

Barriers to parental involvement in children's religious education: A case of Nairobi chapel church Karen.

Milka Wangui*, Dr. Joash Mutua**, Dr.Mercy Mauki**, Kenneth Mburugu***

*Assistant Children Director, Nairobi Chapel Karen

**Department of religious studies, Africa International University

**Department of education, Africa International University

*** Department of Business & Economics-Kenya Methodist University

DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.11.05.2021.p11363

<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.11.05.2021.p11363>

Abstract- Biblically parents are mandated to be the primary educators of their children religious education. This has been recommended by different stakeholders, including the church, schools with an extensive body of researchers suggesting myriad of positive outcomes in children whose parents are involved in their religious education. The purpose of this research was to investigate Christian Parental Involvement in children's religious education: A case of Nairobi Chapel Karen. The research added to the general understanding of Christian parental involvement in religious education of their children. presented a working knowledge of what parent's experiences at Nairobi chapel Church Karen and provided rich insights to religious educators, children pastor's and the parents .The research addressed barriers that Christian parents encounter in their involvement in children's religious education. Nine participants were selected through purposive sampling where by the children pastor and the associate recommended members of congregation who exemplified the phenomenon of parental involvement in children religious education. The data was collected from these 9 participants through interview transcript, site documents and a focus group. Memoing, coding, classifying, analyzed the data through immersion into the participants' experience and interpretation .This process helped in identifying themes, which included; function of involvement, fruit of involvement, forms of involvement and facilities of involvement, foundational of involvements, feelings of involvement and challenges in parental involvement in children's religious education. The findings in this research concurred with the literature review.

Index Terms- Children, religious education, parental involvement, Barriers.

I. INTRODUCTION

Religious educators and Christians have always called the parents to participate in children religious education [1] & [3], the church believes that parental involvement is very important with the Catholic Church giving precedence in parental involvement and the Protestants encouraging parents to be participants in their children's religious education [2].

Historically, the puritans who were the earliest European settlers strongly believed in parental involvement; this was seen in their day-to-day practices, which included how a child was oriented in the family, their family evening practice of reading together, and their effort to teach every parent their role.

[4] Quoting Baxter (1862) encouraged the parents and the churches to promote religion in their families by reading the scripture together, leading their families in prayers, observing the Lord's Day. "I beseech you therefore if you desire the reformation and welfare of your people do all you can to promote family religion". The home governance is very important, and the failure of home system can translate to failure of school and at large society.

Biblically parents are called to model, nurture and train their children God's truth. The commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Parental involvement is not only of importance to religious education but as well to society. The relationship between the children and parents, to some extent determines who they become. "When the parents are not involved in their lives, children are likely to feel the gap with other things or ways". Communicating religious beliefs to children, attending church as a family, establishing friendships within the church help the children and teenagers to remain occupied. The primary means for families to facilitate religious education is through communication [5].

II. THEORY & LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Parent Involvement Model

Parental involvement theories are at large attributed to the work of [15] and that of Hoover Dempsey and Sandler who presents a comprehensive model of parental involvement grounding their work in education and psychological research [6] & [16]. On the psychological approach the model explains, “Why parents get involved, how they choose their involvement and form of involvement, and how their involvement makes a difference”. [7] suggests three reasons as to why parents get involved in children education: “they build up a parental role construction about their participation in their children’s education; (2) they develop a positive parental efficacy for helping their children succeed in school; and (3) they perceive opportunities or demands for involvement from children and school”. The four major reasons why parents get involved in their children education, which includes the beliefs the parents have on the involvement. In level two, they outline three perceptions that contribute to parent’s choice either of wanting to be involved in activities at home or at school. These includes “parents perceptions” of their capability of helping their children in their assignments, perceptions on their availability to help their children and finally their perceptions if they are invited to get involved by the schools, teachers and children [7]. In level 3, the model argued that through a mechanism parental involvement influences the outcome of the student. In level four [7] model suggest, “tempering/mediating), where by the parent is able to supervise their child homework, which may be a choice or expectations from school. Finally, in level five the model presents the parental involvement children outcomes which may include success in school, achievement etc.

2.2 Empirical review

In his theory, Piaget emphasized that children are active learners, who construct individual knowledge of the world by “acting on and interacting with objects in time and space”. For a child to be able to construct knowledge the environment need to be conducive as they interact with families and peers , the social interactions with people and the surrounding are “ in dissociable” as they develop cognitively. Similarly, children have “a constant drive to match their internal constructions (their own view of the real world) and external constructions (the external realities they face with their surroundings)” [10]. [12] suggested that, for children faith to develop, parents should put effort in the following, “create a conducive environment for children growth, attend church regularly with their children, allow children to attend catechesis discuss and share issues of faith with them, and to be their role models”.

2.2.1 Parental involvement at Home

[19] Suggest that the home is the first most important agency for Christian education because the earthly home teaches a child about their heavenly one. Therefore, Parental involvement in education helps in improving student performance; it gives the parent the confidence in their children’s performance and reduces absenteeism in school. Researchers suggest that children with parents or guardians who are involved in their education perform well in school; their social skills are better and improved behaviour

2.2.2 Barriers to Parental involvement

The barriers to parental involvement can be classified by adapting [15]’s (2001) framework of spheres of influence focusing in three areas” family, community and school. Parent’s belief about his or her own involvement can act as a barrier to effective parental involvement. Parents, view about their role in their children’s lives is a crucial one. To start with, parents who believe that their role is to take a child to school and pay school fees, such a parent will not be actively involved in their children’s education, either at home or school.

[7] Noted that lack of confidence is one factor that makes parent feel in adequate to be involved in their children education. This can be attributed to the feeling that they are not well educated to be involved and past experiences that were not good. Such views acts as a barrier to parental involvement despite the research that parents do not require high level of education for them to be able to support their children in learning ([10]; [16]; [7]. Consequently, another barrier to parental involvement is the parent’s view of their children intelligence and how they develop and learn ([7]. Parents who believe that their child has a certain level of intelligence that is fixed and school achievement is by luck, they will not see the need of their involved in their children education [8].

Lack of creating a strong link between schools and homes or having a welcoming environment to involve the parents has being identified as a major challenge as to why parent is not engaged. Green et al 2007, suggests that parents level of education influences their involvement. Parents with low level of education tend to shy away from helping their children because they feel they do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to do so [19].

Lack of availability. When parents are not able to be there for their children they transfer their responsibility, [4] observes that over the years, the noble task of parents teaching their children has been fading away yet the parent’s expect good results from their children. Different reasons have been attributed to passing of the responsibility which includes, the overall deterioration of the family unit, parents feeling in adequate to teach, parents feeling busy on their own faith and parents lack of moral authority to teach [6]; [9]; [17] & [12]. Moreover, parent’s circumstances can also act as a barrier to their involvement. Parents with young children or large families find themselves with a lot of responsibility, which can act as a barrier to parental involvement.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Using a phenomenological approach enabled to reveal the essence of a phenomenon as experienced by several participants (Creswell, 2013). The researcher chose this research design because [9] suggests that qualitative analysis is appropriate when a researcher is examining faith development; it is considered the most appropriate to examine faith development. The participants were parents of children aged 5-12 years, the researcher chose the age group because, according to [1], this is the time children religious beliefs and worldviews are formed.

The 9 parents who demonstrated the phenomenon were randomly selected through purposive sampling procedure, by the children pastor and the associate, these parents were engaged in activities that encourage, teach and disciple children in religious education. [16] Recommends for a case study 3-5 cases, grounded theory 20-30cases, phenomenological approach 3-10 cases. On the other hand, [9] recommends 6 participants for phenomenological approach, and 30-50 cases in ethnography.

The participants were contacted via a phone call and were requested to participate in the research upon acceptance, each participant was sent an email with participant consent form. The data collected was described through think description that allowed the researcher to draw conclusions and analysis data. Participants were given pseudonyms and some information changed to protect their identity in the study. The participants were further protected by following research ethics as provided by Africa International University Institutional Ethical Review Board IERB and NACOSTI (National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation. This study used purposive sampling design, which was selected using a modified snowball sampling procedure. Other researchers who have used the snowballing method of sampling include [4]; [5]; [9] & [18].

Data triangulation was used in this research, which is an important component in research [18] & [15]. The researcher used interviews to get the necessary and relevant information from the parents who were the participants in this research. The focus group was developed after conducting an interview and collecting site documents, the focus group helped in refining the identified themes. Triangulation enhanced the credibility of results thus improving reliability of the instruments. Data analysis procedures involved Memoing, Coding, Classifying and Interpretation. The open coding of interview transcripts, focus group and site documents generated codes. Participant's words were used as a code and other codes were the researchers own words that best described the content. The codes were grouped according to themes that best captured the experiences and the concept of Christian parental involvement in children's religious education.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. What are the barriers that Christian parents encounter in their involvement in children's religious education?

In this, research parents reported to be experiencing different challenges in their involvement in religious education of their children. These challenges included being inconsistency due to limited time, family circumstances and influence from other children.

Source: (Author, 2021)

Thandiwe a married businessperson, with 2 children aged 11 and 12 lives in Karen with her family, her husband is employed and the two daughters are in school. Thadiwe believes it is important for her children to attend a Christian school where they can learn how to integrate faith in their education. She feels excited when her children tell her how they read prayer or recited a Bible verse at school. She mentioned that her **busy schedule** is a challenge for her as it denies her to give her best in religious education of her children.

Ann a wife, and a mother of a twelve-year-old boy and eight years old girl, volunteers in teaching Sunday school at Nairobi Chapel Karen. Her husband is a businessperson and rarely attends church with the family. As a professional she felt **overwhelmed by parenting** because her husband leaves the house early in the morning and comes back home late in the evening.

David a man married with a daughter at elementary school noted that **it gets scary because he does not want to make a mistake** in bringing her up and therefore he is always asking God for wisdom on how to go about it.

Keziah a wife and a mother of a nine-year-old girl and a three-year-old boy are in fulltime employment with her husband. During the week, the two of them are **busy** but they make it intentional to have the meals together, thereafter as a family, they enjoy dancing or watch a movie together before they go to bed. Keziah wants to lead her children by example and being consistent in what she does, and that is why she enrolled her daughter for a Bible study when she realized there is **inconsistency** because of **time factor**, which has created gaps in her daughter religious education.

Trixie a single mother teacher with a boy aged 13 years leaves the house together, she goes to work and boy goes to school. TRIXIE felt **challenged with balancing life as a single mother** because of work, leaving her with less time to be there for her son religious education, she also wishes the father was there as a male figure to work with the son.

Jack a business owner and a father of two girls aged 10 and 7 years divorced with his wife three years ago and as result he gets to spend time with his children during the weekends and holidays and during weekdays they spend with their mother. He is busy with his business, but where never the children are in his house he has to create time for them. Jack mentions that he has experienced challenges of busyness, marital and the fact that he is not always with his children, as he would wish.

Table 1 displays codes and themes that appeared in the interview, site documents and focus group for triangulation.

Table 1: Themes and codes

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
Challenges	<i>Challenges in involvement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time factor• Inconsistency• Influence• Inadequate• Family circumstances	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Living out their faith• Salvation• Love for God/others• Firm foundation	<i>Fruits of involvement</i>

Source: (Author, 2021).

V. DISCUSSION

4.1 Challenges in involvement

In this, research parents reported to be experiencing different challenges in their involvement in religious education of their children. These challenges included being inconsistent due to limited time, family circumstances and influence from other children. These challenges helped in answering research question three: What are the barriers that Christian parents encounter in their involvement in children's religious education?

4.1.1 Inconsistency

The parents reported having limited time to be a major challenge leading to them being inconsistent in their involvement in religious education of their children. When asked about the challenges she faces, Ann reported, "At times am inconsistent because I come late from work and find them asleep" (Personal communication Nov 10th 2020). Similarly, Keziah reported, "inconsistency and time factor has created a lot of gaps" (Personal communication, Nov 6th 2020). Trixie on the other hand explained that, having a work life balance has been a challenge to her as a single mother leading to her being inconsistent in her involvement in religious education of her son. These results were found consistent with those of Pinantoan, A. 2013).

4.1.2 Family circumstances

Family circumstances were reported to be a challenge to some parents, leading them not to be fully involved in their children religious education. When asked the challenges he faces in his involvement Eliud answered, "since now am divorced with my wife, not being with my children as I should is a challenge to me". Similarly, Jack reported, "divorce is a setback for me; I wish I had a complete family". [16] Pointed out that several aspects of parents life contexts can act as barriers to parental involvement.

In this research busy work schedules was identified as a challenge to different parents making them to be inconsistent in their involvement. Some parents feared that they do not have enough time and knowledge for them to be fully involved in children religious education. This research agreed with the Catholic Church emphasis and extol of parents role in education of their children. The school and church are referred to as second home where the values learned are modeled and reinforced by religious education as a formal enterprise [17]; [15] & [6]. School, home and church were the three primary facilities of involvement identified in this research. [12] Added community to be the fourth location for spiritual education. In this research, one of the participants [14] desired to have community as the fourth facilities of involvement.

Brelsford (2013) argues that spiritual disclosure is an important part of parental involvement in religious education where by the parents communicates their religion beliefs to their children. Parents in this research were disclosing their faith to their children through the identified functions of involvement.

V. CONCLUSION

This research was grounded on [7]-Dempsey & Sandler parental involvement model, The theory hold true in this research for parental involvement in children religious education as revealed in different themes. In addition, the result of this research agrees with the literature review.

This research can provide insights for different stakeholders, which includes curriculum designers, pastors and parents. For the parents it can offer encouragement to further engage in parental involvement and to encourage those who do not get involved in children religious education. Pastors can use this research to evaluate how well they involve or can involve parents in religious education of their children and the resources they provide in their churches if they are of help to their children. Finally, the curriculums designers can use this research to develop resources that parent is value and are helpful in parental involvement in religious education of their children.

5.1 Recommendations

There is need to expound on the topic of parental involvement in children religious education by researching the topic from different angles. For example, this study only focused on Christian parents living out other religious groups hence need to research on other religions. In addition, this research focused on urban families living in leafy suburbs of Karen, living out urban families living in low-income families like slums, there is need for this research to be done in a slum area and see if the results will be the same.

APPENDIXES

Table 1: Participants demographic information

No.	Name	Gender	Children's Age	Interview Details
1.	Eric	Male	10,7	5 th Nov 2020
2.	Ann	Female	12, 8	10 th Nov 2020
3	Thandiwe	Female	11,12	26 th Oct 2020
4	Jack	Male	10,7	Nov 2020
5	Imani	Female	9,8	13 th Nov 2020
6	Eliud	Male	16,12,11	24 th Nov 2020
7	Trixie	Female	13	7 th Nov 2020
8	David	Male	5	1 st Nov 2020
9	Keziah	Female	9,3	6 th Nov 2020

Source: (Author, 2021).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I owe my gratitude to God family and friends, Africa International University (AIU), lecturers. I am greatly indebted and sincerely grateful to my supervisors. Dr. Joash Mutua**, Dr. Mercy Mauki** and Kenneth Mburugu my peer reviewer.

REFERENCES

- [1] Barna, G. (2003). Transforming Children into spiritual champions. CA: Regal: Ventura.
- [2] Morgenthaler, S., Keiser, J., & Larson, M. (2014). The importance of Nurturing the infant soul. *Christian Education*, 244-258.
- [3] Witmer, T. (2012). *The Shepherd at Home*. Wheaton: IL: Crossway.
- [4] Bunnell, W. (2016). Parental Involvement in Elementary Children's Religious Education:A Phenomenological Approach. 15-50.
- [5] Donald, W. (2012, Sept 25th). *The Influence Parents have On their Children*. Retrieved November 25th, 2019, from the transformed soul: <http://www.thetransformedsoul.com>
- [6] Dugan, E. (2009). Are conservative christian school paents involved? a study of paental involvement in an association of Chistian schools international school. Doctor of Philosophy:Capella University.
- [7] Hoover-Dempsey, K., & Walker, J. (2005). Why do parents get involved? Research findings and implications. *The elementary school journal*, 105-130.
- [8] Flouri, E., & Buchanana, A. (2002). The potective role of parental involvement in adolescent suicide,crisis. *The jounal of cisis intervention and suicide*, 17-22.
- [9] Wenk, Hardesty, Morgan, & Blair. (1994). The influence of parental Involvement on the well-being of sons and daughters. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 229-234.
- [10] Piaget, J. (1983). Piaget's theory.P.Mussen(ed). Handbook of child Psychology. New York: Wiley.
- [11] Pinantoan, A. (2013, September 22). *The Effect of Parental Involvement on Academic Achievement*. Retrieved January 22, 2020, from teach thought: <http://www.teachthought.com/learning/the-effect-of-parental-involvement-on-academic-achievement/>
- [12] Alaxander, J. (2014). The Nature,Warrant, and History of Family Worship. *A Theology of the Family*, 53-59.
- [13] Dudley, R., & Wisbey, R. (2000). The relationship between parenting styles to the committment to church among young adults. *Journal of religioues education*, 39-50.
- [14] Henderson, A., & Berla, N. (1994). A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement(A report from the National Committee for Citizens in Education). Washington,DC: Center for Law and Education.
- [15] Epstein, J. (2007). Connections Count: Improving family and community involvement in secondary Schools. *Pricipal leadership*, 16-22.

- [16] Green, C., Walker, J., Hoover-Dempsey, K., & Sandler, H. (2007). Parents motivations for involvement in children's education: An empirical test of a theoretical model of parental involvement. *Journal of educational Psychology*, 532-544.
- [17] Haynes, B. (2009). Shift: What it takes to finally reach families today. Loveland: Co: Group. Pub Inc.
- [18] Lemmer, E. (2007). Parental involvement in Teacher Education in South Africa. *International Journal about parents in Education*, 218-229.

AUTHORS

- i. Milkah Wangui (MA), Assistant Children Director, Nairobi Chapel Karen, milkahwangui3@gmail.com
- ii. Dr. Joash Mutua (Ph.D.) Department of religious studies, Africa International University
- iii. Joash.Mutua@Africaninternational.edu
- iv. Dr.Mercy Mauki(Ph.D), Department of education, Africa International University, Mercy.Mauki@africainternational.edu
- v. Kenneth Mburugu, (B.Sc. Econ, MSFI, Hons.), Department of Finance & Accounting, Kenya Methodist University, kenkamari@gmail.com

Correspondence Author –Milka Wangui, milkahwangui3@gmail.com, +254 728336 029.