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Contemporary Challenges in Education: A Study on School–Family Interaction in the Primary Education Context of Malema-Sede, Mozambique

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ABSTRACT

This article examines family–school interaction and its impact on the cognitive performance of students at Malema-Sede Primary School, Mozambique. A mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative strategies, was employed to provide a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of the phenomenon. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with parents, teachers, and school administrators; structured questionnaires; participant observation during meetings and school events; and documentary analysis of performance reports and institutional records. The sample comprised 30 parents, 10 teachers, and 4 administrators. Results indicate substantial parental involvement in pedagogical meetings and celebratory events, but low participation in extracurricular activities, such as reading workshops and sports projects. School–family communication received mixed evaluations: some respondents rated it as good/excellent, while others considered it fair/unsatisfactory, highlighting weaknesses in formal communication channels. Statistical analyses revealed a positive correlation between parental involvement and student performance ($r = 0.68$; $p < 0.05$) and significant differences among students with varying levels of family engagement (ANOVA: $F = 4.32$; $p < 0.05$). Documentary evidence confirms that, although policies promoting parental involvement exist, their practical implementation is inconsistent. The study concludes that family participation supports learning and socio-emotional development, albeit constrained by

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structural and contextual barriers. Recommendations include enhancing communication strategies, strengthening school governance, and diversifying opportunities for continuous family engagement.
Keywords: Family–School Relationship; Parental Involvement; Cognitive Development; School Communication

1. Introduction

The interaction between family and school constitutes a central element in the educational process, significantly influencing both students' academic performance and socio-emotional development. In contemporary contexts, characterized by rapid social, economic, and cultural changes, this relationship becomes even more critical, as schools alone cannot fully meet the educational needs of children. Families, in turn, have evolved from being solely transmitters of traditional values to assuming more complex roles, including emotional support, learning guidance, and promotion of socialization. Recognizing the importance of this interaction requires understanding how family and school practices are articulated to foster the holistic development of students.

In Mozambique, family configurations have undergone significant transformations. Demographic shifts, the rise of single-parent households, urbanization, and the increasing participation of women in the labor market have altered traditional family roles. In this context, examining family–school collaboration not only reflects social realities but also provides insights for more effective educational policies aimed at enhancing learning outcomes and reducing inequalities. The study conducted at Malema-Sede Primary School offers a unique opportunity to analyze these dynamics in a real-world setting, identifying factors that facilitate or hinder family involvement and assessing the impact of such involvement on students' academic performance.

The innovative aspect of this research lies in its integration of qualitative and quantitative methods to understand family–school relationships. Unlike previous studies limited to quantitative analyses of participation frequency or isolated teacher reports, this investigation adopts a comprehensive approach, combining interviews with parents, teachers, and administrators, structured questionnaires, participant observation during school events, and documentary analysis of institutional records. This methodological triangulation provides a contextualized and holistic view of the school reality, capturing both subjective perceptions and observable patterns of family engagement, thereby enriching the understanding of the impact of parental collaboration on student development.

Another distinctive feature of this study is its focus on extracurricular activities and school–family communication mechanisms. Previous research often centers exclusively on pedagogical meetings and formal academic performance, neglecting the importance of reading workshops, sports projects, and cultural activities that contribute to students' holistic development. By investigating parental participation in these activities and perceptions of communication effectiveness, this study identifies gaps and opportunities that can inform more effective engagement strategies, emphasizing the need to diversify forms of family involvement.

The research also highlights the relevance of documentary analysis for understanding the practical implementation of policies encouraging family participation. While regulations promoting family–school collaboration exist, their application is often inconsistent. Institutional documentation provides valuable information on participation frequency, academic outcomes, and pedagogical practices, allowing for the correlation of objective data with stakeholders' perceptions. This approach strengthens the study and provides a solid foundation for actionable recommendations for school management and public policy.

Moreover, the study identifies significant correlations between family involvement and academic performance, demonstrating that parental presence and engagement contribute to students' motivation, discipline, task completion, and socio-emotional development. At the same time, it reveals structural and contextual barriers that limit effective participation, such as transportation challenges, time constraints, and limited knowledge of school activities. By mapping these obstacles, the research offers practical guidance for developing targeted strategies to enhance inclusion and family engagement in education.

The originality of this work lies in the integration of theory and practice. The study not only describes the existing reality but also critically reflects on how family–school

interaction can be enhanced in light of contemporary social transformations. Unlike prior research that focuses solely on the correlation between parental presence and academic outcomes, this investigation expands understanding of the family's role as an active agent in students' holistic development, encompassing cognitive, social, and affective dimensions. This integrated perspective provides a strong basis for recommendations on educational policies and innovative pedagogical practices, promoting more effective collaboration between schools and families.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Family

Understanding the concept of the family is fundamental to analyzing its interaction with schools and its impact on student development. Over time, the notion of family has evolved, reflecting social, cultural, and economic transformations that directly shape how parents, guardians, and other family members participate in children's education.

2.1.1. Traditional Definition and Evolution of the Family Concept

The traditional conception of the family has historically been centered on a hierarchical institution structured around parental roles and biological ties. For much of the twentieth century, the nuclear family—formed through legalized marriage and biological offspring—was regarded as the primary unit of care and socialization [1]. However, sociocultural and technological advances have increasingly challenged this perspective, revealing the need for a more dynamic and comprehensive understanding of the family as an evolving social institution.

According to Dermott and Fowler (2020) [1], the family should be understood as a set of social practices through which individuals construct relationships of care, affection, and belonging, regardless of blood relations or formal cohabitation. From this perspective, the family ceases to be defined merely by physical proximity or legal arrangements and is instead conceived as a network of meaningful interactions that ensure emotional support and social cohesion. This approach emphasizes that affective bonds and caregiving practices are central to family identity, allowing for the inclusion of reconstituted arrangements, flexible cohabitation, and intergenerational structures.

Contemporary family diversity should be understood as the outcome of social and historical processes that transform patterns of cohabitation, kinship, and care. According to Adler and Lenz (2023) [2], changes in gender relations, marital trajectories, and economic conditions have weakened homogeneous family models, fostering flexible, interdependent, and socially constructed arrangements that vary according to cultural and political contexts. The author argue that as social and economic contexts transform, families move from homogeneous structures to interdependent and flexible configurations. This perspective underscores that understanding the family cannot be limited to its formal structure; it requires observing how members organize responsibilities, share resources, and construct collective meanings.

Building upon this view, Seltzer (2019) [3] stresses the transition from a narrow perspective—focused on stable marriage and biological offspring—to a more inclusive approach that recognizes reconstituted families, multiple generations, and diverse living arrangements. The author explains that factors such as increased longevity, cultural change, and marital instability significantly influence the social role of modern families. Consequently, by focusing exclusively on structure, both policy and research risk neglecting the importance of emotional bonds and social support as key determinants of family well-being.

Bronk et al. (2024) [4] contribute to this discussion by introducing the concept of "family purpose", suggesting that the contemporary definition of family transcends domestic cohabitation or biological reproduction. For these authors, the family should be understood as a unit that shares goals, values, and collective purposes. This perspective highlights that family cohesion is not confined to physical proximity but arises from the capacity to organize actions imbued with shared meaning. Historically, the family has evolved from an exclusive focus on kinship and reproduction to encompass dimensions of collective purpose, thereby consolidating its role as a social actor and a space for intergenerational meaning-making.

Digital mediation emerges as another key factor in redefining family dynamics. Sefton-Green et al. (2025) [5] note that digital platforms reshape routines, caregiving roles, and relational practices, enabling bonds to be maintained even in geographically dispersed contexts. The "platformization"

of family life transforms the family into a fluid, hybrid, and adaptable network, whose functions are intertwined with external forces such as digital markets, public policies, and media culture. This view underscores that the contemporary family must be understood not merely through its structure but as a relational system in constant negotiation, mediated by technology and digital caregiving practices.

Although family structure remains a relevant dimension, recent research indicates that the quality of internal processes is a decisive factor for child and adolescent development. Savell et al. (2023)[6] argue that attention should shift from formal configuration to relational bonds, showing that affection, emotional support, and consistent caregiving practices are the key determinants of youth well-being. Their longitudinal study demonstrates that diverse family arrangements can provide equally favorable conditions for development, challenging the assumption that the nuclear family constitutes the ideal model for child growth.

Savell et al. (2023)[6] emphasize that the family should be conceived as a space of dynamic interactions, whose effectiveness depends on caregiving and support practices rather than fixed structures or cultural norms. This approach allows for understanding how families of multiple forms foster resilience, positive socialization, and emotional well-being, regardless of formal configuration. Moreover, it reinforces the need for public policies and educational interventions that value the diversity of family arrangements and promote effective caregiving practices.

Beyond redefining family structures, current literature challenges normative and political conceptions of what constitutes a "valid" family unit. The inclusion of digital families, extended care networks, and supportive communities demonstrates that the family simultaneously functions as a space of socialization, education, and transmission of cultural values. The incorporation of collective purpose and digitally mediated practices suggests that the family is not merely a private domain but also a social actor capable of contributing to community and cultural development.

This conceptual evolution implies that, in the twenty-first century, the analysis of the family must go beyond the definition of the domestic nucleus and consider it as a relational, adaptive, and culturally situated system. Family cohesion depends on multiple factors—affective ties, mutual support, shared purpose, and social integration—that together promote resilience, positive development, and cultural continuity. The contemporary understanding of family thus provides a robust foundation for scientific research, public policy formulation, and educational intervention, recognizing the diversity of family experiences and the centrality of relational processes.

2.1.2. Contemporary Perspectives on the Role of the Family in Society

The role of the family in society and education has been the subject of critical analysis throughout history, with different conceptions and expectations varying according to social context and prevailing theoretical frameworks. Since the earliest organized societies, the family has been regarded as the basic unit of socialization, where children and adolescents learned not only the skills necessary for survival but also the values, norms, and behaviors that sustained social order. This understanding of the family as a fundamental space for cultural and educational transmission has been widely recognized across various schools of thought over time.

Contemporary perspectives on the family's role in society and education reflect profound social and cultural transformations in recent decades, as well as diverse approaches to social protection and well-being. Assembly of the Republic (2004)[7] emphasizes that the evolution of the family is inseparable from economic and political changes in the modern world, which pose new challenges for families, particularly in the provision of education and social protection. The family's role today cannot be analyzed in isolation but must be considered in connection with other institutions, such as the state and the market, which play complementary roles in organizing social welfare.

With urbanization, industrialization, and increasing social and geographic mobility, families have become less self-sufficient and more dependent on external institutions, such as the state and the market, to ensure the well-being of their members. Traditional functions of protection, education, and care have gradually been transferred to these institutions, resulting in a reconfiguration of family responsibilities. In this context, the role of the family has been questioned, leading to a redefinition of its social functions in response to structural changes affecting contemporary societies.

The state, through its social policies, plays a crucial role in promoting family and individual autonomy relative to the community and the family itself. Social protection policies

such as public health, education, and social security systems are essential for enabling families to cope with social risks inherent to modern life, including unemployment, illness, and aging. These policies allow individuals to emancipate themselves from traditional forms of familial and communal dependency, providing a safety net that confers greater autonomy and freedom of choice. Ben-Arieh et al. (2014, p. 41)[8], the notions of individual autonomy are closely linked to social expectations of family-based protection, which differ according to theoretical and methodological interpretations of social reality".

Functionalist theories, such as structural functionalism, tend to view the state as complementing the functions of the family, whereas critical theories emphasize the need for a more active role for the state in addressing social and economic inequalities affecting families. These perspectives underscore the importance of universal access to essential services, allowing families to focus on educational and affective roles without bearing sole responsibility for material provision and the well-being of their members.

2.2. School

2.2.1. Definition and Historical Function of the School

The school emerges as an institution intrinsically linked to social, economic, and cultural transformations, serving both as a space for the transmission of knowledge and for the formation of citizens. Caffagni (2024)[9] argues that the school is a product of changes in the modes of production and social organization, arising as a necessary instrument for the division and specialization of knowledge. Throughout history, its functions have varied according to different contexts, the interests of dominant groups, and prevailing political projects, shifting between moral, disciplinary, and intellectual formation, and later toward the promotion of critical thinking and individual autonomy.

In antiquity, according to Caffagni (2024)[9], schooling was intended for "free men," and it was differentiated into spaces oriented either toward action or reflection, as exemplified by the Spartan and Athenian models. The role of education during this period was closely tied to preparing citizens to perform specific functions within society, whether through the exercise of active citizenship or the mastery of civic and military practices. During the feudal period, under the influence of the Church, the school assumed an ideological character, reinforcing hierarchies and religious norms. In modernity, with the rise of the bourgeoisie, the school began to form citizens who were useful to the new productive order, combining the teaching of technical skills with the development of politically engaged individuals[9].

In contemporary society, however, the school demonstrates a multifaceted role, continuing to articulate diverse social functions. According to Caffagni (2024)[9], the institution moves between training for work and for citizenship, reproducing cultural values and inequalities while also offering potential for resistance and democratic construction, depending on the pedagogical intentions and educational practices adopted. This duality reveals that the school is not a neutral space; its structures and curricula reflect power relations but also open possibilities for social transformation.

Gawryszewski and Hastenreiter (2023)[10] complement this analysis by situating the social function of the school within the broader context of class structures. The Escola Normal (Teacher Training School), in particular, emerged as an instrument of social control, training teachers to meet the demands of capital and to sustain the technical and social division of labour. The authors emphasize that, although the school may serve as a tool of emancipation, it has historically reproduced structural inequalities, functioning simultaneously as a means of social mobility and as a mechanism for maintaining hierarchy.

Successive educational reforms have repositioned the school as a space for teacher education while maintaining its ambivalent nature: although it promotes technical skills and discipline, it also offers opportunities for critical development and social awareness. In this sense, the social function of the school is marked by a constant tension between meeting the demands of the productive system and creating opportunities for reflection and emancipation.

Fabregat (2022)[11] provides a complementary perspective by understanding the school as a fundamental social space for human and civic formation—one whose function transcends the mere transmission of content. Drawing inspiration from thinkers such as Freire and Saviani, the author argues that the school should integrate knowledge, values, and pedagogical practices that promote social transformation and the realization of educational rights. In this view,

the school does not simply reproduce knowledge but constructs meaningful experiences aimed at the child's holistic development and the consolidation of equitable, high-quality education.

According to Fabregat (2022)[11], the social function of the school must be analyzed in light of its historical and political ties. Teachers' understanding of this function is decisive for educational quality. When educators recognize the school as a space for critical formation and the promotion of citizenship, their pedagogical practices reflect a commitment to humanization, dialogue, and the collective construction of knowledge. Thus, the school becomes more than a site of instruction; it acts as an agent of social transformation, capable of preparing critical, participatory individuals who are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

2.2.2. The Role and Vision of the School in Student Formation and Socialization

Throughout history, the school has played a crucial role, and its function should be analyzed both in historical terms and in relation to evolving educational approaches. Michel Foucault, for example, conceptualizes the school as a space of discipline and constraint, while simultaneously functioning as a network of social relations. For Foucault, the school is not merely a site for the transmission of knowledge but also an environment where norms and social practices are formed and reinforced Guzmán Marín (2017)[12].

In this context, it is important to recognize that the school's role extends beyond the mere delivery of academic content. It is a space that integrates affective and social education, bearing the responsibility of preparing students for citizenship and harmonious coexistence in society. Social awareness equips students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for active citizenship and national development, helping them appreciate principles such as democracy, human rights, environmental sustainability, and cultural diversity (Asare and Antwi, 2025)[13]. This holistic approach reflects the need to prepare students not only for the labor market but also for active and responsible participation in society.

Accordingly, schools should be understood as central agents of socialization, systematically transmitting knowledge, cultural values, and social norms, preparing students for future roles as responsible citizens and productive members of society (Asare and Antwi, 2025)[13]. This perspective broadens the understanding of the school's role, highlighting its function as a dynamic space where teaching and learning processes are interactive and shaped by the social relations occurring within the institution.

The school's role in academic formation is central. Through a structured curriculum covering multiple areas of knowledge, the school not only imparts information and technical skills but also fosters critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and creativity. According to Freire (2005)[14], education should be viewed as a process that extends beyond knowledge transmission, involving the development of critical and socially conscious individuals[12].

Beyond academic formation, the school is also a space for personal development, providing opportunities to cultivate social, emotional, and behavioral skills. Interactions with peers and teachers contribute to the construction of students' personal and social identity, fostering competencies such as empathy, cooperation, and respect for diversity[12].

Socialization constitutes one of the school's most important functions. Through daily interactions within the school environment, students learn social norms, cultural values, and expected behaviors. The school operates as a microcosm of society, where students experience and internalize social practices essential for adult life[12]. This socialization function is critical for integrating students into broader social and cultural contexts, preparing them to interact and collaborate with others beyond the school setting.

While the primary focus of the school is academic and social education, many institutions also provide spaces and activities supporting students' spiritual and religious development, offering opportunities for reflection, emotional support, and the cultivation of personal values. It is, however, essential that these practices remain inclusive and respect students' religious diversity[12].

2.3. Education

2.3.1. Definition and Objectives of Education

Throughout history, education has consistently emerged as a phenomenon of profound societal relevance. Since the earliest civilizations, various forms of education and knowledge transmission have been developed, adapting to the particularities of each social group and the demands of their respective historical contexts.

According to UNESCO (2023)[15], "Education is no longer understood as something limited to schooling, but as a lifelong process in multiple contexts, in which learning occurs within families, communities, and society at large, involving shared responsibility among a wide variety of actors." This perspective reinforces the idea that education has always been a shared social action, permeating multiple spheres of daily life.

Bélanger (2010)[16] emphasizes that education is a continuous human development process encompassing physical, intellectual, and moral dimensions. This process is not confined to childhood or formal schooling but extends across the lifespan, enabling individuals to integrate socially, actively participate in the community, and respond to the economic, cultural, and social demands of contemporary society. Similarly, Durkheim (1975)[17] characterizes education as the process through which individuals learn to become members of society. He emphasizes that there is no single path for everyone to acquire social membership; rather, individuals learn their roles within their class, group, caste, profession, or moral environment. In this sense, socialization entails learning to occupy one's proper place within society.

Socialization can be understood along two dimensions, as suggested by Tlili et al. (2023)[18], education has a social dimension, in which cultural heritage and knowledge are transmitted through institutions and mediated by educators, despite challenges such as limited digital skills and incentives. This duality demonstrates that education is not merely a passive process of knowledge transmission but also an active process of transformation. As individuals absorb and reinterpret the culture in which they are embedded, they contribute to the evolution of society itself.

Consequently, education serves as a critical link between the individual and the collective, enabling not only the internalization of social norms and values but also the construction of a critical, self-aware identity. As individuals appropriate inherited cultural knowledge, they do not merely reproduce it but reinterpret it in light of their own experiences and specific contexts. This underscores that socialization is neither homogeneous nor linear; it is multifaceted and continuous, with individuals acting as active agents in shaping and transforming society. Thus, education, as both a social and cultural practice, plays a fundamental role in bridging the legacy of the past with contemporary challenges, preparing individuals to act in a reflective, participatory, and transformative manner within their communities.

2.3.2. The Relationship between Formal Schooling and Informal Family Education

Despite various critiques, the relationship between formal schooling and the informal education provided by the family remains essential for individual development. As observed by Simbo (2025)[19], education occurs continuously through social interactions, shaping individuals through collective norms and shared experiences. This implies that both the school and the family must be aligned in their educational efforts, working complementarily to foster the holistic development of the individual. In this sense, the school alone cannot meet all the educational needs of a child; a strong connection with the family environment is necessary to make the learning process truly effective.

Furthermore, as highlighted by these authors, education represents one of humanity's most valuable assets, as it enables the transmission of accumulated cultural knowledge across generations. This cultural transmission does not occur automatically but through formal and informal educational practices, in which the school plays a central role. However, for this transmission to succeed, collaboration between the school and the family is essential, as both share responsibility for preparing new generations for the future. Cooperation between these two institutions not only enhances the quality of education but also contributes to the development of more conscious and socially prepared citizens, capable of navigating a rapidly changing society.

According to Asare and Antwi (2025, p. 9018)[13], "while primary socialization occurs within the family, secondary socialization takes place at school, where the values taught at home are refined and expanded through interaction with teachers, peers, and institutional norms.". In this context, teachers play a pivotal role as mediators of this relationship. They must remain attentive to the needs and expectations of both students and their families, contributing not only to students' academic development but also to the creation of a more cohesive and integrated educational community.

Thus, education, in all its dimensions and approaches, emerges as a decisive factor in both individual formation and social organization. Through education, values, knowledge, and skills are transmitted from generation to generation,

ensuring cultural continuity while enabling social transformation. As this analysis demonstrates, the relationship between school and family is essential for the educational process to occur effectively, providing students with the necessary conditions to secure a better future, both for themselves and for society at large.

2.3.3. The Impact of the Family–School Relationship on Students' Academic Activities

The role of the family in contemporary society can no longer be seen merely as a space for reproducing and maintaining wealth, as it was in the past, where families played a central role in transmitting economic and social heritage, ensuring the continuity of status and resources across generations. This reductive view no longer aligns with the complexity of the demands of the modern world.

Today, families are expected to fulfill a variety of roles, including educating and socializing children as well as providing emotional and financial support, reflecting broader structural and cultural changes that increasingly shift responsibilities from the state to the family (Eustace et al., 2018) [20]. Consequently, the family now faces added burdens, such as caring for the elderly, supporting mental health, and overseeing children's education. These expanded roles make the family not only a space of affection and coexistence but also a crucial element in sustaining social and economic order.

According to Oliveira (2009) [21], psychosocial factors demonstrate that the family environment significantly influences learning. The availability of educational materials, parental involvement in children's development, interaction patterns, language use at home, and the emotional climate all shape children's academic learning processes. According to Acharya, Mjaya, and Robinson-Pant (2025) [22], the family constitutes the first social space in which children construct meanings about learning by actively participating in everyday practices involving language, interaction, and cultural values. In these environments, knowledge emerges through intergenerational coexistence and mutual support, enabling children to develop early understandings of the world, behavior, and communication even before formal schooling mediates their learning.

By observing and imitating parental behaviors, children develop cognitive and social skills essential for navigating the school environment. A lack of adequate family support can lead to unrealistic expectations of the school, such as believing it is solely responsible for all educational and behavioral outcomes. This creates a dilemma: while the school plays a critical role in academic formation, it cannot substitute for familial engagement in a child's holistic development.

Family responsibilities in education have evolved, with parents increasingly adopting active roles in the learning process. Active parental participation through involvement in school activities or encouragement of home learning reinforces the importance of a supportive family environment for intellectual growth. This school-family partnership is crucial, as the school alone cannot address all educational needs. "Contemporary family dynamics, including parents' educational level, income, and patterns of communication with the school, directly shape students' engagement in learning" (Marah, Fute, and Kangwa, 2025) [23]. Social changes, including the rise of single-parent households and diverse family arrangements, require schools to adapt, recognize these new realities, and collaborate with parents to ensure quality education.

The family's role extends beyond knowledge transmission; it encompasses emotional well-being and the development of children's social and cognitive skills. Comprehensive student development transcends academic performance, encompassing social skills such as empathy, respect, and teamwork, alongside the emotional support necessary to meet school challenges. This broadened view underscores the importance of a stable and nurturing family environment for educational success and holistic development [23].

In this context, the role of the family is directly articulated with the role played by the school, which is configured as a complementary and indispensable space for the student's holistic development. The school is understood as a central institution in the processes of students' formation and socialization, since, beyond transmitting formal knowledge, it operates as a space for the production of norms, values, and modes of behavior. Under this logic, schools do not merely transmit formal knowledge but also contribute to students' self-regulation, shaping socially valued subjectivities through power relations and everyday governance (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2019) [24].

Parents act not only as academic supporters but also as mediators of experiences that foster self-confidence and resilience, enabling children to thrive in often challenging

school settings. Without adequate emotional support, even the most effective educational system will struggle to achieve full student success. Oliveira (2009)[21] emphasizes that family.

Moreover, ongoing teacher training, combined with active family involvement, creates a dynamic and adaptable learning environment capable of responding to the demands of a constantly evolving society. Consequently, the school-family partnership is not merely desirable; it is essential to ensure that children and adolescents receive a comprehensive education that extends beyond the formal curriculum while promoting strong ethical and moral values.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Type and Design of the Study

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between family and school and its impact on the academic performance of students at Malema-Sede Primary School, Mozambique.

The methodological choice for a mixed design was based on the premise that combining numerical and narrative data allows for a more robust analysis of complex educational phenomena (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018)[25]. The study followed a convergent parallel design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and later integrated during the interpretation phase. This approach enabled direct triangulation of results, contributing to a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The research was descriptive-correlational in nature, aiming to identify associations between family involvement and academic performance, and exploratory regarding participants' perceptions and experiences.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The target population included three key groups within the educational community: parents or guardians, teachers, and school administrators (principals and pedagogical coordinators). The total sample comprised 44 participants: 30 parents (68%), 10 teachers (23%), and 4 administrators (9%) (**Figure 1**).

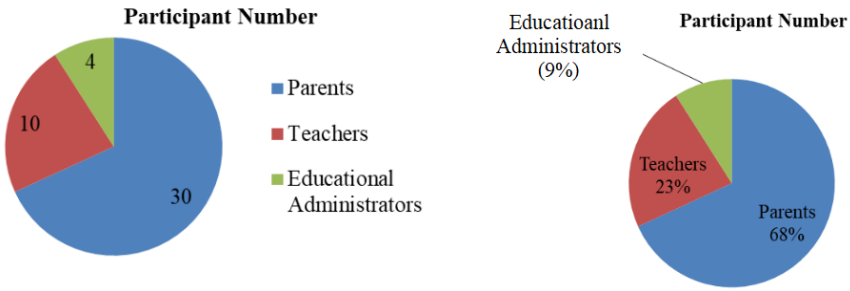

Figure 1. Sample Distribution by Participant Group.

A non-probabilistic sampling strategy was employed, combining convenience sampling—to include parents who were available and willing to participate—and purposive sampling, applied to teachers and administrators with direct experience in school–family collaboration practices. This strategy was chosen to ensure the inclusion of participants with relevant lived experiences and situated knowledge, as supported by Patton (2015)[26] and Denzin (2017)[27].

Inclusion criteria included: active affiliation with the institution, a minimum of one academic year of experience, and informed consent. Although the sample was not statistically representative, its diversity ensured thematic saturation in the qualitative analysis and sufficient variability for examining quantitative patterns.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

Four main instruments were used to ensure methodological triangulation Denzin (2017)[27] and complementarity between datasets:

Structured questionnaire—Administered to parents and teachers, containing closed-ended questions and Likert-type scales (1–5) addressing the frequency, intensity, and forms of family involvement (e.g., homework supervision, teacher

communication, meeting participation, material and emotional support). These data enabled the identification of quantitative patterns and the establishment of correlations.

Semi-structured interviews—Conducted with 12 participants (6 parents, 4 teachers, and 2 administrators), exploring perceptions, motivations, barriers, and expectations related to family involvement. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes and was audio-recorded and transcribed with participants' explicit authorization.

Participant observation—Undertaken during parent meetings, school events, and extracurricular activities, using pre-structured observation grids. This technique provided direct empirical evidence of school–family interactions, allowing the analysis of behaviors and attitudes in natural contexts.

Document analysis—Focused on academic performance reports, meeting minutes, and school–family communication records. The aim was to complement empirical findings with institutional data and to assess the coherence between administrative practices and participants' perceptions.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 26). Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and standard deviations) and inferential analyses, including Pearson's correlation coefficient and analysis of variance (ANOVA), were employed to identify significant relationships between family involvement variables and academic performance.

Qualitative data were subjected to inductive thematic analysis, following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019)[28]. The steps included: exhaustive reading of transcripts, open coding, grouping into categories, and identification of core themes. The emergent categories—school–family communication, parental support, socioeconomic barriers, and student motivation—were then compared with quantitative findings to promote interpretative integration of results.

The articulation of different methods and sources of evidence, such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, and document analysis, helps to minimise methodological biases and strengthen the internal validity of qualitative research, increasing analytical consistency and the credibility of the results achieved (Santana and Paiva Júnior, 2022)[29].

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The study fully complied with the ethical standards of the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Ethical Guidelines of the National Bioethics Committee of Mozambique All participants were informed about the objectives, procedures, and implications of the research and signed the Informed Consent Form. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed, and participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

3.6. Methodological Justification and Validity

The adoption of a mixed-methods approach is justified by the inherent complexity of family–school interactions, which encompass cognitive, emotional, cultural, and contextual dimensions. As argued by Arias, Meneses, and Berrío (2023)[30] and Fan and Chen (2020)[31], the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods enhances explanatory power and provides interpretative depth in studies on parental involvement and academic performance.

Recent research conducted in African contexts also underscores the relevance of this approach. Santana and Paiva Júnior (2022)[29] highlight that the combination of interviews, questionnaires, and observations allows for a deeper understanding of the cultural and socioeconomic contexts being investigated, as the intersection of these techniques broadens the reading of the social dynamics that condition the involvement of different actors in educational and community processes. Similarly, Martin et al. (2021)[32] show that methodological integration contributes to more accurately assessing the impact of community and school-based programmes on children's learning outcomes.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Results

The analysis of the collected data revealed significant patterns regarding family involvement, school–family communication, and their impact on the academic performance of students at Malema-Sede Primary School. The methodological triangulation enabled the comparison of perceptions among parents, teachers, and administrators, thereby rein-

forcing the reliability of the conclusions.

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Parental Involvement in School Activities

Quantitative data indicate that parental involvement is variable. Only 30% of parents participate frequently in meetings and school events, while 50% participate occasionally and 20% rarely. This pattern is illustrated in **Figure 2**, which shows the percentage distribution of parental participation frequency.

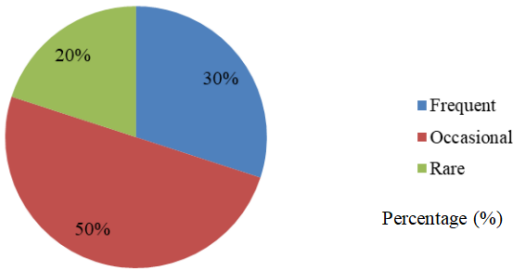

Figure 2. Frequency of Parental Participation in School Activities.

Teachers reported that parental involvement positively impacts students' academic performance, particularly in terms of motivation, discipline, and task completion. However, extracurricular activities such as reading workshops and sports projects show low parental participation, suggesting that factors such as time availability, transportation, and awareness of activities may limit family collaboration.

Qualitative analysis of interviews indicates that parents perceive school meetings as useful opportunities to understand their children's progress but feel minimally involved in pedagogical decision-making. The disparity in parents' assessment of school family communication, considered good by 45%, fair by 35%, and excellent by only 20%, highlights the need for more effective engagement strategies and clearer communication channels.

4.1.2. School Policies and Practices

Document analysis revealed that the school has formal parental engagement policies, including invitations to meetings, periodic performance reports, and celebratory events. However, the practical implementation of these policies faces limitations. As shown in **Table 1**, the alignment between established policies and actual execution is partial, primarily due to ineffective communication, lack of resources, and insufficient parental involvement.

Table 1. Implementation of parental engagement policies.

School Policy	Implementation (%)	Notes
Pedagogical meetings	80	High frequency, limited participation
Celebratory events	70	Effective participation on specific dates
Reading and sports workshops	30	Low adherence and engagement
Performance reports	60	Regular distribution, limited follow-up

These findings align with the literature suggesting that well-designed policies, if not consistently implemented, fail to achieve the desired impact on family involvement [16]. The study highlights the need for improved institutional communication, ongoing training for teachers and administrators, and incentives to increase parental participation.

4.1.3. Participant Observation

Observations during school events confirmed that parental engagement is more effective in structured activities, such as pedagogical meetings and school celebrations. In these contexts, parents actively participate, providing emotional support to students and collaborating with teachers in organizing activities. Conversely, extracurricular activities show low participation, indicating logistical and motivational barriers (see **Table 2** and **Figure 3**).

These data indicate that the effectiveness of parental collaboration depends on the type of activity, supporting Oliveira [21], who argues that clear and goal-oriented contexts enhance parental involvement.

Table 2. Parental participation in different types of activities.

Activity Type	High Participation (%)	Medium Participation (%)	Low Participation (%)
Pedagogical meetings	80	15	5

Table 2. *Cont.*

Activity Type	High Participation (%)	Medium Participation (%)	Low Participation (%)
Celebratory events	75	20	5
Reading workshops	20	30	50
Sports projects	15	25	60

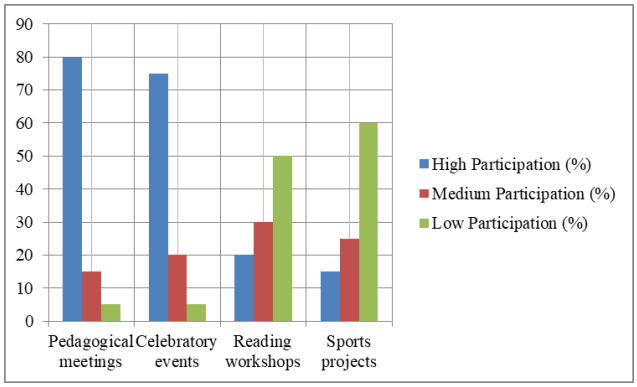

Figure 3. Parental participation in different types of activities.

4.1.4. Impact on Academic Performance

The correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement was analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient, revealing a significant positive association ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). Students whose parents regularly participate in school activities achieve higher averages in core subjects such as Portuguese Language and Mathematics, as well as better attendance and behavior records.

Qualitative analysis reinforces this finding, showing that engaged parents encourage study habits at home, supervise homework, and foster dialogue about school experiences. Family involvement, therefore, functions as a reinforcing factor in formal learning, contributing to students' cognitive and socio-emotional development.

4.1.5. Documentary Analysis

Most of the performance reports analyzed indicate an improvement in students' academic outcomes when parental participation is present. These reports consider academic performance in terms of grades and averages, class attendance, classroom behavior, engagement in school activities, and the development of socio-emotional skills.

Active participation is most frequently observed in meetings and school events such as celebrations, pedagogical meetings, and science fairs.

The improvements recorded in performance reports are consistent with the theoretical perspectives outlined in the literature review, which suggest that an engaged family environment contributes significantly to students' academic success.

The documentation of parental involvement in meetings supports the need for practices that facilitate families' continuous and meaningful participation in school life.

5. Discussion

The analysis of family–school interactions at Malema-Sede Primary School highlights patterns of parental engagement that reflect both progress and persistent limitations. Quantitative data indicated that only 30% of parents participated frequently in meetings and school events, 50% occasionally, and 20% rarely. Engagement was higher in structured activities such as pedagogical meetings and school celebrations, while participation in extracurricular activities—reading workshops and sports projects—remained limited. These findings align with Bronk et al. (2024)[4], who argue that contemporary families are defined less by co-residence or biological ties and more by relational practices, care, and shared purposes. Parental involvement appears to be strategic, focusing on moments perceived to directly influence children's development.

Qualitative analyses revealed that parents value school meetings as opportunities to monitor academic progress but feel minimally involved in pedagogical decision-making. This observation echoes Seltzer (2019)[3], who notes that modern families seek meaningful engagement beyond mere physical presence, reflecting dynamic roles and selective participation. Similarly, Sefton-Green et al. (2025)[5] emphasize that digital mediation has reshaped family-school relations, yet the full potential of these platforms remains underutilized, suggesting opportunities to enhance parental engagement through technological channels.

Communication between school and family emerged as a critical determinant of participation. Although formal policies—including written notices, performance reports, and event invitations—exist, implementation was incon-

sistent. The moderate positive correlation between communication quality and parental involvement ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$) underscores the importance of frequent, clear, and accessible interactions. This finding resonates with Fabregat (2022)[11] and Simbo (2025)[19], who stress that educational efficacy depends on aligned efforts between families and schools, tailored to the diversity of family structures and student needs.

Parental involvement was positively associated with academic outcomes. ANOVA results revealed significant differences in student performance across levels of parental engagement ($F = 4.32$, $p < 0.05$), with higher participation correlating with superior grades in core subjects, better attendance, and more positive classroom behavior. These findings reinforce the assertion[22] that psychosocial factors, including parental verbal interaction, emotional climate, and availability of educational resources, strongly influence learning. Observations further indicated that students from highly engaged families exhibited greater motivation, proactivity, and socio-emotional competence, consistent with Marah et al. (2025)[23], who highlights the family as the primary socialization context shaping cognitive, behavioral, and social skills.

The present study also illuminates broader contextual factors. Limited time, transport challenges, and competing parental responsibilities constrained engagement, echoing Oliveira (2009)[21], who notes that the individualistic logic of contemporary capitalist systems and precarious labor conditions shift responsibilities to families, reducing their capacity for educational involvement. This underscores that parental engagement cannot be understood in isolation; socioeconomic, cultural, and structural dimensions are essential for interpreting participation patterns.

The analysis of formal policies revealed gaps in clarity, monitoring, and adaptability to family diversity. Despite guidelines promoting parental engagement, implementation depended heavily on individual teachers and school managers. This scenario mirrors Gawryszewski and Hastenreiter (2023)[10], who describe the school as historically ambivalent—both reproducing social hierarchies and offering potential for emancipation. Effective family-school partnerships, therefore, require institutionalized strategies that combine clear directives, ongoing teacher training, and mechanisms for consistent follow-up.

Crucially, the findings highlight the complementarity of formal and informal education, as emphasized by Simbo (2025)[19]. Schools provide knowledge and structured learning environments, while families reinforce, contextualize, and motivate learning. Fabregat (2022)[11] further notes that schools assume a social function extending beyond knowledge transmission; they serve as arenas for holistic development in partnership with families. Parental engagement enhances cognitive development, socio-emotional skills, and values formation, establishing a feedback loop that strengthens both academic and personal growth.

The study also demonstrates that engagement is influenced more by relational processes than by family structure, in line with Savell et al. (2023)[6]. Whether nuclear, single-parent, or blended, families that provide consistent emotional support, supervision, and encouragement contribute significantly to student outcomes. These findings corroborate Dermott and Fowler (2020)[1], who argue that contemporary families are defined by dynamic practices of care and belonging rather than rigid structural criteria. Bronk et al. (2024)[4] extend this view, suggesting that families act as social agents with collective purposes, and parental involvement in school can be seen as an expression of these broader family objectives.

Finally, the low participation in extracurricular activities suggests the need to expand engagement strategies beyond formal events. Schools should employ multiple communication channels, integrate digital platforms, and provide flexible participation opportunities that account for socioeconomic constraints and logistical challenges. Sefton-Green et al. (2025)[5] indicate that platform-mediated engagement can enhance parental participation, particularly in contexts where physical presence is difficult. Implementing these strategies can foster inclusive, continuous, and meaningful parental involvement.

In summary, this study confirms the central role of families in educational processes and underscores that effective engagement requires addressing structural, contextual, and institutional barriers. Family-school collaboration is pivotal not only for academic success but also for holistic student development, encompassing socio-emotional, behavioral, and ethical dimensions. Policies and practices that recognize family diversity, enhance communication, and promote active participation create conditions for a synergistic educational ecosystem. These findings reinforce the systemic

perspective of family-school interaction, highlighting the necessity of integrated strategies that articulate educational policies, institutional practices, and relational dynamics to optimize both learning and well-being.

6. Conclusions

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between families and schools and their influence on students' academic performance at Malema-Sede Primary School. The evidence demonstrates that family engagement remains a determining factor in shaping students' educational experiences, yet it also reveals substantial disparities in participation patterns. While parental involvement is relatively high in structured activities such as school meetings and celebrations, it declines considerably in extracurricular initiatives, such as reading workshops and sports projects. This inconsistency reflects not only the parents' selective prioritization of activities perceived as academically relevant but also broader socioeconomic and logistical constraints that limit continuous engagement.

The results further highlight that effective communication between families and schools is a crucial dimension of educational success. Although formal mechanisms for communication exist—such as meetings, written notices, and performance reports—their implementation is uneven, resulting in mixed perceptions among parents. A considerable portion of families reported satisfaction with the school's communication practices, yet others expressed dissatisfaction due to a lack of transparency, irregular feedback, and limited involvement in decision-making processes. Strengthening communication channels through clarity, regularity, and accessibility emerges as a decisive factor for enhancing trust and collaboration between schools and families.

The study also confirms that parental involvement is positively associated with students' academic outcomes, particularly in core subjects such as Portuguese and Mathematics. Children whose parents demonstrate consistent engagement in school life tend to show higher levels of motivation, discipline, and achievement. These results underscore the complementary role of families and schools as co-responsible agents in the educational process. However, it is equally important to recognize that family engagement cannot be analyzed in isolation from broader structural factors. Time constraints, economic challenges, transportation difficulties, and limited awareness of school activities all represent significant barriers to continuous participation.

From an institutional perspective, the existence of policies promoting parental involvement indicates an awareness of its importance, but their practical application remains inconsistent. This discrepancy reveals a structural weakness within the school's organizational and managerial framework. Policies that remain at the level of formal documentation, without adequate monitoring and accountability mechanisms, fail to generate the intended outcomes. Therefore, there is a need for institutional strategies that integrate parental engagement into the broader pedagogical and administrative processes of the school.

The study also demonstrates that engagement tends to be stronger when objectives are clearly defined and participation is explicitly invited. This suggests that schools must provide structured opportunities for families to contribute meaningfully to educational planning and decision-making. Expanding engagement beyond formal meetings to include home-based learning support, digital communication, and collaborative community activities can significantly enhance the quality and continuity of family participation.

A critical reflection on the findings also reveals methodological and contextual limitations. The study's reliance on cross-sectional data restricts the ability to capture long-term trends in parental involvement and student outcomes. Additionally, the sample is limited to one primary school, which may constrain the generalizability of results to other educational contexts with different cultural and socioeconomic characteristics. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, comparative analyses, and mixed methodological approaches to better understand the causal mechanisms linking family involvement and educational achievement.

While the study focuses on the specific context of Malema-Sede, its implications extend beyond the local level and provide valuable insights for district, provincial, and national educational policies. The observed patterns of irregular participation, inconsistent communication, and socioeconomic constraints reflect challenges found in other areas of the country. Therefore, the results support the need for public policies that promote parental involvement as a key

element of strategies to improve educational quality. Investments in teacher training for effective communication, the creation of inclusive school committees, the establishment of participation indicators, and the integration of accessible digital platforms can enhance collaboration between families and schools and contribute to educational equity.

The data from this study also engage with global discussions on parental involvement, particularly in contexts marked by social inequalities and structural limitations. The experience of Malema-Sede illustrates that effective involvement goes beyond physical presence at school activities. It requires relationship-building that is horizontal, culturally sensitive, and focused on educational justice. This perspective contributes to international debates on inclusion, community participation, and the sustainability of educational policies in middle- and low-income countries.

Despite these limitations, the research provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of school–family collaboration. It underscores the importance of institutional coherence, communication, and social inclusion as prerequisites for effective parental engagement. The evidence supports the notion that successful educational outcomes depend not solely on classroom practices but also on the strength of the relational networks connecting families, schools, and communities.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study have several implications for school practice and educational policy. First, effective communication between schools and families is crucial to strengthening parental participation. Schools should develop and implement more effective communication strategies to ensure that all parents are well-informed and actively engaged in school activities. This may include the use of multiple channels, such as face-to-face meetings, e-mails, social media, and school communication applications.

In addition, schools should not only establish policies aimed at fostering family involvement but also implement them consistently. This requires continuous professional development for teachers and school leaders to ensure alignment with recommended practices for parental engagement, as well as the provision of adequate resources to support these practices.

Participant observation highlights the importance of creating more opportunities for family involvement in extracurricular activities, such as thematic workshops, cultural events, school fairs, and interactive parent–child sessions. Schools should explore ways to make these activities more meaningful and accessible for families, promoting an environment that encourages parental participation across all aspects of students' school life.

Finally, documentary analysis underscores the importance of monitoring and documenting family participation in order to maintain detailed records. These records should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of engagement strategies and to identify areas for improvement.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: D.E.T. and N.A.D.; Methodology: D.E.T.; Data collection: D.E.T.; Formal analysis: D.E.T. and N.A.D.; Validation: D.E.T. and N.A.D.; Writing—original draft: D.E.T.; Writing—review & editing: D.E.T. and N.A.D. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles governing research in the social and educational sciences. All procedures complied with the relevant ethical standards and regulations in Mozambique.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants (parents, teachers, and school administrators) prior to data collection.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the authors upon reasonable request, while ensuring participants' confidentiality.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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