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INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT ON SATISFACTION WITH PUBLIC BOARDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS AMONG STUDENTS IN MAARA SUB-COUNTY, THARAKA-NITHI COUNTY IN KENYA

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Citation:

Muchiri, C. K., Murungi, M. J., & Njagi, M. W. (2024). Influence of parental engagement on satisfaction with public boarding secondary schools among students in Maara Sub-County, Tharaka-Nithi County in Kenya. In: Mutembei Henry, Nduru Gilbert, Munyiri Shelmith, Gathungu Geoffrey, Kiboro Christopher, Otiso Wycliffe, Rithaa Jafford, Miriti Gilbert, Gichumbi Joel, Mwathi David, Gitonga Lucy, Nanua Jackin, Kahindi Roseline, Jonathan Kathenge & Muthui Zipporah (Eds.). *Proceedings of the Chuka University Tenth Annual International Research Conference held in Chuka University, Chuka, Kenya from 5th to 6th October, 2023. 42-46 pp.*

ABSTRACT

A boarding school is a learning institution where students study and live away from homes and families. A boarding school includes new ways of life including routines of social and academic activities. It is therefore important to ensure that students are well prepared and satisfied as they study and live in a boarding school. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of parental engagement on students' satisfaction with public boarding secondary schools in Maara Sub-County, Tharaka-Nithi County, in Kenya. This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The target population was a composition of 4,804 students, 38 principals, 38 boarding heads of department (HODs) and 38 form three class teachers from 38 boarding secondary schools in Maara Sub-County, Tharaka-Nithi County in Kenya. The sample size was a total of 439 respondents comprising of 357 form three students, 38 form three class teachers, 38 boarding HODs and six principals from public boarding secondary schools in Maara SubCounty. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 38 public boarding secondary schools from a list of 55 public secondary schools in Maara Sub-County. Simple random sampling was used to select 357 students who participated in the study. Data was gathered using interviews for principals and questionnaires for form three class teachers, boarding HODs and form three students. The instruments were piloted to determine their reliability in a school in Meru-South Sub-County, while validity of the instruments was ascertained by experts in the department of Education of Chuka University. The reliability coefficient for questionnaire was 0.8956. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 28.0 was used for data analysis. The obtained quantitative raw data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, frequency and mean). The findings of the study indicated that parental engagement has significant influence of on satisfaction with public boarding secondary schools among students. The research findings may be useful to parents and teachers as they guide students in public boarding secondary schools. The finding may also be helpful to students as they study and cope with life in public boarding secondary schools. The study findings are also likely to form a basis for reference that informs future research on students' satisfaction with boarding schools.

Key Words: Parental Engagement, Satisfaction and Boarding schools.

INTRODUCTION

Education is an ongoing process that brings change in the way that human beings live and behave. The three main types of education are; formal education, informal education and non-formal education (Globale, 2020). Formal education or formal learning usually takes place in a school, where people may learn basic, academic, or trade skills. Formal education is given by specially qualified teachers that are trained in their area of specialization. Informal education is the type of education that is not carried out in a school and does not use any particular learning method (Globale, 2020). Informal education is not instructed by an institution such as school or college and there is no fixed timetable or curriculum required unlike in formal educations. Non-formal education includes basic

adult education where one can learn how to read and write and simple skills. Non-formal, education is designed to care for the needs of a specific group of people.

A boarding school is learning institution where children study and live while being given formal education. Boarding schools have new ways of life including routines of social and academic activities, dress code, sleep and wake up time among others (Morris, 2013). According to Schaverian, (2011), students in boarding school live in a different environment from the one they are used to at home, without the familiar routines or people around them. Boarding schools were first introduced in United States to educate Native American children and youths according to Euro- American standards (Moris, 2013). From the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries onwards, boarding schools became wide-spread in most part of Europe and formed an important element in Education system. Later other countries including African countries joined and agreed with the boarding school's idea. Different families and countries had differing reasons for introduction of boarding schools (Laiser & Makewa, 2016). The main reason for many children joining boarding schools during the First World War was increased number of orphans due to the death or prolonged illness of the parents. Other reasons for boarding schools were that most communities did not have a primary school nearby and in other areas, boarding schools served as places children who were believed to be problematic to their parents or wider society were isolated.

Students' satisfaction is an attitude that results from an evaluation of students' educational experiences (Elliot & Healy, 2001). Satisfaction is a process that is influenced by several factors within one's environment. According to Choudhary (2012), students' satisfaction assumes four dimensions which include; teaching, facilities, attitudes and convenience. Students' satisfaction according to Abduh, Matriza and Ruthworth (2012), depends on the learning and teaching resources, teaching methods and achievement of expected outcomes. Providing a comfortable and nurturing environment to students is clearly very important to ensure students are satisfied as they study and live in boarding school. Students expect teachers to possess greater communication skills and the ability to carefully and skillfully engage students in the learning process. Students' satisfaction improves academic performance and promote students' mental health and stability, which are conducive for both short term academic performance and long term character and social development.

Some challenges that students experience while they study and live in boarding schools includes; struggle for acceptance, need for adjustment and decline in parents-child relationship (Samuel, 2021). Another challenge faced by students in boarding schools is bullying. If children are victims of bullying, they might have quite a hard time in boarding school since they spend much of their time living within the school environment (Serena, 2022). Involvement in immoral act is another problem which has eaten deep into the life of students. Some students in boarding schools engage in all sort of immoral acts such as homosexuality and hard drugs intake which is a danger to their life, mostly as a result of peer influence. Inadequate and improper feeding is another challenge face by students in boarding school. Students are limited to a particular kind of food that is not very well prepared and sometimes not well balanced. Students feed on this kind of meal day in day out a condition that has resulted to students' strikes which leads to burning of schools by students in bording schools According to Elizabeth (2016), students target to burn schools because their grievances are school-based. The most commonly mentioned complaints among students include principals' overly authoritarian styles of management, poor quality school diets and inadequate learning resources, including teaching. Majority of schools that are burnt by students are boarding schools across the country. Boarding schools are targeted because life for students in these schools can be "like prison". The boarding school, like prison, can be considered a "total institution". This idea, theorized by sociologist Erving Goffman, refers to a situation where all aspects of life occur in the same place, with the same cohort and according to a stringent schedule. The majority of school fires are set in students' dormitories, thereby also destroying students' own personal belongings. Some of the reasons given by students for burning dormitories is that the destruction of their dormitories means that they will be sent home and given some break from their intensive boarding school lifestyles.

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Parental engagement is the act of parents and teachers working together in order to improve and support the academic achievement, development and health of children. Willis, Clancy, Macknish, Nash, Pendergast, Exley, & O'Brien (2020), considers parental engagement is a significant involvement in their children's learning process. Learning can take place in a different settings including early childhood and childcare settings, private and public schools and in boarding and day school. Learning can also take place at home through learning from family members. Parental engagement is a greater commitment of parents to their children's learning

process and activities more than parental involvement. According to Ikunyua (2012), parent engagement allows teaching outside the classroom and creates a more positive experience for children which help children to perform better academically.

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Parental engagement entails the activities and principles of parents who support children to learn from when the child is born up to adulthood both at home, school, and in the community (Weiss, 2010). Parental engagement can be achieved by parents providing a encouraging environment for doing homework and an environment which enables intellectual development. Parental engagement can also be achieved by providing support for children's social and emotional well-being and by parent and teacher communicating and showing respect for the children, (Ahmedi, 2019) and engagement in the school community (Fox & Olsen, 2014). Parental engagement is a mutual responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and other organizations are committed to reach out to involve parents in meaningful ways and parents being committed to actively supporting their children's learning and development process. According to Chang and Guo (2021), family support scale instrument, comprises of six dimensions which include; economic and material assistance, emotional assistance, information assistance, network connection-based assistance, daily activities- based assistance and assistance in building self-worth are all available.

Parent-child communication and good relationship play an important role in developing good personality in children both at home and at school. According to Suriansyah and Aslamiah (2015), when children are very young, parents tend to be more engaged with their children. Also, parents show great engagement in their children's preschool education. As the child grows, parental engagement in the child's education decreases. Most parents send their children to boarding school to avoid responsibilities. It is important to note that as much as boarding school are suitable for busy parents and parents who are unavailable, it is essential for parents to ensure that students in boarding school are comfortable and satisfied as they study and live within the boarding school environment. Communication between parents and their children play an important role in developing good personality in children both at home and at school. According to Suriansyah and Aslamiah (2015), when children are very young, parents tend to be more engaged with their children. More significantly parents show great engagement in their children's preschool education. As the child grows, parental engagement in the child's education decreases. Most parents send their children to boarding school to avoid responsibilities. It is important to note that as much as boarding school are suitable for busy parents and parents who are unavailable, it is essential for parents to ensure that students in boarding school are comfortable and satisfied as they study and live within the boarding school environment.

According to Guo (2018), personal religion belief has significant influence on parental engagement in their children's education. Religion belief includes ideology, rituals, religious practice, and religious knowledge. When a person understands and behave according to the principles of the religion they believe in, they will be actively involved in their children's education. Religion belief affects how parents act towards their children. Parents who are religious are usually more engaged in character education for their children. Religion belief is one way that enables individuals to face and overcome challenges in life and that faith can help parents to be more engaged in children's education.

In a study carried out by De Dieu and Andala (2021), in Nyarugenge District in Rwanda with the aim of examining the influence of parents on students' discipline in twelve-year basic education in Rwanda. The study was guided by three specific objectives: to identify cases of indiscipline among students, to examine extents to which parents are involved the control of students' discipline and to establish the relationship between parental involvement and students' discipline in twelve years' basic education in Nyarugenge District. The research made use of explorative, descriptive survey and correlational design. Simple random sampling stratified random sampling and purposive sampling was the techniques used for analysis of data. Questionnaires and guided interview were used to collection data. The study findings recommended that parents should ensure that they get involved in their student's discipline control by communicating with the teachers and school authorities. The study findings also recommended that parents should reward their students once they show pleasant positive behaviors and even visiting their students for discipline issues when indiscipline issues arises. Also, school principals should often call for school meetings to discuss and make decisions on the policies of improving students' discipline. The study findings also recommended the government policy makers in the ministry of education to set up a special policy to awaken parents to participate in their students' discipline improvement. The current study will assess the influence of parental engagement on students' satisfaction with public boarding secondary schools in Maara Sub-County in Kenya. The results of the findings will be compared to establish whether the same conclusion will be made.

In June 2020, a taskforce was established by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Kenya to analyse the national roll of the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) and advise the minister on key implementation issues. Among the recommended changes by the taskforce report was the abolishing of boarding in all junior secondary schools (Gichana, 2021). According to the report, boarding school would be set aside for a few schools that will admit students across the country to pursue various pathways in senior secondary schools as proposed under the new system (Republic of Kenya, 2012). The proposal to abolish boarding schools was in line with the views of the former Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) Secretary General, Mr. Wilson Sossion, (Gichana, 2021). According to Mr. Sossion, boarding schools had outlived their usefulness and it was time to reform Kenya's education system to completely day schools and be accessed at the local level. According to Koech Commission (1999), many developed countries, like Britain that introduced boarding schools in Kenya, have abolished boarding schools and adopted the day school system as the main mode of secondary schooling. The Koech commission therefore felt that, it was time to have an education system that will meet the needs of Kenya and its people in the 21st century, by abolishing boarding school.

Contrary to the Koech Commission of 1999 recommendation on abolishing boarding schools, the postindependence increase of boarding schools was as a result of the need to meet the competitive job market and admission to the best schools available (Zachariah & Joshua, 2016). Parents send their children to boarding schools primarily for better education and to learn to live independently while others send their children to boarding schools because they cannot handle them. This was evident when some children became unmanageable during the COVID-19 lockdown. The need and desirability of boarding schools has continued unrestricted, particularly at the secondary school level. The Kenyan government has over time made amendments to the education sector to ensure that students are safe and satisfied with boarding school. Such reforms include abolishment of corporal punishment, and introduction of compulsory midterm to all schools. There are still cases of indiscipline cases like torching of school dormitories, bullying among students and strikes an indicator that students are not completely satisfied while in boarding schools. This study therefore seeks to find out the impact of parental engagement on students' satisfaction with boarding schools.

Boarding school environment includes new routine of social life, academic activities, dress code, sleep and wake up time among others. There have been many cases of indiscipline among students in public boarding secondary school in Kenya. The government of Kenya has made amendments in the education sector to ensure that students are safe and satisfied with public boarding schools. Education policies such as abolishment of corporal punishment, introduction of compulsory midterm to all school and introduction of guidance and counseling department have been put in place to ensure that students are safe and satisfied while in boarding schools. Despite of the numerous educational reforms, there are still a lot of indiscipline issues such as; burn down of school dormitories, students escaping from schools, student attacking teachers, bullying among student and strikes an indicator that students may not be satisfied with public boarding secondary schools. This study therefore, sought to establish the influence of parental engagement on the satisfaction with boarding secondary school among students.

The study sought to determine the influence of parental engagement on satisfaction with public boarding schools among students in Maara Sub-County in Tharaka-Nithi County in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, a type of research design that aims to obtain information to systematically describe a phenomenon, situation or population. Descriptive survey research design was appropriate for this study since it involved gathering information on individual's habits, opinion, attitudes and social issues. According to Syombua and Wamitu, (2019), descriptive research design incorporates acquiring information from population members to assess current status in relations to one or more variables. In relation to Siedlecki (2020), descriptive survey research design looks at the characteristics of a population, identify problems that exists within a unit, an organization, population or looks at variations in characteristics or practices between institutions or even countries. Questionnaires and interviews schedules were the main research instruments for data collections. Questionnaires incorporated closed and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were used to allow participants to fully elaborate their responses. Also, some of the responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale of; strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree, strongly agree. Reliability of the instruments was tested by subjecting the questionnaires to a pilot study in a school in the neighboring Meru-South Sub-County. The test-retest method was used to determine reliability of instruments.

The target population was 4,918 a composition of 4,804 students, 38 principals, 38 boarding HODs and 38 form three class teachers. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size Table; with a population of approximately 4,804 a sample of 357 was appropriate. Therefore, in this study respondents were 357 students, who were selected using simple random sampling technique from 38 public boarding secondary schools. Six (6) principals were picked purposively to represent the three categories (National, Extra-County and County) of public boarding secondary school in Maara Sub-County. A total of 38 class teachers, 38 boarding HODs and were picked by census method from public boarding secondary schools in the Sub-County.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed at exploring influence of parental involvement on students' satisfaction with public boarding secondary schools in Maara Sub-County, Tharaka-Nithi County in Kenya. Students were given five (5) statements which described activities that indicate parental engagement. They were asked to indicate their opinion on whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. Table 1 presents the students' responses

Table 1: Students' Opinion on Parental Involvement.

Statement	SD %	D %	UN %	A %	SA %
Parents provide enough shopping and pocket money for their children.	4.2	8.1	23.2	27.7	36.7
Parents call often to ask about their children's welfare.	21.8	17.4	36.1	14.3	10.4
Parents prepare students well before joining school	2.8	2.2	16.8	34.2	44.0
Parents attend school meetings and functions	3.9	3.4	15.7	28.3	48.7
Parents assists student with holiday assignment	31.4	14.0	26.3	17.1	11.2

(Key: %= Frequency, SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, U= Undecided, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree)

On whether parents provide enough shopping and pocket money for their children, majority of the students (36.7%) and (27.7%) strongly agreed and agreed with the statement respectively, 4.2% strongly disagreed while 8.1% disagreed that parents provide enough shopping and pocket money to their children. 'Parents call often to ask about their children's welfare' 36.1% of the students were undecided on the statement,

21.8% of the students strongly disagreed with the statement, 17.4% disagreed, while only 14.3% and 10.4% of the students agreed and strongly agreed respectively, that parents call often to ask about their children's welfare. This study finding is in accordance with Ginanto (2018) study findings in a study to establish the influence of parental involvement in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia whereby the study findings showed that although boarding schools have been implementing parental involvement quite well, schools should be made aware of differences in parental involvement practices such as families from lower social economic background that have less opportunities to get involved in school activities and programs.

On whether parents prepare students well before joining school, majority of the students (34.2%) agreed and 2.8% strongly disagreed with the statement. 'Parents attend school meetings and functions' majority of the students (48.7%) strongly agreed with the statement and 28.3% agreed that parents attend school meetings and functions. Only a few students (3.9%) strongly disagreed, 3.4% of the students disagreed with the statement. On whether parents assist students with holiday assignment majority of the students (31.4%) strongly disagreed with the statement, 26.3% of the students were undecided while 17.1% agreed and 11.2% strongly agreed that parents assist students with holiday assignment. This study finding is in line with Ahmadi, (2019) study findings that parental engagement can be achieved by parents having great expectations and respect for children, reading together, communication between parents and children, providing a positive environment for homework and an environment which stimulates cognitive development, providing support for children's emotional and social well-being. These study findings are also in line with Ikunyaa, (2012) study findings on parental engagement in students' academic performance, where by the findings indicated that parental engagement helps to extend teaching outside the class room and that parental engagement also creates more positive experience for children and helps children to perform better when they are in school.

This study is in line with (Ahmedi, 2019) study finding that parental engagement can be achieved by parents having great expectations and respect for children, reading together, communication between parents and children, providing a positive environment for homework and an environment which stimulates cognitive development, providing support for children's emotional and social well-being. These study findings are also in line with Ikunyaa, 2012 study findings on parental engagement in students' academic performance, where by the findings indicated that parental engagement helps to extend teaching outside the class room and that parental engagement also creates more positive experience for children and helps children to perform better when they are in school.

Five (5) statements which described activities that indicate parental engagement were given to the form three class teachers. The form three class teachers were asked to indicate their opinion on whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. Table 2 presents the teachers responses.

Table 2: Form Three Class Teachers' Opinion on Parental Involvement.

SD D UN A SA

Statement	%	%	%	%	%
Parents provide enough shopping and pocket money for their children.	0	15.8	47.4	31.6	5.3
Parents call often to ask about their children's welfare.	10.5	18.4	42.1	26.3	2.6
Students are well prepared before joining boarding school	2.6	21.1	36.8	31.6	7.9
parents attend school meeting and functions	2.6	5.3	28.9	39.5	23.7
Parents assist students with holiday assignment	26.3	44.7	23.7	5.26	0

(Key: %= Frequency, SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, U= Undecided, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree)

On whether parents provide enough shopping and pocket money for their children, 15.8% disagreed with the statement, 47.4% were undecided while 31.6% of the teachers agreed that parents provide enough shopping and pocket money for their children. 'Parents call often to ask about their children's welfare' 10.5% strongly disagreed with the statements, 18.4% disagreed with the statement, 42.1% were uncertain while 26.3% of the teachers agreed that parents call often to ask about their children's welfare. On whether students are well prepared before joining boarding school 21.1% disagreed with the statement, while 36.8% were uncertain and 31.6% of the teachers agreed with the statement that students are well prepared before joining public boarding school. 'Parent s attend school meeting and functions', majority (39.5%) of the teachers agreed with the statement while 23.7% strongly agreed that parents attend school meetings and functions. A few (5.3%) of the teachers and 2.6% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the statement while 28.9% were uncertain whether parents attend school meeting and functions. On whether parents assist students with holiday assignment, majority (44.7%) of the form three class teacher disagreed and 26.3% strongly disagreed with the statement. 23.7% of the form three class teachers were uncertain while 5.2% agreed and none (0%) strongly agreed that that parents assists students with holiday assignment.

Boarding HODs were given four (4) statements which described activities that indicate parental engagement. They were asked to indicate their opinion on whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. Table 3 presents the HODs responses.

Table 3: Boarding HODs' Opinion on Parental Engagement.

Statement	SD %	D %	UN %	A %	SA %
Parents provide enough shopping and pocket money for their children.	10.5	18.4	34.2	31.6	5.3
Parents call often to ask about their children's welfare.	7.9	36.8	26.3	21.1	7.9
Students adopt with ease when they joined school	13.2	23.7	31.6	23.7	7.9
Parents attend school meetings and functions	7.9	23.7	31.6	28.9	7.9

(Key: %= Frequency, SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, U= Undecided, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree)

On whether parents provided enough shopping and pocket money for their children, 10.5 % of the HODs strongly disagreed, 34.2% were uncertain while 31.6% of the of HODs agreed that parents provided enough shopping and pocket money for their children in boarding public boarding secondary schools. 36.8% of the teachers disagreed while 21.1% agreed while 26.3% of the HODs were uncertain whether parents call often to ask about their children's welfare while in public boarding secondary schools. 'Students adopt with ease when they join public boarding schools' 13.2% of HODs strongly disagreed with the statement, 23.7% disagreed while 31.6% of the HODS were uncertain. 23.7% agreed with the statement that students adopt with ease when they first join public boarding secondary school and only 7.9% of the HODs strongly agreed with the statement. On whether parents attended school meetings and functions 23.7% of the HODs agreed with the statement while 23.7% disagreed that parents attend school meetings and functions.

Analysis of the information on Tables, 1, 2 and 3 indicates that majority (64.5%) of students, 36.9% of teachers and 36.9% of boarding HODs agreed that parents provide enough shopping and pocket money for their children. On whether parents call often to ask about their children's welfare, only 32.9% of students and 28.9% of teachers agreed with the statement while majority (44.7%) of boarding HODs disagreed with the statement. 77.0% of students, 63.2% of teachers and 36.8% of boarding HODs agreed that parents attend school meetings and functions. 45.0% of students and 71.0% of form three class teachers agreed that parents assist

students with holiday assignment. It is therefore evident from the study findings that parents provide enough shopping and pocket money to their children, attend school meeting and functions but parents do not assist their children with holiday assessments and also do not often call to ask about their children's welfare. Interviews conducted with the principals also shows that most parents attend school meetings and functions although parents are only called to school to discuss students' welfare and discipline cases only when there is need to. This implies that parental engagement has influence on students' satisfaction with public boarding secondary school in Maara Sub-County, Tharaka-Nithi County in Kenya. This study finding is in line with the study finding of De Dieu and Andala (2021), in Nyarugenge District in Rwanda on the impact of parental involvement and students' discipline in twelve years' basic education schools with the purpose to examine the involvement of parents on students' discipline in twelve-year basic education in Rwanda. The study findings recommended that school leaders should regularly prepare school meetings for the purpose of discussing and make decisions on the strategies of improving students' discipline.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Research Findings

This study assessed the influence of parental engagement on satisfaction of public boarding secondary schools among students in Maara Sub-County, Tharaka-Nithi County in Kenya. Information obtained from students, teachers and boarding HODs questionnaires shows that parents provide enough shopping and pocket money to their children, parents attend school meeting and functions but most parents do not assist their children with holiday assignment and also most parents do not often call to ask about their children welfare. Also from the interviews conducted with the principals, it was evident that most parents attend school meetings and functions and sometimes parents are called to school to discuss students' welfare and discipline issues. Students are separated from their parents or guardians for a long period without any mean of communication which makes students miss home. Some students are not able to cope with boarding school due to homesick hence affect their academic performance and as a result students prefer transferring from boarding school to day school. This implies that parental engagement has influence on students' satisfaction with public boarding secondary school in Maara Sub-County, TharakaNithi County in Kenya.

CONCLUSIONS

The researcher concluded that parental engagement has significant influence on students' satisfaction with public secondary boarding school in Maara Sub-County, Tharaka-Nithi County in Kenya. Parents provide enough shopping and pocket money to their children, attend school meeting and functions but most parents do not assist their children with holiday assignment and do not often call to ask about their children welfare. Some students are not able to cope with boarding school due to homesick hence affect their academic performance and as a result students prefer transferring from boarding school to day school.

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