Tanzanian Teachers' Knowledge of Parental Engagement in Students' Participation and Learning in Physical Education

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Abstract

This study explored teachers' knowledge of parental engagement in supporting students' participation and learning in physical education (PE) in secondary schools. Eight PE teachers, each with at least two years of teaching experience, participated in interviews, and data were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that PE teachers have a limited understanding of parental engagement. Although teachers recognise its motivational value, they primarily view parents' roles in material terms, including providing resources, supporting facility rehabilitation, and participating in school-organised sports activities. The study further reveals that, despite greater material support, higher-income families often lack motivation to foster students' interest in PE. Overall, teachers hold a narrow, largely material-oriented view of parental engagement, while both low – and high-income families face distinct barriers to supporting students' participation and learning in PE. The study recommends that PE teachers reconceptualise parental engagement beyond material and event-based approaches through professional development that emphasises collaborative and communicative forms of involvement.

Keywords: *socioeconomic status, parent engagement, support strategies, student participation, teachers' knowledge*

DOI: *https://dx.doi.org/10.56279/ped.v43.special.i3.7*

1. Introduction

Parental engagement in education has increasingly been recognised as a critical factor influencing students' participation and learning across different subject areas, including physical education (PE). Globally, research consistently demonstrates that parental engagement is positively associated with students' academic achievement, motivation, and overall educational outcomes (Kelley, 2022; Otani, 2020). However, contemporary scholarship moves beyond viewing parental engagement merely as attendance at school events or homework support, instead conceptualising it as a multidimensional construct

that encompasses home-based involvement, school-based participation, and academic socialisation (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Otani, 2020). These dimensions highlight that meaningful engagement is relational, communicative, and embedded within broader socio-cultural contexts. A key mechanism through which parental engagement influences student outcomes is communication. Evidence suggests that open and sustained communication strengthens parental involvement and aligns home–school relationships, thereby enhancing student engagement (Anna et al., 2022; Schmid & Garrels, 2021). At the same time, parental roles extend beyond communication to include modelling behaviours, providing encouragement, and supporting access to learning resources, all of which shape students' participation in learning activities (Keech et al., 2018; Atunde et al., 2023; Lilian, 2021).

Despite this broad recognition, parental engagement is uneven in practice and often shaped by contextual constraints, such as limited knowledge of school programmes, competing work demands, and restricted access to school activities. In some contexts, even when parents recognise the importance of education or specific subjects, this awareness does not necessarily translate into active engagement (Earley & Fleet, 2021). This suggests that parental engagement is not only a matter of awareness but also of opportunity, access, and alignment between school practices and family realities. Socioeconomic status further complicates patterns of parental engagement by shaping both its forms and intensity. In higher socioeconomic contexts, parents may be less directly involved due to reliance on external educational support and demanding professional commitments (Poncelet et al., 2023). In contrast, lower socioeconomic contexts often experience constrained engagement due to limited resources and lower levels of educational attainment (Kapinga, 2014). These contrasting patterns indicate that parental engagement is structured by broader social and economic conditions, rather than being solely a matter of individual choice.

Within the domain of physical education, these challenges are particularly pronounced. Although parental encouragement has been shown to positively influence students' participation in physical activity (Olivares et al., 2015), PE remains a marginal subject in many education systems. It is often perceived as less academically valuable compared to core subjects, leading to lower prioritisation by both schools and families (Earley & Fleet, 2021). As a result, students may receive limited encouragement and support for participation and learning in PE, despite its recognised contribution to holistic development. In Tanzania, parental engagement is formally embedded within education policy and curriculum frameworks, which emphasise parents' roles in supporting

students' learning and teachers' responsibility to involve parents in the educational process (MoEC, 2005; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2023). However, implementing these expectations occurs within a context marked by structural and institutional constraints. The expansion of PE provision in secondary schools, from a small number of institutions in 2008 to a broader national presence by 2024 (NECTA, 2024), reflects growing recognition of the subject. Nevertheless, this expansion has not been matched by adequate human and material resources, particularly the availability of qualified PE teachers.

In many schools, one teacher is responsible for multiple classes, limiting opportunities for both effective instruction and meaningful engagement with parents. Empirical evidence also indicates that parental engagement in Tanzania remains limited in both scope and form. Communication between parents and teachers is often minimal, participation in school activities is low, and involvement in students' learning processes is inconsistent (Seni & Onyango, 2021; Vicent, 2018). Where engagement exists, it tends to be narrowly oriented towards examination performance, reflecting dominant educational priorities that privilege examinable subjects over broader learning domains (Mwakililo & Mgaya, 2021; Marwa, 2015; Kazungu, 2016). This emphasis contributes to the marginalisation of physical education, which is frequently perceived as recreational and non-essential within the formal curriculum (Kazungu, 2016). Longstanding societal perceptions of PE in Tanzania reinforce these dynamics. Historically viewed as a non-examinable, recreational subject, PE has received limited attention from both schools and families, which has shaped patterns of low participation and support (Kazungu, 2016). Consequently, students often experience limited encouragement from home, which affects both their engagement and performance in the subject. This situation underscores the importance of examining how parental engagement is understood and enacted specifically within the context of physical education.

Despite the growing recognition of parental engagement in education, existing research in Tanzania has largely focused on its relationship with academic achievement, particularly examination outcomes, with limited attention to subject-specific contexts such as physical education (Marwa, 2015; Kazungu, 2016). Moreover, little is known about how teachers conceptualise parental engagement in PE, or how this understanding shapes their strategies for involving parents in supporting students' participation and learning. Against this backdrop, a critical gap exists in understanding teachers' knowledge of parental engagement in physical education and how this knowledge informs practice. This study, therefore, examines how secondary school PE teachers in Tanzania perceive the role of parental engagement, the strategies they use

to involve parents, and how their understanding of socioeconomic differences shapes their instructional practices.

Specifically, the study addresses the following questions:

i) How do secondary PE teachers perceive the role of parental engagement in supporting students' participation and learning in PE?

ii) What strategies do PE teachers use to engage parents in physical education?

iii) How does teachers' knowledge of parents' socioeconomic status shape their instructional practices in PE?

2. Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by a conceptual framework developed by the researcher, based on concepts drawn from the literature. The conceptual framework outlines how schools and teachers implement structured activities and communication channels to involve parents in the educational process. School serves as a vital bridge connecting teachers, parents, and students in the learning process. It opens access to sports facilities and equipment and organises workshops and meetings to foster collaboration and support students' participation and learning in PE. On the other hand, teachers play a key role in communicating the importance of PE to parents and encouraging their involvement in PE programs and home-based activities. Once actively engaged, parents motivate their children, model an active lifestyle, and participate in school Physical Education activities. Parents engage in two main ways: through home-based activities and school-based activities. This dual approach enables parents to play an active role in both their children's academic and personal growth, creating a more supportive and holistic learning environment for PE. Generally, this conceptual Framework highlighted teachers and school roles in facilitating parents' engagement in supporting students' participation and learning in PE. The central focus of this framework was to explore the teacher's theorisation of parent engagement, the role of the school in empowering parents' engagement, and the contribution of parents' socioeconomic status to their engagement in supporting students' participation and learning in PE, as shown in Figure 1.

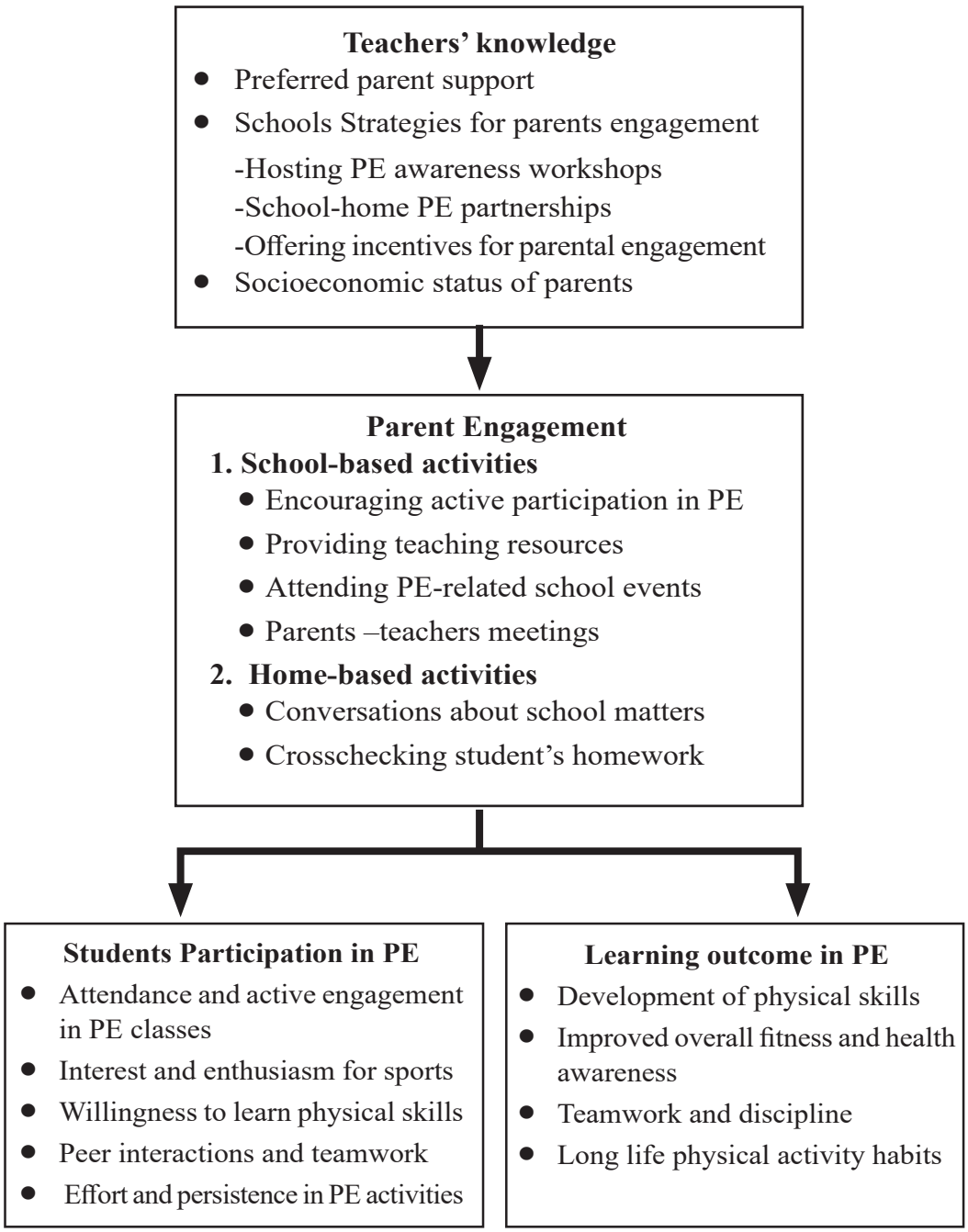


Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework Regarding Parent Engagement*

As shown in Figure 1, teachers' knowledge influences learning outcomes by first shaping how parents engage, which in turn shapes students' participation and ultimately their physical education outcomes. This sequential pathway heightens students' participation and learning in Physical Education.

3. Research Methodology

The social constructivist philosophical paradigm guided the study. The paradigm recognises the importance of human subjective creation of the meaning without rejecting some outright notion of objectivity. Moreover, the paradigm assumes the social construction of knowledge through interaction between researcher and participants via dialogue, questions, and other related methods (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Furthermore, the paradigm assumes the social construction of multiple realities developed through personal experiences. Based on these assumptions, teachers' knowledge of parents' engagement was socially constructed through dialogue between the researcher and teachers. Multiple realities regarding parents' engagement were socially constructed through teachers' experiences in teaching PE, and meanings from those realities were developed through theme development. In addition, the paradigm informs the researcher to employ a qualitative research approach.

The study employed a qualitative research approach. The approach was useful for exploring views and opinions on teachers' knowledge of parents' engagement in supporting students' participation and learning in PE. Creswell (2018) highlights that the qualitative approach was useful when exploring why and how people think and behave about the phenomenon. This approach thus emphasises understanding teachers' perspectives and the meaning they attach to their practical experiences. By using this approach, the study was able to access rich information that illuminated the meaning and motivation behind teachers' actions in secondary schools. Moreover, the study employed an explorative case study design to examine teachers' knowledge of parents' engagement in students' participation and learning in physical education. According to Yin (2017), an exploratory case design was effective for addressing "what" and "how" questions and for generating rich, in-depth descriptions of complex social phenomena. It highlights how an event happens in the surrounding area. This design enabled researchers to develop detailed insights into how teachers view parents' engagement in supporting students' participation and learning in PE.

Furthermore, the researcher conducted a study in the Arusha region, located in northern Tanzania, which was well known for producing high-performing athletes in track and field. A few secondary schools in the region actively offer physical education (NECTA, 2024). Diverse populations live in the Arusha Region, with many residents engaged predominantly in livestock rearing and farming. These residences' economic backgrounds offer a unique context for understanding parents' engagement in supporting students' participation and learning in physical education.

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select schools and PE teachers. The researcher selected schools purposively based on offering PE for more than 3 years. The researcher purposively selected teachers based on their qualifications as certified teachers, each with at least 2 years of teaching PE. Based on experiences, eight PE teachers were involved.

The researcher collected data from eight PE teachers at secondary schools. All teachers provided verbal consent after understanding the study's purpose. The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews with PE teachers from four secondary schools in the Arusha region. Thirteen preset questions were designed to capture information on teachers' knowledge of parents' engagement, the strategies used to engage parents, and the impact of parents' socioeconomic status on the teaching and learning process in PE. Nevertheless, the probing questions facilitated further clarification from the respondents.

The interviews provided data on teachers' knowledge and perceptions of parents' engagement in supporting students' participation and learning in PE. The interviews helped researchers capture data on teachers' knowledge and perceptions of parents' engagement in supporting students' participation and learning. Each interview session lasted 40 minutes. Each conversation was audio-recorded, and notes were recorded in a diary. To minimise the limitations of non-verbal cues, probing questions were used to assess participants' understanding and encourage detailed responses.

Data from interviews were analysed thematically. This analysis method suited the context, as the researcher had limited prior knowledge about the data content gathered. The audio-recoded data were transcribed, after which the transcripts were carefully read and revised to ensure accuracy. The researcher manually coded the transcribed text. The key terms, phrases, and statements were inductively coded. Forty codes emerged, which were organised into twenty categories of related codes. From these groups, 15 initial themes were generated. The researcher then refined and merged these themes based on similarity and relevance, ultimately producing three major themes that captured the core ideas. The generated themes include (a) understanding of parent engagement, (b) schools' role and strategies in empowering parent engagement, and (c) knowledge of parents' socioeconomic status. To enhance credibility, members are rechecking employed to cross-check the accuracy of the themes. However, the pseudonyms such as Balodina, Qaymo, Felix, Francis, Kelvin, Marko, Zoro, and Karo were used in reporting the data to conceal their identity and privacy. After generating themes, the researcher developed a detailed findings report.

4 Findings

Teachers' knowledge of parents' engagement in students' activities was crucial for enhancing their participation and learning in PE. This study explored teachers' knowledge of parents' roles, the strategies they use, and the socioeconomic factors that enhance parent engagement in PE matters. However, the following are the detailed findings.

4.1 Teachers' Understanding of Parents' Engagement in Physical Education

Teachers' knowledge of parent engagement in PE activities enhances students' participation and learning within and beyond school contexts. When exploring teachers' understanding of the role of parents in supporting students' participation and learning in PE, teachers were asked to explain what parents' engagement means as used in PE. The majority of the teachers responded that parents' engagement encompasses involvement in school events such as sports and Bonanza, as well as the provision of basic items to facilitate students' learning. Teacher Qaymo, in elaborating on what parent engagement means in the PE context, had this to say:

> Mmh, from my experience, parents' engagement means parents' participation in the school Sport Bonanza. It may occasionally include providing basic resources to facilitate students' participation in PE. Schools, through teachers, often acknowledge the importance of parents' participation in their children's learning.

Teacher Zoro also had this to say:

> Parent engagement is about their awareness of the subject itself. Most of them, as is their tradition, believe that physical education contributes to students' failure. I think what matters is engaging them (parents) to raise their awareness of sports. However, PE helps students shine academically and physically in school, so long as they arrive at school earlier and clean the classroom.

The quotes above indicate that teachers equate parents' engagement with attendance at visible, structured school events, such as sports day. Although this type of engagement was essential, it was limited in scope. Some parents provide teaching materials, such as sports equipment and attire, indicating their support for PE when it involves tangible needs. Teachers' definitions reflect a somewhat limited perspective on parental engagement, focusing primarily on support for students' participation and learning in physical education while neglecting broader aspects such as ongoing communication and involvement in decision-making. Teachers may have mentioned Sport Bonanza as an opportunity

for parents to attend meetings where teachers interact with them and discuss matters related to physical education. To explore further teachers' understanding of parents' engagement in physical education, they were asked to describe the role of parents in supporting students' participation and learning in PE. The majority of the teachers responded that parents' role was to supply material support, such as equipment and sports attire. Teacher Karo, in elaborating on the role of parent engagement in supporting student participation in physical education, said the following.

> In general, parent engagement in physical education is similar to that in other subjects such as biology, physics, and Kiswahili. When parents are aware that their child is studying physical education and are asked to contribute items such as equipment and sports attire, some respond positively and purchase them. However, it was important to acknowledge that not all parents respond in this manner, as various factors, including socioeconomic background, cultural perspectives, and individual circumstances, can influence their level of engagement and support. For example, parents of third-year students at our school, whose children take physical education as an optional subject, often question their children's future career prospects. Some of these parents refuse to support their child's participation in physical education.

The above quotes reveal that the roles mentioned by teachers primarily involve providing material support. Parents facilitate the availability of sports equipment used in physical education lessons. However, this support largely depends on their level of awareness of the importance of physical education for their children's future careers. From the teachers' responses, it can be inferred that parents generally had limited awareness of the potential role of physical education in their children's career development.

To better understand parents' engagement, teachers were asked to specify the types of support they expected from parents. It was revealed that teachers expect material support, including assistance with facility maintenance. Teacher Karo, in elaborating the support that teachers expect from parents, shared the following insight:

> Personally, the type of support I would like to receive from parents regarding students' participation in physical education, for example, in those sports that need playgrounds, is the improvement of the playgrounds. Parents could also have been involved in purchasing equipment, such as a racket and balls. This kind of parental support could have been attractive for facilitating my students' participation and learning in PE.

In contrast, teacher Kelvin, in elaborating on the type of parents' support that teachers expect, has the following to say:

> .... It is good for parents to support the development of school playgrounds. For sure, we lack adequate playgrounds for games like soccer and netball at our school. If parents took an active role in improving the playgrounds, students would benefit significantly, as it would enhance their learning experiences and add value to their participation in physical education lessons.

As depicted in the quotes above, teachers confined parents' engagement to material facilitation. Moreover, the teachers expressed a desire for parents to contribute to maintaining school playgrounds and to provide sports equipment and attire. The emphasis was on facility improvement and equipment provision as the primary types of support expected from parents.

Moreover, teachers were asked to explain the importance of parents' engagement in supporting students' participation and learning in PE. Findings from the teachers' interview revealed that parent engagement motivates students' participation in PE. Students, through their parents' encouragement, develop a participatory attitude toward the PE lessons. Teacher Kelvin provides the following insight concerning the importance of parents' engagement in PE activities.

> Yes, for the overall development of the subject, parents' engagement is very important because it motivates students. If parents support a subject, it reinforces the perception that the subject holds value. Conversely, if parents disapprove of the subject, students may perceive it as unimportant and irrelevant to their lives. You know, others study PE because it's on the school timetable, without knowing its history or anything about it, until convinced by teachers.

As the quote above indicates, parent engagement is an important factor in encouraging students' participation and learning in physical education lessons. Students seem to conclude that physical education is important based on their parents' recommendations.

4.2 The School's Role and Strategies for Empowering Parent Engagement

Teachers' understandings of the school's role in empowering parent engagement are essential for promoting students' participation in physical education lessons. When interviewed about the school's role in fostering parent engagement, many teachers emphasised that organising sports competitions and establishing

playgrounds are among the school's key roles in fostering parent engagement. Teacher Balodina, in elaborating on how school can foster parent engagement, provided the following insight.

> I believe school can enhance parent engagement through organising various sports competitions at the school level. For instance, holding such events twice a year would be ideal for bringing parents closer to the school. Prioritising the upgrading of schools' playgrounds is also essential. Moreover, introducing a dedicated Parents' Sport Day could significantly enhance parents' involvement in PE-related activities. This day should be a true celebration of sports, with active participation from parents, students, teachers, and support from the school as a whole.

Similarly, teacher Qaymo, in elaborating the role of school in empowering parent engagement, had this to say.

> I think schools have an obligation to provide mechanisms to encourage parental engagement in their children's education. The head of school should plan to encourage teachers to put in place mechanisms to involve parents in students' education. To promote collaboration with parents, teachers should plan events and send invitations to parents. I think this is what school is supposed to do.

As the above quotes show, schools need to create an environment conducive to parents' engagement by organising sports competitions and sports days, and ensuring playground availability. Teachers highlighted that sports competitions and sports days serve as a bridge, bringing parents and students together in a shared sporting arena within the school compound.

Furthermore, when teachers were asked to identify the strategies commonly used to promote parent engagement in supporting students' participation and learning in PE, the majority highlighted parents' meetings. In elaborating the strategies for parent engagement in PE lessons in school, teacher Felix shared the following insight:

> Eeh, often we use parents' meetings. It is in such meetings that we inform parents about the presence of physical education, sport teachers, playgrounds, and related matters. At our school, we do not have any other strategies to facilitate parent engagement.

Teacher Zoro also had this to say:

> In my school, we use two ways to engage parents: individual and mass involvement. I prepared the plan by either contacting parents in person

> or by phone. I follow primary school students who are good at sports; after they graduate, I consult their parents to convince them to send their children to our school. The second method is through parents' meetings in schools, where the head of school reports to parents, including evidence of students' participation in national and East African secondary school competitions and their academic achievements.

The quote above underscores that parent-teacher meetings and physical visits are the primary strategies schools use to connect both parents and teachers. Key discussion points in those meetings often include the availability of PE teachers and the inclusion of academic and sports achievements in physical education within the school curriculum.

When teachers were asked to specify further the methods they use to communicate with parents regarding students' progress in PE, the majority emphasised parent-teacher meetings as the primary mode of communication within schools. Teacher Felix elaborated on this approach, stating that 'we communicate with parents through parents meetings during school closing season'. We reach out to them through invitations to these meetings. This statement highlights that parents' meetings, typically held at the end of a term or year, are the primary opportunity for informing parents about their children's progress. However, relying solely on such end-of-term or end-of-year meetings may provide limited insight into students' ongoing progress in physical education.

4.3 Teachers' Knowledge of Parents' Socioeconomic Status

Teachers' knowledge of parents' socioeconomic status was vital for fostering parents' engagement in students' participation and learning in PE. To elicit teachers' knowledge of parents' socioeconomic status, teachers were asked to describe the socioeconomic backgrounds of parents whose children are studying PE in secondary schools. Findings indicate that most parents are at a low income level and engage in animal farming. Teacher Felix says this while narrating the parents' socioeconomic status.

> Most of the parents, though not all, living near our school are pastoralists, with few working as government employees. A significant number of these parents are primarily engaged in livestock herding, which limits the time they can devote to their children's education. They earn little income, just enough to feed their families and, occasionally, cover school expenses when requested by the school.

As the above quote highlights, teachers recognised that most parents had low incomes, making it difficult for them to meet their families' basic needs. It was

also revealed that parents had limited time to engage in education-related matters, including their children's physical education.

When asked whether they had ever observed differences in parents' engagement based on socioeconomic background, many teachers responded that parents' socioeconomic status influences their mindset and decision-making. Teachers Francis elaborated on the difference in parents' socioeconomic status and its impact on supporting students' participation and learning in PE, by offering the following insight:

> Students from some low-income families sometimes come to school late, with an empty stomach or feeling weak when in class. I am sure these students are breadwinners in some families. They spent some time doing activities to earn money for themselves and their families. Interestingly, despite these challenges, such students often perform well in class.

Teacher Kelvin added:

> Although students from low-income families struggle in PE lessons due to limited resources, students from high-income families often undervalue PE. Even though they have enough sports attire and other essential equipment, PE is a last priority for them.

As highlighted in the quotes above, there was a relationship between family socioeconomic status and students' participation and learning in PE. Students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds face shortages of necessities, which negatively affect their engagement in PE. Conversely, students from high-income families experience different challenges often related to parents' expectations and preferences. This finding suggests that differences in parents' socioeconomic status influence students' motivation to participate in physical education.

When teachers were asked to explain how parents' socioeconomic status shapes PE lessons and instructional practices, the majority responded that parents' background affects students' decision to participate in physical education. Teacher Marko explained how parents' socioeconomic status influences PE lessons and instructional practices, offering the following insight.

> You know, this is a significant challenge to teachers. The majority of parents in this community are pastoralists with low incomes. Although the government mandates that students participate in physical education, not all parents are aware of its importance. For those who understand

> the value of PE, their children respond positively. Yet, for parents with limited awareness of PE, we must invest significant effort in educating them. It takes time for them to recognise the potential of a PE career for their children. This delay in understanding often results in delayed parental support for students and, subsequently, affects students' decisions to join physical education classes on time.

As noted in the quote above, parents' socioeconomic background affects teachers' decision-making ability to facilitate student learning in physical education. Students from low-income families often delay joining physical education classes because their parents are unable to provide adequate support, which, in turn, affects teachers' efforts to engage students in the learning process.

5. Discussion

This study examined teachers' knowledge of parental engagement in supporting students' participation and learning in physical education (PE). The findings reveal a predominantly narrow, material-oriented understanding of parental engagement, shaped by contextual constraints, institutional practices, and socioeconomic factors. Three key themes emerge: (i) the conceptualisation of parental engagement, (ii) strategies for engagement and communication, and (iii) the influence of socioeconomic status on engagement and learning.

First, teachers largely conceptualise parental engagement in terms of visible, event-based, and material support rather than as a multidimensional and relational process. Engagement is primarily associated with participation in school sports events, provision of equipment, and support for school-based activities. This contrasts with broader conceptualisations that emphasise home-based involvement, academic socialisation, and sustained interaction between parents, teachers, and students (Otani, 2020; Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Tan et al., 2020). By privileging observable and resource-driven forms of involvement, teachers overlook less visible yet equally significant dimensions, such as parental expectations, communication, and support for learning at home. This limited framing constrains the development of comprehensive engagement strategies and reflects a tendency to align parental roles with immediate institutional needs rather than long-term learning processes. Relatedly, teachers equate parental engagement with resource mobilisation, particularly the provision of sports equipment and support for infrastructural development. While material support can facilitate participation, it does not, on its own, constitute meaningful engagement in learning. Evidence suggests that parental encouragement, role modelling, and involvement in children's physical activity are critical in shaping participation and motivation (Hosokawa et al., 2023;

Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). The emphasis on material support observed in this study may reflect structural realities, including shortages of facilities and equipment in schools, which position parents as supplementary resource providers. However, this orientation risks reducing parental engagement to a compensatory function and limits teachers' ability to mobilise parents as active partners in students' learning.

Second, the findings indicate that strategies for engaging parents are limited in scope and largely confined to formal and periodic interactions, particularly school meetings. While such meetings serve as important platforms for information sharing, they do not support continuous dialogue or collaborative engagement. This contrasts with broader approaches that emphasise partnership, cooperation, and formalised structures for parental involvement (Sharabi & Cohen-Ynon, 2022; Okeke, 2014). The reliance on end-of-term meetings suggests that communication between teachers and parents is episodic rather than sustained, thereby limiting opportunities for feedback, joint problem-solving, and active participation in students' learning. Communication channels such as telephone or written correspondence also appear underutilised and are often reserved for disciplinary issues, further limiting constructive engagement. In addition, schools frame parental engagement within logistical and performance-oriented domains, such as organising sports events and improving facilities. While these activities are important, they provide a narrow basis for assessing and fostering engagement. More transformative approaches emphasise the creation of inclusive and collaborative school environments that align parental expectations with educational goals and actively involve parents in learning processes (Tan et al., 2020; Sianturi et al., 2022). The limited scope of the school-led engagement strategies identified in this study suggests a need to reconceptualise schools' role from organisers of events to facilitators of sustained partnerships.

Third, teachers recognise that socioeconomic status shapes parental engagement, but they interpret this understanding primarily through a resource-based lens. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are perceived to face constraints related to unmet basic needs, which affect their participation and learning in PE. This aligns with broader evidence linking socioeconomic disadvantage to reduced parental involvement and educational challenges (Şengönü, 2022; Kapinga, 2014). Conversely, parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are often seen as capable of providing material support and influencing educational decisions, although their direct involvement may be limited due to professional commitments (Poncelet et al., 2023; Naite, 2021). However, the findings also reveal a more complex dynamic. While students from higher

socioeconomic backgrounds benefit from access to resources, they do not necessarily demonstrate greater engagement in PE, partly because parental emphasis on the subject is limited and there are few relevant role models. This contrasts with assumptions that higher socioeconomic status uniformly enhances educational engagement (Wardere et al., 2020; Sujarwo et al., 2021). These patterns suggest that socioeconomic status influences not only the capacity to engage but also the value attached to specific subjects, with implications for students' participation and motivation. Furthermore, teachers appear to adapt their instructional practices based on their perceptions of students' socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly regarding resource availability and participation levels. While such adaptations may be responsive to contextual realities, they also reflect an implicit normalisation of inequality, in which parental engagement is primarily understood in terms of financial contributions rather than broader forms of involvement. This reinforces a limited understanding of engagement and may inadvertently constrain efforts to promote inclusive participation.

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers' knowledge of parental engagement is shaped by institutional constraints, dominant educational priorities, and socioeconomic realities, leading to a predominantly material, event-based orientation. This narrow conceptualisation limits the potential of parental engagement as a relational and pedagogical resource for supporting students' participation and learning in physical education. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the study's limitations. The small sample size and focus on a limited number of schools restrict the generalisability of the findings. In addition, the use of purposive sampling limits the extent to which the results can be transferred to other contexts. Future research could expand the sample and incorporate multiple stakeholder perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of parental engagement in physical education.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Parental engagement in PE plays an important role in shaping students' participation and learning. This study shows that secondary school PE teachers largely perceive parental engagement in narrow, event-based and material terms, focusing on participation in school sports activities and the provision of resources rather than on sustained, relational forms of involvement. This limited conceptualisation constrains the potential of parental engagement as a pedagogical resource for supporting students' learning. In terms of engagement strategies, teachers rely primarily on school–parent meetings as the main mechanism for interaction. Although these meetings provide a platform for communication, they remain episodic and insufficient for fostering continuous

dialogue and meaningful collaboration. As a result, opportunities to engage parents as active partners in students' learning processes are underutilised. The findings further demonstrate that teachers recognise the influence of parents' socioeconomic status on students' participation and learning in PE. However, this influence is interpreted largely through a resource-based lens, where parental support is associated with material provision rather than broader forms of involvement. Consequently, teachers' instructional practices and expectations are shaped by assumptions about students' home backgrounds, which may reinforce inequalities in participation and engagement. Overall, the study highlights the need to reconceptualise parental engagement in PE beyond material and event-based approaches, and to promote more inclusive, communicative, and collaborative forms of involvement that support students' holistic learning.

Based on the study's findings, it was recommended that physical education teachers should reconceptualise parent engagement beyond event-based and material contributions by participating in a professional development program that emphasises collaborative and communicative forms of involvement. Moreover, schools should strengthen and diversify their communication channels, including meetings, workshops, and digital platforms, to foster continuous, meaningful interaction with parents. Schools should further integrate parents into a more holistic support system by involving them in school-based and home-based activities to enrich students' learning experiences. However, future studies shall focus on the feasibility of implementing parent involvement strategies to support students' participation and learning in physical education.

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