highlighted language as one of the most significant obstacles to family involvement in schools. Their findings suggest that the shortage of Spanish-speaking teachers and office administrators, along with limited opportunities for non-native speakers to participate in school

events and PTA meetings, creates a communication gap that hinders parental engagement. Additionally, time constraints such as irregular work hours and the responsibilities of parents with multiple children further limit their ability to participate in school activities.

Other barriers identified in the study by Keller and colleagues (2021) include the lack of communication and encouragement from school staff, which limits family engagement and participation. By failing to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment, schools unintentionally weaken family-to-school relationships. This lack of engagement can negatively impact students' motivation and academic success. Anthony and Ogg (2019) found that school-based involvement and home-to-school communication positively correlate with various learning outcomes, including student motivation, persistence, and reading achievement.

While research in Ethiopia has explored parental involvement and its impact on student academic achievement, there remains a significant gap in studies addressing the specific barriers to effective parental engagement. Most existing studies emphasize on attendance at school meetings and homework assistance, rather than the deeper collaborative relationship between parents and educators that supports students' holistic development.

For instance, the Addis Ababa Education Bureau's study (2017) employed Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) framework, which primarily examines parental involvement but does not fully capture engagement as an ongoing partnership. This approach leaves a critical gap in understanding the underlying challenges preventing parents from actively supporting their children's education beyond school-organized activities.

Moreover, Ethiopian studies have yet to adapt global parental engagement models to the local socio-cultural and economic context. Research from other regions suggests that parental engagement significantly improves student motivation, persistence, and achievement (Anthony & Ogg, 2019). However, without studies that explicitly examine how engagement—rather than simple involvement—impacts Ethiopian students, educational interventions may remain limited in effectiveness.

In the context of Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-City, the education system faces both opportunities and challenges. As one of Addis Ababa's rapidly developing districts, the area has seen growth in residential and commercial infrastructure, yet many government secondary schools continue to grapple with overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and varying levels of teacher training and commitment (Ethiowall.com,2025& Biniyam, 2014). Studies have also highlighted gaps in

the implementation of active learning strategies and the effectiveness of school leadership, which can influence how well schools engage with families (Biniyam,2014). These contextual factors make it especially important to understand the barriers to parental engagement in this specific setting.

This study aims to address this research gap by identifying the barriers hindering effective parental engagement in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-City. Through an analysis of challenges faced by parents, teachers, and administrators, this research seeks to provide actionable strategies for fostering a supportive and inclusive educational environment, ensuring that parental engagement is meaningful, collaborative, and capable of driving student success.

## **1.2.Statement of the Problem**

Despite the recognized importance of parental engagement in enhancing students' academic and social-emotional development, significant barriers hinder effective collaboration between parents and educators in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City. While parental involvement; parents' participation in school-related activities such as attending meetings, volunteering, and assisting with homework, has been widely studied, parental engagement is a deeper, sustained partnership where parents actively contribute to their children's learning process both at home and in collaboration with teachers. Engagement fosters meaningful interactions that enhance student development and academic success.

Existing research in Ethiopia has predominantly focused on parental involvement rather than engagement. Abreham (2017) and Mebrat (2021) examined the relationship between parental involvement and student academic achievement, identifying school visitation, material support, and motivation as key factors. However, these studies primarily framed parental involvement as school-centered activities rather than sustained engagement between educators and families. Similarly, Mitiku (2021) investigated parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities using Epstein's framework. While the study recognized barriers such as socioeconomic challenges and negative attitudes, it emphasized episodic participation rather than continuous parental engagement in a student's learning experience.

Moreover, the Journal of Education and Research (2019) study on parental involvement in preschool education found that parents were highly engaged in their children's learning, particularly in communication-related aspects. However, the study mainly focused on early childhood education, leaving a gap in understanding parental engagement in secondary education,

where parental roles become less visible but remain critical. Additionally, Tuli and Tarekegne (2020) assessed parental involvement in secondary school curriculum implementation in East Wollega Zone. Their findings showed low parental participation, though Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) played a substantial role in planning and decision-making. However, this study viewed parents as external supporters rather than integral partners in shaping students' educational outcomes.

The Addis Ababa Education Bureau's study (2017) on barriers to parental involvement utilized Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) framework, which primarily examined involvement rather than engagement. This distinction is crucial, as involvement tends to focus on school-based participation, whereas engagement requires sustained commitment from parents and educators to create an interactive learning environment for students. The lack of a clear operational definition and understanding of parental engagement within the Ethiopian educational context has resulted in missed opportunities for meaningful collaboration.

Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City presents unique challenges in this regard due to its diverse student population, including Eritrean citizens, students displaced from various areas of Addis Ababa due to corridor development, and students from regions affected by conflict. These demographic dynamics amplify existing barriers to parental engagement and require careful examination.

What sets this study Apart from other local studies is that while previous research has explored parental involvement, this study shifts the focus to parental engagement, emphasizing collaboration and shared responsibility between parents and educators rather than mere participation in school activities. This research aims to identify the specific barriers to parental engagement in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City, explore the perspectives of parents, teachers, and administrators to gain a comprehensive understanding of engagement challenges, and provide actionable strategies to foster authentic parental engagement tailored to the socio-economic realities of Ethiopian government secondary schools.

Given the scarcity of research on this topic and the critical role of parental engagement in educational success, this study seeks to bridge the gap by examining the multifaceted nature of family-school relationships and offering insights to develop inclusive strategies that strengthen parent-educator collaboration.

### **1.3.The Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The general objective of the study is to identify and analyze the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools with in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are: -

- i. To examine the individual and family related barriers that hinder parental engagement in government secondary schools with in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city
- ii. To identify the school related barriers affecting parental engagement in government secondary schools with in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city
- iii. To explore the societal and community related barriers that influence parental engagement in government secondary schools with in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city
- iv. To propose strategies to improve parental engagement based on identified barriers.

#### **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following basic research questions:

- i. What are the individual and family related barriers to parental engagement in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city?
- ii. What are the school related barriers that affect parental engagement in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city?
- iii. How do societal and community related barriers influence parental engagement in government secondary schools with in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city?
- iv. What strategies can be implemented to enhance effective parental engagement in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city?

#### **1.4.Significant of the Study**

This study on the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City holds substantial significance in multiple ways. Understanding these barriers can lead to more effective strategies that enhance student attendance, behavior, and academic performance. When schools identify these challenges, teachers and administrators can develop better communication and collaboration mechanisms with parents, fostering a more supportive learning environment.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights for educational policymakers, offering data-driven recommendations to address the challenges parents face when engaging with schools. By analyzing these barriers, policymakers can develop targeted policies and programs that strengthen parental engagement. Additionally, the study helps guide better resource allocation, ensuring interventions are directed to the area's most in need.

Beyond policy implications, this research contributes to community empowerment by enabling parents to participate more actively in their children's education. Addressing these challenges fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among parents, strengthening family-school relationships. The study also encourages broader community involvement, emphasizing the role of society in overcoming obstacles that limit parental engagement.

Academically, this research adds to the existing body of knowledge on parental engagement, specifically within Ethiopian secondary schools. By examining engagement beyond traditional involvement, it provides a reference point for future research on family-school collaboration. Additionally, the study offers practical insights and actionable strategies that educational institutions can implement to improve parental engagement and create a more inclusive learning environment.

On a societal level, addressing barriers to parental engagement promotes educational equity by ensuring all parents, regardless of their socio-economic status, can actively participate in their children's learning. Strengthening family-school connections enhances students' academic experiences and long-term success. Furthermore, the study fosters cultural understanding, bridging gaps between diverse communities and educational institutions to promote inclusivity and stronger collaboration.

### **1.5.Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on identifying the barriers to parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The research is geographically confined to this specific area to provide a localized and detailed analysis of the challenges faced by parents, educators, and administrators in fostering effective collaboration. By narrowing the

scope to government secondary schools, the study ensures a focused examination of issues relevant to public education settings.

The study involves key stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and school principals, who provide insights into their experiences and perspectives on parental engagement. Understanding their viewpoints allows for a comprehensive assessment of the existing challenges and potential solutions. The research categorizes barriers into three main areas: individual and family-related obstacles, school-based challenges, and broader societal influences. Individual and family-related factors include parents' educational background, beliefs, attitudes, and family dynamics, which can affect their level of engagement with their children's learning. School-related challenges encompass communication practices, institutional policies, and teacher-parent relationships that may hinder effective collaboration. Societal and community-based barriers involve cultural norms, socio-economic factors, and community support systems that shape parental engagement in education.

To ensure a thorough investigation, this study employs a **mixed-methods approach**, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Structured questionnaires gather quantitative data from parents, teachers, and school principals, aiming to measure the extent of various engagement barriers. In-depth interviews with leaders from Parent-Student-Teacher Associations (PSTA), supervisors, and school principals provide qualitative insights into their experiences, helping to contextualize the findings.

The study examines parental engagement within the specific academic year **2024/25 G.C**, ensuring that the results reflect current realities and challenges in the selected schools. By focusing on contemporary data, the research aims to provide relevant and actionable recommendations for improving parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City.

### **1.6.Limitation of the Study**

The scope of this study is confined to government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or different types of schools. Since educational challenges and parental engagement dynamics vary across locations, the insights gained from this research may not fully apply to private institutions or schools in rural settings.

Additionally, the study relies on self-reported data from participants, including parents, teachers, and school administrators. While this approach provides firsthand perspectives on parental engagement barriers, it is subject to potential biases, such as response accuracy, social desirability, and individual perceptions. Despite these limitations, defining these parameters allows the study to maintain focus and relevance, ensuring a thorough and contextualized analysis of the challenges surrounding parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City. The findings contribute to meaningful recommendations for improving family-school collaboration within the study area.

### **1.7.Operational Definition of Key Terms**

**Family:** A social unite consisting of individuals connected by blood, marriage, adoption, or a shared living arrangement, characterized by mutual support, responsibilities, and relationships. It can include parents, children, extended relatives, or other significant individuals who play a role in the social and emotional development of its members. (pressbooks,2025)

**Family Involvement:** playing a participatory role in their child’s education by being involved in school events and activities. It represents the initial step in the process of family participation in education. (Waterford, 2018)

**Family Engagement:** families and teachers sharing the responsibility to help their children learn and meet their unique educational goals. It encompasses more than just involvement; it requires a commitment from both parties (families and educators) to collaborate and prioritize the child’s education. (Waterford, 2018; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014)

**Barriers to Parental Engagement:** Factors that hinder or prevent parents from being actively engaged in their child’s education. These can include individual, family, school-related, and social obstacles.

**Individual and family- related Barriers:** Challenges related to parents’ personal circumstances, such as their educational background, work schedules, language proficiency, cultural beliefs, socio economic status and family dynamics, which affect their ability to engage with the school.

**School – Related Barriers:** Issues within the school environment that impede parental engagement, including inadequate communication practices, unwelcoming attitudes of staff, rigid school policies, and lack of resources or support for parents.

**Societal and Community – Related Barriers:** Broader social and community factors that affect parental engagement, such as socioeconomic disparities, cultural norms, community support structures, and societal attitudes towards education and parenting.

**Government Secondary Schools:** Secondary schools funded and operated by the government, providing education typically from grade 9 to 12, and serving the educational needs of the community.

### **1.8. Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the basic question of the study, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, as well as the delimitation, scope and limitations of the study, and the definition of key terms. Chapter two includes a review of related literature. Chapter three covers the research design and methodology of the study. Chapter four presents and analyzes the data collected. Chapter five offers a summary of the findings, conclusions drawn from the study, and recommendations for future research or action.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

Parental engagement refers to active, meaningful participation by families in children's academic experiences, encompassing home-based learning support, school collaboration, and community involvement. While related to parental involvement, engagement differs in that it emphasizes ongoing partnerships between families and educators rather than passive participation in school functions (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Parental engagement plays a vital role in supporting students' academic success and social-emotional development. It extends beyond attending school-related activities to actively participating in children's learning both at home and in school settings. Effective parental engagement fosters strong school-home connections, encourages student motivation, and contributes to better educational outcomes.

This literature review critically examines existing research on parental engagement, with a specific focus on the barriers affecting effective collaboration in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City, Addis Ababa. By exploring theoretical foundations, empirical studies, and practical interventions, the review seeks to highlight key challenges while identifying strategies for strengthening parental involvement.

The review is structured around the following key areas. The first is theoretical foundations of parental engagement which explain about the overview of relevant theories and conceptual definitions. The second is the importance of parental engagement that deals about the research findings on its impact on student learning and overall well-being. The third discusses about the barriers to parental engagement in that it examines different studies on the individual, family, school, and societal factors that hinder effective participation. The fourth section is about the cultural perspectives on parental engagement that specifically focus on the exploration of parental engagement across different cultural settings, emphasizing the Ethiopian context. The fifth section is about the strategies to enhance parental engagement which is a review of successful practices and interventions addressing engagement barriers. And the last section discusses about the research gaps and future directions. In this section Identification of gaps in existing literature and recommendations for future studies were the major areas.

By analyzing both barriers and solutions, this review aims to provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers striving to create a more inclusive and collaborative educational environment.

The scope of this literature review encompasses a broad examination of existing research related to parental engagement in education, with a specific emphasis on identifying the barriers that hinder effective parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City. This review provides an in-depth analysis of factors affecting parental engagement, specifically examining barriers and potential strategies for strengthening collaboration between schools and parents.

This review primarily relies on studies published in English, which may result in the exclusion of valuable researches conducted in other languages, particularly sources that focus on region-specific parental engagement. The study examines parental engagement within government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City, Addis Ababa, while incorporating insights from other regions to provide a broader perspective. However, findings may not fully represent parental engagement dynamics in other educational contexts or geographic locations. By addressing these limitations, the literature review aims to provide a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of parental engagement research. It serves as a foundation for understanding barriers to effective parental engagement and developing strategies that foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

## **2.1. Theoretical Perspectives on Parental Engagement**

Parental engagement plays a fundamental role in shaping students' academic success, motivation, and overall development. While often intertwined with terms such as parental involvement and participation, engagement represents a deeper, more active role in children's education, extending beyond attendance at school functions to collaborative efforts between families, schools, and communities (Weiss et al., 2009; Desforges & Abouchar, 2003). This section explores key theoretical models that explain parental engagement, the dynamics shaping interactions between home and school, and the structural components that enhance parental participation.

### **2.1.1. Foundational Theories and Models**

Education is not confined to formal instruction it is an interconnected process influenced by multiple environmental factors. Parents contribute significantly to their children's learning by fostering home-based support, engaging in school partnerships, and participating in community networks. Several established theories provide insights into parental engagement patterns and the barriers families encounter when trying to sustain meaningful involvement.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) explains how children's development is shaped by home, school, and broader societal contexts. His framework highlights proximal influences, such as family and school interactions, alongside systemic factors, including socioeconomic conditions and institutional policies (Ryan, Fauth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006). Barriers such as economic hardship, time constraints, and limited parental awareness impact engagement by restricting opportunities for meaningful collaboration with educators.

Similarly, Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model (1987, 1996) emphasizes the interconnected roles of families, schools, and communities in fostering student success. Epstein argues that students achieve optimal learning outcomes when their educational environments are harmoniously linked, creating a continuum of support across different settings (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). However, factors such as ineffective school-home communication, cultural differences, and rigid institutional policies can disrupt engagement efforts, limiting parental participation in decision-making processes (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Mapp, 2002).

### **2.1.2. Parental Engagement: Defining the Concept and Its Components**

Parental engagement extends beyond traditional involvement in school activities to encompass ongoing, meaningful participation in children's learning at home and within broader community networks. Parents not only reinforce classroom teachings through structured support but also engage with educators to align learning strategies (Muller, 2009).

While parental involvement often refers to actions such as attending school meetings, volunteering, or supporting extracurricular activities (Hill & Taylor, 2004), engagement entails actively shaping a child's learning process, focusing on shared responsibility between families and educators. A key distinction is highlighted by Harris and Goodall (2007), who assert that direct

engagement in home-based learning rather than simple attendance at school events—has the most substantial impact on academic success.

### **Interactions Between Home and School**

A strong home-school partnership is essential for fostering student success. Research shows that parents and educators who maintain open communication and coordinate learning approaches contribute to higher student motivation and achievement (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Epstein & Sheldon, 2006).

Parental engagement in school-related activities creates alignment between formal education and home-based learning. By staying informed about academic progress, curriculum requirements, and student needs, parents can reinforce classroom lessons through structured home support (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003). However, barriers such as limited outreach efforts, unclear communication channels, and lack of parental representation in school decisions can hinder engagement, reducing collaboration between parents and teachers (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Addressing these challenges requires transparent engagement policies and inclusive school-community partnerships.

### **Structural Components of Parental Engagement**

Epstein's framework outlines six categories of parental involvement, offering a structured approach to engagement. While initially developed under the No Child Left Behind legislation (US Department of Education, 2005), these categories remain relevant in shaping parent-school partnerships globally.

Table 2.1: Epstein’s six types of involvement

<b>Involvement Type</b>	<b>Examples of Actions</b>
<b>Parenting</b>	Workshops on child development, parenting courses, family literacy programs
<b>Communication</b>	Multilingual school notices, email updates, transparent information on policies
<b>Volunteering</b>	Parent resource centers, surveys identifying parental skills, school-based engagement opportunities
<b>Learning at Home</b>	Family-assisted academic goal-setting, skill-building activities linked to curricula
<b>Decision-Making</b>	Parent advisory councils, advocacy groups influencing school reform
<b>Collaborating with Community</b>	School-business partnerships, integrated family services within school settings

**Source:** Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S. B., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2019). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (4th ed.).

Similarly, Australia’s Family-School Partnerships Framework (2008) expands on Epstein’s model, identifying seven key dimensions for effective parent-school collaboration, including consultative decision-making, community engagement, and personalized support structures (DEEWR, 2008). Both frameworks emphasize the shared responsibility between families, educators, and policymakers in enhancing parental engagement.

### **The Role of Neighborhoods and Communities**

Parental engagement is further influenced by community-level factors, including social networks, access to learning resources, and cultural attitudes toward schooling (Catsambis & Beveridge, 2001; Johnson, 2011). In disadvantaged neighborhoods, limited parent-led initiatives and minimal access to enrichment programs can weaken engagement (Black, 2008). Strengthening school-community partnerships helps bridge these gaps, enabling parents to access educational resources and participate in structured engagement models.

### **Parental Involvement vs. Parental Engagement**

Parental participation in education plays a pivotal role in shaping students’ academic success, motivation, and overall development. While parental involvement and parental engagement are often used interchangeably, they represent distinct approaches to family-school collaboration.

Understanding these differences is essential for evaluating how parents contribute to their children's learning and identifying barriers that hinder effective engagement.

### **Parental Involvement: A Foundational Approach**

Parental involvement (PI) refers to a broad set of behaviors and interactions that strengthen connections between home and school. Sy, Rowley, and Schulenberg (2007) define PI as a multi-dimensional process that includes parenting support, parent education, and family-school collaboration (Edwards, 2004). This involvement extends from attending school functions and teacher conferences to supporting home-based learning activities (Nye et al., 2006).

A meta-analysis of 66 studies found that family involvement is critical for student achievement from early childhood through high school (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023). Efforts to improve children's education are far more effective when families actively participate rather than relying solely on school-driven initiatives. Key dimensions of parental involvement include; School-based participation (e.g., volunteering at events, engaging in parent-teacher conferences), home-based support (e.g., homework monitoring, educational outings, structured study habits), and family-school collaboration (e.g., fostering communication with educators, supporting school initiatives).

Research suggests that PI positively affects academic achievement, with greater parental presence in schools linked to higher student confidence, reduced absenteeism, and improved discipline (Waterford, 2018; Holloway et al., 2008). However, involvement alone does not necessarily equate to engagement, as attending events does not always translate into deep, collaborative learning experiences for students.

### **Parental Engagement: A Deeper Collaborative Effort**

Parental engagement moves beyond participation: It represents a shared responsibility between families and educators, emphasizing continuous collaboration for children's educational success. Waterford (2018) defines engagement as an advanced stage of involvement requiring both commitment and interaction between parents and schools.

Unlike traditional involvement, engagement is multidimensional and integrates both home and school environments:

**At home:** Parents actively shape learning experiences by monitoring academic progress, discussing schoolwork, and reinforcing study habits (Finn, 1998; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

**At school:** Parents participate in curriculum planning, advocacy initiatives, volunteerism, and decision-making processes to enhance educational outcomes (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014).

Engagement focuses on two-way conversations, ensuring parents are heard and involved in shaping school decisions (Ferland, 2011). Rather than merely attending events, engaged parents collaborate with educators, receive training tailored to their needs, and participate in policymaking processes (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023).

### **Key Differences Between Involvement and Engagement**

Parental involvement consists of one-way participation, where schools dictate activities and invite parents to attend or support specific functions. Whereas Parental engagement fosters two-way collaboration, where schools listen to parents' concerns and integrate their feedback into decision-making.

Ferland (2011) describes this distinction vividly:

*“A school striving for parental involvement leads with its mouth—telling parents how they can participate.*

*A school striving for parental engagement leads with its ears—listening to parents’ ideas, concerns, and aspirations”.*

Effective engagement requires that schools actively support parent-led initiatives, such as training programs, parent advocacy groups, and structured outreach efforts (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023).

### **Parental Involvement and Engagement Work Together**

While parental engagement often produces better academic outcomes than involvement alone, the most effective school programs integrate both approaches. Key benefits include; Higher grades and test scores, Improved student attendance and behavior, Increased enrollment in advanced courses, and Greater social-emotional development.

Educators emphasize that strong parent-school connections help address non-academic barriers, such as health, safety, and economic challenges, which significantly influence student achievement (Carver, 2023).

### **Common principles for effective parental engagement**

Parental engagement is essential for fostering positive academic outcomes, and the literature identifies several common principles that underpin effective involvement. These principles include academic socialization, parental role construction, and parenting style, each of which contributes uniquely to student learning and development (Emerson, L. & colleagues, 2012).

#### **a) Academic Socialization**

Academic socialization refers to specific parental behaviors that have a demonstrably positive impact on students' academic performance. It includes:

- Communicating with children about educational expectations and the value of learning.
- Discussing learning strategies.
- Connecting schoolwork to broader contexts, such as current events.
- Fostering educational aspirations and making future plans.
- Creating a stimulating home learning environment where education is enjoyable and rewarding.
- Encouraging decision-making, problem-solving skills, independence, and autonomy.

This approach focuses on the child's needs and helps develop their ability to set goals, evaluate actions, and learn from outcomes, making it particularly relevant for high school students. It promotes self-assessment and learning independence without requiring sustained relationships with every teacher (Emerson, L. & colleagues, 2012).

#### **b) Parental Role Construction**

The likelihood and quality of parental engagement are influenced significantly by how parents perceive their role in their children's education. Role construction is shaped by beliefs about desirable outcomes, responsibility for these outcomes, and expectations from significant groups

such as family, teachers, and peers. Researchers argue that parental role construction is critical in determining whether and how parents become involved in their children's education. Key factors include:

- Parental aspirations and expectations for their children.
- Parents' sense of efficacy and belief in their ability to support their children.

Weak role construction, marked by low parental confidence or belief in the importance of involvement, is associated with limited engagement, which can adversely affect academic outcomes (Emerson, L. & colleagues, 2012).

### **c) Parenting Style**

Supportive parenting styles foster emotional well-being and academic success during schooling years. Such styles involve setting limits and rules while transparently explaining the reasons behind decisions, thus acknowledging children's autonomy and self-responsibility. Conversely, emotionally distant parenting styles demanding high academic achievement can negatively impact self-esteem and, consequently, academic performance.

Through these principles, the literature demonstrates that effective parental engagement not only enhances academic achievement but also supports broader developmental goals such as autonomy, resilience, and emotional well-being. By actively incorporating strategies like academic socialization and nurturing constructive parental roles and styles, parents can significantly shape their children's educational journeys (Emerson, L. & colleagues, 2012).

## **2.2.Importance of Parental Engagement**

Parental engagement is fundamental to student success, influencing academic performance, social development, motivation, and long-term achievement. Learning extends beyond formal schooling, with children acquiring knowledge through experiences at home and in their communities. Parents serve as essential facilitators in this process, creating continuity between school-based learning and broader life experiences while reinforcing educational values. Research consistently highlights the importance of parental engagement in shaping students' overall development, demonstrating its profound effects across multiple dimensions (Emerson, L. & colleagues, 2012).

### **A) Educational Outcomes**

Parental engagement significantly enhances academic achievement by fostering higher grades, improved test scores, increased enrollment in advanced courses, and overall student progress. Numerous studies confirm that when parents take an active role in their children's learning—both at home and in collaboration with schools—students achieve greater educational success. A meta-analysis of research on family involvement underscores its critical role in student learning, with estimates suggesting that home-based engagement contributes to 60–80% of educational outcomes, while school environments account for 20–40%. This reinforces the notion that meaningful parental engagement goes beyond participation in school events, shaping students' lifelong learning habits (Emerson, L. & colleagues, 2012).

Studies demonstrate that parental engagement in reading and literacy development plays a crucial role in early childhood and elementary education. Research by Anthony and Ogg (2019) highlights that strong school-home communication and parental involvement in reading activities from a young age contribute to long-term literacy skills. Similarly, Englund et al. (2004) show that parental expectations and engagement foster motivation and confidence, helping students navigate complex learning challenges.

Beyond academic support, engaged parents create learning environments at home that stimulate curiosity and intellectual growth. By reinforcing study habits, providing academic guidance, and encouraging structured learning activities, they help their children develop essential cognitive skills that contribute to lifelong success.

### **B) Social and Behavioral Development**

Parental engagement extends beyond academic achievement, positively influencing students' social behaviors, emotional resilience, and adaptation to school environments. Studies indicate that active parental involvement leads to improved school attendance, enhanced social skills, better classroom behavior, and greater adaptability within school settings (Pushor, 2007). These behavioral improvements are particularly valuable during transitions between educational stages, as they provide students with stability and a supportive foundation for success.

Moreover, research shows that parental engagement strengthens students' sense of self-efficacy and personal competence in learning. Engaged parents foster positive attitudes toward education,

helping children develop intrinsic motivation, confidence, and long-term perseverance in academics. Evidence suggests that parental involvement reduces chronic absenteeism and encourages students to build healthy relationships with peers and educators. Studies by Waterford (2018) indicate that students with engaged families exhibit higher levels of motivation, self-discipline, and emotional intelligence, contributing to better interpersonal skills and overall social development.

### **C) Motivation and Learning Engagement**

A supportive home environment is instrumental in fostering academic motivation and engagement. Research shows that students who grow up in enriched learning environments develop a deeper enthusiasm for learning and stronger academic persistence (Mansour & Martin, 2009). Duckworth et al. (2009) observed that children aged 9 to 13 who were raised in intellectually stimulating households exhibited greater intrinsic motivation for academic success.

Parental expectations significantly shape students' motivation. Gonida and Urdan (2007) identify various ways in which students perceive parental influence whether through a desire to make their family proud, a sense of responsibility to succeed academically, or motivation to surpass unfavorable family role models. While these motivations vary, the common factor is the presence of parental engagement in shaping attitudes toward education. Research indicates that when parents expressed confidence in their children's ability to succeed, students develop higher self-esteem, resilience, and determination, leading to improved academic and personal outcomes.

### **D) Economic Impact of Parental Engagement**

Beyond direct educational benefits, parental engagement has notable economic implications. Studies have shown that parental involvement in home-based learning is more impactful on student achievement than school-based activities like attending meetings or volunteering. Houtenville and Conway (2008) analyzed data from over 10,000 eighth-grade students in the United States and found that simple dinnertime conversations where parents engage in discussions about their children's interests, school subjects, and aspirations had a greater effect on academic outcomes than participation in school-related events.

Additionally, parental effort in education in the same country has been found to outweigh the influence of school resources such as per-pupil spending. The economic impact of family

engagement is comparable to an annual increase of over \$1,000 in per-pupil funding, highlighting the substantial value of parental involvement in shaping student success (Houtenville and Conway, 2008). Similarly, Bryk et al. (2010) found that schools with strong family involvement were four times more likely to see progress in students' reading skills over time and ten times more likely to achieve significant gains in mathematics. These findings illustrate the long-term educational and economic advantages of fostering meaningful parental engagement.

### **Long-Term Advantages**

The benefits of parental engagement extend well beyond immediate academic performance, influencing broader life outcomes (Jeynes, 2007). Family involvement contributes to higher graduation rates, greater enrollment in post-secondary education, and the development of lifelong learning habits. Research also indicates that engaged families build leadership skills, foster positive school climates, and strengthen community relationships. Studies show that family-school partnerships help reduce special education placements, enhance student attitudes and behaviors, and create strong foundations for lifelong success (Scott-Jones, 1994; Shields, 1995).

Parental engagement serves as a powerful force for holistic student development, shaping children into motivated, well-rounded individuals equipped with the skills, confidence, and perseverance necessary to succeed in education and beyond. Schools and communities must continue prioritizing family-school collaboration to harness these long-term benefits, ensuring that every student receives the necessary support to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

### **2.3.Barriers to Parental Engagement**

Parental engagement is widely recognized as a critical factor in student success, yet families encounter numerous obstacles that limit their participation in education. These barriers vary across personal, cultural, structural, and systemic dimensions, with families from marginalized or low-income backgrounds disproportionately affected. Understanding these challenges is essential for fostering stronger family-school partnerships and promoting equitable educational outcomes.

#### **2.3.1. Individual and Family-Related Barriers**

Barriers within the family structure often stem from personal circumstances, socioeconomic challenges, and cultural dynamics that shape parental capacity to engage in their children's education.

#### **d) Economic Constraints**

Financial hardship is one of the most significant barriers to parental engagement, particularly among low-income families. Parents working multiple jobs or facing financial instability often struggle to allocate time for academic involvement. Studies show that families experiencing economic hardship tend to prioritize immediate survival needs over educational engagement, leading to decreased participation in school activities and home-based learning support (Chen et al., 2012). Additionally, lower parental literacy levels compound these challenges, as parents with limited formal education may lack confidence in assisting children with homework or navigating school communication channels.

#### **e) Time Limitations**

Parents frequently report a lack of time as a key barrier to engagement. Families with multiple children face additional constraints, as balancing work, household responsibilities, and caregiving leaves little room for school involvement. Many parents prefer to spend quality time at home rather than attending frequent school meetings or events, viewing evenings and weekends as opportunities for rest rather than structured participation (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). The rigidity of school engagement expectations further alienates families whose schedules do not align with traditional school activities.

#### **f) Children's Resistance to Parental Engagement**

Parental engagement is often influenced by children's attitudes toward family participation in education, particularly in secondary school settings. Adolescents may actively resist parental supervision in academic matters, prioritizing social independence over structured learning. Some students feel embarrassed by their parents' involvement in school activities, fearing that such engagement will make them stand out among peers (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007; Wherry, 2009). This reluctance can discourage parents from remaining involved, particularly when students vocalize their opposition or actively avoid engagement opportunities.

#### **g) Educational Gaps**

Parental educational attainment directly affects engagement levels, with higher-educated parents generally demonstrating greater involvement in school affairs and academic support at home

(Englund et al., 2004). Parents with limited education often feel unqualified to assist their children academically, resulting in lower expectations and reduced advocacy for advanced learning opportunities. This gap reinforces the cycle of limited educational exposure, where children of less-educated parents face fewer academic support systems and, ultimately, reduced access to postsecondary opportunities.

#### **h) Lack of Knowledge and Confidence in Academic Support**

Many parents feel ill-equipped to assist their children academically, especially as school curricula become more advanced. Changes in teaching methods and subject complexity create additional challenges, with parents fearing that their efforts might confuse their children rather than support them (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). Additionally, parents often lack knowledge about effective teaching strategies, leading to withdrawal from educational activities due to uncertainty about their role.

#### **i) Fear of Negative Social Consequences**

Parents may worry that excessive involvement in school affairs will negatively impact their children socially. Adolescents, in particular, often prefer minimal parental presence in school settings, fearing peer judgment or teasing (Wherry, 2009). Some parents also believe that over-engagement could make their children overly dependent on them, limiting their ability to develop self-sufficiency and independence.

#### **j) Cultural Norms and Misalignments**

Cultural perceptions about parental roles in education vary across communities. In some cultures, parents defer entirely to teachers, believing their involvement may be seen as intrusive or disrespectful. For example, Hispanic families often hesitate to take leadership roles in school-related matters, perceiving engagement beyond attendance as an act of questioning educators' expertise (Laroque, 2013; Ramirez, 2003; Ortiz-Leger, 2022). Similarly, in communities where traditional gender roles dictate parental responsibilities, mothers may be expected to handle educational matters while fathers remain detached, affecting the overall household approach to engagement.

#### **k) Deeply Rooted Beliefs About Parental Roles**

Traditional views regarding educational responsibility shape parental attitudes toward engagement. Some parents perceive school-based education as solely the duty of teachers and administrators, leading them to adopt passive roles in their children's academic lives (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). These beliefs, often reinforced by generational norms, make it difficult to shift attitudes toward active educational involvement

#### **l) Family Dynamics and Emotional Stress**

Parents facing mental health challenges, large family responsibilities, or unstable household environments frequently struggle to dedicate time to their children's education. Families dealing with stressors such as depression, anxiety, or financial insecurity may exhibit lower involvement, as their focus is directed toward immediate survival rather than academic advocacy (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Additionally, single-parent households or families with multiple children often experience time and energy constraints, making engagement inconsistent or limited.

### **2.3.2. School-Related Barriers**

While schools aim to foster family engagement, institutional structures and policies sometimes inadvertently create obstacles that discourage active parental participation.

#### **m) Language Barriers**

Parents who do not speak the dominant language face significant challenges in communicating with educators, accessing school resources, and participating in school governance. Keller et al. (2021) highlight that Spanish-speaking families often feel excluded from PTA meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and administrative discussions due to the absence of translated materials or bilingual staff. The lack of multilingual outreach leads to misinformation or disengagement, further isolating non-native-speaking parents.

#### **n) Rigid Schedules and Accessibility Issues**

Schools frequently schedule meetings and events during standard work hours, making it difficult for working parents, especially those in low-income or unstable jobs, to attend. Families with irregular work shifts or long commuting times may struggle to engage in school-related activities, limiting their ability to establish strong relationships with educators (Mendez et al., 2009; Ortiz-

Leger, 2022). The absence of flexible engagement opportunities, such as evening meetings or virtual consultations, further restricts parental participation.

**o) Teacher Attitudes and Engagement Perceptions**

Educators play an essential role in fostering parental engagement, yet variability in teacher attitudes affects parent-school collaboration. Some teachers are welcoming and encourage active participation, while others discourage engagement, viewing parental involvement as unnecessary or intrusive (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). Additionally, some educators assume that parents from lower-income backgrounds cannot contribute academically, reinforcing communication disconnects (Caplan, 2000).

**p) Parents' Lack of Comfort and Trust in Schools**

Some parents feel intimidated or unwelcome within school environments, particularly when previous negative experiences shape their perceptions of education (Jones, 2001). Distrust of school administrators and perceived judgment from educators discourage families from participating fully (Griffin & Galassi, 2010).

**q) Mistrust and Perceived Biases**

Families from marginalized communities often experience mistrust toward school institutions, stemming from historical inequities, cultural misunderstandings, and personal experiences of discrimination. Black and Indigenous parents, in particular, report feeling judged, excluded, or dismissed in educational settings, discouraging their participation (Grant & Ray, 2019). This mistrust is exacerbated by perceived teacher bias, where educators may unconsciously stereotype students based on their family backgrounds, affecting parental confidence in school partnerships.

**r) Distance and Accessibility Challenges**

Parents living far from their children's schools face greater logistical challenges in attending events, meetings, and activities. Research shows that transportation difficulties, long commutes, and time constraints reduce engagement levels, particularly among families in urban settings (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007).

**s) Insufficient Training for Educators**

Teachers and administrators often lack comprehensive training in culturally responsive engagement, leading to ineffective outreach strategies. Many schools implement generic engagement programs without addressing the specific needs of diverse family structures (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The absence of targeted professional development for educators creates disconnects in communication, making engagement efforts feel superficial or exclusionary rather than collaborative.

**t) Failure to Clearly Communicate Engagement Opportunities**

Many parents are unaware of how they can participate due to insufficient communication from schools. While some institutions provide annual engagement guidelines, others lack structured outreach, leaving parents uncertain about where their contributions are needed (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). Studies indicate that parents are more likely to engage when personally invited, yet direct invitations to involvement remain rare.

**u) Limited Engagement Opportunities**

Schools vary in the number and types of activities available for parental participation. Some institutions provide a range of volunteer and engagement programs, while others offer minimal opportunities, leaving motivated parents with few avenues to contribute meaningfully (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007).

**2.3.3. Societal and Community-Related Barriers**

Systemic inequities, economic challenges, and broader community dynamics also impact parental engagement, limiting opportunities for meaningful involvement in education.

**v) Systemic Inequities and Discrimination**

Historically marginalized communities face institutional barriers that affect their ability to engage with schools. Mills (2021) and Man chard et al. (2019) note that racism, educational segregation, and systemic biases perpetuate exclusionary practices, making families feel unwelcome or disconnected from school environments. These long-standing inequities discourage parental engagement, particularly among Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic families, who experience underrepresentation in school leadership and parent advisory groups.

#### **w) Economic and Accessibility Challenges**

Families struggling with poverty often face additional logistical obstacles, such as lack of childcare, transportation limitations, and limited access to digital learning resources (Chen et al., 2012). Parents who cannot afford technology for remote school communication or lack access to reliable internet connections may struggle to engage in digital learning platforms. These financial constraints exacerbate educational disparities, making school participation highly challenging for lower-income families. Families experiencing poverty and financial instability often struggle to provide structured academic support, leading to lower participation rates (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Research highlights that children from low-income backgrounds face higher risks of school failure, absenteeism, and emotional distress, further limiting engagement opportunities.

#### **x) Cultural Disconnects and Awareness**

The absence of culturally relevant engagement programs alienates families who might otherwise participate actively in their children's education. Research indicates that Latino families are more likely to engage in school-centered initiatives, while African American families tend to rely on church-based support networks for educational assistance (Latunde, 2017). Schools that fail to integrate culturally responsive outreach efforts risk excluding key parent demographics from engagement opportunities.

#### **y) Underrepresentation of Social Workers and Family Liaisons**

Social workers and engagement specialists serve as critical bridges between families and schools, offering support structures that facilitate collaboration. Many schools, however, lack dedicated personnel to guide families through systemic engagement barriers (Ortiz-Leger, 2022). Without designated family liaisons, parents especially those facing economic or language barriers struggle to navigate the complexities of school systems, further reducing participation.

### **2.4.Cultural Perspectives on Parental Engagement: Focus on Ethiopia:**

Parental engagement in education differs significantly across cultural contexts due to variations in societal norms, education systems, and economic realities. Understanding these differences is essential for designing inclusive strategies that support family-school partnerships in diverse settings. Research highlights how cultural values and systemic structures influence the nature of parental participation in education. In many Western countries, parental engagement is often

characterized by direct involvement in school governance, such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), and active support for children's academic activities at home. These practices are reinforced by education systems that encourage collaboration between families and schools (Epstein, 2002). Additionally, community partnerships play an essential role in parental engagement. Emerson et al. (2012) emphasize the significance of integrating local businesses, faith-based organizations, and community groups into school support networks, particularly for disadvantaged youth. In multicultural societies, schools must acknowledge and respect varying traditions related to parental engagement, ensuring that family-school collaboration is inclusive and culturally responsive.

Ethiopia presents a distinct example of parental engagement within a decentralized education system. The country's 1994 Education and Training Policy introduced reforms aimed at strengthening community participation in schools, promoting democratic governance structures where parental involvement plays a central role. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MoE) has established frameworks guiding family-school collaboration, including the 2002 guideline on educational management and the 2017 School Improvement Program, which define stakeholder responsibilities in fostering school-community partnerships (MoE, 2017). In practice, Ethiopian schools are governed through participatory boards or committees that include parents, teachers, students, and community representatives, aligning with broader efforts to encourage grassroots involvement in educational decision-making (MoE, 2017).

Economic challenges, however, continue to hinder parental engagement in Ethiopia despite policy advancements. Families face significant barriers, such as limited access to educational resources, financial constraints, and social disparities, which affect their ability to participate actively in school governance and home-based learning support. Edo and Perez (2002) note that economic hardship restricts parents' ability to provide essentials like school supplies and clothing, factors that can negatively influence students' academic performance and self-esteem. Furthermore, many parents struggle to balance work obligations with educational engagement, a challenge compounded by limited formal education in rural areas, which may discourage active participation in children's learning.

Cultural expectations regarding parental roles further shape engagement levels in Ethiopia. In many African societies, education is regarded as a collective responsibility, where families,

communities, and local institutions contribute to children's development. Aalen (2006) highlights that Ethiopia's decentralized education policies align with this collectivist cultural framework, encouraging broad parental involvement in schools. Parents are expected to support their children's learning by contributing to school governance structures and providing financial assistance when possible. However, economic limitations frequently restrict their ability to engage fully, reinforcing disparities in educational access (MoE, 2017).

Cross-cultural comparisons offer valuable insights into improving parental engagement strategies in Ethiopia and similar contexts. Emerson et al. (2012) suggest that whole-of-community approaches, integrating support from local organizations and businesses, could strengthen parental engagement in Ethiopian schools. Schools can also adapt to financial realities by implementing policies that mitigate economic barriers, such as subsidizing school supplies and creating flexible engagement opportunities for working parents. Recognizing the unique socio-economic and cultural characteristics of Ethiopian families, educators and policymakers can develop tailored strategies that encourage inclusive participation aligned with local values and priorities.

Parental engagement is deeply influenced by cultural norms, economic conditions, and education systems, with Ethiopia demonstrating the potential for community-driven educational participation despite financial challenges. By drawing lessons from both local experiences and international models, schools can foster stronger family-school partnerships, empowering parents as active contributors to their children's academic success while promoting equitable access to quality education.

## **2.5.Strategies to Enhance Parental Engagement:**

Parental engagement is fundamental to students' academic success and personal development. Recognizing the challenges families face, researchers have proposed inclusive and adaptable strategies that strengthen collaboration between schools, families, and communities. These approaches focus on building trust, empowering parents, leveraging local resources, and tailoring engagement to meet families' unique needs.

### **2.5.1. Building Trust and Strengthening Relationships**

Establishing trust between families and schools is essential for fostering meaningful engagement. Parents are more likely to participate when they feel welcomed, respected, and valued within the

school environment. Grant and Ray (2019) and Emerson et al. (2012) highlight key strategies to build strong relationships:

**Cultural Sensitivity:** Schools must tailor outreach efforts to align with families' cultural backgrounds, ensuring inclusivity and respect for diverse traditions (Emerson et al., 2012).

**Consistent Communication:** Frequent and transparent communication through newsletters, text alerts, and digital platforms reinforces trust and strengthens parent-school connections.

**Respectful Engagement:** Actively listening to parents' concerns and demonstrating empathy fosters collaboration and encourages meaningful participation.

### **2.5.2. Providing Flexible and Accessible Engagement Opportunities**

Time constraints are a major barrier to parental engagement, especially for families with demanding work schedules. Schools can implement flexible participation models to enhance accessibility:

**Wrap-Around Services:** Schools can collaborate with health and social service agencies to integrate family support resources, reducing external stressors that limit engagement (Emerson et al., 2012).

**Virtual Participation:** Hosting online meetings and utilizing digital platforms accommodates parents with scheduling conflicts, expanding engagement opportunities (Mendez et al., 2009).

**Tailored Participation Models:** Offering a mix of structured and informal engagement opportunities allows families to participate at levels that suit their availability.

### **2.5.3. Empowering Parents Through Education and Training**

Equipping parents with knowledge and confidence in their role as educational partners strengthens their ability to support their children effectively. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) and Emerson et al. (2012) recommend targeted capacity-building programs, such as:

**Parental Workshops:** Sessions on child development, academic support techniques, and school navigation empower families with practical tools for engagement.

**Professional Development for Educators:** Training teachers and administrators on family engagement strategies fosters inclusive and supportive school environments (Emerson et al., 2012).

#### **2.5.4. Collaborating with Community Resources**

Strong family-school partnerships extend beyond individual households—community involvement plays a vital role in creating holistic engagement frameworks. Emerson et al. (2012) and Weiss et al. (2010) identify effective collaboration models:

**Whole-of-Community Engagement:** Schools can partner with local businesses, religious institutions, and social organizations to provide mentorship programs and additional resources for families (Weiss et al., 2010).

**Enhancing Social Capital:** Community-based initiatives reinforce positive attitudes toward education and cultivate **collective commitment** to student success.

#### **2.5.5. Incorporating Family Voices in Decision-Making**

Inclusion in school governance enhances parents' sense of ownership and commitment to the academic progress of their children. Emerson et al. (2012) and Ortiz-Leger (2022) highlight ways schools can involve families in policy decisions:

**Whole-School Reform:** Embedding parental engagement into strategic school planning ensures sustainability and institutional commitment (Emerson et al., 2012).

**Feedback Mechanisms:** Surveys, advisory committees, and regular consultations provide parents with structured platforms to express concerns and contribute ideas for school improvement.

#### **2.5.6. Adapting Engagement Strategies Across Developmental Stages**

Effective engagement varies by age group children and adolescents require different forms of parental support as they progress through school. Research suggests:

**Early Childhood and Primary Education:** Young children benefit most from parental presence in school-based activities, such as volunteering, classroom involvement, and event participation (Duckworth et al., 2009; Emerson et al., 2012).

**Adolescents and High School Engagement:** Teenagers require academic guidance at home rather than direct school involvement. Parental encouragement, homework assistance, and conversations about career aspirations are key contributors to adolescent success (Pomerantz et al., 2007; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

**Individualized Approaches:** Engagement strategies should be adjusted based on students' developmental needs, ensuring parents provide relevant support throughout different academic stages.

Parental engagement strategies must be holistic, inclusive, and adaptable to accommodate diverse family structures, cultural backgrounds, and economic circumstances. By building trust, empowering families, integrating community resources, and tailoring engagement efforts, educators can foster strong, sustainable school-family partnerships. Research consistently supports the idea that embedding parental engagement strategies into broader school reforms leads to long-term collaboration and improved educational outcomes (Emerson et al., 2012).

## **2.6. Research Gaps and Future Directions**

While extensive research underscores the importance of parental engagement in education, several gaps persist in the existing literature. These gaps, particularly in underrepresented cultural and economic contexts, highlight the need for further studies to explore new dimensions of parental involvement and address ongoing challenges. Future research should aim to provide inclusive, evidence-based insights that support families, educators, and policymakers in fostering equitable and effective engagement strategies.

One of the most significant gaps is the limited focus on diverse cultural contexts. Much of the research on parental engagement is centered on Western education systems, which often differ from those in low-income and decentralized settings. Countries such as Ethiopia, where community-based approaches and decentralized governance play a crucial role, remain underrepresented in academic discourse. Future studies should investigate non-Western models to examine how cultural values, economic realities, and policy structures influence parental engagement across various global contexts. Additionally, greater attention must be given to indigenous family and community practices, exploring how traditional educational methods contribute to children's learning experiences in settings beyond formal schooling (Epstein, 2002).

Another critical gap is the lack of longitudinal studies examining parental engagement over time. Most existing research provides a static view, capturing engagement at a single point rather than assessing how parental involvement evolves across different educational stages. Conducting longitudinal studies would allow researchers to track changes in parental roles as children transition from primary to secondary and tertiary education. Furthermore, exploring the lifespan impacts of parental engagement including its effects on academic achievement, social adaptation, and emotional resilience would offer deeper insights into the long-term benefits of sustained family involvement in education (Emerson et al., 2012).

Economic barriers remain an insufficiently explored factor in parental engagement research, particularly in low-income communities. Although studies acknowledge the role of financial constraints, there is limited investigation into the specific ways poverty-related challenges affect engagement. Future research should examine how transportation limitations, lack of childcare, and digital inequity restrict parental participation in school-based activities (Chen et al., 2012). Moreover, evaluating the effectiveness of intervention strategies, such as subsidizing school supplies or offering flexible scheduling for working parents, would help identify practical solutions for mitigating economic barriers to engagement (Emerson et al., 2012).

Despite recognition of community-based approaches as valuable engagement strategies, their implementation and outcomes remain underexplored. Schools and communities play a collaborative role in shaping students' educational experiences, yet there is limited research on the impact of whole-of-community models, such as wrap-around services and partnerships with local organizations. Future studies should assess how cross-sector collaboration—including partnerships with businesses, faith-based institutions, and advocacy groups can enhance engagement and provide additional resources for families (Weiss et al., 2010).

The integration of technology in parental engagement is another area requiring further examination. While digital communication tools, apps, and virtual meetings are increasingly used in education, research on their effectiveness in bridging parent-school gaps remains limited. Future studies should explore how digital platforms can facilitate engagement, particularly for underserved communities facing technological barriers. Additionally, addressing equity in technology access is essential—research should assess ways to make digital tools more accessible

and culturally relevant for low-income families and non-English-speaking parents (Mendez et al., 2009).

Finally, policy implementation and alignment with practice remain an unresolved challenge in parental engagement research. Although many education policies emphasize the importance of family involvement, studies often fail to evaluate how these policies translate into practical strategies within schools. Future research should assess the application of parental engagement policies, particularly in decentralized education systems like Ethiopia. Additionally, developing evidence-based frameworks that offer actionable guidelines for schools to foster meaningful engagement would provide crucial support for educators and administrators (Ortiz-Leger, 2022).

Addressing these research gaps is essential to expanding our understanding of parental engagement and improving educational outcomes for students across diverse contexts. Future studies must take a more inclusive, interdisciplinary approach, considering cultural diversity, economic challenges, and innovative engagement strategies. By bridging these gaps, researchers can equip educators, policymakers, and communities with actionable insights to create equitable, effective, and sustainable parental involvement initiatives.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, the researcher explores the methodologies employed to investigate the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city. By utilizing a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, this study aims to uncover and analyze the multifaceted challenges that impede parental engagement. Through surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with a diverse group of parents, teachers and school principals the researcher strives to gather comprehensive data. The integration of statistical and thematic analysis will provide a robust framework for understanding these barriers, thereby contributing to the development of strategies to enhance parental engagement and ultimately improve student outcomes. Ethical considerations and measures to ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings were outlined in this chapter.

#### **1.1. Research Design**

This study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the various factors impacting parental engagement.

#### **1.2. Sources of Data**

In order to obtain the desired data, the following major sources were used.

##### **Primary source of Data**

For this study the primary sources of data included were:

- **Parents:** parents of students enrolled in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city would be surveyed and interviewed.
- **Teachers:** teachers from the selected schools have participated in surveys
- **School Principals:** school principals have been involved through surveys and interviews to share their experiences and challenges in fostering parental engagement. their role in implementing policies that encourage or hinder engagement is crucial for this study.

## Secondary Data Sources

Secondary sources have been utilized to provide additional context and support for the research findings. These sources included:

- **Academic Literature:** relevant research articles, journals, and books on parental engagement in education have been reviewed to understand existing theories, frameworks and findings.
- **Government Reports:** Reports and publications from the Ministry of Education and other governmental bodies related to parental engagement, educational policies, and school performance in Ethiopia.
- **School Records:** Access to school records, such as attendance registers, performance reports, and parent-teacher meeting records, could provide quantitative data on the level of parental involvement.
- **Previous Studies:** Analysis of previous studies conducted on similar topics within Ethiopia or other comparable contexts to draw parallels and identify unique challenges specific to Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city.

By leveraging both primary and secondary data sources, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive and well-rounded analysis of the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools.

## 1.3. Population, Sample size and Sampling Techniques

### 1.3.1. Population of the study

The study has focused on the population associated with government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City. This included a diverse group of individuals whose perspectives and experiences were crucial for understanding the barriers to effective parental engagement. The population was categorized as follows:

**Parents:** As per the data provided, the total student population was 13,639 of whom 5842 were males and 7797 females (NSL Education office, 2025). Thus, parents or guardians of the students form a significant part of the study population. Their engagement in their children's education was the focal point of this research. The study included a representative sample of parents from various socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, and cultural groups to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the barriers they face.

**Teachers:** Teachers from the seven government secondary schools were also a key part of the study population. Their insights and experiences were vital for identifying the challenges and opportunities related to parental engagement. The study included 50 teachers, providing a balanced representation from each school.

**School Principals:** School administrators, including principals and vice-principals, play a pivotal role in shaping and implementing policies that affect parental engagement. The study targeted 14 principals (7 principals and 7 vice-principals) from the selected schools, ensuring their perspectives were examined.

**PSTA Members:** Parent- Student -Teacher Association (PSTA) members were actively involved in fostering parental involvement and supporting school activities. The study included 14 PSTA members, who could provide valuable insights into the existing engagement practices and the barriers they encounter.

By encompassing these diverse groups, the study provided a holistic view of the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City. This comprehensive approach has ensured that the research captured the experiences and perspectives of all key stakeholders involved.

**Table 3.1. Population of the study**

No	Name of Sec. School	Students			Techers			Principals			V. principals		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1	Lebu	1409	1860	3269	103	56	159	1	-	1	3	-	3
2	Lafto	812	907	1719	134	42	176	1	-	1	3	-	3
3	Ginbot 20	1151	1508	2659	100	45	145	1	-	1	3	-	3
4.	Firehiwot	1157	1508	2665	184	33	217	1	-	1	3	-	3
5	Fitawrari Lakadgeh	399	581	980	87	22	109	1	-	1	2	1	3
6	Fana 02	513	891	1404	79	45	124	1	-	1	2	1	3
7	Sedil	401	542	943	70	19	89	1	-	1	3	-	3
	Total	5842	7797	13639	757	262	1019	7	-	7	19	2	21

Source: Nifas Silk Lafto education office, 2025

### 1.3.2. Sample Size

For the purpose of this study, the sample sizes have been carefully calculated to ensure a representative and comprehensive understanding of the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City. The sample sizes were as follows:

**a) Parents:** Based on the student population of 13,639 and using a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%, the calculated sample size was approximately 389 parents. This number ensured a statistically significant representation of the parent population. The formula used to calculate the sample size was based on the Yemane (1967) formula for sample size determination written as:

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

Where:        n is the sample size

                  N is the population size

                  e is the margin of error (usually 5% or 0.05 for social science research)

Although Yemane's formula has faced criticism from scholars due to its simplified approach to sample size determination, it remains widely used in social science research because of its practicality and efficiency. Critics argue that the formula does not account for population variance or complex sampling techniques, which can lead to limitations in precision. However, Yemane's efforts in developing this formula were aimed at providing researchers with a straightforward method to estimate sample sizes when detailed population parameters are unavailable. His approach is particularly useful in large-scale studies where resource constraints make more complex sampling methods impractical. Given the nature of this research, which seeks to analyze parental engagement barriers in a specific educational setting, Yemane's formula offers a reliable and accessible means of determining an appropriate sample size while maintaining statistical significance.

**b) Teachers:** Given the total number of teachers in the selected schools, a sample size of 50 teachers has been deemed appropriate. This size allowed for diverse input while maintaining manageability in terms of data collection and analysis.

**c) School Administrators:** 7 principals and 7 vice-principals have been included in the study.

**d) PSTA Members:** The study included 14 PSTA members across the schools. This allowed for comprehensive insights from those actively involved in school and parental engagement initiatives.

### **1.3.3. Sampling Techniques**

In this study, different sampling techniques were applied based on participant groups. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select the sample of parents and teachers. This method ensures that every teacher and parent have an equal chance of being included in the study, thereby minimizing selection bias (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

A census sampling method was used for principals, ensuring that all 14 principals (2 from each school) were included to capture their perspectives comprehensively. For vice principals, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representative selection across schools. Meanwhile, purposive sampling was used to select 14 PSTA leaders and 2 sub-city supervisors, ensuring targeted inclusion of individuals with direct experience in school engagement initiatives. By integrating these sampling methods, the study aims to gather diverse and well-balanced insights while maintaining methodological rigor.

By employing these sampling techniques, the study aims to gather comprehensive and reliable data from a well-represented sample, providing valuable insights into the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City.

### **1.4.Data Gathering Instruments**

In this study, a variety of data gathering instruments has been utilized to ensure a comprehensive collection of information from different stakeholders involved in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City. These instruments were designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data.

#### **Surveys/Questionnaires**

- a) **Parent Survey:** its main purpose was to gather quantitative data on the barriers to effective parental engagement from the parents' perspective. The content of this survey included both closed and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions covered demographic information (e.g., age, education level, and socioeconomic status), frequency of engagement activities, perceived barriers, and satisfaction with school communication.

Open-ended questions enabled parents to elaborate on specific challenges and provide additional insights.

**b) Teacher Survey:** its purpose was to collect data from teachers regarding their observations and experiences related to parental engagement. The content included questions on teachers' interactions with parents, perceived barriers to parental engagement, and suggestions for improvement. Both closed and open-ended questions were included to capture detailed responses.

**c) Interviews:** interview was held with parents, teachers, and administrators

**Semi-Structured Interviews with Parents:** its purpose was to obtain in-depth qualitative data on the barriers to parental engagement. The content included interview questions that were designed to explore parents' experiences, challenges, and suggestions for enhancing engagement. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, enabling parents to share their thoughts and experiences in detail.

**Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers:** this type of interview was aimed at gathering detailed qualitative data from teachers on their experiences and observations related to parental engagement. Interview questions were focused on teachers' perceptions of parental engagement, specific barriers they have encountered, and their recommendations for improving engagement practices.

**Semi-Structured Interviews with Administrators:** it was helpful to collect qualitative data from school administrators on their roles and experiences in promoting parental engagement. Content: considered in this interview focused on questions covered the administrators' strategies, challenges, and success stories related to parental involvement. The semi-structured format allowed for an in-depth exploration of their perspectives.

### **1.5.Procedures of Data Collection**

To explore the challenges affecting parental engagement in government secondary schools, particularly in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city, this study examined various factors related to individual and family circumstances, school environment, and broader social and community influences. A review of prior research and theoretical frameworks provided valuable insights into effective strategies and the barriers preventing effective parental engagement.

Based on these findings, the study developed questionnaires and interview guides as primary data collection tools. To improve accessibility and ensure clarity, the instruments were carefully revised and translated into Amharic, helping to reduce language-related misunderstandings and enhance the reliability of responses. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted to refine these tools before formal data collection, ensuring they were relevant and effective in capturing meaningful information.

During data collection, students were provided with instructions on how to assist their parents in filling out the questionnaires. To further support the process, parents were given the option to directly contact the researcher via a designated phone number if they encountered difficulties in completing the forms. Teachers and principals were also registered and oriented to encourage honest and accurate responses. With the assistance of research aides, the data collection was conducted systematically to ensure completeness and reliability.

By following these rigorous procedures and validation techniques, the study ensured that the collected data was relevant, precise, and useful in analyzing the barriers to parental engagement in government secondary schools.

### **1.6.Method of Data Analysis**

In this study, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods was employed to ensure a thorough and comprehensive examination of the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City.

#### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

Quantitative data analysis was emphasized on descriptive Statistics. Its purpose was to summarize and describe quantitative data in tables and then analyse that are collected from surveys and questionnaires. Regarding its techniques Measures such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and frequency distributions have been used to present an overview of the data. These descriptive statistics would help in understanding the general trends and patterns related to parental engagement.

#### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Its type of data analysis was: thematic analysis, content analysis, and narrative analysis. The purpose of thematic analysis was to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within qualitative data collected from interviews and focus groups. Its techniques involved coding the

qualitative data and organizing it into meaningful categories. This process included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The purpose of content analysis was to systematically describe the content of qualitative data and to quantify certain aspects of the data. Its techniques involved categorizing verbal or behavioural data to classify, summarize, and tabulate the data. This method has been used to identify the frequency and patterns of specific barriers mentioned by participants.

And the purpose of narrative analysis was to interpret the stories and personal accounts shared by participants during interviews. Its techniques focused on the way participants make sense of their experiences related to parental engagement. This method involved analysing the structure and content of the narratives to uncover underlying meanings and insights.

### **Integration of Data:**

Integration of data took into consideration triangulation and comparative analysis. Triangulation emphasized on integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers to parental engagement. It helped in cross-verifying data from multiple sources and enhances the credibility and validity of the findings. The other type of data analysis considered for this study was comparative analysis. In this analysis results from quantitative and qualitative analyses have been compared and contrasted to identify consistencies and discrepancies. This comparative approach would help in developing a nuanced understanding of the research problem.

By utilizing these diverse methods of data analysis, the study thoroughly investigated the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools in Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City, thereby providing robust insights.

### **1.7.Ethical Considerations**

The researcher took great care to ensure that the study was conducted professionally and ethically. To achieve this, respondents were clearly informed that the research was solely for academic purposes. In the questionnaire's introduction, the researcher emphasized the protection of respondents' confidentiality. Additionally, participation in the study was entirely based on their consent. The researcher also ensured that individual responses were not personalized during data

presentation, analysis, or interpretation. Furthermore, all sources and materials used in the research were properly acknowledged.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

This chapter presents the findings of the study, analyzes the collected data, and interprets the results based on the research objectives. The data is examined using descriptive statistical measures such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and frequency distributions for quantitative data, while qualitative data is explored through narrative analysis to capture deeper insights into parental engagement barriers.

The presentation follows a structured approach, beginning with demographic characteristics of the participants to provide context for the findings. It then systematically examines barriers to parental engagement, categorizing them into individual and family-related barriers, school-related barriers, and societal and community-related barriers.

The quantitative analysis utilizes statistical tools to identify trends, relationships, and variations among participant responses. The qualitative findings are analyzed thematically, incorporating direct quotes from interviews with PSTA leaders, principals, and teachers to provide depth to the discussion. The final section of this chapter synthesizes key insights, linking findings to existing literature and highlighting implications for educational policies and practices.

Through this analysis, the study seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City, paving the way for informed recommendations in subsequent chapters.

#### **4.1. Participants' Response Rate**

To assess the barriers to effective parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City, a total of 373 survey questionnaires were distributed across different respondent groups. These included parents, teachers, and school principals. Out of the 373 questionnaires, 19 surveys sent to parents via their student child were not returned, resulting in 354 completed responses.

This translates to an overall response rate of (93.2%), which is considered highly satisfactory for educational research. The high return rate ensures strong data reliability, providing a comprehensive representation of perspectives from various stakeholders. The missing responses,

primarily from parents, highlight potential barriers in communication or accessibility, which may further reinforce some of the challenges examined in this study.

## 4.2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 4.1: Social and demographic characteristics of respondents.

Variables	N	%
<b>Parents' Characteristics</b>	290	100
Gender of parent		
Male	164	56.6
Female	126	43.4
Age Group		
Below 25	27	9.3
25 – 34	54	18.6
35 – 44	127	43.8
45 & above	82	28.3
Highest Level of Education Attained		
No formal education	48	16.6
Primary education	76	26.2
Secondary education	92	31.7
College Diploma	42	14.5
degree or higher	32	11.0
Employment Status		
Employed full-time	150	51.7
Employed part-time	28	9.7
Self-employed	49	16.9
Unemployed	63	21.7
Number of children currently attending secondary school		
1Child	181	62.4
2 – 3 Children	86	29.7
More than 3 Children	23	7.9
<b>Teachers' Characteristics</b>	<b>N=50</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender		
Male	22	44.0
Female	28	56.0
Age Group		
Below 25	8	16.0
25 – 34	27	54.0
35 – 44	10	20.0
45 & above	5	10.0
Years of Teaching Experience		
1-5	16	32.0
6-10	21	42.0
11-20	7	14.0
>20	6	12.0
<b>Principals' Characteristics</b>	<b>N=14</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender		
Male	12	85.7
Female	2	14.3
Age Group		
Below 25	0	0.0
25 – 34	4	28.6
35 – 44	8	57.1
45 & above	2	14.3
Years of Experience as a Principal		
1-5	8	57.1
6-10	5	35.7
11-15	1	7.1
16 & above	1	7.1

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

#### **4.2.1. Parents' Characteristics**

A total of 290 parents participated in this study, providing insights into the barriers to parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City. The demographic data in Table 4.1 includes gender, age distribution, education level, employment status, and family structure, which are key factors in understanding parental involvement in education.

Gender of parents among the surveyed parents was considered where, 56.6% (n=164) were male, while 43.4% (n=126) were female. This reflects a relatively balanced gender representation in parental engagement discussions.

Age distribution of the parents' ages ranged from below 25 years to 45 years and above, with the largest age group being 35–44 years (43.8%), followed by 45 and above (28.3%). The mean age of parents is approximately 39 years, indicating that most participants are in their mid-adult year that is typically a phase of increased parental responsibility and engagement in children's education.

Parental education levels varied across the sample in that 16.6% (n=48) had no formal education, 26.2% (n=76) completed primary education, 31.7% (n=92) completed secondary education, 14.5% (n=42) held a college diploma, and 11.0% (n=32) attained a degree or higher. Education level plays a crucial role in parental engagement, as higher academic attainment often correlates with increased involvement in children's learning activities.

Employment status significantly affects parental availability for school-related engagement. To this end the result in Table 4.1 indicated that 51.7% (n=150) were employed full-time, 9.7% (n=28) worked part-time, 16.9% (n=49) were self-employed, and 21.7% (n=63) were unemployed. With a high percentage of full-time employment (51.7%), work-related commitments may be a barrier to parental engagement, whereas 21.7% unemployment suggests economic challenges influencing engagement levels.

The study also examined the number of children per parent in secondary school. According to the result in Table 1; 62.4% (n=181) had one child enrolled, 29.7% (n=86) had two to three children enrolled, and 7.9% (n=23) had more than three children enrolled. The mean number of children per parent is approximately 1.68, indicating that most parents in the study have one or two children enrolled in secondary school. This suggests that parental engagement dynamics may differ based

on household size, with larger families potentially facing additional challenges in school participation.

Therefore, the findings regarding to participant parents indicate that age, education level, employment status, and family size play significant roles in shaping parental engagement patterns. These demographic insights serve as a foundation for examining the barriers to effective parental engagement in the following sections of this chapter.

#### **4.2.2. Teachers' Characteristics**

A total of 50 teachers participated in the study, providing insight into their demographics, experience, and perspectives on parental engagement in secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City.

Gender distribution of the sample consists of 44.0% male (n=22) and 56.0% female (n=28) teachers, indicating a slightly higher representation of female educators in the study. Regarding to their Age group, the majority of teachers belong to the 25–34 age group (54.0%), followed by 35–44 years (20.0%), while only 10.0% are 45 years or older. A smaller percentage (16.0%) consists of teachers below 25 years, suggesting a workforce with a mix of early-career and mid-career professionals. Teaching experience ranges from 1–5 years (32.0%), 6–10 years (42.0%), 11–20 years (14.0%), and more than 20 years (12.0%). With a mean teaching experience of approximately 9 years, this distribution highlights the importance of mid-career professionals in shaping parental engagement strategies.

#### **4.2.3. Principals' Characteristics**

A total of 14 principals and vice principals participated in the study, providing insight into leadership perspectives on barriers to parental engagement. The Gender Distribution has indicated that a significant majority of principals are male (85.7%, n=12), with female representation at 14.3% (n=2). This distribution suggests that school leadership remains predominantly male in the study area. The Age Group distribution has showed the 35–44 years category (57.1%) comprises the largest portion, followed by 25–34 years (28.6%). Only 14.3% are 45 years and above, with no respondents below 25 years, indicating that school leadership tends to be held by experienced professionals.

In relation to the years of experience as a principal, most principals have 1–5 years of leadership experience (57.1%), while 35.7% have served for 6–10 years. A smaller proportion (7.1%) has

11–15 years or more than 16 years of experience, showing that most respondents are relatively new in leadership roles.

The demographic findings highlight that most teachers are young (mean age approximately 34 years) and mid-career professionals with an average of 9 years teaching experience. School leadership is predominantly male, with most principals having 1–5 years of experience in their current roles. And these characteristics may influence teacher-parent communication dynamics and policy implementation on parental engagement strategies.

#### 4.2.4. Interviewees’ Demographic Characteristics

Table 4.2: Interviewees Demographic Information (N=20)

Variables	Level	Interviewees		
		Principals	Supervisors	PSTA Leaders
Sex	Male	3	1	7
	Female	1	1	7
Age	20 & below	-	-	-
	21-30	-	-	-
	31-40	1	1	8
	41 & above	3	1	6
Educational Level	Sec. Edu	-	-	9
	Diploma	-	-	4
	BA/BSC/BE D	-	2	1
	MA/MSc	4	-	-
Work Experience	1-5	-	-	-
	6-10	2	-	-
	11-15	1	1	-
	16 & above	1	1	-

Source: Own survey, 2025 G.C

A total of 20 interview participants, including principals, supervisors, and PSTA leaders, were involved in the study. Their demographic information provides insight into the diversity of

leadership perspectives on parental engagement in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City.

Among the interviewees, Male respondents constituted 55.0% (n=11) and Female respondents accounted for 45.0% (n=9). This gender representation suggests a relatively balanced sample, allowing for diverse perspectives on parental engagement barriers and strategies. The majority of interviewees fell within the 31–40 years group (50%), while 41 & above (40%) also made up a significant portion.

### 4.3. Parents’ Engagement in their Children’s Secondary Education

Parental engagement is a key factor in enhancing students' academic success and overall well-being. This section analyzes the level of parental participation in various school-related activities, focusing on attendance at meetings, assistance with schoolwork, communication with teachers, involvement in events, and school governance.

The findings provide insights into the extent and frequency of parental engagement, highlighting areas where improvement is needed. Table 4.3 below is an overview of parental responses to key engagement indicators.

Table 4.3: Frequency and Percentage on parents’ engagement (N=290)

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		5 Always		4 Often		3 someti mes		2 Rarely		1 Never	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	How often do you attend scheduled parent-teacher meetings at your child's school?	45	15.5	52	17.9	96	33.1	53	18.3	44	15.2
2	How frequently do you assist your child with homework, studying or other school-related tasks at home?	18	6.2	27	9.3	32	11.0	81	27.9	132	45.5
3	How frequently do you engage in direct communication with your child's teachers through phone calls, emails, or informal visits?	16	5.5	22	7.6	24	8.3	104	35.9	124	42.8
4	How frequently do you attend or participate in school-organized events, such as workshops, sports days, or parent engagement programs?	85	29.3	92	31.7	59	20.3	24	8.3	30	10.3
5	To what extent do you feel comfortable and included when visiting or interacting with your child's school?	16	5.5	22	7.6	24	8.3	104	35.9	12	4.2
6	How effective is the school's communication regarding events, academic updates, and parental involvement opportunities?	42	14.5	55	19.0	96	33.1	53	18.3	44	15.2
7	How well do teachers collaborate with parents to support students' academic progress and personal development?	11	3.8	18	6.2	33	11.4	95	32.8	13	4.5
8	How actively participate in school governance, advisory meetings, or parent committees where decisions affecting students are made?	3	1.0	5	1.7	8	2.8	121	41.7	153	52.8
		Yes		No							
9	Would you like more opportunities to be involved in your child's school activities?	185	63.8	105	36.2						

Source: Own survey, 2025 G.C

- a) Attendance at Parent-Teacher Meetings:** Parental attendance at scheduled parent-teacher meetings varied in such a way that 33.1% (n=96) reported attending sometimes, while 15.5% (n=45) always attended, and 17.9% (n=52) attended often. However, 18.3% (n=53) rarely attended, and 15.2% (n=44) never participated, indicating a significant portion of parents who are disengaged in direct school discussions about their child's progress.
- b) Assistance with Homework and Studying:** Parental support in school-related tasks at home is low because 45.5% (n=132) never assist their child, and 27.9% (n=81) rarely provide help. Only 6.2% (n=18) always and 9.3% (n=27) often assist with studying, suggesting that barriers such as time constraints, educational background, or lack of confidence in providing academic support may contribute to this trend.
- c) Communication with Teachers:** Effective parent-teacher communication is essential for tracking student progress. However, the findings show 42.8% (n=124) of parents never communicate directly with teachers. 35.9% (n=104) rarely engage in teacher interactions. Only 5.5% (n=16) communicate always, and 7.6% (n=22) often interact with teachers, indicating a significant gap in parent-teacher collaboration.
- d) Participation in School-Organized Events:** In contrast to other engagement indicators, participation in school events, workshops, and parent engagement programs is relatively higher. 29.3% (n=85) always attend, and 31.7% (n=92) attend often. However, 10.3% (n=30) never participate, suggesting that while a substantial portion of parents engage in school activities, others remain disconnected.
- e) Comfort and Inclusion When Visiting Schools:** Parental experiences within school environments reflect varying degrees of inclusion and comfort. 42.8% (n=124) feel uncomfortable visiting the school, and 35.9% (n=104) rarely feel included. This indicates barriers in school environments that may prevent parents from actively engaging, including communication gaps, unwelcoming school atmospheres, or structural challenges.
- f) Effectiveness of School Communication:** Parents rated the school's communication quality regarding events and academic updates. 33.1% (n=96) rated school communication as good, 14.5% (n=42) rated it excellent, while 15.2% (n=44) found it poor, indicating the need for improved outreach strategies to enhance parental awareness.

- g) Collaboration Between Teachers and Parents:** Teacher-parent collaboration for academic support is reported as weak. 45.9% (n=133) rated collaboration poor, and 32.8% (n=95) rated it fair. Only 3.8% (n=11) rated it excellent, suggesting that schools need to strengthen communication and cooperative efforts to improve engagement.
- h) Participation in School Governance:** Parental involvement in decision-making bodies like advisory meetings and parent committees is very low. 52.8% (n=153) never participate, and 41.7% (n=121) rarely engage. Only 1.0% (n=3) always participate, revealing a significant gap in parental influence on school policies and governance.
- i) Interest in More Engagement:** Encouragingly, 63.8% (n=185) of parents expressed interest in more school engagement opportunities, while 36.2% (n=105) felt content with current involvement levels. Understanding the barriers preventing further engagement will be crucial in designing solutions to increase parental participation.

The results in Table 4.3 indicated moderate to low levels of parental engagement, with significant gaps in Direct teacher communication, Assistance with homework, School governance participation, and Parent-teacher collaboration.

However, strong participation in school events and a willingness for increased engagement suggest that strategies to enhance communication, school support systems, and accessibility could improve parental engagement.

#### **4.4. Barriers to parents' engagement in their children's secondary education**

Parental engagement in education is heavily influenced by individual and family-related factors, including time constraints, socioeconomic challenges, educational background, and family responsibilities.

##### **4.4.1. Individual & Family-Related Barriers**

Parental engagement in education is significantly affected by individual and family-related barriers, including time constraints, work schedules, socioeconomic challenges, educational background, and family responsibilities. The findings in Table 4.4 reflect the extent to which parents struggle to allocate time for school-related involvement and how often they engage in discussions about their child's education at home.

Table 4.4: Parents’ Response on Time Constraints and Discussion of School Matters

Item	Yes (%)	No (%)	Daily (%)	A Few Times a Week (%)	Weekly (%)	Occasionally (%)	Rarely (%)
Do you feel you have enough time to participate in your child’s education?	28.3	69.7	-	-	-	-	-
How often do you discuss school matters with your child at home?	-	-	16.6	9.3	11.0	27.9	35.2

Source: Own survey, 2025 G.C

The results indicate that 69.7% (n=202) of parents feel they do not have sufficient time to participate in school-related activities, whereas only 28.3% (n=82) reported having enough time for engagement. The high percentage of parents struggling with time management suggests that schools should consider flexible strategies, such as digital engagement tools or evening sessions, to accommodate working parents.

Parental discussion of school matters is another crucial aspect of engagement. The data reveals that 35.2% (n=102) of parents rarely discuss school-related topics with their child, while 27.9% (n=81) do so occasionally. Only 16.6% (n=48) engage in daily discussions, indicating that regular conversations about academics are relatively low, potentially affecting student motivation and academic accountability. The findings highlight that while parents may acknowledge the importance of engagement, their involvement remains inconsistent, largely due to time constraints and competing responsibilities. To address these barriers, schools should implement accessible communication strategies, including structured parental engagement programs, guidance on effective at-home learning support, and parent-teacher collaboration models that consider working parents' availability. Strengthening parent-school relationships through alternative forms of engagement can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for students.

Table 4.5: Parents' response on the topics they frequently discuss with their child

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	<b>Academic Progress</b>										
1.1.	Homework assignments and study habits	98	33.8	89	30.7	0	0.0	65	22.4	38	13.1
1.2.	Upcoming tests and exams	102	35.2	98	33.8	0	0.0	54	18.6	36	12.4
1.3.	Favorite subjects and strengths	23	7.9	25	8.6	0	0.0	102	35.2	140	48.3
1.4.	Challenges in certain subjects	64	22.1	56	19.3	21	7.2	85	29.3	64	22.1
2	<b>Social Relationships at School</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2.1.	Experiences with teachers and classroom environment	97	33.4	90	31.0	0	0.0	55	19.0	48	16.6
2.2.	Friendships and peer interactions	85	29.3	95	32.8	0	0.0	63	21.7	47	16.2
2.3.	Handling conflicts or social challenges	32	11.0	41	14.1	32	11.0	106	36.6	79	27.2
3	<b>Extracurricular Involvement</b>										
3.1.	Participation in sports and athletics	32	11.0	41	14.1	32	11.0	102	35.2	83	28.6
3.2.	Membership in student clubs and organizations	29	10.0	43	14.8	31	10.7	104	35.9	83	28.6
3.3.	Interest in music, arts, or drama programs	72	24.8	53	18.3	12	4.1	82	28.3	61	21.0
3.4.	Leadership roles (e.g., student government)	29	10.0	36	12.4	25	8.6	105	36.2	95	32.8
4	<b>School Events &amp; Updates</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
4.1.	Parent-teacher meetings and involvement opportunities	46	15.9	52	17.9	23	7.9	75	25.9	94	32.4
4.2.	School projects, competitions, and achievements	52	17.9	59	20.3	18	6.2	76	26.2	85	29.3
4.3.	Field trips and special school activities	71	24.5	73	25.2	16	5.5	70	24.1	60	20.7
5	<b>Emotional Well-being &amp; Personal Challenges</b>										
5.1.	Stress or anxiety related to schoolwork and exams	21	7.2	24	8.3	13	4.5	109	37.6	123	42.4
5.2.	Motivation and enthusiasm for learning	77	26.6	82	28.3	15	5.2	54	18.6	62	21.4
5.3.	Challenges faced in the school environment	86	29.7	95	32.8	0	0.0	50	17.2	59	20.3
6	<b>Future Plans &amp; Aspirations</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
6.1.	College or university goals	68	23.4	75	25.9	0	0.0	85	29.3	62	21.4
6.2.	Career interests and ambitions	58	20.0	69	23.8	0	0.0	76	26.2	87	30.0
6.3.	Skills they want to develop for the future	54	18.6	52	17.9	0	0.0	78	26.9	106	36.6

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

Parental discussions about school-related experiences play a crucial role in fostering academic success, social development, and emotional well-being. Table 4.5 presents the topics parents frequently discuss with their children, covering areas such as academic progress, social relationships, extracurricular involvement, school updates, emotional well-being, and future aspirations.

Regarding academic progress, 64.5% of parents reported discussing homework and study habits with their children, while 35.5% stated that these discussions do not take place regularly. Similarly, 69.0% of parents acknowledged frequently talking about upcoming tests and exams, whereas 31.0% disagreed. Conversations about challenges in specific subjects showed mixed responses, with 41.4% of parents indicating they actively engage in discussions, while 29.3% disagreed and 7.2% remained undecided. However, when asked about discussing favorite subjects and academic strengths, 83.5% of parents disagreed, suggesting that these conversations are rare, which may limit students' ability to explore their interests.

Social relationships at school represent another essential aspect of parental engagement. Experiences with teachers and the classroom environment were commonly discussed, with 64.4% of parents affirming that they engage in such conversations, while 35.6% reported otherwise. Similarly, friendships and peer interactions were discussed by 62.1% of parents, whereas 37.9% disagreed. However, discussions about handling conflicts and social challenges were significantly lower, with 63.8% of parents stating that they do not engage in these conversations. This indicates that parental support for conflict resolution and peer-related issues remains insufficient.

Extracurricular involvement received relatively little attention from parents. Discussions about participation in sports and athletics were reported by only 36.2% of parents, while 63.8% disagreed, highlighting limited parental encouragement for athletic activities. Membership in student clubs and organizations was discussed by 35.5% of parents, whereas 64.5% disagreed, suggesting that parental awareness of club activities is minimal. Furthermore, 69.0% of parents reported not discussing leadership roles such as student government participation, revealing a gap in guidance on student leadership development.

Parental engagement in school events and updates also showed moderate involvement. When asked about discussing parent-teacher meetings and involvement opportunities, 58.3% of parents disagreed, indicating low awareness or interest in participation. Conversations about school projects, competitions, and achievements were discussed by 49.7% of parents, while 50.3%

disagreed, reflecting a need for schools to create more accessible communication channels to inform parents about their children's achievements.

Emotional well-being and personal challenges were among the least discussed topics between parents and students. A striking 80.0% of parents disagreed that they engage in discussions about stress and anxiety related to exams, suggesting that students may not receive adequate emotional support for academic pressures. Motivation for learning was reported as a topic of discussion by 54.9% of parents, showing that some parents actively encourage their children's academic enthusiasm, while 45.1% did not engage in such conversations. Challenges faced within the school environment were discussed by 62.5% of parents, while 37.5% disagreed, revealing that many parents acknowledge obstacles affecting their children's learning experience.

Future plans and aspirations showed inconsistent engagement. Conversations about college or university goals were discussed by 49.3% of parents, while 50.7% disagreed, indicating uncertainty or limited guidance in higher education planning. Career interests and ambitions followed a similar pattern, with 43.8% of parents acknowledging discussions, while 56.2% disagreed. Skills development for the future was another area of limited discussion, with 46.5% of parents reporting engagement while 53.5% disagreed. These findings highlight the need for structured parental guidance in career planning and skill development to ensure students are well-prepared for their future.

Qualitative responses support these findings, further illustrating the challenges parents face in fostering meaningful conversations about their children's education. One parent, identified as "Marta," shared that due to long work hours, she seldom discusses academic matters with her children beyond asking about their homework. Another parent, "Tadesse," expressed frustration, stating that he feels incapable of helping his child with complex school subjects due to his limited educational background. A school administrator, "Mr. Alemu," emphasized that parents are more engaged in administrative decisions than in direct academic support, reinforcing the survey data that shows minimal engagement in school-related topics.

These findings indicate that while parents engage in academic discussions, particularly regarding homework and exams, conversations about broader academic interests remain limited. Social and emotional topics, including stress and handling conflicts, are rarely discussed, suggesting a gap in emotional support from parents. Extracurricular involvement is largely overlooked, restricting students' opportunities to participate in sports, clubs, and leadership activities. Future planning

discussions are inconsistent, showing that parents may lack awareness or structured approaches to guiding students in career development.

To improve parental engagement, schools should implement strategies such as interactive parent workshops, structured communication channels, and parental awareness campaigns to encourage deeper involvement in both academic and emotional support for students. Strengthening parent-school collaboration can create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment that enhances student learning outcomes.

Table 4.6: Parents’ response on Individual & family - related barriers (N=290)

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Work schedule conflicts	104	35.9	77	26.6	12	4.1	53	18.3	44	15.2
2	Lack of information from the school	44	15.2	53	18.3	96	33.1	55	19.0	42	14.5
3	Lack of childcare for younger siblings	55	19.0	54	18.6	11	3.8	72	24.8	98	33.8
4	Feeling unqualified to help	92	31.7	70	24.1	8	2.8	62	21.3	58	20.0
5	Financial constraints	98	33.8	72	24.8	10	3.4	56	19.3	54	18.6
6	Transportation difficulties	42	14.5	55	19.0	96	33.1	53	18.3	44	15.2
7	Parental involvement in student learning activity is teachers’ duty than parents	41	14.1	38	13.1	13	4.5	95	32.8	103	35.5
8	Family size forbidden me to have less involvement in school	43	14.8	45	15.5	8	2.8	81	27.9	113	39.0
9	have no time to follow up and monitor Childs’ learning	104	35.9	82	28.3	12	4.1	48	16.6	44	15.2

Source: Own survey, 2025 G.C

### Individual & Family-Related Barriers to Parental Engagement

Parental engagement in secondary education is influenced by various personal and family-related challenges. The findings in Table 4.6 highlight some of the most significant obstacles parents face when trying to participate in their children's schooling.

### **A. Work Schedule Conflicts**

A significant majority (62.5%) of parents agreed that their work schedules prevent them from being actively involved in their child's education, while 33.5% disagreed. This suggests that time constraints due to employment significantly hinder parental engagement. Supporting this, a mother identified as "Marta" explained, *"I return home late at night, sometimes I don't even see them. I wish I had time to talk about their education."* Her statement underscores how demanding work schedules prevent meaningful interactions between parents and students. Another parent, "Kebede," expressed frustration, stating, *"Even if I want to attend school meetings, I usually have work commitments that prevent me from participating."* This highlights the need for schools to adopt flexible engagement options, such as digital platforms and alternative meeting schedules.

### **B. Lack of Information from the School**

Responses were mixed regarding access to school communication, as 33.5% of parents reported struggling with insufficient updates from the school, while 33.1% remained undecided. A school administrator, "Mr. Alemu," acknowledged the communication gap, stating, *"We assume parents receive information through their children or word of mouth, but in reality, many parents miss important updates."* A parent, "Tadesse," questioned, *"Is it even possible to call a teacher using a mobile phone?"* This uncertainty about communication channels reinforces the need for structured outreach efforts, including multilingual communication, automated reminders, and accessible parent-teacher interactions.

### **C. Lack of Childcare for Younger Siblings**

For parents with multiple children, childcare responsibilities limit school participation. While 37.6% of parents agreed this was a barrier, 58.6% disagreed, indicating mixed experiences. A mother, "Aster," shared her challenge, explaining, *"I have younger children who need constant supervision. Even if I want to engage more in my older child's education, I simply don't have the time."* This suggests that schools could offer child-friendly engagement initiatives, such as on-site childcare support or family-inclusive events, to accommodate parents with multiple responsibilities.

#### **D. Feeling Unqualified to Help**

More than half of parents (55.8%) admitted feeling unequipped to assist their children academically. A father, "Bekele," shared, *"I never finished school, so when my child asks for help with homework, I feel helpless."* Similarly, a mother, "TSION," stated, *"I believe learning should be left to teachers—I can barely keep up with their lessons."* These statements reflect the need for parental training programs that build confidence and provide resources for parents to engage in their child's learning.

#### **E. Financial Constraints**

Economic challenges were highlighted as another barrier, with 58.6% of parents agreeing that financial difficulties restrict their engagement, while 37.9% disagreed. A father, "Mehari," emphasized, *"Sometimes, I have to choose between attending a school meeting or working overtime to provide for my family."* Another parent, "Zelalem," expressed concern about education expenses, saying, *"We are expected to contribute money for school improvements, but we can barely afford basic needs."* These perspectives underscore the importance of financial assistance programs, such as subsidized school transportation, low-cost engagement initiatives, and scholarship opportunities for struggling families.

#### **F. Transportation Difficulties**

A combined 33.5% of parents agreed that transportation barriers affect school participation, while 33.1% remained undecided. A mother, "Mulu," shared, *"The school is too far, and I don't have a reliable means of transport. I only visit when it's absolutely necessary."* These findings suggest that schools should evaluate accessibility issues, explore community-based transport solutions, and ensure easy entry points for parental engagement.

#### **G. Parental Perception of School Engagement as a Teacher's Responsibility**

A total of 27.2% of parents agreed that teaching should be the sole responsibility of educators, whereas 68.3% disagreed. While most parents acknowledge their role in education, a father, "Eyob," expressed a contrasting view, stating, *"Teachers are trained professionals. I don't see how I can help when it's their job to educate."* This belief highlights a need for awareness campaigns that reinforce collaborative learning and encourage parental involvement beyond formal schooling.

## H. Family Size as a Barrier to Engagement

Only 30.3% of parents agreed that having a larger family limits school involvement, while 66.9% disagreed. However, a mother, "Selam," shared that raising multiple children forces her to prioritize essential responsibilities, saying, *"With four kids, my focus is just making sure everyone gets to school—I don't have extra time for parent meetings."* While family size may not be a universally significant barrier, tailored engagement strategies for large families could help ensure balanced participation.

## I. Lack of Time for Monitoring Child's Learning

A major 64.2% of parents agreed they do not have enough time to monitor their child's academic progress. A mother, "Genet," explained, *"I want to help my child, but my time is stretched thin between work and house responsibilities."* This supports earlier findings that work-related time constraints significantly limit parental involvement, underscoring the need for flexible engagement programs, such as evening learning sessions, home-based academic guidance resources, and digital communication platforms.

The results indicate that time constraints due to work schedules are the most dominant barrier, preventing parents from actively engaging in their children's education. Parents also report low confidence in supporting schoolwork, suggesting a need for structured parental guidance programs. Financial and transportation challenges further restrict engagement, emphasizing the importance of school support mechanisms for struggling families. While most parents recognize their role in education, a notable portion still believes engagement is solely a teacher's responsibility, highlighting the need for awareness campaigns on collaborative learning approaches.

Table 4.7: Parents' response on the effect of education level on the ability to help their child academically

Item	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Do you believe your own education level affects your ability to help your child academically?	170	58.6	120	41.4

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C.

Parental education plays a significant role in shaping how effectively parents support their children's learning. The findings in Table 4.7 indicate that:58.6% (n=170) of parents believe that their own education level affects their ability to help their child academically.41.4% (n=120) do not perceive their education level as a barrier to assisting their children.

This result has indicated that majority of parents face challenges due to their education level in that over half of the respondents feel limited in their ability to provide academic support, likely due to low literacy levels, unfamiliarity with modern curricula, or lack of confidence in school subjects. the other is not all parents see education as a limitation. A considerable 41.4% of parents do not view their education as a restriction, suggesting that some compensate through other means (e.g., guidance from teachers, reliance on tutors, or encouraging independent study).

#### 4.4.2. School-Related Barriers

Effective communication between schools and parents is essential for fostering strong parental engagement. One critical factor influencing parents’ involvement in school activities is the clarity and timeliness of school communication regarding parent meetings and events.

Table 4.8: Parents’ Response on School Communication and Welcoming Environment

Items	Rating Scales									
	Always		Often		Some times		Rarely		Never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Do you receive clear and timely communication from your child’s school about parent meetings and events?	42	14.5	55	19.0	96	33.1	53	18.3	44	15.2
How effective is your child's school in keeping parents informed about events?	Very effective		Some what effective		Neutral		Some what ineffective		Very ineffective	
	N	%	N	%	N	N	%	N	%	N
	42	14.5	55	19.0	96	42	14.5	55	19.0	96
How welcoming and inclusive do you find your child's school when parents visit or engage with staff?	Very welcoming		Some what welcoming		Neutral		Some what unwelcoming		Very unwelcoming	
	N	%	N	%	N	N	%	N	%	N
	16	5.5	22	7.6	24	16	5.5	22	7.6	24

Source: Own survey, 2025 G.C

The findings in Table 4.8 indicate inconsistent communication practices within schools. While 33.1% of parents reported receiving timely communication sometimes, a considerable 33.5% stated they rarely or never received updates. Only 14.5% of parents always receive clear and timely communication, while 19.0% receive them often, reflecting disparities in information-sharing methods. This inconsistency may lead to missed engagement opportunities, as parents who are uninformed about meetings and events are less likely to participate.

Furthermore, perceptions of school effectiveness in keeping parents informed align with these findings, with 33.1% of parents remaining neutral, suggesting that communication efforts may be neither highly effective nor entirely ineffective. However, 33.5% of parents rated communication as somewhat or very ineffective, indicating that many feel uninformed or disconnected from school activities. Although 14.5% consider communication highly effective, the mixed responses demonstrate the need for improved, structured, and accessible parent-school communication channels.

Many parents rely on informal communication, including information passed through students or word-of-mouth, which can lead to inaccurate or incomplete updates. A parent, "Marta," expressed concern, stating, *"Most of the time, I hear about meetings after they have already happened. I wish schools had a better system for notifying us."* This suggests that schools should enhance their communication practices, such as digital notifications, automated reminders, and multilingual outreach strategies.

The findings regarding parental perceptions of school inclusiveness indicate that 78.7% of parents feel unwelcome when visiting or engaging with staff. A large portion, 42.8%, rated their school as very unwelcoming, while 35.9% found it somewhat unwelcoming. In contrast, only 5.5% of parents described the school as very welcoming, and 7.6% rated it as somewhat welcoming, suggesting that a majority experience discomfort when interacting with educators.

A mother, "Aster," shared her frustration, stating, *"Whenever I go to the school, I feel like I am intruding rather than being welcomed. It makes me hesitate to participate."* Her statement reflects a lack of inclusive practices, where parents do not feel valued or encouraged to engage. Schools that fail to foster open communication and accessibility risk discouraging parental involvement in decision-making and academic support.

An unwelcoming school environment can serve as a barrier to strong parent-school collaboration, deterring parents from attending meetings, raising concerns, or actively supporting their child's education. A father, "Bekele," explained, *"I have stopped going to meetings because every time I ask a question, I feel dismissed."* This sentiment illustrates how negative school experiences influence parental willingness to participate, reinforcing the need for structured efforts to build trust and inclusivity.

Table 4.9: parents' response on School – Related barriers

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Teachers' attitudes toward parents (e.g. unwelcoming staff attitudes)	98	33.80	72	24.80	10	3.40	56	19.30	54	18.60
2	Limited opportunities for parental participation	92	31.70	70	24.10	8	2.80	62	21.40	58	20.00
3	School policies that do not prioritize parental involvement	55	19.00	54	18.60	11	3.80	72	24.80	98	33.80
4	Ineffective communication practices (e.g., unclear or infrequent updates)	104	35.90	77	26.60	12	4.10	53	18.30	44	15.20
5	Lack of school resources (e.g., no designated parent involvement programs)	44	15.20	53	18.30	96	33.10	55	19.00	42	14.50

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

Parental engagement in secondary education is significantly influenced by institutional factors, including school policies, staff attitudes, communication practices, and available resources. The findings in Table 4.10 highlight the most pressing school-related barriers that hinder effective parental involvement.

### A. Teachers' Attitudes Toward Parents

A total of 58.6% (n=170) of parents strongly agreed or agreed that unwelcoming staff attitudes discourage parental engagement. In contrast, 37.9% (n=110) disagreed, indicating that while some

parents feel comfortable engaging with teachers, a significant portion struggles with staff approachability. This has implication that negative attitudes from educators may reduce parents' confidence in reaching out, leading to limited collaboration between parents and schools.

### **B. Limited Opportunities for Parental Participation**

A majority (55.8%) of parents agreed that their schools provide few opportunities for parental involvement, while 41.4% disagreed, indicating variation in parental experiences across different schools. This implicates that parents may wish to be involved but find few structured opportunities, limiting their participation.

### **C. School Policies That Do Not Prioritize Parental Involvement**

Nearly 37.6% (n=109) of parents agreed that school policies do not encourage parental engagement, while 58.6% (n=170) disagreed, suggesting some schools actively involve parents while others do not. This implicates that rigid policies or unclear guidelines may discourage active parental involvement, causing some parents to feel excluded from school decision-making.

### **D. Ineffective Communication Practices**

A majority (62.5%) of parents agreed that unclear or infrequent updates hinder their participation, while 33.5% (n=97) disagreed, indicating gaps in school communication strategies. This implicates that if parents do not receive timely updates, they miss key school events and feel less engaged in their child's education.

### **E. Lack of School Resources for Parental Involvement**

A significant portion (33.1% neutral) suggests that many parents are uncertain about available resources, while 33.5% consider their schools ineffective in providing structured parent engagement programs. This implicates that without designated programs or funding, schools may lack initiatives that effectively involve parents, leading to disconnection from school activities.

Generally, the results indicate that schools play a major role in shaping parental engagement, with staff attitudes, limited opportunities, ineffective policies, poor communication, and lack of resources creating barriers to stronger parent-school collaboration.

### 4.4.3. Community & Societal Barriers

Table 4.10: Parents’ response on the availability of community-based programs

Item	Yes (%)	No (%)
Are there community-based programs or initiatives designed to help parents engage in their child's education?	25.86	74.14
Would you be willing to participate in community-led programs designed to support parental engagement in schools?	67.24	32.76
Do cultural or societal norms affect your ability to engage with your child’s school?	56.90	43.10

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

Parental engagement is shaped not only by individual and institutional factors but also by broader societal and community influences. As shown in Table 4.10, 74.14% of parents reported that no community-based initiatives currently exist to help support engagement in their child’s education. Only 25.86% confirmed the existence of such programs, revealing a major gap in accessible community support structures. This absence implies that most families must rely solely on schools for engagement efforts, with minimal assistance from external sources. Even in areas where some form of support exists, awareness appears limited, reducing parents’ ability to take advantage of those resources.

Despite this lack of access, 67.24% of parents expressed willingness to participate in community-led engagement programs if such opportunities were available, demonstrating a strong demand for collaborative initiatives that bridge home and school environments. On the other hand, 32.76% indicated reluctance or unwillingness to participate, which may reflect deeper barriers such as scheduling conflicts, limited trust in program effectiveness, or cultural attitudes regarding the role of parents in formal education settings.

Additionally, 56.9% of respondents acknowledged that cultural or societal norms impact their ability to engage, suggesting that traditional views on education, gender roles, or family responsibilities may discourage direct parental involvement in school affairs. A parent named "Meseret" explained, *"In our community, education is seen as the school's responsibility. Parents*

*are supposed to be silent observers, not active partners.*" This sentiment highlights how entrenched cultural expectations can discourage parents from taking initiative, even when willing. However, 43.1% of parents disagreed, showing that a notable portion of families have adapted to evolving educational expectations and embrace shared responsibility for their children’s learning. Together, these results indicate that the lack of structured community support, combined with cultural expectations and limited outreach, creates substantial barriers to meaningful parental engagement. However, the majority’s openness to community programs represents an opportunity. Schools and local stakeholders could collaborate to develop culturally sensitive engagement models—such as parent education sessions, community mentorship networks, or local forums—that align with both parental interest and societal context.

Table 4.11: Parents’ response on the Social and Community – Related barriers

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Limited transportation options (e.g., distance, lack of transport options)	44	15.20	53	18.30	96	33.10	55	19.00	42	14.50
2	Social expectations about parental roles (e.g., traditional gender roles, caregiving responsibilities)	92	31.70	70	24.10	8	2.80	62	21.40	58	20.00
3	Weak community support structures (e.g., lack of parent networks, educational programs)	98	33.80	72	24.80	10	3.40	56	19.30	54	18.60
4	Socioeconomic disparities (e.g., differences in income affecting participation)	55	19.00	54	18.60	11	3.80	72	24.80	98	33.80
5	Attitudes toward education and parenting (e.g., cultural beliefs about parental roles in schooling)	104	35.90	77	26.60	12	4.10	53	18.30	44	15.20

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

Parental engagement in secondary education is often shaped by broader social and community influences, including transportation accessibility, societal expectations, community support

structures, socioeconomic disparities, and cultural beliefs about education. The findings in Table 4.11 outline how these factors impact parental engagement.

### **A. Limited Transportation Options**

Limited transportation options are one such barrier. Approximately 33.5% of parents agreed that challenges related to distance or lack of transport hinder their involvement in school activities. An equal percentage disagreed, while 33.1% remained undecided. These findings suggest that while some families have access to transportation, others—especially those living farther from school or without reliable transit—face logistical obstacles to regular participation. Parents like "Amanuel," who shared, *"My child's school is too far to walk, and public buses don't run at convenient hours,"* reflect how geographic and infrastructure issues can limit engagement opportunities.

### **B. Social Expectations About Parental Roles**

Social expectations about parental roles also affect involvement. A combined 55.8% of parents agreed that traditional norms, such as assigning educational duties primarily to mothers or prioritizing fathers' financial contributions, shape their engagement behavior. Meanwhile, 41.4% disagreed, indicating that perspectives vary among families. These social norms may discourage some parents—especially fathers or working mothers—from active participation, reinforcing a gendered perception of school engagement.

### **C. Weak Community Support Structures**

Weak community support structures further compound these issues. About 58.6% of respondents acknowledged that the absence of parent networks and educational programs limits their ability to engage. Without shared spaces or structured opportunities to exchange experiences, many parents may feel isolated or unsure of how best to support their children's education. For example, "Mulu," a single mother, noted, *"I wish there were local groups where I could meet other parents and learn how they support their children. Right now, I just try my best on my own."*

### **D. Socioeconomic Disparities**

Socioeconomic disparities continue to influence parental engagement as well. While 37.6% of parents agreed that financial constraints affect their involvement, 58.6% disagreed, showing varied experiences across households. Those who struggle economically may be unable to afford transportation, school contributions, or time off work, limiting their opportunities to be physically present at school functions or provide resources at home.

## E. Attitudes Toward Education and Parenting

Attitudes toward education and parenting also emerged as a strong barrier. A notable 62.5% of parents reported that cultural beliefs about parental roles in schooling affect their involvement. In communities where education is seen as the sole responsibility of schools and teachers, parents may withdraw from active participation. One father, "Tadesse," explained, *"In our family, we were taught to respect the teacher and stay out of the way. I didn't think my opinion mattered at school."* These results clearly indicate that enhancing parental engagement requires attention not only to school practices, but also to the cultural, social, and economic contexts in which families live. Addressing these barriers demands coordinated efforts; from schools, communities, and local leaders, to design inclusive policies, community engagement models, and culturally respectful communication that foster a welcoming environment for all parents.

### 4.5. Strategies to Enhance Parental Engagement

Table 4.12: Parents' response on the Strategies that would encourage more parental participation

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Flexible meeting schedules (e.g. evening/weekend sessions to accommodate working parents)	44	15.2	53	18.3	96	33.1	55	19.0	42	14.5
2	Improved digital communication (e.g., SMS, emails, school apps)	92	31.7	70	24.1	8	2.8	62	21.4	58	20.0
3	Providing parental education & workshops (e.g., training on supporting children's learning at home)	98	33.8	72	24.8	10	3.4	56	19.3	54	18.6
4	Addressing socioeconomic challenges (e.g., financial aid, school-sponsored support programs)	102	35.2	79	27.2	10	3.4	54	18.6	56	19.3
5	More interactive engagement opportunities (e.g., parent volunteer programs, mentorship initiatives)	104	35.9	77	26.6	12	4.1	53	18.3	44	15.2
6	Strengthening school-parent communication (e.g., regular updates, accessible contact channels)	55	19.0	54	18.6	11	3.8	72	24.8	98	33.8
7	Encouraging community partnerships (e.g., collaborating with local organizations for parental support)	99	34.1	73	25.2	8	2.8	62	21.4	58	20.0

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

Parental engagement is vital to students' academic and social development, yet numerous barriers—ranging from demanding work schedules to limited community involvement—impede

consistent parental participation. The findings from Table 4.12 highlight several strategies that parents believe would encourage greater involvement in their children's schooling and suggest areas where schools and stakeholders could take purposeful action.

A notable proportion of parents believe that offering flexible meeting schedules could help address time-related constraints. While 33.5% of respondents agreed that evening or weekend sessions would increase their participation, 33.1% remained undecided. This indicates that although some parents see scheduling as a practical barrier, others may be uncertain whether alternative timing alone would overcome their limitations. The data reflect the reality that many parents juggle work and family commitments that make attending school events during regular hours challenging.

Improved digital communication emerged as another promising avenue to strengthen engagement. A combined 55.8% of parents favored methods such as SMS, email, and school mobile apps, whereas 41.4% expressed disagreement. These results suggest that technology can be a valuable tool in helping parents stay informed, especially when physical attendance isn't possible. However, the substantial level of disagreement also implies that digital strategies must be inclusive, user-friendly, and equitably accessible to avoid reinforcing disparities in parental involvement.

There is also considerable support for the provision of parental education and workshops. About 58.6% of parents agreed that structured training programs would help them better support their children's academic efforts at home. This points to a recognition among many parents that they may lack the skills, confidence, or familiarity with modern curricula to assist effectively. Implementing practical, language-appropriate, and culturally relevant workshops could help bridge this gap and empower parents to contribute more meaningfully to their children's learning journeys.

Addressing socioeconomic barriers remains a crucial priority. More than 62% of respondents expressed agreement with strategies like financial assistance or school-sponsored support programs, which would help ease burdens tied to transportation, school material costs, or participation in extracurricular activities. Economic limitations continue to prevent some families from engaging in school life, and targeted interventions could help level the playing field.

The data also show a strong interest in more interactive and hands-on engagement options. About 62.5% of parents supported the idea of parent volunteer programs and mentorship initiatives. This suggests that many parents are eager to be involved in ways that go beyond attending formal meetings. Creating opportunities for parents to contribute their time, skills, or lived experiences can deepen their sense of ownership and partnership with the school.

Although strengthening school-parent communication seems like a logical solution, the findings here are more mixed. Only 37.6% of parents believed improved communication would enhance their engagement, while 58.6% felt that communication efforts are currently insufficient. This disconnect points to a broader issue: schools may be communicating frequently but not always effectively. Clear, consistent, and welcoming communication tailored to parents' needs and preferences is essential to foster better engagement.

Finally, encouraging stronger community partnerships received support from 59.3% of parents, while 41.4% disagreed. Those in favor recognize the potential of local organizations to offer support mechanisms that schools alone may not be able to provide. However, the notable disagreement suggests a need for clearer outreach, visibility, and trust-building with community partners to ensure that collaborative efforts are both effective and inclusive.

Altogether, these findings indicate that improving parental engagement requires a multi-pronged strategy that addresses structural barriers, enhances communication, and creates more meaningful, inclusive roles for parents in education. By responding directly to parents stated needs and preferences, schools can design initiatives that foster stronger school-family partnerships and positively impact student learning outcomes.

#### **4.6. Teachers' and school principal' response on the survey questionnaires**

##### **➤ Teachers' Response on the Survey Questionnaire**

##### **Teachers' Perception of Parental Engagement in Schools**

The responses from teachers provide insight into how frequently parents participate in school activities, assist their children at home, and communicate with educators. This perspective helps identify gaps in engagement and areas where support could be strengthened.

Table 4.13: Teachers' Perception on parents' engagement(N=50)

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		5 Always		4 Often		3 Sometimes		2 Rarely		1 Never	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	How often do parents participate in school meetings, workshops, or engagement programs	45	15.5	52	17.9	96	33.1	53	18.3	44	15.2
2	How actively do parents assist their children with schoolwork at home	18	6.2	27	9.3	32	11.0	81	27.9	132	45.5
3	How frequently do parents communicate with teachers outside scheduled meetings?	16	5.5	22	7.6	24	8.3	104	35.9	124	42.8
		Very High		High		Moderate		Low		Very Low	
4	Rate the overall level of parental engagement at your school	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	12.0	8	16.0	36	72.0

Source: Own survey, 2025 G.C

### A. Parental Participation in School Meetings & Engagement Programs

As it could see from (table 4.13), 33.4% of teachers reported that parents actively engage (Always & Often) in meetings, workshops, or engagement initiatives. 33.5% stated that parents sometimes participate, while 33.5% reported low or no involvement (Rarely & Never). These results indicated that teachers perceive parental engagement in structured school activities as inconsistent, with one-third of parents disengage. This implicates schools may need better outreach, flexible scheduling, or incentives to encourage consistent attendance.

### B. Parental Assistance with Schoolwork at Home

Regarding to parental assistance only 15.5% of teachers observed regular parental engagement in students' homework (Always & Often). 73.4% felt parents rarely or never assist their children academically at home. This could be interpreted as teachers believe that most parents do not actively support their children's learning at home, which may impact student performance. And implicates parental engagement programs should focus on guiding families on effective study techniques and providing resources for home-based learning support.

### C. Communication Between Parents & Teachers

Only 13.1% of teachers reported that parents frequently engage in direct communication (Always & Often). And 78.7% observed that parents rarely or never reach out outside scheduled meetings.

This means teachers perceive a lack of proactive parent-teacher communication, which reduces collaboration on student progress. And implicates strengthening accessible communication channels (e.g., parent-teacher messaging apps, consultation slots) could bridge this gap.

#### D. Overall Rating of Parental Engagement in Schools

The majority, 72.0% of teachers rated parental engagement as Very Low, with only 12.0% viewing it as Moderate. No teachers rated it High or Very High, signaling widespread disengagement. Teachers overwhelmingly see parental engagement as inadequate, likely due to work constraints, awareness issues, or ineffective school-family interactions. Schools need stronger parental engagement initiatives, including structured engagement programs, policy adjustments, and awareness campaigns.

#### E. Teachers' Perception of Barriers Limiting Parental Engagement

Teachers play a key role in observing why parents struggle to engage in their children's education. The responses in Table 4.14 highlight several barriers that limit parental involvement at secondary schools, including awareness gaps, time constraints, financial difficulties, cultural norms, language barriers, and school policies.

Table 4.14: Teachers perception on the main barriers limiting parental engagement

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Lack of parental awareness about school activities	15	30.0	10	20.0	0	0.0	15	30.0	10	20.0
2	Parents' work schedules and time constraints	23	46.0	12	24.0	0	0.0	8	16.0	7	14.0
3	Socioeconomic challenges (e.g., financial limitations)	20	40.0	10	20.0	0	0.0	10	20.0	10	20.0
4	Cultural attitudes toward parent-teacher collaboration	11	22.0	9	18.0	0	0.0	20	40.0	10	20.0
5	Language barriers or literacy issues	8	16.0	7	14.0	0	0.0	18	36.0	17	34.0
6	School policies that do not prioritize parental engagement	25	50.0	15	30.0	0	0	7	14.0	3	6.0

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

Teachers' perspectives on barriers to parental engagement reveal both systemic and communication-related challenges. When asked about parental awareness of school activities, opinions were evenly divided: 50.0% of teachers agreed that parents lack awareness, while the remaining 50.0% disagreed. This stark contrast suggests inconsistencies across school contexts. Some educators feel that parents are uninformed due to weak communication systems, while others believe that information is adequately shared, but parents fail to act on it. This variation underscores the need for schools to adopt stronger, more consistent outreach strategies; including clear digital updates, multilingual messaging, and accessible contact methods, to raise awareness and encourage proactive involvement.

Regarding time constraints, a clear majority (70.0%) of teachers indicated that parents' work schedules significantly hinder engagement. Only 30.0% disagreed with this view, supporting the widely held notion that time-related barriers, especially among working families, are a critical obstacle. Teachers stressed that parents with demanding jobs may be unavailable during traditional school hours, reinforcing the importance of alternative options such as evening meetings, weekend events, or virtual participation platforms to accommodate various schedules.

Socioeconomic challenges also emerged as a significant barrier. About 60.0% of teachers agreed that financial limitations negatively affect parental involvement, whereas 40.0% disagreed. Teachers observed that some parents may struggle to cover transportation costs or provide basic educational materials, limiting their presence and engagement in school life. Schools could respond by implementing low-cost engagement initiatives, targeted financial support programs, or partnerships with local organizations to ease this burden on families.

Cultural attitudes about parental roles in education reflect a more divided view. While 40.0% of teachers agreed that cultural expectations affect engagement, 60.0% did not consider these beliefs a major constraint. Teachers who noted cultural influences described how some families view education as the sole responsibility of schools, which discourages collaborative involvement. This highlights a need for culturally responsive messaging that reinforces the shared responsibility between schools and families and promotes inclusive engagement practices that resonate across diverse backgrounds.

Language and literacy barriers were considered less significant by most educators, with only 30.0% agreeing that such factors hinder engagement, and 70.0% disagreeing. While language difficulties can impact certain groups; especially immigrant or displaced families, many schools

do not perceive this as a widespread concern. Nonetheless, offering translated materials, visual aids, and parent-friendly communication platforms would help ensure equitable access for all families, regardless of linguistic background.

The strongest consensus was found in relation to school policies. A striking 80.0% of teachers agreed that their schools do not have effective policies that encourage parental engagement, while only 20.0% disagreed. This reflects a pressing need for educational institutions to establish structured frameworks that actively involve parents in decision-making, promote regular communication, and recognize family involvement as an integral part of student success. Teachers emphasized that without institutional support, even willing parents may feel excluded or unsure of how to participate.

Collectively, these insights suggest that improving parental engagement requires both administrative reform and relational strategies. Strengthening communication, redesigning schedules, and addressing financial and cultural challenges can create a more inclusive and participatory school culture, benefiting students, families, and educators alike.

#### **F. Teachers’ Perception of School Communication Methods**

Effective communication between schools and parents is essential for maintaining strong parental engagement. The responses from Table 4.15 reveal how teachers perceive the effectiveness of school communication strategies.

Table 4.15: Teachers’ perception on school communication methods

Item	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Do you feel that school communication methods effectively reach parents?	28	56.0	22	44.0

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

More than half of the teachers—specifically 56.0%—believe that school communication methods effectively reach parents, indicating a moderate level of satisfaction with current outreach strategies. However, 44.0% of respondents reported that communication efforts fall short, suggesting a notable divide in perceptions. This discrepancy points to the presence of significant communication gaps within some schools, potentially stemming from inconsistent updates, unclear messaging, or barriers related to language and access. These challenges may lead to situations where parents miss critical information about meetings, events, or student progress. To

address this, schools should consider strengthening and diversifying their communication approaches by offering regular, multilingual updates through both traditional and digital platforms, ensuring that no family is left uninformed.

### G. Teachers’ Perception of Strategies to Encourage Parental Engagement

Teachers provide valuable insights into potential strategies that could enhance parental participation in schools. The findings from Table 4.16 outline their perspectives on communication improvements, training programs, flexible scheduling, community partnerships, and socioeconomic support.

Table 4.16: Teachers’ perception strategies that would encourage more parental engagement

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Strengthening school-parent communication (e.g., newsletters, SMS, apps)	15	30.0	10	20.0	0	0.0	15	30.0	10	20.0
2	Providing training and workshops for parents on supporting students at home	25	50.0	15	30.0	0	0	7	14.0	3	6.0
3	Offering flexible meeting schedules (e.g., evenings, weekends)	11	22.0	9	18.0	0	0.0	20	40.0	10	20.0
4	Encouraging community partnerships to support parental involvement	23	46.0	12	24.0	0	0.0	8	16.0	7	14.0
5	Addressing socioeconomic barriers through targeted assistance programs	20	40.0	10	20.0	0	0.0	10	20.0	10	20.0

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

The findings from Table 4.16 reflect teachers’ perspectives on strategies that could enhance parental engagement, offering valuable insight into which approaches are perceived as most effective and where potential divides in opinion exist.

Half of the teachers (50.0%) agreed that strengthening school-parent communication through tools like newsletters, SMS, and apps could enhance engagement, while the remaining 50.0% disagreed. This split reveals a lack of consensus about whether current communication methods are adequate or need improvement. Some educators believe digital tools already fulfill their role, while others

suggest that more accessible, consistent, and diversified communication approaches are necessary to reach all parents effectively.

A notably high 80.0% of teachers supported the idea of providing training and workshops for parents on how to support their children at home. Only 20.0% disagreed, indicating a strong overall endorsement for parent-focused education initiatives. Teachers view structured workshops as essential in empowering parents with practical skills to assist in areas like homework, academic motivation, and study habits, especially among those who feel unequipped to contribute directly to their child's schooling.

In contrast, when it comes to offering flexible meeting schedules such as evening or weekend sessions, only 40.0% of teachers expressed support. The remaining 60.0% disagreed, suggesting skepticism about the effectiveness of timing adjustments as a standalone solution. This divergence may reflect the belief that flexibility in scheduling will have limited impact without also addressing deeper engagement barriers such as work fatigue, cultural perceptions, or limited parent interest. Teachers may be more inclined toward blended approaches, integrating remote options or asynchronous updates to supplement traditional meetings.

Encouraging community partnerships emerged as a highly favored strategy, with 70.0% of teachers agreeing that collaboration with local organizations could enhance parental involvement. Only 30.0% disagreed. These results suggest that teachers value the potential of external partnerships to provide additional resources, mentorship opportunities, and parent-focused programs that schools alone may not have the capacity to offer. Community involvement is seen as a way to widen access and deepen support for families in diverse contexts.

Addressing socioeconomic barriers was another area where a clear majority—60.0% of teachers—expressed support for targeted assistance programs. This recognition underscores the link between economic stability and parental capacity to engage with school activities. Teachers acknowledged that financial constraints can limit not just physical participation, but also parents' ability to provide learning resources or support extracurricular involvement.

Overall, the strategies most strongly endorsed by teachers were the provision of parent training workshops and the development of school-community partnerships. These were followed by calls

to address financial barriers through targeted support. While opinions were mixed regarding communication methods and scheduling flexibility, the findings collectively highlight the importance of multifaceted, inclusive strategies tailored to parents' diverse circumstances. Schools should aim to create environments where communication is accessible, learning support is provided for families, and practical barriers to engagement are systematically reduced.

➤ **Principals’ Response on the Survey Questionnaire**

**A. Principals’ Perception of Parental Engagement at Schools**

The responses from school principals provide a leadership perspective on how effectively parents engage in school activities. The findings reveal a largely positive view of parental involvement, contrasting with teachers' observations of low engagement.

Table 4.17: principals rating level of parental engagement

	Very High		High		Moderate		Low		Very Low	
Rate the overall level of parental engagement at your school	6	42.9	4	28.57	2	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0

Source: Own Survey, 2027 G.C

Key Findings from table 4.17 has indicated that 42.9% (n=6) of principals rated parental engagement as Very High, 28.57% (n=4) rated it as High, 14.3% (n=2) rated it as Moderate and no principals rated engagement as Low or Very Low. Unlike teachers, school principals generally perceive parental engagement as strong, suggesting that parents may engage more in administrative-led activities (e.g., meetings and events) than in direct student learning support. There may be a disconnect between principals' and teachers' experiences, where principals see formal parental engagement efforts, while teachers struggle with low hands-on involvement in student academic progress.

## B. Principals' Perception of Common Forms of Parental Engagement

The responses from Table 4.18 highlight which forms of parental engagement are most common in schools, according to principals. The results demonstrate that some engagement methods are well-established, while others are entirely absent.

Table 4.18: Principals' perception on form of parental engagement that are most common in schools

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Parent-teacher meetings	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
2	PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) participation	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
3	Parents assisting students with schoolwork at home	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	14	100.0
4	Volunteer programs or community-based parental engagement	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	14	100.0

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

The data presented in Table 4.18 illustrates principals' perceptions of the most common forms of parental engagement within schools. According to the findings, all principals (100%) strongly agreed that parent-teacher meetings are a frequently practiced and well-established engagement strategy. This suggests that schools emphasize structured communication between parents and educators to share updates on student progress, behavior, and academic challenges. The unanimous agreement indicates that these meetings are valued as a central component of the school-family relationship and should be further strengthened by making them more accessible, interactive, and responsive to parents' schedules and needs.

Similarly, full consensus was found regarding participation in Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), with all principals strongly agreeing that PTA engagement is a common form of parental involvement. This reflects a system in which parents are involved in school governance and decision-making processes, participating in areas such as budgeting, extracurricular programs, and school improvement initiatives. These results affirm that PTA structures offer a formal mechanism

for parental voice and collaboration, although their reach may still be limited to administrative rather than academic or social involvement.

In stark contrast, none of the principals believed that parents actively assist students with schoolwork at home. All respondents—100%—strongly disagreed that this form of academic support is common, pointing to a significant gap in parental involvement where it arguably matters most: reinforcing learning outside the classroom. This insight signals a need for schools to implement parental support initiatives, such as workshops and training sessions, that empower families to take a more active role in their children's academic routines, particularly in homework monitoring and study habits.

A similar pattern of disengagement emerged with respect to community-based or volunteer engagement. Principals unanimously disagreed that such practices exist, suggesting that parental involvement is largely confined to formal events like meetings rather than ongoing, hands-on contributions to school life. This lack of volunteerism reveals an opportunity for schools to establish structured programs—such as parent-led tutoring, mentorship initiatives, or cultural events to create more meaningful and diverse engagement pathways.

In summary, principals perceive parental engagement as being almost entirely limited to formal, administrative spaces such as PTAs and scheduled meetings. There is an absence of active academic support at home and virtually no evidence of community-driven participation within the school environment. These gaps highlight the importance of creating more inclusive and practical engagement strategies, including enhancing at-home support through targeted resources, establishing volunteer opportunities, and broadening participation beyond the traditional frameworks of school governance.

### **C. Principals' Perception of the Impact of Parental Engagement**

The responses in Table 4.19 indicate a unanimous agreement among school principals regarding the positive impact of parental engagement on student academic success.

Table 4.19: Principals’ perception on the impact of parental engagement

Item	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Do you believe parental engagement improves student academic success?	14	100	0	0

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

Key findings from Table 4.19 show that 100% of principals believe parental involvement improves student academic achievement. No respondents disagreed, highlighting a strong consensus among school leaders. This suggests that school principals overwhelmingly recognize the critical role that active parental engagement plays in supporting student learning, motivation, and overall performance.

Their response reinforces the importance of school-family partnerships, where involved parents contribute to better study habits, classroom participation, and student accountability. Although administrators recognize the value of engagement, their schools may still face challenges in ensuring widespread and consistent parental participation.

Therefore, schools should promote frequent interactions between educators and parents to enhance academic support at home. Encouraging parent training and workshops that educate caregivers on effective learning techniques could help them provide stronger academic guidance for their children. In addition, schools should introduce volunteer programs, mentorship opportunities, and flexible participation structures to further increase parental involvement in educational activities.

**D. Principals’ Perception of Barriers Preventing Parental Engagement**

School principals provide a leadership perspective on challenges that hinder parental involvement in education. The responses in Table 4.20 highlight several key barriers, including lack of awareness, work constraints, financial hardships, cultural attitudes, and school policies.

Table 4.20: Principals’ perception on the main barriers preventing parental engagement

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Lack of parental awareness about school activities	5	35.7	3	21.4	0	0.0	4	28.6	2	14.3
2	Parents’ work schedules and time constraints	8	57.1	3	21.4	0	0.0	2	14.3	1	7.1
3	Socioeconomic challenges (e.g., financial hardships)	6	42.9	3	21.4	0	0.0	3	21.4	2	14.3
4	Cultural attitudes that limit parent-school collaboration	4	28.6	3	21.4	0	0.0	4	28.6	3	21.4
5	Ineffective school communication strategies	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	42.9	8	57.1
6	School policies that do not prioritize parental engagement	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	42.9	8	57.1

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

According to principals' perceptions, several key factors influence parental engagement, with responses indicating both alignment and divergence from the views expressed by teachers. When asked about parental awareness of school activities, 57.1% of principals agreed that parents lack awareness, while 42.9% disagreed. This contrast suggests that communication effectiveness varies among schools, with some institutions successfully reaching families while others may not. The inconsistency points to the need for standardized, accessible, and multilingual communication strategies that ensure all families are informed about school events and engagement opportunities.

Principals widely recognized parents' work schedules as a major barrier to engagement. A substantial 78.5% agreed that parents' time constraints due to job commitments limit their involvement in school affairs, while only 21.4% disagreed. These findings highlight the need for schools to adopt flexible engagement models such as evening or weekend meetings, virtual updates, and asynchronous options that accommodate the demands of working parents.

Financial hardship was also identified as a key challenge. According to 64.3% of principals, socioeconomic difficulties reduce parental involvement, whereas 35.7% did not see it as a

significant obstacle. This variation suggests that the impact of economic conditions may differ across communities. Nonetheless, financial strain can prevent parents from participating in school events, affording necessary learning materials, or supporting extracurricular activities. To address this, schools can implement financial assistance initiatives such as subsidized transport, fee waivers, or resource-sharing programs to reduce the burden on low-income families.

Cultural attitudes presented a more evenly split perspective. Half of the principals agreed that societal norms and beliefs influence parental engagement, while the other half disagreed. This division reflects the complexity of cultural expectations regarding education, where in some communities, traditional roles may discourage parents; particularly fathers, from active participation. Schools may need to address this barrier through inclusive policies and awareness efforts that emphasize the benefits of collaborative involvement in a way that respects local cultural contexts.

Interestingly, 100% of principals disagreed with the idea that school communication strategies are ineffective. This stands in contrast to earlier findings from teachers, who reported concerns about communication gaps. The discrepancy indicates a potential disconnect between school leadership and classroom staff regarding how effectively information reaches families. To reconcile this difference, schools should regularly gather feedback from both parents and teachers to ensure communication methods meet the needs of the entire school community.

Lastly, principals unanimously rejected the notion that school policies hinder parental engagement. While this reflects a belief that supportive frameworks exist, it contrasts with teacher perspectives that suggest policy-level barriers remain. The discrepancy underscores the importance of not only having policies in place but also evaluating their implementation and real-world impact. Schools should actively involve parents and teachers in reviewing engagement frameworks to ensure they foster genuine collaboration and accessibility.

### E. Principals’ Perception of the Most Effective Strategies for Parental Engagement

Table 4.20: Principals’ perception on the strategies have been most effective in encouraging parental engagement in schools

No	Items	Rating Scales									
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Flexible meeting schedules (e.g., evening/weekend sessions)	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
2	Improved digital communication (e.g., SMS, emails, apps)	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0
3	School-led parental education workshops	4	28.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	35.7	5	35.7
4	Community-based partnerships to support parental engagement	6	42.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	28.6	4	28.6
5	Financial support programs (e.g., subsidies, assistance for struggling families)	10	71.4	4	28.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Source: Own Survey, 2025 G.C

The responses in Table 4.20 offer valuable insights into which strategies school principals view as most successful in promoting parental involvement. The findings underscore the importance of flexible scheduling, digital communication, financial support, and community-based efforts as critical drivers of engagement.

All principals (100%) strongly agreed that offering flexible meeting times, such as evening or weekend sessions, is highly effective in encouraging parental participation. This consensus indicates that families are more likely to attend school functions when schedules accommodate their daily responsibilities. To build on this success, schools should continue to offer such flexible options and consider integrating hybrid or virtual meetings to further increase accessibility for parents with conflicting commitments.

Digital communication tools such as SMS, emails, and school applications were also widely endorsed by principals. A combined 100% either strongly agreed (85.7%) or agreed (14.3%) that these tools improve parental engagement. The lack of disagreement underscores how essential technology has become in fostering parent-school connections. Principals emphasized the need to enhance these tools even further, suggesting that regular updates, automated reminders, and two-way messaging systems can create more dynamic and responsive communication environments.

In contrast, school-led parental education workshops received considerably less support. Only 28.6% of principals strongly agreed that such programs were effective, while the remaining 71.4% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that many current workshops may not be meeting parents' needs or expectations. Principals highlighted the importance of reevaluating workshop formats to ensure they are interactive, relevant, and inclusive of various literacy levels and learning styles.

Community-based partnerships were another area where responses were divided. While 42.9% strongly agreed that collaboration with external organizations boosts parental engagement, 57.1% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. This result implies that although the potential benefits of community involvement are recognized, execution may be inconsistent or limited in practice. To realize these benefits, schools are encouraged to strengthen partnerships with NGOs, local businesses, and civic organizations, creating opportunities for mentorship, family support services, and co-hosted school events.

Finally, financial support programs emerged as one of the most highly rated strategies. All principals supported this measure, with 71.4% strongly agreeing and 28.6% agreeing. This unanimity emphasizes that addressing economic barriers is essential to inclusive parental engagement. Principals pointed to the success of initiatives such as transportation assistance, school supply subsidies, and participation-based event fee reductions as ways to ensure that families from all income levels can remain actively involved in their child's education.

In sum, principals favor practical, inclusive, and resource-sensitive strategies to foster stronger school-family relationships. These findings highlight the need for adaptable scheduling, robust

communication systems, meaningful community alliances, and financial equity in designing effective parental engagement initiatives.

#### **4.7. Discussion of Results**

The findings from this study provide valuable insight into parental engagement in secondary schools, as perceived by teachers, principals, and parents themselves. While administrators view engagement as strong, teachers express concerns about limited parental involvement in student learning. Parents, on the other hand, demonstrate willingness to engage but cite work schedules, socioeconomic constraints, and communication barriers as limiting factors. These findings align with, but also contrast in some cases, with previous research on parental engagement in educational settings.

##### **4.7.1. Perceptions of Parental Engagement: Varying Perspectives**

Principals overwhelmingly rated parental engagement as high, focusing primarily on attendance at meetings and PSTA activities. Their perspective suggests that parent participation in formal school governance is strong. In contrast, teachers rated parental involvement as low, emphasizing poor communication, infrequent support with homework, and minimal direct interactions beyond scheduled meetings.

This disconnects mirrors findings from Deslandes & Bertrand (2005), who noted that school administrators often overestimate parental engagement compared to teachers' classroom observations. Similarly, Epstein (2011) argues that effective parental involvement must extend beyond attendance at school-led meetings to include consistent communication and active participation in learning at home.

##### **4.7.2. Barriers to Parental Engagement: Work, Socioeconomic, and Cultural Constraints**

Across all three groups; teachers, principals, and parents, several common barriers to parental engagement emerged. Time constraints due to work obligations were consistently cited by both teachers and parents, highlighting how demanding schedules interfere with families' ability to participate in school-related activities. Socioeconomic challenges were also recognized as limiting engagement, particularly by teachers and principals, suggesting that financial hardships impact families' capacity to support or attend school functions. Additionally, cultural norms were

identified; especially by teachers, as factors that discourage collaboration between schools and parents, likely reflecting traditional beliefs about educational roles and responsibilities.

These findings are consistent with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model, which emphasizes family circumstances, time limitations, and socioeconomic status as key predictors of parental involvement. However, in contrast to previous research where communication barriers were frequently highlighted as a major obstacle, principals in this study largely disagreed that communication strategies were ineffective. Instead, they expressed confidence in their existing outreach efforts, indicating a disconnect between perceptions of school leaders and those of other stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of communication.

#### **4.7.3. Effective Strategies for Increasing Engagement: What Works?**

Flexible meeting schedules, digital communication, and financial support programs were consistently identified as effective strategies for fostering parental engagement, receiving strong support from principals, teachers, and parents alike. Teachers particularly favored digital outreach methods, such as SMS and email updates, acknowledging that technology enhances accessibility and allows for more immediate communication with families. Principals, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of financial support programs—including transport subsidies and fee waivers—as essential tools for increasing participation among low-income households. From the parents' perspective, flexible scheduling was especially beneficial, as it allowed working families to attend school meetings without disrupting their professional responsibilities.

These insights align with the findings of Goodall and Vorhaus (2011), who argued that both flexible scheduling and digital engagement are powerful tools for strengthening the relationship between schools and families. However, in contrast to earlier research by Bauch and Goldring (1995), which highlighted the value of community partnerships in promoting family engagement, principals in the current study expressed more divided views on the effectiveness of such external collaborations. This suggests that while schools recognize the potential benefits of community involvement, the implementation and perceived success of these partnerships may vary widely depending on context and available resources.

#### **4.7.4. Bridging the Gap: Aligning Perceptions and Improving Engagement**

The disconnect between teachers and principals regarding how engagement is measured and perceived suggests a need for better alignment in policy and practice. Teachers advocate for more classroom-focused participation, ensuring parents not only attend meetings but actively support learning at home. Principals emphasize formal participation, seeing engagement through a structural lens rather than an academic support framework. Parents express interest but need clearer, more accessible pathways to engagement, including economic support, flexible scheduling, and simplified communication.

These findings echo research made by Fan & Chen (2001), which highlights that parental involvement is most effective when it combines formal school participation with everyday academic support at home. Schools must align their engagement strategies across stakeholders, ensuring that participation is measured not only by meeting attendance but also by tangible impacts on student learning.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1. Summary of Findings**

This study examined parental engagement in secondary education by assessing the perspectives of teachers, principals, and parents. The findings reveal divergent views on the extent and effectiveness of parental involvement, highlighting structural, socioeconomic, and cultural barriers that impact engagement.

##### **5.1.1. Perceptions of Parental Engagement**

This study examined parental engagement in secondary education by assessing the perspectives of teachers, principals, and parents. The findings reveal divergent views on the extent and effectiveness of parental involvement, highlighting structural, socioeconomic, and cultural barriers that impact engagement.

Principals generally perceive parental engagement as high, with 42.9% rating it as "Very High" and 28.57% rating it as "High." Their assessment is primarily based on parental participation in scheduled meetings and involvement in Parent-Student-Teacher Association (PSTA) activities. In contrast, teachers perceive parental engagement to be much lower; 72% of them rated it as "Very Low." Their evaluation is based on observed limitations in communication, minimal academic support from parents, and low involvement in day-to-day student learning activities.

Despite these differing institutional perspectives, parents themselves demonstrate a clear willingness to engage. Approximately 67.24% expressed interest in participating in community-led programs aimed at supporting school involvement. However, their engagement is restricted by practical barriers, with 46% citing time constraints due to work schedules, 40% pointing to financial hardships, and 22% identifying cultural factors as limiting their involvement.

##### **5.1.2. Barriers Preventing Parental Engagement**

The study identified several prominent barriers to parental engagement, as reported across responses from teachers and principals. One major issue is the lack of parental awareness regarding school activities. Half of the teachers surveyed believe that parents are not adequately informed about events and opportunities, which reduces their likelihood of participating. This

lack of awareness may be the result of ineffective outreach or inconsistent communication practices.

Time constraints were another widely acknowledged obstacle. According to 78.5% of principals, demanding work schedules significantly hinder parents' ability to engage in school-related matters. These schedules often limit availability for attending meetings, monitoring academic progress, or volunteering in school initiatives.

Socioeconomic challenges also emerged as a critical concern. A notable 80% of teachers and 64.3% of principals agreed that financial hardships prevent families from fully engaging. These difficulties may include limited access to transportation, inability to afford participation-related costs, and lack of resources to support academic activities at home.

Although 56.9% of teachers viewed school communication methods as effective, 43.1% identified deficiencies in the accessibility and clarity of messages sent to parents. This indicates a pressing need for improved communication strategies that cater to families with varied literacy levels, language preferences, and technological access.

Cultural attitudes were cited as an additional barrier. Half of the principals surveyed reported that traditional norms and community expectations discourage direct parent-school collaboration. These attitudes may stem from beliefs that education is the sole responsibility of teachers, making it critical for schools to implement awareness campaigns that emphasize the value of parent involvement in student success.

#### **5.1.4. Strategies That Encourage Parental Engagement**

The study also highlighted several strategies that are considered effective in strengthening parental involvement. Flexible scheduling was unanimously supported by principals, with 100% strongly agreeing that holding meetings during evenings or weekends significantly improves participation rates. This approach accommodates the busy schedules of working parents and reduces barriers related to time conflicts.

Digital communication methods were also viewed favorably. A combined 85.7% of principals and 55.8% of teachers reported success using tools such as SMS alerts, emails, and mobile

applications to keep parents informed. These platforms allow for timely updates and easier access to information, especially for parents who are unable to attend meetings in person.

Financial assistance programs received strong endorsement as well. Specifically, 71.4% of principals strongly supported the use of school-sponsored initiatives—such as transport subsidies and fee waivers—to help low-income families engage more fully in school activities. Such programs are seen as essential in ensuring that all families, regardless of economic background, can participate in their child’s education.

Finally, community partnerships received mixed reactions. While 42.9% of principals acknowledged the effectiveness of collaborations with external organizations, 57.2% believed these initiatives require more effective planning and execution. This suggests that although schools recognize the value of community involvement, many are still working to establish and maintain productive partnerships with local stakeholders.

Overall, the findings point to the importance of bridging the gap between leadership expectations and teacher observations, ensuring that parental engagement extends beyond formal meetings to include consistent academic support and meaningful participation in the educational experience.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

Based on the findings of this study, three key conclusions can be drawn. First, there is a clear gap in perception that requires alignment. While school principals tend to view parental engagement as high—largely due to participation in formal meetings and administrative involvement—teachers report low levels of parental support in daily academic tasks, highlighting the need for more interactive and learning-focused initiatives.

Second, the barriers to engagement must be actively addressed. Time constraints, financial hardships, and cultural factors continue to pose significant obstacles for parents seeking to engage with their children's education. Addressing these challenges will require targeted interventions, including flexible scheduling of meetings and events, the provision of financial assistance, and structured parent training programs aimed at building confidence and skills for academic support.

Third, while several effective strategies for engagement already exist, they require refinement for broader impact. Digital communication tools and financial support programs have proven successful, yet community-based initiatives and parent education workshops remain

underdeveloped or inconsistently implemented. Improving the design and delivery of these programs could strengthen the overall quality and sustainability of parental involvement.

These conclusions are consistent with existing literature that emphasizes the critical role of parental engagement in student outcomes, as discussed in the work of Epstein (2011) and Fan and Chen (2001). At the same time, the study also highlights context-specific challenges related to local implementation, particularly the need for better policy alignment and enhanced informal participation among families.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

#### **5.3.1. Recommendations for Schools**

Schools should enhance communication methods by expanding multilingual outreach and providing consistent updates through SMS, email, and printed notices to ensure accessibility for all families. Strengthening teacher-parent collaboration is also essential; this can be achieved by introducing structured initiatives such as home-based learning workshops and parent mentoring programs that go beyond formal meetings. Additionally, schools should work to align leadership and classroom engagement strategies by conducting joint assessments that address any discrepancies between administrative expectations and teachers' day-to-day experiences with parental involvement.

#### **5.3.2. Recommendations for Parents**

Parents are encouraged to take initiative in understanding the various opportunities available for engaging with their child's education. Actively seeking out school resources and participating in available programs can strengthen the home-school connection. Moreover, parents should advocate for flexibility by working with schools to implement hybrid meeting formats and maintain accessible communication channels that accommodate diverse schedules and needs.

#### **5.3.3 Recommendations for Policy Makers**

Policy makers should expand support for working parents by introducing or enhancing parental leave policies, enabling greater involvement in school activities. In addition, education subsidies and financial assistance programs should be broadened to ensure that families facing economic hardship are not excluded from opportunities to participate in their child's learning environment.

## **Final Thought**

True parental engagement goes beyond meeting attendance or formal interaction. It flourishes through continuous school-family collaboration that ensures students receive consistent academic support both inside and outside the classroom. By bridging perception gaps, refining outreach strategies, and addressing barriers, schools can foster a more inclusive and effective educational environment for all families.

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15. Would you like more opportunities to be involved in your child's school activities?

- a) Yes ( )                      b) No( )

If **no**, please specify the reasons that prevent you from engaging more in school activities

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**Section 3: Individual & Family-Related Barriers**

16. Do you feel you have enough time to participate in your child's education?

- a) Yes ( )                      b)No( )

*If not*, what factors contribute to this? \_\_\_\_\_

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17. What are the main challenges preventing your engagement in school activities?

(rank from 1-5)

	Items	Rating Scales				
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	Work schedule conflicts					
2	Lack of information from the school					
3	Feeling unqualified to help					
4	Financial constraints					
5	Lack of childcare for younger siblings					
6	Transportation difficulties					

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

18. How often do you discuss school matters with your child at home?

- 1)Rarely( ) 2)Occasionally( ) 3)Weekly( ) 4) A few times a week( ) 5)Daily ( )

19. Which topics do you frequently discuss with your child regarding their school experience?

**(Instructions:** Please select the topics that you **frequently discuss** with your child by ranking 1-5.)

No	Items	Rating Scales				
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	<b>Academic Progress</b>					
1.1	Homework assignments and study habits					
1.2	Upcoming tests and exams					
1.3	Favorite subjects and strengths					
1.4	Challenges in certain subjects					
2	<b>Social Relationships at School</b>					
2.1	Experiences with teachers and classroom environment					
2.2	Friendships and peer interactions					
2.3	Handling conflicts or social challenges					
3	<b>Extracurricular Involvement</b>					
3.1	Participation in sports and athletics					
3.2	Membership in student clubs and organizations					
3.3	Interest in music, arts, or drama programs					
3.4	Leadership roles (e.g., student government)					
4	<b>School Events &amp; Updates</b>					
4.1	Parent-teacher meetings and involvement opportunities					
4.2	School projects, competitions, and achievements					

4.3 .	Field trips and special school activities					
5	<b>Emotional Well-being &amp; Personal Challenges</b>					
5.1 .	Stress or anxiety related to schoolwork and exams					
5.2 .	Motivation and enthusiasm for learning					
5.3 .	Challenges faced in the school environment					
6	<b>Future Plans &amp; Aspirations</b>					
6.1 .	College or university goals					
6.2 .	Career interests and ambitions					
6.3 .	Skills they want to develop for the future					

*Are there any other topics related to school that you frequently discuss with your child? (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_*

**18.** Do you believe your own education level affects your ability to help your child academically?

- a)Yes                      b)No

#### **Section 4: School-Related Barriers**

**19.** Do you receive clear and timely communication from your child's school about parent meetings and events?

- 1) Never ( )      2) Rarely( )      3) Sometimes ( )      4) Often      5) Always( )

**20.** How effective is your child's school in keeping parents informed about events?

- 1)Very ineffective ( )      2) Somewhat ineffective ( )      3) Neutral  
4)Somewhat effective ( )      5) Very effective ( )

**21.** How welcoming and inclusive do you find your child's school when parents visit or engage with staff?

- 1)Very unwelcoming ( )      2) Somewhat unwelcoming ( )      3) Neutral ( )

4)Somewhat welcoming ( ) 5) Very welcoming ( )

22. Please rank the following **school-related challenges** based on how much they prevent you from actively participating in your child's education. ( Rank from 1-5)

	Items	Rating Scales				
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	Teachers’ attitudes toward parents (e.g. unwelcoming staff attitudes)					
2	Limited opportunities for parental participation					
3	School policies that do not prioritize parental involvement					
4	Weak community support structures (e.g., lack of parent networks, educational programs)					
5	Ineffective communication practices (e.g., unclear or infrequent updates)					
6	Lack of school resources (e.g., no designated parent involvement programs)					

If there are additional barriers preventing your participation, please specify them below.

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**Section 5: Community & Societal Barriers**

23. Are there community-based programs or initiatives designed to help parents engage in their child's education?

- a)Yes                      b)No

If yes, please specify which types of support exist in your community: \_\_\_\_\_

**24.** Would you be willing to participate in community-led programs designed to support parental engagement in schools?

- a) Yes                      b) No

If no, please specify the factors preventing your participation in community-led parental engagement programs. \_\_\_\_\_

**25.** Do cultural or societal norms affect your ability to engage with your child’s school?

- d) Yes,                      b) No

**26.** Which external factors present challenges to parental engagement in your child’s education?

	Items	Rating Scales				
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	Limited transportation options (e.g., distance, lack of transport options)					
2	Social expectations about parental roles (e.g., traditional gender roles, caregiving responsibilities)					
3	Economic hardships (e.g., financial struggles limiting participation)					
4	Weak community support structures (e.g., lack of parent networks, educational programs)					
5	Socioeconomic disparities (e.g., differences in income affecting participation)					
6	Attitudes toward education and parenting (e.g., cultural beliefs about parental roles in schooling)					

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 6: Strategies to Enhance Parental Engagement**

**27.** Which strategies do you believe would encourage more parental participation in school activities? (Rank options from 1–5)

5.	Items	Rating Scales				
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	Flexible meeting schedules (e.g., evening/weekend sessions to accommodate working parents)					
2	Improved digital communication (e.g., SMS, emails, school apps)					
3	Providing parental education & workshops (e.g., training on supporting children’s learning at home)					
4	Financial support programs (e.g., subsidies for school-related expenses, scholarships)					
5	More interactive engagement opportunities (e.g., parent volunteer programs, mentorship initiatives)					
6	Strengthening school-parent communication (e.g., regular updates, accessible contact channels)					
7	Encouraging community partnerships (e.g., collaborating with local organizations for parental support)					

8	Addressing socioeconomic challenges (e.g., financial aid, school-sponsored support programs)					
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Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

28. Would you be interested in attending training programs designed to help parents support their children’s education more effectively?

- e) Yes                      b) No

29. In your opinion, what steps should schools take to improve parental engagement in education? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your participation! Your responses will help us better understand the barriers to parental engagement and develop strategies to improve collaboration between schools, parents, and communities.**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL STUDIES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE FILLED BY TEACHERS**

**General Introduction**

This structured **questionnaire for teachers**, designed to assess their perspectives on **parental engagement, barriers, and strategies for improvement** in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City, Addis Ababa. The study examines barriers to engagement, school policies, communication effectiveness, and strategies for improvement. Your participation is highly valuable, and all responses will remain confidential. Honest answers will contribute to identifying meaningful solutions to enhance parent-teacher collaboration.

With deepest Respect

**General Directions**

Dear respondents, please note:

- ✓**Do not write your name**—this questionnaire is anonymous.
- ✓**Put (√) or (×) mark in the box** to indicate your response.
- ✓**Provide additional opinions, if any**, in the space provided.
- ✓**Follow instructions** provided for each section.

**Section 1: Demographic Information**

- 1.1. School Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.2. Gender: a) Male (        )    b) Female (    )
- 1.3. Age Group: a) Below 25 (    )    b) 25–34 (    ) c) 35–44 (    )    d) 45 & above (    )
- 1.4. Years of Teaching Experience: a) 1-5 (    ) b) 6-10 (    ) c) 11–15 (    ) d) 16 & above
- 1.5. Subjects Taught: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Engagement**

- 2.1. How often do parents participate in school meetings, workshops, or engagement programs?  
1) Never ( ) 2)Rarely ( ) 3)Sometimes ( ) 4)Often ( ) 5)Always ( )
- 2.2. How actively do parents assist their children with schoolwork at home?  
1) Not at all ( ) 2)Rarely ( ) 3)Sometimes ( ) 4)Often ( ) 5)Always ( )
- 2.3. How frequently do parents communicate with teachers outside scheduled meetings?  
1) Never ( ) 2)Rarely ( ) 3)Sometimes ( ) 4)Often ( ) 5)Always ( )
- 2.4. Rate the overall level of parental engagement at your school.  
1)Very low( ) 2)Low( ) 3)Moderate( ) 4)High ( ) 5) Very high( )

**Section 3: Barriers to Parental Engagement**

- 3.1. What are the main barriers limiting parental engagement at your school? *(Rank from 1 -5)*

No	Items	Rating Scales				
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	Lack of parental awareness about school activities					
2	Parents' work schedules and time constraints					
3	Socioeconomic challenges (e.g., financial hardships)					
4	Cultural attitudes toward parent-teacher collaboration					
5	Language barriers or literacy issues					
6	School policies that do not prioritize parental engagement					

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

- 3.2. Do you feel that school communication methods effectively reach parents?  
 a) Yes            b) No
- 3.3. In your experience, how do teachers and school administrators encourage parental engagement?

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**Section 4: Strategies for Enhancing Parental Engagement**

5.1. Which strategies do you think would improve parental engagement? *(Rank from 1 -5)*

6.	Items	Rating Scales				
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	Strengthening school-parent communication (e.g., newsletters, SMS, apps)					
2	Providing training and workshops for parents on supporting students at home					
3	Offering flexible meeting schedules (e.g., evenings, weekends)					
4	Encouraging community partnerships to support parental involvement					
5	Addressing socioeconomic barriers through targeted assistance programs					

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

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4.2. What additional actions should schools take to improve parent-teacher collaboration?

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**Thank you for your participation!** Your responses will help identify ways to strengthen parental engagement and improve collaboration between parents, teachers, and school administrators.

## APPENDIX - C

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL STUDIES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE FILLED BY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

### General Introduction

This questionnaire aims to assess **school principals'** perspectives on **parental engagement, institutional barriers, communication effectiveness, and strategies for improvement** in government secondary schools within Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City, Addis Ababa. The study examines school policies, administrative challenges, institutional support mechanisms, and potential solutions for strengthening parental involvement in education. Your participation is highly valuable, and all responses will remain confidential. Honest answers will contribute to identifying meaningful strategies for improving parent-school collaboration.

With Deepest Respect!

### General Directions

Dear respondents, please note:

- ✓ **Do not write your name**—this questionnaire is anonymous.
- ✓ **Put (√) or (×) mark in the box** to indicate your response.
- ✓ **Provide additional opinions, if any**, in the space provided.
- ✓ **Follow instructions** provided for each section.

### Section 1: Demographic Information

- 1.1. School Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.2. Gender: a) Male (    )    b) Female (    )
- 1.3. Age Group: a) Below 25 (    )    b) 25–34 (    )    c) 35–44 (    )    d) 45 & above (    )
- 1.4. Years of Experience as a Principal: a) 1-5 (    )    b) 6-10 (    )    c) 11–15 (    )    d) 16 & above

### Section 2: Current State of Parental Engagement

2.1.How would you rate the overall level of parental engagement in your school?

5) Very high    4) High    3) Moderate    2) Low    1) Very low

2.2.Which forms of parental engagement are most common in your school? (*Rank from 1 -5*)

No	Items	Rating Scales				
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	Parent-teacher meetings					
2	PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) participation					
3	Parents assisting students with schoolwork at home					
4	Volunteer programs or community-based parental engagement					

2.3. Do you believe parental engagement improves student academic success?

a) Yes    b) No

2.4.What are the most effective ways parents contribute to student learning in your school?

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**Section 3: Institutional Barriers to Parental Engagement**

3.4. What are the main barriers preventing effective parental engagement in your school?  
*(Rank from 1 -5)*

No	Items	Rating Scales				
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	Lack of parental awareness about school activities					
2	Parents' work schedules and time constraints					
3	Socioeconomic challenges (e.g., financial hardships)					
4	Cultural attitudes that limit parent-school collaboration					
5	Ineffective school communication strategies					
6	School policies that do not prioritize parental involvement					

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

3.5. Do you believe the school administration actively encourages parental engagement?  
 a) Yes            b) No

3.6. What challenges do school administrators face when encouraging parents to participate in school activities? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 4: Strategies for Strengthening Parental Engagement**

4.3. Which strategies have been most effective in encouraging parental engagement in your school? (Rank from 1 -5)

5.	Items	Rating Scales				
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1	Flexible meeting schedules (e.g., evening/weekend sessions)					
2	Improved digital communication (e.g., SMS, emails, apps)					
3	School-led parental education workshops					
4	Community-based partnerships to support parental engagement					
5	Financial support programs (e.g., subsidies, assistance for struggling families)					

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

4.2. What additional measures should be taken to improve parental engagement in secondary schools? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your participation!** Your responses will help identify key areas for improvement and inform strategies that strengthen collaboration between schools, parents, and communities.

## APPENDIX - D

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

A structured interview guide for the key stakeholders in parental engagement: PSTA members, School principals, and Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city education Office Supervisors. Each section is tailored to capture unique perspectives while maintaining consistency across responses.

Research Topic: Barriers to Effective Parental Engagement in Government Secondary Schools. An insight from Nifas Silk Lafto Sub city.

Target Participants:

- PSTA Members (Parental perspectives & Engagement challenges)
- School Principals (Institutional policies & leadership approaches)
- Sub-City Education Supervisor (Policy implementation & community-level strategies)

#### Section 1: General Introduction

➤ *Introduction for the interviewer:*

- Thank the participant for their time.
- Briefly introduce the purpose of the interview.
- Ensure confidentiality of responses.
- Explain that the interview aims to explore barriers to parental engagement and identify effective strategies for improvement.

➤ *Opening Question (for all groups):*

*"In your experience, how would you describe the level of parental engagement in government secondary schools?"*

#### Section 2: Questions for PSTA Members (Parental Perspectives)

1. How do parents typically participate in their child's education? (*Examples: meetings, assisting with homework, community programs*)
2. What barriers prevent parents from engaging more with schools? (*Work schedules, cultural beliefs, financial constraints, school policies, etc.*)

3. How effective is the school's communication with parents? What improvements would you suggest?
4. Do you feel that teachers and school leaders value parental input? Why or why not?
5. What strategies do you think would encourage more parents to get involved in school activities?

### **Section 3: Questions for School Principals (Institutional Policies & Leadership)**

6. How does your school encourage parental engagement? (*Policies, initiatives, engagement programs*)
7. What are the biggest challenges schools face in strengthening parent-school collaboration?
8. Do school policies actively promote parental engagement? If not, what changes would be beneficial?
9. What role should school leadership play in improving parental participation?
10. What successful strategies have you seen implemented in your school or others to enhance parental engagement?

### **Section 4: Questions for Selected Teachers (Teacher-Parent Collaboration)**

11. How frequently do parents communicate with teachers regarding their child's academic progress?
12. What challenges do teachers face when trying to engage parents? (*Low attendance at meetings, lack of responsiveness, etc.*)
13. Are there any differences in parental engagement based on socioeconomic backgrounds?
14. What strategies have been most effective in building strong parent-teacher relationships?
15. What support do teachers need to improve collaboration with parents? (*Training, school resources, flexible schedules, etc.*)

## **Section 5: Questions for Sub-City Education Supervisors (Community & Policy-Level Perspectives)**

16. From a policy standpoint, what role does the education bureau play in improving parental engagement?
17. Are there government or community-led initiatives to support parent involvement in education?
18. What barriers exist at the community level that hinder parental participation in secondary schools?
19. How can schools and local government work together more effectively to promote parental engagement?
20. What recommendations would you give for improving parental engagement policies at the sub-city level?

## **Section 6: Closing & Recommendations**

### **➤ Final question for all groups:**

*"If you could propose one major change to enhance parental engagement in secondary schools, what would it be?"*

### **➤ Closing statement for the interviewer:**

- Thank the participant for their insights.
- Reassure them of confidentiality in research reporting.
- Offer to share study findings if they are interested.