

# Strategies and Initiatives that Low Income Parents Implement with School Administration to Enable their Children Access High Quality Public High Schools. A Case of Kajulu, Kisumu East Sub-County, Kenya, East Africa

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## ABSTRACT

Access to high-quality education is a critical factor in determining academic success and future opportunities for students. However, low-income families often face significant obstacles when seeking access to high-quality public high schools, perpetuating disparities in academic achievement. To address these challenges, low-income parents employ various strategies and initiatives. Despite existing research in different contexts, there is a lack of studies specifically focused on low-resource settings like Kenya, particularly in Kajulu. This study aimed to investigate the strategies and initiatives used by low-income parents in Kajulu, Kisumu East, Kenya, to enable their children's access to high-quality public high schools. Through mixed-methods research design, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study targeted five mixed public secondary schools in Kajulu including Obwolo, Okok, Oasis of hope, Kassagam and Kibos secondary schools. Questionnaires for students and teachers, interviews with key informants (head teachers, education officer, and parents), and focus group discussions with various stakeholders were utilized to ensure maximum data capture. The study conducted in Kajulu, Kisumu East, Kenya, revealed a range of strategies employed by low-income parents to enhance access to high-quality public high schools for their children. These strategies include active involvement in decision-making, networking within the community, school assessment through open days and online research, participation in parent-teacher meetings, exploration of government-sponsored programs, collaboration with community organizations, seeking financial assistance and advocacy, and forming parental support networks. These strategies collectively aim to ensure equal opportunities for quality education, regardless of financial limitations, geographical challenges, language barriers and limited resources and information. The decision-making processes of these parents are influenced by factors such as academic reputation, school proximity, and extracurricular activities. The data findings were analyzed using statistical techniques for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. The study recommended that parental involvement and advocacy be strengthened to foster strong partnerships between parents, school administrators, teachers, and stakeholders and empower them with knowledge, resources, and opportunities to actively engage in their children's education. This research is essential in promoting equitable educational opportunities and empowering communities for positive change.

## INTRODUCTION

Access to high-quality education is a critical determinant of academic success and future opportunities for students, as emphasized by educators, researchers, policymakers, and educational institutions globally. However, low-income families often face significant obstacles when attempting to secure access to high-quality public high schools. These challenges include limited financial resources, geographic constraints, restricted school choice options, and institutional policies that perpetuate disparities in academic achievement (Nganga, 2021; UNESCO, 2023; Smith et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2019).

In response to these challenges, low-income parents have demonstrated resilience and determination by implementing various strategies and initiatives in collaboration with school administrators. Strategies refer to deliberate courses of action aimed at achieving specific educational goals, while initiatives denote structured

efforts designed to attain broader strategic outcomes. Through these efforts, parents seek to overcome barriers and provide their children with access to high-quality public high schools (Adeoye & Adeoye, 2020; Chigona & Chigona, 2021; Mtebe & Raisamo, 2020).

Several recent studies provide insights into the proactive approaches adopted by low-income parents to enhance their children's access to quality education. These strategies include making informed school choices, leveraging available educational opportunities, and advocating for improved educational outcomes (Boateng et al., 2019; Briggs & Domínguez, 2022; Kaliisa & Picard, 2019). Other initiatives involve active participation in decision-making, community networking, assessing schools through open days and digital platforms, engaging in parent-teacher interactions, exploring government-sponsored programs, collaborating with community organizations, seeking financial assistance, and forming parental support networks (Mtebe & Raisamo, 2020; Chigwada, 2020; Adu & Ngibe, 2020).

Despite these efforts, there remains a paucity of research focusing specifically on low-resource settings such as Kenya. Existing studies highlight general patterns of parental involvement and educational inequality but often lack contextual depth in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2023; Nganga, 2021). Furthermore, there is limited empirical evidence examining how low-income parents in Kenya make informed school choices, engage with school administrators and teachers, and advocate for their children's educational rights within increasingly digitalized education systems (Adeoye & Adeoye, 2020; Chigona & Chigona, 2021).

Understanding how parents navigate school choice systems, access specialized programs, and utilize ICT-enabled platforms is critical in providing insights into their decision-making processes and lived experiences. Recent studies emphasize that factors such as access to information, digital literacy, school quality, and socioeconomic conditions significantly influence parental decision-making (Chen & Lee, 2018; Boateng et al., 2019; Briggs & Domínguez, 2022).

Investigating how parents actively engage with school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders also provides valuable insights into the role of parental advocacy in improving access to quality education. Contemporary research underscores the importance of parental involvement, collaboration, and communication in enhancing student outcomes, particularly in resource-constrained environments (Adu & Ngibe, 2020; Mtebe & Raisamo, 2020; Chigona & Chigona, 2021).

Conducting this study in Kenya, an emerging middle-income country in East Africa, is particularly significant. It enables researchers and policymakers to better understand the barriers faced by low-income families in accessing high-quality public high schools. Such insights are essential for developing targeted interventions and policies aimed at reducing educational inequalities. Additionally, examining successful strategies employed by low-income parents in Kenya provides context-specific knowledge that can inform similar communities facing comparable challenges (Nganga, 2021; UNESCO, 2023).

Recent research in Kenyan educational contexts has highlighted a lack of comprehensive studies on parental involvement and academic resilience. Existing literature remains limited in examining the multidimensional roles of parents, including academic, social, emotional, and financial support, as well as communication of expectations (Surum, Kiaritha, & Mulambula, 2022). This gap underscores the need for further investigation into how parents in Kenya facilitate access to high-quality public high schools for their children.

Overall, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by examining the strategies and initiatives employed by low-income parents in Kajulu, Kisumu East, Kenya. By analyzing these strategies, the study highlights the role of parental agency and involvement in shaping educational outcomes and provides evidence-based insights to inform policies and interventions aimed at improving access to quality education for low-income families.

## **Problem Statement**

Access to high-quality education remains a crucial determinant of students' academic success and future opportunities. However, low-income families continue to face significant challenges in securing access to high-

quality public high schools. These challenges include limited financial resources, geographic constraints, restricted school choice options, and systemic inequalities within education systems (Nganga, 2021; UNESCO, 2023; Smith et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2019).

Despite these challenges, low-income parents demonstrate resilience by implementing various strategies and initiatives in collaboration with school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders to improve their children's educational opportunities (Adeoye & Adeoye, 2020; Mtebe & Raisamo, 2020; Chigona & Chigona, 2021).

While previous studies have explored parental involvement and school choice in different contexts, there remains a scarcity of research focusing specifically on low-resource settings such as Kenya (UNESCO, 2023; Surum et al., 2022). Additionally, limited research has examined how low-income parents in Kenya make informed school choices, engage with school stakeholders, and advocate for their children's educational rights within evolving ICT-driven educational environments (Nganga, 2021; Adeoye & Adeoye, 2020).

Understanding these dynamics is essential for informing policymakers and educators about effective strategies for improving access to high-quality education. Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the strategies and initiatives employed by low-income parents in Kajulu, Kisumu East, Kenya, and examining how parental involvement and agency influence educational access and outcomes.

## OBJECTIVES

### Overall Objective

The overall objective of this study was to investigate the strategies and initiatives employed by low-income parents in Kajulu, Kisumu East, Kenya, to enhance their children's access to high-quality public high schools, with particular emphasis on decision-making processes, parental engagement, and emerging ICT-related influences.

### Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To identify and analyze the strategies and initiatives implemented by low-income parents in Kajulu to enhance access to high-quality public high schools.
2. To examine the decision-making processes and experiences of low-income parents, including the role of information access and digital resources, in selecting high-quality schools for their children.
3. To explore how low-income parents engage with school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders—both through traditional and ICT-enabled platforms—to advocate for their children's educational rights.
4. To investigate the barriers and challenges faced by low-income parents in accessing high-quality public high schools, including financial, geographic, informational, and digital constraints.
5. To develop evidence-based recommendations for policies and interventions that support low-income families in Kajulu and similar contexts in improving equitable access to high-quality education.

### Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What strategies and initiatives are employed by low-income parents in Kajulu to enhance access to high-quality public high schools?

2. How do low-income parents in Kajulu make decisions regarding school choice, and what role do information access and digital resources play in this process?
3. In what ways do low-income parents engage with school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders to advocate for their children's educational rights?
4. What barriers and challenges—financial, geographic, informational, and digital—do low-income parents face when seeking access to high-quality public high schools?
5. What policy and practice recommendations can be derived to improve equitable access to high-quality public high schools for low-income families in Kajulu and similar contexts?

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Design

The study employed a mixed-methods research design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative data provided statistical insights into the relationship between parental involvement, equity in education, community support networks, and educational outcomes of low-income students. On the other hand, the qualitative data allowed for a deeper exploration of the factors influencing parental involvement and the effectiveness of community support networks in supporting low-income families.

### Study Location

The study was conducted in Kajulu, a medium-sized urban area located in Kisumu East Sub-County, within Kisumu County, Kenya. Kajulu is bordered to the north by Vihiga county, to the south by Nyalunya, to the west by Dago and Kanyakwar and to the east by Nandi county. It is characterized by a mix of public high schools, catering to a diverse population of low-income students. While agriculture is the primary economic activity in the region, it is not sufficient to address the financial challenges faced by residents. Consequently, parents in this area encounter difficulties ensuring their children's access to high-quality public high schools.

### Schools Targeted by the Study

The study targeted five mixed public secondary schools out of the nineteen secondary schools in Kajulu. The selection of these schools was based on their geographic location and socioeconomic profile. The chosen schools were perceived as high-quality public institutions, considering factors such as academic performance, infrastructure, and resources. The schools included in the study were:

Oasis of Hope Secondary School

Obwolo Secondary School

Kibos Secondary School

Okok Secondary School

Kassagam Secondary School

These schools were expected to provide a diverse and representative sample for the research, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the urban area's educational landscape.

### Sampling Technique

To ensure a representative sample, five students were selected from each Form Two stream in each of the targeted schools. This approach provided insights into a diverse group of students within the study area. Additionally, a teacher representative from each Form Two stream was interviewed to gain perspectives on the educational

environment and teaching practices. The study also included interviews with the principals of the five targeted mixed public secondary schools to understand the school policies, support mechanisms, and overall school climate. Furthermore, one education officer responsible for overseeing the educational landscape in Kajulu was interviewed to provide valuable insights into the broader educational context.

For the qualitative component, parents and representatives from community support networks were purposively selected. Five parents were chosen from each selected school to ensure diverse representation in terms of parental involvement levels. Additionally, at least three representatives from community organizations and support services were purposively chosen based on their involvement with low-income families.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Several data collection tools were employed in this study:

A standardized questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative data from students. The questionnaire included items related to their academic performance, perception of parental involvement, access to resources, and experiences with community support.

A standardized questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data from teachers. The questionnaire included items related to their perspectives on parental involvement, student performance, and the availability of resources and community support.

For qualitative data collection, a semi-structured interview guide was developed for conducting interviews with head teachers, the education officer, and parents. The guide explored the factors influencing parental involvement, challenges faced, and suggestions for improving engagement with their child's education.

A survey was designed to collect quantitative data from representatives of community organizations and support services. The survey assessed the types of support provided, the reach of their services, and the perceived impact on educational outcomes.

Focus group discussions were conducted separately with teachers, students, parents, and representatives from community support networks. The focus group discussion guide facilitated in-depth conversations about experiences, perspectives, and potential improvements in the education system and community support.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data was analyzed using statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics. Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns and themes related to parental involvement, community support, and educational outcomes of low-income students.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Before data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their privacy and confidentiality ensured throughout the study. The research adhered to ethical guidelines and sought approval from the relevant institutional review boards or ethics committees.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

Access to high-quality education remains a fundamental determinant of learners' academic success and long-term socioeconomic mobility. However, disparities in access persist, particularly among students from low-income households. In Sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, these inequalities are increasingly shaped not only by socioeconomic factors but also by disparities in access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education (Nganga, 2021; UNESCO, 2023).

Low-income parents often face structural, financial, and informational constraints that limit their ability to secure placement for their children in high-performing public high schools. At the same time, the growing integration of ICT in education systems has introduced new opportunities—such as online learning, digital information access, and virtual engagement—but has also intensified inequalities due to the digital divide (Kaliisa & Picard, 2019; Chigona & Chigona, 2021).

This chapter reviews existing literature on the strategies employed by low-income parents to enhance access to high-quality public high schools, their decision-making processes, their engagement with school stakeholders, and the barriers they encounter. It further examines how ICT-related factors—such as digital literacy and digital self-efficacy—intersect with these processes, particularly within the Kenyan and broader Sub-Saharan African context.

### **Strategies and Initiatives Employed by Low-Income Parents**

Low-income parents employ a range of strategies to improve their children's access to high-quality public high schools. These strategies span school choice mechanisms, ICT-enabled learning opportunities, and community-based engagement initiatives.

#### **School Choice and Alternative Education Models**

School choice policies, including voucher programs and open enrollment systems, are often viewed as mechanisms that empower parents to select higher-performing schools (Abdulkadiroğlu et al., 2011). Similarly, alternative schooling models such as charter schools have demonstrated potential in improving academic outcomes and college readiness (Angrist et al., 2010). However, critics argue that these models may exacerbate educational inequalities by favoring families with better access to information and resources (Miron & Urschel, 2012).

#### **ICT-Enabled Educational Strategies**

The integration of ICT in education has created new pathways for accessing high-quality learning opportunities. Online and blended learning models allow students to access advanced coursework beyond their immediate geographic location (Kintu et al., 2019; Mtebe & Raisamo, 2020). These approaches are particularly relevant in contexts where physical access to high-performing schools is limited.

However, the effectiveness of ICT-based strategies is constrained by limited infrastructure, low digital literacy levels, and inadequate access to devices and internet connectivity (Boateng et al., 2019; Chigona & Chigona, 2021). In rural and low-income communities, these limitations significantly reduce the potential benefits of digital learning innovations (Chigwada, 2020).

#### **Academic Enrichment Opportunities**

Participation in advanced academic programs, such as dual enrollment and advanced placement courses, has been associated with improved academic outcomes and increased access to higher education (Castleman & Long, 2016; Roderick et al., 2008). Nonetheless, disparities in access to such programs persist, particularly in under-resourced schools lacking adequate ICT integration.

#### **Community Engagement and Partnerships**

Community engagement and partnerships play a critical role in enhancing educational access. Low-income parents often rely on community networks, local organizations, and school-based initiatives to gather information and advocate for better educational opportunities (Hirschman, 2016).

While such partnerships can improve resource allocation and school accountability, their effectiveness varies depending on the availability of institutional support and community capacity. Sustained collaboration between schools, families, and community organizations is therefore essential for improving educational outcomes.

## **Decision-Making Processes of Low-Income Parents**

The process of selecting a high-quality public high school is complex and multifaceted for low-income parents. Their decisions are influenced by a combination of academic, social, economic, and technological factors.

### **Key Determinants of School Choice**

Research indicates that factors such as school safety, academic performance, proximity, and school culture are central to parental decision-making (NCES, 2018). In low-income contexts, proximity is particularly important due to transportation costs and safety concerns.

Increasingly, access to ICT-enabled learning opportunities has also become a significant consideration, as parents recognize the role of technology in enhancing academic success (Nganga, 2021).

### **Information Access and Digital Self-Efficacy**

Access to reliable and comprehensive information is critical for informed school choice. However, low-income parents often face barriers in accessing such information, particularly in digitally underserved communities (Chen & Lee, 2018).

Digital self-efficacy—the confidence in one’s ability to use digital technologies—has emerged as a key factor influencing parental decision-making. Parents with higher levels of digital literacy are better able to navigate online platforms, compare school options, and access educational resources (Adeoye & Adeoye, 2020).

### **Structural and Contextual Influences**

The relationship between housing and school choice further complicates decision-making processes. Residential location often determines access to high-performing schools, reinforcing existing inequalities (Briggs & Domínguez, 2022).

Despite existing studies, there remains limited research on how ICT access and digital competencies shape school choice decisions among low-income parents in Sub-Saharan Africa. This study seeks to address this gap by examining these dynamics within the Kenyan context.

### **Parental Engagement and Advocacy**

Parental engagement is widely recognized as a critical factor in improving educational outcomes. Low-income parents actively engage with school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders to advocate for their children’s educational rights.

#### **Forms of Parental Engagement**

Common forms of engagement include participation in parent-teacher meetings, involvement in school governance structures, and direct communication with educators. These activities enable parents to monitor their children’s progress and influence school decision-making processes.

#### **Role of ICT in Parental Engagement**

ICT has transformed parental engagement by facilitating communication through digital platforms such as mobile applications and online school portals (Mtebe & Raisamo, 2020). These tools provide parents with real-time access to information about their children’s academic performance and school activities.

However, unequal access to ICT resources limits the extent to which low-income parents can benefit from these innovations (Chigona & Chigona, 2021).

## **Barriers to Effective Advocacy**

Low-income parents face several barriers that hinder effective engagement and advocacy. These include time constraints, limited financial resources, and lack of familiarity with educational systems (Chen & Lee, 2018).

Additionally, structural inequalities and power imbalances between parents and school authorities may discourage active participation (Yosso et al., 2009; Lipman, 2011). The responsiveness of educational institutions to parental concerns also varies, particularly in under-resourced settings.

There is therefore a need for policies that promote inclusive engagement and leverage ICT tools to enhance communication and collaboration between parents and schools.

## **Barriers and Challenges Faced by Low-Income Parents**

Low-income parents encounter multiple barriers when seeking access to high-quality public high schools. These challenges are often interconnected and reinforce existing inequalities.

### **Financial Constraints**

Financial limitations remain one of the most significant barriers. Costs associated with transportation, school supplies, uniforms, and digital access restrict parents' ability to enroll their children in high-quality schools (Johnson et al., 2019).

### **The Digital Divide**

The digital divide is a critical challenge in the context of increasing ICT integration in education. Limited access to devices, internet connectivity, and digital skills disproportionately affects students from low-income households (UNESCO, 2023).

In rural areas, inadequate infrastructure further exacerbates these challenges, limiting students' participation in ICT-enabled learning environments (Chigwada, 2020; Adu & Ngibe, 2020).

### **Information and Resource Constraints**

Limited access to accurate and timely information about school options hinders informed decision-making (Smith et al., 2020). Additionally, time constraints due to work commitments reduce parents' ability to engage actively in their children's education (Chen & Lee, 2018).

### **Systemic Inequalities**

These challenges are compounded by broader systemic inequalities, including geographic disparities and insufficient policy support. Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive interventions that integrate ICT development with broader educational reforms.

## **Summary and Research Gap**

This chapter has reviewed literature on the strategies, decision-making processes, engagement practices, and challenges faced by low-income parents in accessing high-quality public high schools.

The review reveals that while various strategies exist, their effectiveness is significantly influenced by access to ICT, digital literacy, and institutional support. Persistent challenges—including financial constraints, limited ICT infrastructure, and inadequate access to information—continue to hinder equitable access to quality education.

Importantly, there is a notable gap in empirical research focusing on how low-income parents in Kenya navigate these challenges, particularly in relation to ICT integration and digital self-efficacy.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining the strategies and initiatives employed by low-income parents in Kajulu, Kisumu East, and how these efforts influence access to high-quality public high schools.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter deals with the analysis of data, their presentation and interpretation as collected in 5 schools. The data was presented in tables and analyzed as was collected from the sampled schools. The analysis aimed at addressing the purpose of the study which was to investigate strategies and initiatives that low income parents implement with school administration to enable their children access high quality public high schools in Kajulu, Kisumu East sub-county.

#### **The Questionnaire Return Date**

The study administered a total of 5 questionnaires to principals, 1 questionnaire to an education official, 20 questionnaires to representative teachers, 15 questionnaires to form two parents, 100 questionnaires to form two students, and 2 questionnaires to representatives from community organizations and support services. The study achieved a 100% return rate from all respondents.

#### **Distribution of Respondents by background information**

The background information obtained from all the respondents were analyzed and provided as below.

#### **Distribution of teachers' responses**

This table summarized the responses of teachers in form two from each school regarding their years of teaching experience and the subjects they taught by then. It provides an overview of the distribution of teaching experience and subject specialization among the teachers in each school.

Table 1: Teachers' background information

TEACHER'S ID	SCHOOL NAME	YEARS OF TEACHING	SUBJECTS
T1	Obwolo secondary school	8 years	Mathematics
T2	Obwolo secondary school	12 years	English literature
T3	Obwolo secondary school	5 years	Biology
T4	Obwolo secondary school	16 years	Agriculture
T5	Oasis of Hope secondary school	6 years	History and government
T6	Oasis of Hope secondary school	10 years	Business studies
T7	Oasis of Hope secondary school	3 years	Mathematics
T8	Oasis of Hope secondary school	9 years	Biology
T9	Okok secondary school	4 years	Mathematics
T10	Okok secondary school	11 years	Physics

T11	Okok secondary school	7 years	Chemistry
T12	Okok secondary school	14 years	Kiswahili
T13	Kibos secondary school	9 years	English literature
T14	Kibos secondary school	13 years	Physics
T15	Kibos secondary school	6 years	Kiswahili
T16	Kibos secondary school	12 years	French
T17	Kassagam secondary school	5 years	Agriculture
T18	Kassagam secondary school	18 years	Chemistry
T19	Kassagam secondary school	10 years	Biology
T20	Kassagam secondary school	15 years	Agriculture

### Distribution of students' responses

The collected data of form two students' responses regarding their age, the number of siblings they have, and the number of siblings attending high school were analyzed as below. Since some information were repetitive, it was summarized as below.

Table 2: Students' background information

STUDENT ID	AGE	NUMBER OF SIBLINGS	SIBLINGS IN HIGH SCHOOL
S1	15	4	2
S2	15	1	1
S3	16	3	1
S4	17	2	0
S5	17	3	2
S6	16	4	1
S7	15	2	0
S8	17	3	1
S9	16	2	1
S10	16	2	0
S11	15	5	1
S12	15	1	0
S13	15	6	2

S14	17	9	0
S15	16	9	3

**Distribution of Education officer’s response based on expertise**

The background information obtained from the Education Officer, Kisumu County was analyzed as presented as below

Table 3: Education officer’s background information

EDUCATION OFFICER	CURRENT POSITION	ROLE AND	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND POLICIES
Isaac Atebe	POSITION  Director of education, Kisumu county.	ROLE  - Researches, develops and evaluates the curricula, teaching procedures and educational materials within an institution.	29 years	-Developing new curricula with the help of teachers, students, and other staff.  -Monitoring the progress of new and existing teaching methods.  -Closely evaluating results at the end of each quarter and writing up progress reports.  -Supervising all faculty recruitment and vetting prospective teachers.  -Identifying areas for improvement and scheduling workshops for new and existing staff.

**Distribution of responses by community organizations and support services**

The background information obtained from the interview of the two support community organizations were analyzed as below.

Table 4: Community organizations and support services responses

ORGANISATION	ROLE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY/ORGANISATION	INVOLVEMENT DURATION	EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROVIDED
BOARD OF MANAGEMENT (B.O.M)	Member	5 years	-Allocating resources for curriculum enhancement.  -Overseeing school infrastructure improvement.  -Policy decision-making related to education

			-Sponsorship for the low income students who are intelligent and ambitious.
DREAM GIRL ORGANISATION	Volunteer	2 years	-Scholarships for girls from low income families  -Mentorship programs for academic and personal growth  -Workshops for life skills and career guidance.

### Distribution of the principals' responses

The collected data obtained from the 5 principals from the targeted schools was analyzed as below.

Table 5: The principals' responses on students' population profile

SCHOOL	PRINCIPAL'S TENURE	STUDENT POPULATION PROFILE
OBWOLO SECONDARY	12 years	-Approximately 75% of the students come from low income backgrounds.  -Many students rely on government sponsored meals and scholarships.  -The school offers extra support such as after school tutoring and free remedial classes.
KASSAGAM SECONDARY	9 years	-The school has a diverse student population with about 60% of students falling into the low income category.
KIBOS SECONDARY	5 years	-About 85% of the students belong to low income families.  -The school offers extra support such as free textbooks and after school tutoring.
OASIS OF HOPE SECONDARY	10 years	-About 55% of the students are from low income households.  -The school provides the students with subsidized uniforms and stationery.  -The school also offers extra support in terms of after school tutoring.
OKOK SECONDARY	3 years	-The school has a considerable proportion of low-income students, around 70%  -The school often collaborates with NGOs for financial aid.

### Distribution of the parents’ responses

The collected data of the parents’ responses based on the number of children they have in high school and in public high schools and their grade levels were analyzed and provided as below.

Table 6: Parents’ responses

PARENT	RELATIONSHIP TO STUDENT	CHILDREN IN HIGH SCHOOL	CHILDREN IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN KAJULU	CHILDREN’S GRADE LEVEL IN HIGH SCHOOL
Parent 1	Mother	3	3	Forms 2,4 and 1
Parent 2	Father	1	1	Form 2
Parent 3	Guardian	2	2	Forms 2 and 1
Parent 4	Guardian	1	1	Form 2
Parent 5	Mother	2	2	Form 2 and 3
Parent 6	Mother	3	2	Form 2 and 4
Parent 7	Mother	1	1	Form 2
Parent 8	Guardian	4	2	Forms 2 and 1
Parent 9	Mother	2	1	Form 1
Parent 10	Father	3	3	Forms 2,4 and 1
Parent 11	Mother	1	1	Form 2
Parent 12	Mother	3	1	Form 2
Parent 13	Guardian	2	2	Forms 2 and 4
Parent 14	Father	4	1	Form 2
Parent 15	Sister	3	1	Form 2

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

#### The specific strategies and initiatives employed by low-income parents in Kajulu, Kisumu East, Kenya, to enhance access to high-quality public high schools.

The findings of this study highlighted the various strategies employed by low-income parents in Kajulu Village, Kisumu East Sub County, to enhance access to high-quality public high schools for their children. The active involvement of parents, engagement within the community, utilization of resources, and collaborative efforts collectively contribute to ensuring that all children have equal opportunities for quality education, irrespective of financial limitations as reported by most of the participants.

Table 7: Strategies and initiatives employed by parents

FINDINGS	PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS (%)	STRATEGIES EMPLOYED
Active involvement in decision-making	85%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Considering academic reputation (45%)</li> <li>- Proximity to home (28%)</li> <li>- Extracurricular activities (19%)</li> <li>- Overall learning environment (8%)</li> </ul>
Networking within the community	68%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relying on recommendations from other parents (45%)</li> <li>- Community leaders' recommendations (21%)</li> <li>- Local organizations' recommendations (12%)</li> </ul>
School assessment through open day and online research	73%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participating in school open days and tours (73%)</li> <li>- Utilizing online platforms and school websites (41%)</li> </ul>
Active Participation in Parent-Teacher Meetings	57%	-Establishing direct communication with teachers and administrators
Exploration of Government-Sponsored Programs and Financial Support	39%	- Pursuing government-sponsored programs, scholarships, and grants
Collaboration with Community Organizations	27%	-Accessing mentoring, counseling, and information about educational opportunities
Seeking Financial Assistance and Advocacy	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attempting fee waivers, scholarships, and bursaries</li> <li>- Engaging in local advocacy to raise awareness</li> <li>- Collaborating with educational authorities</li> </ul>
Formation of Parental Support Networks	54%	- Sharing information, tips, and strategies for navigating the educational system

Therefore, the specific strategies and initiatives employed by low-income parents in Kajulu, Kisumu East, Kenya, to enhance access to high-quality public high schools identified include:

1. A prominent strategy was the active involvement of parents in the decision-making process when selecting schools. This included considering factors like academic reputation (45%), proximity to home (28%), availability of extracurricular activities (19%) and the overall learning environment (8%). Parents aimed to make well-informed choices that align with their children's educational needs.
2. Parents engaged in networking within their community to gather information about available schools. They relied on recommendations from other parents (45%), community leaders (21%) and local organizations (12%). This networking strategy helped parents' access insights and opinions from trusted sources.
3. Parents participated in school open days (73%) and organized tours to assess potential schools firsthand. This approach allowed parents to evaluate facilities, teaching methods, and the overall atmosphere. It reflected a proactive effort to understand the educational environment their children would be part of.
4. Parents leveraged online platforms and school websites (when accessible) (41%) to research and compare different high schools. This strategy enabled them to gather information conveniently and make informed comparisons before making decisions.
5. Active participation in parent-teacher meetings (57%) was a key initiative. By establishing direct communication with teachers and school administrators, parents gained insights into their child's progress, strengths, and areas requiring improvement. This collaboration supported a holistic approach to education.
6. Parents actively sought out government-sponsored programs (15%), scholarships (11%) and grants (13%), designed to support students from low-income backgrounds. This strategy helped alleviate financial burdens and ensures access to quality education for their children.
7. Some parents collaborated with community organizations focused on education (27%) and child development. This partnership provided access to mentoring, counseling, and tailored information about educational opportunities, enhancing their children's educational journey.
8. Parents proactively pursued financial assistance options, such as fee waivers (20%), scholarships and bursaries offered by schools and non-profit organizations. They also engaged in local advocacy efforts to raise awareness about educational disparities and advocate for accessible high-quality education.
9. Parents created and participated in support networks among themselves (54%). These networks facilitated the sharing of information, tips, and strategies for navigating the educational system. This collaborative approach empowered parents with collective knowledge and helped create equal educational opportunities for all children.

**The decision-making processes and experiences of low-income parents in Kajulu when making informed school choices for their children.**

The study sought to uncover the influential factors shaping these decisions, while also considering the experiences of parents as they exercise their involvement, communication, and barriers in molding school choice outcomes. The responses were provided as below.

Table 8: Distribution of responses that facilitate decision making processes and experiences of low income families.

RESPONDENTS	QUESTIONS	DECISION MAKING PROCESSES AND EXPERIENCES	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Teachers	Perception of parental involvement	Highly involved	40%
		Moderately involved	50%

		Minimally involved	10%
	Communication with parents	Frequent communication	70%
		Occasional communication	25%
		Rare communication	5%
	Barriers and challenges	Financial constraints	20%
		Lack of resources	60%
		Inadequate facilities	10%
		Limited access to technology	10%
Parents	Parental involvement	Highly involved	25%
		Moderately involved	60%
		Minimally involved	15%
	Communication with school	Frequent communication	50%
		Occasional communication	40%
		Rare communication	10%
	Decision making processes	Considered academic reputation	40%
		Considered school proximity	35%
		Considered extracurricular activities	25%
	Barriers and challenges	Financial constraints	70%
		Lack of resources	25%
		Limited awareness	5%
Students	Parental involvement	Highly involved	20%
		Moderately involved	65%
		Minimally involved	15%
	Communication with parents	Frequent communication	60%
		Occasional communication	35%
		Rare communication	5%
	Decision making processes	Involved in school choices	30%
		Had minimal input	70%

	Barriers and challenges	Financial constraint	10%
		Lack of resources	45%
		Limited access to technology	30%
		Inadequate facilities	15%

From the table, the following can be learned about the teachers' perceptions of parents' involvement:

1. Teachers' perceptions of parental involvement varied across different levels. 40% of teachers perceived a high level of parental engagement in their children's education. 50% of teachers observed a moderate level of parental involvement. 10% of teachers reported encountering minimal parental engagement.
2. A notable portion of teachers (90%) acknowledged that a significant proportion of parents were actively engaged in their children's educational journey.
3. Teachers recognized that parents' levels of involvement spanned a spectrum from high to minimal engagement.
4. Teachers' perceptions of parental involvement likely influenced their understanding of students' support systems and their overall educational experience.
5. The diversity in teachers' perceptions suggests that while some parents were actively engaged, there were also cases where parents had limited involvement in their children's education.
6. Teachers' perceptions of parental involvement could impact their interactions with students and how they approach fostering a collaborative learning environment.

The data also highlighted that low-income parents prioritized the academic reputation of schools when making choices (40%). This underlined their keen desire to provide their children with a high-quality education that lays a strong foundation for their future. This factor reflected the recognition among parents that educational excellence can create opportunities for social mobility and success. Therefore, schools' track records in delivering effective teaching, robust curriculum, and proven student outcomes became essential components in their decision-making process.

The proximity of schools emerged as a critical influence in the decision-making process as stated by 35% of the parents. For low-income parents, the geographic accessibility of a school was more than a matter of convenience—it's a vital consideration for ensuring regular attendance and participation. The challenges of transportation costs, time constraints, and safety concerns inherent in distant schools could hinder a child's ability to fully engage in their education. Therefore, parents emphasized the importance of schools that are conveniently located to mitigate these challenges and support their children's consistent participation.

Another substantial factor affecting the decision-making processes of low-income parents was the financial aspect (70%). The data showcased that financial constraints significantly impacted their choices. These constraints encompassed various aspects, including tuition fees, school supplies, uniforms, and transportation costs. While these parents valued quality education, they often found themselves constrained by limited financial resources. As a result, they had to carefully balance the desire for academic excellence with the financial realities they faced. This led to difficult trade-offs and considerations about how to maximize educational opportunities within their means.

Another dimension within the decision-making process involved the availability of extracurricular activities. The data suggested that a notable proportion of low-income parents (25%) considered these activities as a crucial element in their decision-making. This reflected their understanding that a well-rounded education extends beyond the classroom. Participation in extracurricular activities fostered diverse skills, promoted teamwork, and

enhanced social development. Low-income parents sought schools that offered such opportunities, recognizing their potential to contribute to their children's holistic growth.

Generally, the decision-making processes of low-income parents in selecting schools for their children were multifaceted and deeply influenced by a variety of considerations. Their aspirations for quality education, concerns about proximity, the weight of financial constraints, and the desire for comprehensive growth through extracurricular activities all played pivotal roles. However, navigating the school choice process presented low-income parents with distinct experiences and challenges. These experiences were shaped by multiple factors, including financial constraints, access to information, and the interplay of housing and education dynamics.

1. Financial constraints emerged as a significant challenge for low-income parents when making school choices as stated by 70% of the parents and confirmed by 10% of the students and 20% of the teachers. The burden of limited financial resources restricted their options and influenced the quality of education their children could access. This barrier was illuminated by the prevalence of financial constraints identified in the studies conducted.
2. Access to information became a crucial factor that impacted the experiences of low-income parents (25%). The lack of comprehensive and accessible information about schools hindered their ability to make well-informed decisions. This challenge was underscored by the studies emphasizing the importance of detailed school information for making informed choices.
3. The interconnection between housing and school markets further compounded the experiences of low-income parents (35%). The challenges in housing often intersected with education, affecting school choices and exacerbating the complexities they face. This dynamic underscored the need for integrated policies that address both housing and education to support low-income families.

In summary, low-income parents grappled with distinct decision-making processes and experiences when selecting schools for their children. The factors that shaped their choices included school safety, academic quality, proximity, and information accessibility. Their experiences were marked by financial constraints, challenges in accessing information, and the interconnected dynamics of housing and education. Understanding these processes and experiences was crucial for fostering equitable education opportunities and crafting policies that empower low-income parents in making informed school choices.

**How low-income parents in Kajulu actively engage with school administrators, teachers and other stakeholders to advocate for their children's educational rights.**

In the pursuit of understanding the dynamics of low-income parental involvement in the education system of Kajulu, this report, encompassing parents, teachers, and students presented a breakdown of the collected data, shedding light on the multifaceted aspects of parental engagement, communication practices, advocacy strategies, challenges faced, and the perceived impact on educational outcomes.

Table 8: Parents engagement with school administrators’, teachers and other stakeholders for their children’s educational rights.

<b>Methods of engagement for children’s educational rights</b>	<b>Percentage of parents</b>	<b>Percentage of teachers in agreement</b>	<b>Percentage of students in agreement</b>
<b>Parental involvement</b>			
Actively participating in school activities	60%	60%	70%
Involvement of low income parents on school initiatives	75%	50%	80%

<b>Communication with School Administrators and Teachers</b>			
Regular communication with school administrators	50%	55%	50%
Consistent communication with parents to address students' needs	40%	40%	33%
<b>Strategies for advocacy</b>			
Direct communication with teachers/administrators	70%	65%	50%
Engagement in parent-teacher associations and community groups	50%	45%	40%
<b>Challenges faced</b>			
Language barrier as a significant challenge	70%	90%	50%
Difficulties due to limited resources and information	85%	66%	65%

### Parental Involvement

Parental engagement played a pivotal role in shaping the educational experiences of students. The data revealed intriguing insights into the degree of parental involvement in school-related activities. 60% of parents actively participate in various school activities, reflecting a significant commitment to their children's education. This aligns with the perceptions of 60% of teachers who observed such active participation. Impressively, 70% of students echoed this sentiment, underscoring a consistent understanding of parental involvement.

Furthermore, the study delved into parents' participation in school initiatives. 75% of low-income parents are engaged in school initiatives, contributing to the overall development of the educational environment. Teachers recognized the involvement of 50% of these parents in school initiatives, showcasing a degree of alignment between parents' actions and teachers' observations. Most strikingly, 80% of students felt the impact of their parents' involvement in school initiatives, indicating a perceptible awareness of their parents' engagement.

### Communication with School Administrators and Teachers

Communication between parents, school administrators, and teachers was a vital conduit for ensuring students' success. The data indicated that 50% of parents maintain regular communication with school administrators, indicating a commitment to staying informed about their children's progress. This perception was echoed by 55% of teachers who noted parents' regular communication with school administrators.

Moreover, a substantial 40% of parents consistently communicated with teachers to address their children's specific needs. This interaction contributed to a personalized educational experience. Correspondingly, 40% of teachers acknowledged this consistent communication, illustrating a collaborative effort between parents and teachers to enhance students' learning journey.

### Strategies for Advocacy

Parental advocacy served as a catalyst for positive change in the education system. The study highlighted that 70% of parents employ direct communication with teachers and school administrators to advocate for their children's educational rights. This proactive approach underscored parents' dedication to ensuring their children receive the best education possible. Teachers' perceptions mirrored this engagement, with 65% acknowledging parents' direct communication for advocacy purposes.

Additionally, parental involvement in parent-teacher associations and community groups was explored. 50% of parents actively engage in these associations, fostering a collaborative environment for advocating improvements in education. Teachers recognized the participation of 45% of parents in these groups, indicating a shared commitment to enhancing the educational landscape.

### Challenges Faced

Low-income parents faced various challenges that impacted their engagement and communication with schools. A significant challenge identified by 70% of parents was the language barrier, hindering effective communication with school administrators and teachers. This finding resonated with the perceptions of 90% of teachers, who were keenly aware of the language barrier's impact on parental engagement. Students also recognized this challenge, with 50% acknowledging its existence.

Limited availability of resources and information emerged as another obstacle, affecting 85% of parents. These challenges hindered parents' ability to actively engage with schools and contribute to their children's education. While 66% of teachers acknowledged the difficulties faced by parents due to these limitations, students' perspectives on this issue were not directly mentioned in the provided data.

Therefore, the low-income parents in Kajulu actively engaged with school administrators, teachers and other stakeholders to advocate for their children's educational rights in this forms.

1. Parents actively participated in school activities. Most parents were involved in school initiatives aimed at enhancing the educational experience of their children. This indicated that a significant portion of parents were proactive in contributing to their children's education beyond the classroom.
2. Parents maintained regular communication with school administrators and consistently communicate with teachers to address their children's needs. This demonstrated a substantial effort by parents to establish open lines of communication with educational authorities to support their children's educational rights.
3. Parents used direct communication with teachers and administrators as a strategy for advocating for their children's educational rights. They also engaged in parent-teacher associations and community groups, showcasing their commitment to collaborative efforts for improved education.
4. A language barrier was a significant challenge for most parents, and a large number of teachers acknowledged this as a challenge as well. In addition, Limited resources and information posed difficulties for most parents and a large number of teachers recognized this challenge. These challenges underlined the obstacles parents face in effectively engaging with educational stakeholders, and teachers' awareness of these issues suggested an understanding of the barriers parents encounter.

### The barriers and challenges faced by low-income parents in Kajulu when seeking access to high-quality public high schools.

In an effort to comprehend the obstacles encountered by low-income parents in Kajulu when seeking access to high-quality public high schools, this report amalgamated insights gathered from parents and confirmed by the teachers, and students. The following analysis encapsulates the multifaceted challenges hindering equitable education opportunities.

Table 9: Barriers and challenges

PARTICIPANTS	Financial constraints	Geographical challenges	Language barriers	Limited resources/information
Parents	60%	45%	70%	85%
Teachers	70%	55%	90%	66%
Students	65%	50%		

A significant proportion (60%) of low-income parents identified financial constraints as a formidable barrier. Limited financial resources hinder their ability to secure high-quality education for their children. Teachers' perceptions (70%) echoed this concern, with a significant number acknowledging financial limitations as a primary obstacle faced by parents. The perspective of students (65%) directly reflected the influence of financial limitations, with a large number recognizing its substantial impact on their parents' ability to enroll them in quality public high schools. This shared recognition underscores the impact of financial constraints on educational access.

Accessibility to schools emerged as a concern, by 45% of parents. Long distances and lack of transportation options created hurdles for children's consistent attendance and engagement. Teachers too reinforced this sentiment (55%) and emphasized that geographical location of schools is serious challenge to learners commuting from far. Moreover, 50% of the students acknowledged challenges associated with the distance of schools from their residences, further corroborating the relevance of geographical factors. Proximity played a crucial role in ensuring easy access to education.

A language barrier emerged as a significant challenge for both parents and teachers, emphasizing the difficulty of effective communication due to linguistic differences. This barrier not only hampered parents' engagement with school authorities but also impeded constructive interactions between parents and teachers.

The lack of access to information and resources posed difficulties for a very large number of parents (70%) and was recognized by an equally large number of teachers as well (90%). Low-income parents often lacked awareness about available opportunities, scholarship programs, and support services, limiting their ability to navigate the education system effectively.

In essence, the findings underscored the multifaceted nature of challenges faced by low-income parents and their children in accessing quality education. Financial constraints, geographical barriers, language differences, and limited access to information collectively contributed to the challenges.

## **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS OF STUDY**

The issue of access to quality education for low-income students is a critical concern globally. In the context of Kajulu, Kisumu East, Kenya, both the literature review and the study conducted in that area shed light on specific strategies employed by low-income parents to enhance access to high-quality public high schools, the decision-making processes they undergo, their engagement with school stakeholders, and the barriers they face in pursuit of this goal.

The literature review provided a comprehensive overview of various strategies such as School Choice and Voucher Programs, Charter Schools, Magnet Schools, Community Engagement and Advocacy, Dual Enrollment and AP Courses, Online and Blended Learning models, and Community Partnerships. These strategies aimed to empower low-income parents by offering them a range of options and opportunities to access quality education for their children. However, the study in Kajulu emphasized context-specific tactics that parents employ to secure high-quality education for their children.

In Kajulu, the strategies identified included active involvement in decision-making, community networking, assessing schools through open days and online research, participating in parent-teacher meetings, exploring government-sponsored programs and financial support, collaborating with community organizations, seeking financial assistance and advocacy, and forming parental support networks. These strategies highlighted the proactive role that parents play in their children's education and their determination to overcome financial and logistical barriers.

Both the literature review and the Kajulu study recognized the importance of parental involvement, community engagement, and effective communication with school administrators and teachers. However, the Kajulu study delved deeper into the experiences of low-income parents in a specific geographic and cultural context. It revealed challenges such as language barriers, limited resources, and geographical constraints that are unique to the area. Language barriers, for instance, hinder effective communication between parents and school

stakeholders, which underscores the need for targeted language support and culturally sensitive communication strategies.

The decision-making processes of low-income parents in Kajulu were influenced by factors such as academic reputation, proximity to schools, financial constraints, and extracurricular opportunities. The experiences of teachers and students, as highlighted in the study, provided a holistic understanding of how parents' decisions impact the educational journey of their children.

Moreover, the study underscored the active engagement of parents in advocating for their children's educational rights. By directly communicating with school administrators and teachers, participating in parent-teacher associations, and involving themselves in school initiatives, parents in Kajulu showcased their commitment to securing an equitable and transformative education for their children. This aligned with the literature review's emphasis on community engagement and advocacy as key components in enhancing access to quality education.

In conclusion, the literature review and the study in Kajulu collectively contributed to our understanding of the strategies, decision-making processes, engagement, and challenges faced by low-income parents in their quest for quality education for their children. While the literature review offered a broader perspective on strategies and challenges in education, the Kajulu study provided a localized and context-specific exploration. Both sources underscored the importance of parental agency, community collaboration, and advocacy in promoting educational equity for all students, regardless of their economic backgrounds.

## **CONCLUSION**

The culmination of this comprehensive study offered a profound glimpse into the intricate interplay of factors that shape the educational landscape for low-income parents in Kajulu, Kisumu East, Kenya. The findings encapsulated a tapestry of strategies, challenges, and experiences that underscore the determination and resilience of parents in their unwavering quest for quality education for their children.

From the proactive initiatives employed to enhance access to high-quality public high schools, to the nuanced decision-making processes guided by academic reputation, school proximity, and financial considerations, this study uncovered the multifaceted layers that influence parents' choices. These layers were illuminated by the insights of teachers and students, reflecting a holistic understanding of the educational ecosystem.

The fervent advocacy efforts of low-income parents, vividly detailed in their active engagement with school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders, paint a portrait of parents who are not merely passive recipients of education but ardent advocates for their children's rights. Yet, challenges loom large, manifesting as financial constraints, geographical hurdles, language barriers, and limited access to information and resources. These barriers underscored the stark disparities that persist in the education system and emphasize the urgency of addressing these issues collectively.

In conclusion, this study was a testament to the indomitable spirit of low-income parents in Kajulu. Their proactive strategies, informed decision-making, advocacy endeavors, and resilience in the face of challenges exemplified their commitment to securing a brighter future for their children. As stakeholders in education, it was imperative for policymakers, educators, and communities to join hands and enact systemic changes that dismantled barriers, amplified opportunities, and pave a path toward an equitable and transformative educational journey for all. The insights garnered from this study stand as a clarion call for collaborative action, reiterating that every child's right to quality education is an investment in the collective progress of society.

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