FULL-LENGTH ARTICLE

Status of Family-School Partnership and Primary School Students Learning Success at South West Oromia

Abera Husen[1]* and Abebe Hunde[2]

[1]Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies
[2]Educational Planning and Management, College of Education and Behavioral Science, Jimma University

*Corresponding Author: husenabera48@gmail.com

Abstract:
The main objective of this study was to investigate the current practice of school-family connection and its contribution to students' learning in Southwestern Oromia. A total of 110 teachers, 798 students, 56 community members (PTA and KETB members, and parents) and 20 educational administrators (principals, vice principals, department heads and supervisors) were selected from 16 primary schools purposively identified from 3 zones of the study site. Teachers and students were selected using stratified sampling method, whereas parents and educational officials of different levels were selected by purposive and availability sampling techniques, respectively. Questionnaire, Semi structured interview and FGD were used to gather data. Data were analyzed both quantitatively (percentages, mean values and ranking) and qualitatively while qualitative evidence was analyzed through narratives and descriptions. The finding showed that school to students home, and home to school connection were found at lower level of function. Hence, family-school partnership's contribution to students learning success was found weak. Furthermore, the collaboration between school community and parents regarding children learning was not satisfactory. In addition, parents' living condition, less commitment and misperception of some teachers about the role of parents, meager responsiveness of schools to school-community collaboration contributed to the ineffective school-parent partnership. To improve the family-school connection and subsequent students' learning success, all stake holders should refocus on their roles and work closely. School leadership should also be experienced and profession focused. Awareness building strategies like conferences for family and community and short term trainings for school community deserves attention.

Key Words: Family/parent involvement; Family/parent-school Partnership; Learning success; Learning at home; School & home communication; collaboration & shared responsibility

INTRODUCTION

Education is progressively becoming critical instrument for humans' advancement and improved life. Educational functions require the involvement of numerous stake holders to discharge their respective responsibilities toward the realization of educational goals; of which, students' parent or family take a leading position.

Literature (e.g. Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Christenson, 2004) persistently illuminate importance of family involvement in children education. Family-school connection (Christenson, 2004) greatly influences children's education in numerous ways. Many argue (e.g. Epstein, 2011) parent-school collaboration is critical in affecting students learning outcomes; shared goals and monitoring success; engaging families in variety of children educational activities. In this regard, Epstein (2011) writes that parents participate in their children's education along numerous dimensions

and that overlapping spheres of home, school and community influence, shape children's learning and development. In past, families and teachers might wish that the school could do the job alone, however today's school needs families and families need the schools. To this end, Skager and Dave (1977) as cited in Firdissa (2003) stated that the home and the community play the most crucial role in initiating the process of lifelong learning throughout the entire life span of their children. The education and training policy (TGE, 1994) priorities notably improving quality, relevance, equity, efficiency correspond with this perspective. It intends to expand access with emphasis on primary education in rural areas and enhance girls' education.

Epstein (1992, 2011) revealing family and school overlapping sphere of influencing theory provides the framework for organizing the shared responsibilities between homes and schools. Likewise roles of partners (from home and school), investigating constraints to children learning opportunity are equally important. Studies conducted in Ethiopian (e.g. Mulugeta, 1998; Habitamu, 2002; Kassahun, 2008) in similar way reported that the characteristics and composition of family members influence the demand for schooling and children school enrollment. Mulugeta investigated that household's demand for schooling significantly depends on the education, and sex of household head, location and education level of mother. Kassahun(2008) indicated that gender and education of household head as well as composition of household etc. important as limiting. Meanwhile it worth recalling that the theoretical root of this study is mainly based on Epstein's (1992, 1995) model which explains overlapping sphere of influence school and family share through involvement in children learning. Parent or family involvement in this context is about the roles played by all adults or guardians in the child's educational life having responsibilities for a child's education, development, and well-being (Gay, Geneva 2009). Hence, drawing on the shared roles of teachers and parents, Epstein (1992, 1995) has adopted a model having six components as basic standards or principles for school-parents-community partnership which include: communication, parenting, and student learning, volunteering, school decision-making, and community collaboration. The assumption of the model suggests that school improvement and the corresponding enhancement of education quality ensures the success of students learning. The model is claimed to offer flexible framework for meaningful involvement that embraces families as full partners in improving outcomes for all children, the shared responsibilities of home and school for children.

Perhaps some Vygotsky (1978) learning related perspectives may comply with Epstein's ideas. Vygotsky (1978) believed strongly that community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning in the learning process. He also argued that language and culture are crucial instruments both in intellectual development and in how humans perceive the world. Vygotsky extendedly described that learning concepts are transmitted by the means of language, interpreted and understood by experience and interactions within a cultural setting. In this sense, it was claimed that all learning tasks can be performed by learners under adult guidance or with peer collaboration. Ellis and Hughes (2002) and Christenson, (2004) are of similar opinion. Even though strong family- school connection is desired for children learning success it is not without constraint. Epstein (1992) describes some of these factors to be home literacy, environment and mothers' educational expectations for children; differences in the expectations, rules, activity patterns, parent-children relationships in the impoverished

homes. Similarly studies carried out in sub-Saharan Africa including Ethiopia found out that (Tesfaye, 2009; Kassahun, 2008; Mulugeta, 1998), mothers' educational level, and residence, education and gender of the household head, household composition, and household wealth etc. were among significant family level determinants of children schooling.

It is apparent from the preceding viewpoints that more is expected from current family-school partnership for children learning and Ethiopia is not exceptional. Learning success at every level demands the joint endeavor of family and schools. At lower levels of schooling in particular the children require frequent and immediate guidance both from home and at schools. Currently in the South Western Oromia (three zones: Ilu Ababora, Jimma and South West Shoa), the primary education completion and achievement of students was found to be lower. MoE, (2010) and Teshome (2017) support this argument. The former found out that the survival rate for grade 5 and 8 children cohort (1000) entrant of 2002 was only 550(about 50%) and 264(about 25%) respectively. The latter also disclosed that public primary school students do not meet the minimum quality standards (50%) achievement required by government contrasted to private schools. In this connection different stake holders complained about the low educational performance of their children and attributed to diverse factors. The researchers noted this problem and interested to investigate the status of family-school partnership and its influence on students learning. The problem sensed appear drawback to Education and Training policy and its action plans (MoE, 2010, 2015; Teshome 2017) which aims at improving educational quality and minimizing educational wastages. The theoretical root of this study is mainly based on Epstein's (1992, 1995) model which explains overlapping sphere of influence school and family share through involvement in children learning. Parent or family involvement in this context is about the roles played by all adults or guardians in the child's educational life having responsibilities for a child's education, development, and well-being (Gay, Geneva 2009).

It is imperative that family-school partnership as instrumental to students learning success was less researched in study site. This study examined the current practice and pattern parental involvement in their children education and school affairs in the light of policy directives and perceived roles of parents in their children education. Specifically the study investigates and critically analyzes the current status of family-school partnership in terms of children learning and identifies the major challenges related to family-school partnership and influence on students' learning success in the context of primary schools of SouthWestern Oromia Zones.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Design
Descriptive survey design was used for the present study that involved quantitative and qualitative methods. The latter was used to triangulate the quantitative evidence. Descriptive survey design was preferred to identify the prevailing family-school partnership status in terms of students learning success and we believed it is appropriate to investigate the real/current status of the study problem we picked up. In this connection, research experts (e.g., Creswell 2009, Babbie, 1992)) describe the need to

determine the design and method based on the understanding, of the nature of the problem, the objectives of the study among others.

Data Sources

Teachers (110), and students (798), as well as educational administrators, committee members and parents from 16 primary schools of the 3 zones were included as sources data for this study.   Teachers teaching grades 1-8 and students attending grades 5-8 were the major participants of the study. Likewise, school administrators (Principals, vice principals and unit leaders/ department heads) Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members, Kebele Education and Training Board (KETB) members, cluster school supervisors as well as some parents were also used as sources of evidence. It worth mention here that students' mark records (roster) was used to identify students' ability groups' notably higher, average and lower performing student.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

The three Zones and their respective weredas(6) were selected using purposive sampling technique. These zones were deliberately selected for we (investigators) have witnessed the prevalence of dissatisfactions and complain about primary school students learning performance such as inadequacy of grade 8 students' achievement. Consequently, the purpose, and nature of the problem as well as accessibility, cost effectiveness, distribution, and representation of schools were considered to include the sites into the study. PTA and KETB members and parents also were selected via purposive sampling due to their respective roles or responsibility. Schools were selected using random sampling technique while Stratified sampling was used to select both teachers and students. School principals, vice principals, unit leaders and cluster supervisors were selected using availability sampling from the schools identified. Stratified random sampling was employed to represent 110 out of 195(56.4%) teachers from different school—departments (subject streams)--year of experience by gender categories along these components. Similarly, 798 students out of 3578(22.3%) attending 5-8 grade levels varied by school-- grade level—sections—ability (within section high, medium and low performing) strata were included using stratified sampling. In this context we could claim that students of 5 - 8 grade level are relatively matured (12—15 and over years) to provide relevant information for non-experimental study based on their interest. Furthermore, the process of data gathering was passed through several formal recognition and confirmation by respective level educational leadership official ranged up to school level, suggesting that there are official representatives and protecting bodies of the right of the pupils in addition to our ethical care. . In both cases stratified random sampling is appropriate to represent the target population proportionally from each stratum; and believed to (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006) increase precision by reducing sampling error without increasing cost.

School principals, vice principals, unit leaders and cluster supervisors were selected using availability sampling from the schools identified. Lastly as Babbie (1992) advises us, researcher's selection of samples is often based his/her own knowledge of the population, its attributes, and nature of his/her research aims, participants of the study have been selected using the sampling techniques. Accordingly, 110 teachers, 16 school principals, 8 vice principals 8 cluster supervisors, and 798 students (attending grade 5-8) were included in the study. PTA and KETB members and parents (ranged 3-4 from each school) were also involved in the study.

Instruments of Data Collection: The data were collected using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews; and focus group discussion for this study.

Questionnaire- both open-ended and closed ended questionnaires were designed by the researchers for teachers and students to collect the necessary information. Questionnaire is needed to secure quantitative data as Sapsford and Jupp (2006) write questionnaire produce data that are amendable to easy quantification. The questions prepared comprise items developed from the six components of family-school partnerships models of Epstein (1992, 1995) based on five self-rating scales (1 = none; 2 = rarely; 3 = sometimes; 4 = frequently; 5 = very frequently practiced) were used to measure the extent of school-family partnership contributing to children's learning success. The questionnaire items related to school environment and home environment component and factors influencing the family-school partnership were administered to teachers and analyzed (e.g. table 2a & 2b, table 3]. Whereas questionnaire comprising items pertinent to the extent of assistance and guidance accorded to students mainly by family members were used to gather data from students of 5 - 8 grade level based on their interest and convenient time under supervision of school leadership. The questionnaire for teachers was prepared in English and administered to teachers but for students it was translated in to Afan Oromo to minimize language barriers.

Piloting was carried out to see the clarity and validity of the instruments before administering to the respondents. The comments given were incorporated into the revised data gathering instruments.

Semi structured interview: interview guide comprising questions partially structured or specified was used to obtain information from some principals, department heads, and cluster supervisors about the family-school partnership and its contribution to students' learning success. It was focused on seeking information about the two places having overlapping responsibilities for children education as indicated above.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was employed to generate more ideas from KETB and PTA members as well as parents to supplement the quantitative data. Students result record or roster was also used to identify and represent high, medium and low performing students from schools of the study site.

Methods of Data Analysis: The data collected through different methods were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. For quantitative analysis, data were tabulated and analyzed and interpreted using mean values and percentages. The process of the analysis followed and combined item by item and abridged scores by components and summarized in tables. On the other hand, qualitative data were described through narration and embedded with the quantitatively analyzed data to draw out findings.

Rank order score was approach by aggregating the ranks given to each factor/ item (according their severity) by all respondents and then computed the average by dividing the total by the size of the factors. The mean ranks for the factors ordered from minimum to the maximum suggest the ranks of the challenging factors to family-school partnership and its contribution to students learning success according their severity. The data obtained from FGD and semi-structured were analyzed qualitatively to supplement the quantitative data.

Ethical Consideration

Prior to the data collection process, the researchers' granted letter of recommendation and clearance from Jimma University that verifies the purpose of study. Accordingly the study problem and purpose and related information have been clarified for cooperating bodies and participants in advance. Moreover care has been made protect the right of the participants' and obtained their permission for involving in the study. Anonymity of the respondents and confidentiality of the data they offered was assured. The data generated through different tools were used only for the purpose of the study.

RESULTS

The finding of the study is organized and presents as components as result and its discussion, conclusion and recommendation.

Participants Characteristic

Teachers and students participated in study are different in characteristics such as gender, age and place of residence etc. Teacher respondents were composed of 82 (76.4%) males and 28 (23.6%) females whose age varied from 21-30 (47.2%) through 31-40 (31.8%) to over 41 (20%) years in category. Most of participating teachers 75(68.18%) have service years of 6 and above while those with 5 or less years accounted for 18.18% of the total (see Table 1 below). Likewise, of students' who filled the questionnaire, male represented 53.4% whereas 46.6% of the total was females. Most of the students informant 390 (48.9%) age is 13 and 14 years and 255(31.9%) of them were above 15 years. Family occupation of the majority of respondents was found to be farmers accounting for (73.6%), while others engaged in non agricultural activities(e.g. merchant (8.6%), government employees (13.9%)); and over 74.4% of them live in rural areas whereas 25.6% are urban dwellers. These suggest that the evidence of the study were obtained from relevant and sources having diverse background representation.

The status of family-school partnership and its contribution to students learning at primary schools

 The main objectives of this study was to investigate the status of family-school connection in terms of its contribution to students learning success. The Epstein (1992, 1995) family-school partnership framework was used to measure the extent of school-home partnership based on ratings none (1); rarely (2), sometimes (3), frequently (4); very frequently (5) practiced scales.The items derived from the model, have been used to examine the extent to which schools are ready and connected to home or parents for assisting and enhancing students' learning. The evidence illuminating this connection is given below. The whole data of this section is divided into two and presented in Table 2a representing the role of school (school environment) and in Table 2b that of family related issues and concerns (home environment).

Table 1. Teacher Participants size by Zone and Wereda as well as aggregate characteristics summary

Zone -Wereda	Ilu A/Bora(n=33)		Jimma(n=43)		South West Shewa(n=34)		remark
Wereda	Chora	22	Goma	22	Ilu	14	n= 110
	Gechi	12	Tiro Afeta	21	Woliso	20	

Summary of age & service year data by sex of the study site (3 Zones)	Sex	Age category				Service year by qualification			
		21—30	31--40	>40	Total	Qualification.	1—10	11—20+	Total
	M	36(32.7%)	27(24.6%)	21(19.1%)	84(76.4%)	TTI	3(2.7%)	4(3.6%)	7(6.3%)
	F	17(15.5%)	8(7.2%)	1(0.9%)	26(23.6%)	Diploma	38(34.5%)	33(30%)	71(64.5%)
	Total	53(48.2%)	35(31.8%)	22(20%)	110(100%)	Degree	12(10.9%)	19(17.2%)	31(28.1%)

Source: Field Survey

Table 2a. School-parent partnership level as rated by teacher respondents

Parameters of partnership	Items: the school	Measures	Rating					Total
			1	2	3	4	5	
Communication	creates communication system for parents of diverse background	Frequency	33	10	30	18	19	110
		%	30.0	9.1	27.3	16.4	17.3	100.0
	establishes two-ways of communication means: home-to-school and school-to-home	Frequency	14	21	36	25	14	110
		%	12.7	19.1	32.7	22.7	12.7	100.0
	gives orientation for parents of new entrants or new comer students	Frequency	11	20	33	27	19	110
		%	10.0	18.2	30.0	24.5	17.3	100.0
	contacts families of students' having academic and behavioral problems	Frequency	6	11	28	42	23	110
		%	5.5	10.0	25.5	38.2	20.9	100.0
	Teachers visit parents to know parent's understanding of their children talent, difficulties, etc.	Frequency	10	23	41	20	16	110
		%	9.1	20.9	37.3	18.2	14.5	100.0
Student Learning	involves Parents in decision-making on school related issues	Frequency	8	26	28	36	12	110
		%	7.3	23.6	25.5	32.7	10.9	100.0

	provides information to families on how to monitor students' progress	Frequency	8	20	39	34	9	110
		%	7.3	18.2	35.5	30.9	8.2	100.0
	makes parents aware of the importance of supporting reading and practicing instructional tasks at home	Frequency	10	23	40	29	8	110
		%	9.1	20.9	36.4	26.4	7.3	100.0
School decision-making	involves parents in the process of evaluating school functions and performance	Frequency	15	22	37	27	9	110
		%	13.6	20.0	33.6	24.6	8.2	100
	has active Kebele Education & Training Board (KETB) and Parent- Teacher Association (PTA) members who can play key roles in decision-making	Frequency	13	29	26	21	21	110
		%	11.8	26.4	23.6	19.1	19.1	100
	involves parents in planning and reviewing improvement of school programs	Frequency	10	28	31	26	15	110
		%	9.1	25.5	28.2	23.6	13.6	100
	provides administrative support for community organizations	Frequency	7	21	44	26	12	110
		%	6.4	19.1	40.0	23.6	10.9	100

Source: Field Survey

It is apparent from the table 2a above that participants reported their belief and experience against the three of the six key lenses that reveal the state of linkage prevailing between schools and children's homes. Schools' and homes linkage and roles in terms of contribution to students' learning success perceived by teachers and school administrators showed weaker and somewhat promising trend respectively. This is evident in that, communication dimension as indicator of family-school partnership was perceived as being low or less practiced by majority (59.5%) of the participants, which was deduced of none (13.5%), rarely (15.5%), sometimes (30.5%) rated frequency of communication component. The remaining 40.5% of the participants reported the prevalence of frequent communication among family members and school community. In similar vein, students learning related effort by school environment to initiate parent involvement in children learning and school affairs on aggregate were viewed by the majority of the respondents (61.5%) as unsatisfactory, where about 7.9% indicated no effort, rarely and sometimes practiced were reported by 20.9% and 32.5% of them respectively. Yet, 38.8% of the informants showed the prevalence of frequent efforts and act pertaining to students learning component.

Thus, the greater proportion of teachers revealed that home to school and school to home linkage and teachers and parent contact to enable parents understand their children learning progress and difficulties are not functioning well. In this regard, parents' volunteer based involvement and collaboration with schools to help their children learning progress relatively was reported to be at low level. Because most of the respondents (66.1%) confirmed that parents volunteering is less practiced; this is evident from ratings (none (11.2%), rarely (20.2%) and sometimes (34.3%) practiced responses against the component. On the other hand about 33.9% of the participants indicated the prevalence of high volunteering of parents by rating frequently (23.3%) and very frequently (10.5%) achievement of parents' volunteer collaboration. Likewise, the community collaboration with schools for enhancing students learning success was perceived varyingly at the schools observed by participants. A few (7.9%) reported none existence of community collaboration; most (52.1%) revealed rarely (15.8%) and sometimes (36.3%) collaboration, while the remaining (40%) rated frequent (28.8%) and very frequent (11.2%) implementation of community collaboration. The evidence suggest in spite of the efforts made that both the parent volunteer involvement and community collaboration with schools to realize students learning success or progress is not satisfying, in other word it is at lower level at the schools surveyed.

The data further justify that participants reported that the linkage and contacts are either none, rare or sometimes happen as verified in aggregate by 64.5 %(71) and 67.3 %(74) respectively (table 2a, item 2 & 2b item 5). It is evident from the data that only about one third of the respondent exhibited a favoring view regarding school and students' home linkage and teachers and parents connection. Differently, 39(34.8%) and 36(32.7%) of them said that it is frequently or very frequently or well-practiced respectively. The evidence obtained from interview and FGD varyingly supplement these quantitative data. Accordingly most of the school supervisors and principals believed that the "relationship between the school and parents is not satisfactory because parents seem reluctant and lack sense of belongingness to closely work with schools"; there is "weak participation on the part of parents''. FGD participants also indicated that "family-school-partnership is weak''; One of them explained that "most of the time

parents support the school when there is new construction and maintenance" demand. On the other hand, some PTA members involved in FGD expressed that:

> Some Parents communicate and closely work with schools. However, there could be a problem due to lack of awareness on the part of the community and parents, low commitment on the part of teachers to involve parents on school affairs and students learning.

Therefore, the understanding emerging from the evidence suggests that the connection between home and school is not strong as desired to enhance children learning success due to different reasons. Providing information to parents and working with them by school for students learning were evaluated as none-rarely-sometimes happened (combined) by 78 (70.9%) participants; where recognizing and valuing different parents contribution to schools effort were rated (none-rarely-sometimes) together by 51.6% of the respondents. Whether opportunities are available or not for parents to learn more about parenting skills, the result assured that most of the participants 81 (73.7%) described the insufficient of opportunities for parents, while only 26.3% of the respondents indicated availability of opportunity for parents. The qualitative evidence obtained from FGD participants explained that "…teachers also lack commitment and fail to communicate the problem of children education to parents through home visit, and inviting parents to schools".

 The result on extent of involving parents in decision making on school matters and awaking parents about importance of supporting children at home were identified as none and sometimes functioning were confirmed by 62(56.4%) and 73(66.4%) respectively. Similarly, volunteering of parents in school activities was perceived as dissatisfy state by most of the respondents (75.5%) while (66.4%) them suggested plan for flexible volunteering and minimizing barriers to parents' participation in school activities. The implication of the result suggests that the key functions of family-school partnership were found at lower levels. Then it follows that the two most important environments (home and school) for children learning are not well linked to contribute their respective and joint responsibilities for students' learning success. Concerning involving parents in school decision making like evaluating school activities and community collaboration were reported by about 67.3% and 61.8% of teachers as sometime implemented and remained less active respectively. In similar way larger community participation in school affair was perceived ineffective by about 65(59.1%) of the respondents. To the item inquiring whether schools work with local and community organization on students' learning most of the participants (59.1%) reported insufficiency of this collaboration.

However, 45(40.9%) of the participants had a favoring view toward community and school collaboration and reported as applied frequently. The qualitative evidence obtained from interview differently showed that "majority of students lack support at home because parents do not show the necessary concern about their children's learning". A principal claimed that "parents do not demonstrate their desire as role model for learning" and complained that "some of grade 5 students are unable to read and write…" which suggests inadequacy of support and follow up at home. Moreover, the interviewees expressed that "students' lack of interest towards learning as additional challenge" to family-school partnership. The efforts of Kebele Education and Training

Board (KETB) were described inadequate compared to that of PTA by principals and FGD members. Principals talked about less concern exhibited by kebele leaders whom are the KETB chairpersons about school matters and children in relative terms as compared to PTA. The data focusing on the roles of parents and communities dimensions of family-school partnership is as indicated below (Table 2b).

Some school supervisors stated that "school is trying to work with parents, but parents' contribution is very low to family-school partnership to contribute to students learning success". PTA members further confirmed that "majority of parents believe teaching children is the business of the school and parents are only responsible to supply the necessary materials, and parents focus on their immediate benefit and problems rather than long term outcome of their children education".

On the hand, some parents involved in FGD indicated that "parents closely work with the schools, and direct their children". It was understood that the most of the FGD participants believe that there is weak concern from both teachers and parents toward the partnership and contended in effect considerable size of students second cycle are unable to read and write. Thus, the emerged evidence revealed the weak connection between children home and schools and suggests inadequacy of their joint contribution to students' learning success.

School-Family Partnership Constraining Factors as perceived by Teachers and School Administers

The evidence that outlines the main factors influencing the school-home connection on children education according to their severity is indicated below (Table 2b).

Table 2b. Family-School Partnership parent focusing dimensions as rated by teacher respondents

Parameters of partnership	Items: the school	Measures	Rating					Total
			1	2	3	4	5	
Parenting	provides the information for all families on child learning progress	Frequency	11	27	40	23	9	110
		%	10	24.5	36.4	20.9	8.2	100
	respects and values people (community) of diverse cultures for their contribution to the schools' mission	Frequency	6	14	37	31	22	110
		%	5.5	12.7	33.6	28.2	20.0	100.0
	provides opportunities for parents to learn more about parenting(guiding) skills	Frequency	10	31	40	22	7	110
		%	9.1	28.2	36.4	20.0	6.4	100.0
	share evidence/idea that is clear and valuable for the families to assist children's learning success	Frequency	10	21	44	21	14	110
		%	9.1	19.1	40.0	19.1	12.7	100.0
	obtain information from families about children's interest and capacity that promotes learning success	Frequency	14	36	32	15	13	110
		%	12.7	32.7	29.1	13.6	11.8	100.0
Volunteering	encourages volunteers who come to the school seek awareness on school policies (missions, rules and regulation)	Frequency	9	11	35	39	16	110
		%	8.2	10.0	31.8	35.5	14.5	100.0

	prepares plan for flexible volunteering to enable parents work with school	Frequency	17	19	47	14	13	110
		%	15.5	17.3	42.7	12.7	11.8	100.0
	planned activities that all families can engage/attend in	Frequency	13	36	31	23	7	110
		%	11.8	32.7	28.2	20.9	6.4	100.0
	minimizes barriers (communication and understanding problems) to parent's participation in school affairs	Frequency	10	23	40	27	10	110
		%	9.1	20.9	36.4	24.5	9.1	100.0
Community Collaboration	Encourages and work with government and non-governments institutions to adopt policies that promote the involvement of parents in school affairs	Frequency	9	15	41	32	13	110
		%	8.2	13.6	37.3	29.1	11.8	100
	establishes system that encourages schools to participant in community functions	Frequency	9	19	40	34	8	110
		%	8.2	17.3	36.3	30.9	7.3	100
	works with local and community organizations such as kebele administration to enhance students learning success	Frequency	8	18	39	29	16	110
		%	7.3	16.4	35.5	26.4	14.5	100

Source: Field Survey

Table 3. Mean Rank of Factors Influencing School-Family Partnership by Zone

Items	Ilubabor (n=32)		South West Shewa (n=28)		Jimma (n=41)		Aggregate (N=101)	
	Mean Rank	Item Rank	Item Rank	Mean Rank	Item Rank	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	Item Rank
Teachers perception about parents involvement in their children's learning	54.66	8	49.11	5	49.44	4	51.07	8
parents role construction (sense of personal or group responsibility for child's learning)	49.59	4	51.32	7	51.88	6	50.93	6
School's responsiveness (valuing) to family-school collaboration	49.97	5	48.88	4	53.26	7	50.7	4
parents sense of efficacy (self confidence) for helping the child's learning success	51.47	6	53.75	8	48.76	3	51.33	10
Parents life-context (skills and knowledge, time and energy)	46.31	2	47.54	2	57.02	10	50.29	1
Parenting style (Authoritarian, Permissive or authoritative-rational)	48.59	3	50.09	6	53.5	8	50.73	5
Family and students aspiration (hope) for future	41.44	1	57.14	9	54.27	9	50.95	7

School plan's consideration of family-school partnership	53.58	7	47	1	50.49	5	50.36	2
Language and traditional barriers	57.23	10	47.68	3	48.4	2	51.1	9
School culture and climate (supportive or challenging)	55.33	9	57.14	10	43.43	1	50.54	3

Source: Field survey

Table 3 outlined ten factors as barriers to family-school partnership, and revealed the first five factors ranked in aggregated mean according to their severity. The factors ranked 1st—5th were parent's life context (50.29 mean rank), schools plan consideration of family-school partnership (50.36), school culture and climate (50.54), school responsiveness to family-school partnership (50.7), and parenting (guiding) (50.73 mean rank). The first and the fifth factors- the parents' life situations and parents' roles and approach appear important to children's education but found not contributing to children's learning success. The remaining three factors ranged from 2nd -4th referred to school efforts and experiences as impediment to students' learning. The implication of the data suggests that the schools of the study site could not discharge their leadership role to enhance the school-home linkage for students' education as expected.

On the other hand, parents' sense of efficacy for helping their children education, language and traditional barriers, and teachers' perception about parents' involvement in students learning were identified as the three constraints from the last. Irrespective of the rank order given by teachers these last factors' impact on children education cannot be undermined. The implication emerged of the data related to factors constraining family-school partnership to enhance students learning success most tended to be school related yet those related to parents are severe. However, the degree of influence these factors caused was found varied from zone to zone. For instance, the first ranking factor for Ilu Aba Bora, South Western Shewa, and Jimma Zones were family and students aspiration/hope/ for future, school plan consideration of family-school partnership, and school culture and climate respectively. It was noted that at context level (Zone level) of the three most pressing constraining factors to family-school partnership was reported by the respondents to be parent related notably 2nd, and 3rd factors of Ilu A/Bor, South Western Shewa, and Jimma(see table 2 above). The qualitative evidence partly attributes the factors to both school and home aspects, yet, with different level. Most of the FGD participants indicated that "both teachers and parents less concerned about children learning success; and the schools never manage students properly and many of the students are not capable to read and write as desired". PTA and parents representatives in FGD outlined additional factors such as "distance of the school location from community centers, less awareness of parents and students about the value of education, little motivation of students, and involvement in trading or business". For these participants the "more prioritized child labor as well as increased students absenteeism and dropouts could be considered as the indicators of the challenges". Other FGD participants complained about "less commitment of some teachers to the children learning and involving parent in school activities".

Students Views toward Roles of Family members to Family-School Partnership for Their Learning
This part seeks to analyze students' perception regarding family-school partnership as related to their education. Table 3 shows data on students' views about family members at home. The result assumed to be important with who schools should deal most on issues related to school-family partnership to promote children's learning success (Table 4).

Table 4. Students' view on the role of major stakeholders to their learning success

Items: Family member role (contribution) to my learning by	Measure	Roles and contribution of family members for students learning success as partners of schools							
		Mother	Father	Father & Mother	Step-moth/father	Siblings	others	Missing	Total
Guiding me most about my learning and future educational directions as per school plans	Frequency	99	80	531	12	52	14	10	798
	%	12.4	10.0	66.5	1.5	6.5	1.8	1.3	100.0
Providing me daily **support** on my learning tasks (home work completion, readings etc.) at home	Frequency	80	150	185	5	327	41	10	798
	%	10.0	18.8	23.2	0.6	41.0	5.1	1.3	100.0
Following up my daily educational activities and challenges	Frequency	91	218	267	9	174	29	10	798
	%	11.4	27.3	33.5	1.1	21.8	3.6	1.3	100.0
Delivering the educational **materials** I need as required	Frequency	130	196	372	16	52	22	10	798
	%	16.3	24.6	46.6	2.0	6.5	2.8	1.3	100.0
Encouraging me for good performance and redirects me when exhibiting failure.	Frequency	98	134	262	14	238	42	10	798
	%	12.3	16.8	32.8	1.8	29.8	5.3	1.3	100.0

Communicating about my education with my **teacher** and school administrators	Frequency	95	346	164	17	97	69	10	798
	%	11.9	43.4	20.6	2.1	12.2	8.6	1.3	100.0
Cooperating with my **teacher**(s) and establish common expectations about my learning success	Frequency	104	310	168	14	128	64	10	798
	%	13.0	38.8	21.1	1.8	16.0	8.0	1.3	100.0
Playing **role** in my educational life both at **school and home** so far	Frequency	153	267	243	10	88	27	10	798
	%	19.2	33.5	30.5	1.3	11.0	3.4	1.3	100.0
Monitoring my personal development, including my education regularly	Frequency	185	173	299	19	98	14	10	798
	%	23.2	21.7	37.5	2.4	12.3	1.8	1.3	100.0
Involving **voluntarily** in school activities as per the school schedule	Frequency	120	271	148	21	158	70	10	798
	%	15.0	34.0	18.5	2.6	19.8	8.8	1.3	100.0
Making **regular relationship** with my teacher(s)	Frequency	136	316	143	23	120	50	10	798
	%	17.0	39.6	17.9	2.9	15.0	6.3	1.3	100.0

Source field survey

According to Table 4 above students recognized the roles of mother and father (both parent), father as single, and siblings as important to their learning at a varying degree. In this sense guiding, supplying inputs and monitoring roles were reported by about (66.5%), (46.6%) and (37.5%) of students respondents respectively as performed by mother and father (parent). In the same vein following up act by (33.5%), and encouraging role by (29.8%) students were also attributed to father and mother. This was confirmed almost by 50% (342 out of 798) of the student participants. It was also found that, unlike in single parents' context, fathers predominately play greater roles in establishing regular relationship (39.6%), cooperating (38.8%) and communicating (43.6%) with teachers (school) on children education. In similar way providing daily support to students learning on homework and exercise completing, readings etc. at home were reported to be contributed more by siblings and this was reported by 327(41%) of students. The support made by other care givers for children at home was reported only by 5.1% of the student involved; at the same time, stepmother and stepfather were given less regard by the respondents. The evidence implies that at home environment the roles of all family members are significant input to children education, however, the role of father and mother was tremendously perceived important. It appears logical also in the absence of biological parents, other caregivers or guardians are expected to assume responsibility and play equal role for children learning.

The understanding emerging from the result implied that, though children spend grater span of their time at home as compared to school, only fathers and mothers were found to be concerned or involved in children's education predominantly. In this regard parents involved in FGD accepted that "for effective learning our children need to be oriented and guided to follow acceptable norms and values at home so that they become purposeful and competent at school as well". Accordingly another parent articulated similarly in Afan Oromo that "*Ilmoo manatti nyaaru, mana barumsaattis hayaata fi* bu'aa *qaabessa akka ta'anutti."* Literarily, this means "ones child shall be shaped, oriented and directed early at home so that they become self-disciplined, purposeful and competent at school". In this regard, the qualitative data hence, verify that both home and school agencies of children education have their respective deficiencies in playing the role expected of them. The individual interview and FGD evidence revealed that "most of the parents fail to involve in their children education and work with school to the desired level". We could recall from earlier data that parent (father and mother) support in assignment and exercise completion and reading was insignificant. This is because they engage less in their children education perhaps, owing to "lack of awareness about the importance of education and contribution of parents to students schooling". It was also argued that "school board is limited to decision making and unexpectedly, some member of the board tend to seek payment for their participation or attendance''.

DISCUSSIONS
The study focuses on examining the status of family-school partnership and its contribution to students learning at primary schools. Both the quantitative and qualitative data analyzed and interpreted is discussed in this part.

The Status of Family--School Connection and Students' Learning
The efforts of establishing communication system between school and home of students or teachers and family were found to be weak. The result showed that schools could not facilitate communication mechanisms to increase parents' interaction with teachers and school leadership members on children learning. Two-way communication is absent to link school activities to home and promote school-family partnership for better children's learning. However, a study conducted by Wherry (1992) claims that communication between school and parents can be improved if there is possibility to reach parents and the school sponsors parents for fund raising and support parent-teacher organizations.   It was found that there is no consistent communication and contact arranged for parents, whereas schools routines are emphasized than awareness building about the importance of partnership for children's learning success and parent engagement.

School teachers' initiative to visit parents to know their perception about their children's abilities, difficulties, etc. was reported as weaker practice. This conflicts with the perspective of Epstein (1992, 1998) which advocates that the more consistent the communication the more teachers and parents can address positive thinking in a child's life. The writer suggests that communication helps to challenge parents to increase their involvement in school affairs and feeling towards child learning and minimize language barriers and helps families to know about school programs and student progress.

Similar to communication and parenting, monitoring or making follow-up on students' learning was found at lower status. Contrasted to parents' awareness building for supporting children at home by school their effort of providing the necessary information for parents on how to monitor students learning success has been reported as low. Hence, the finding revealed that the parent-school connection is weaker to contribute to children learning success. Different from this finding Sheridan (2009) disclosed that students' learning at home provides the necessary information and ideas to families on how to assist their children in learning activities at home. He outlined doing homework, other curriculum-related activities decisions, planning and linking schoolwork to real life etc. as areas where parents could help their children at home. Related to weak link between home and school identified, found that working with parents is challenging because they consider that managing students learning is the business of the schools. The qualitative evidence assured that weak commitment of both teachers and parents contributed to the observed weak status of home and school linkage or partnership. Incapability of most students even after reaching the second cycle to read and write very well is an indicator of this fact. The study also implicated the need for improvement through awareness development of parents to value the education of children. The study conducted by Teshome (2017) reflects inability of enhancing learning effectiveness similar to present study observed result. Teshome identified that public primary school students do not meet the minimum quality standards (50%) achievement required by government and   8 score was 29 mean points for public schools compared 37% mean point score of private schools counterpart.

School leadership appeared inconsistent to empower and involve parents, because the finding indicated that the extent of parents' involvement in school level decision making is inadequate. Hussein et al.(2014) reported results of mixed nature in this regard,

claiming that PTAs(Parent –Teachers Associations) is perceived as important actors to involve parents in the school's decision-making, promoting communications, and contributing resources for the school. Differently they found out the dependence of PTAs on school officials in some schools, as many of their interviewee ascertained that the school director plays a dominant role in their meetings in the decision-making process. Similarly, the qualitative evidence disclosed the prevalence of sensible complain by stake holders on KETB (Keble Education and Training Board) less concern about school educational matters. This being the case, Epstein (1998), and Gay Geneva (2009) contended that parents' involvement in decision-making may set foundation for mutual trust and respect between teachers and parents; and enables students to explore positive life experience, solve problems of learning both in school and the community. The observation of Berhan (2010) is of a mixed trend compared to the present study. The Berhan investigated learning and teaching, leadership and management relatively as a better achieved dimension while school environment and community involvement domain achievement were found at a very low level.

Family and Community Collaboration Trust and Students Learning
It was identified that there is mismatch between what is expected of parents and their actual parenting experience and skills pertaining to children's learning progress and problems. Even though parenting style is expected to enable families to effectively nurture their children education; the study data showed that the level of information exchange between schools and the parents is weak. Thus it was found that most parents possess low interest to participate in school affairs and do not make the necessary follow-up on their children learning. Different from this observation, studies (e.g. Sheridan, 2009) suggest that parenting skills improves home conditions that support children to learn at each age and grade level as well as school community, respect for parents with divers culture, … to guide the life of their children. Accordingly, the present study too tend to conflict with the observation of Epstein(1992) which states that home process variables related to education have a major effect on children's school performance.

The effort of schools in fostering voluntary involvement of stakeholder in school activities seems better. However, the result showed that schools do not have fixed program to involve volunteers in school affairs; in particular they are not doing well (ascertained by 66.2%) to attract volunteers for students learning success. Moreover unwillingness of some parents to come to school and discuss on their children learning matter was reported as barrier to partnership. Contrary to this observation Geneva (2009) claimed that parental willingness to donate their talent and invest their time needs personal interest to share life experience.

Pertaining the collaboration of larger community, the finding explores that, strengthen collaboration between the school and community seems relatively better; but establishing a system of collaboration between school and larger community with aims of students' meaningful learning tended to be insufficient. The empirical evidence further disclosed that children fail to respect their teachers and parents suggesting that they are not guided and lead well in this regard. In this regard, Indiana Department of Education (2001) argues that in the process of collaboration schools may get support

from community leaders to achieve educational goals by senior citizens, health offices and artists' initiative involvement. In similar vein, Epstein et al. (2002) showed the wide opportunities the community collaboration creates for both parties such as sharing common purpose and vision as well as leadership, and increasing communication between school, family and community for children education among others. Berhan(2010) finding partly supports the insufficiency of community involvement in school activities and students learning stated earlier. He examined the implementation of school improvement program activities found out that practice in school environment and community involvement domain were found at a very low level.

Students Perception on the Family Roles to their Learning Success
Majority of the student respondents claimed that among the family members mother and father make more follow up on educational activities of their children. Similar finding recorded by Muller (1993) as cited in Bowen (1999) indicated that home-literacy environment and mothers' educational expectations for children were among the strongest predictors … of language achievement. Yet, regarding communication with teachers on children education, fathers are the main actors. Besides this, the father is more responsible than other family members in playing significant roles by setting foundation for child's lifelong learning. In natural way of life both father and mother are more responsible for the personal development of a child including his/her education. The study result also confirmed that father was recognized for regularly establish relationship with school and teachers via voluntary interaction with school and further students learning success. However, siblings (both brothers and sisters) and other family members are expected to be important role players in supporting children in doing their daily homework, exercise reading for better learning success. It is arguable in this regard that less concern demonstrated and lack of sense of efficacy by parents as well as livelihood related problems regarding helping children learning seems visible challenges. The implication suggests the need to refocusing and working on adult literacy and improvement of living standard along with improving children schooling for majority (over 74%) of the students participants were coming from rural area. Similar study (Tesfaye, 2009) partly implies that parent level of literacy affect their view and effort to support their children education and Destefano et al.,(1993) in the same source revealed that valuing the education of children requires the education of parents themselves. Regarding parent-school partnership Epstein (1992) also argued that although families and schools share responsibility for student achievement, schools have the resources and capacity to empower parents to fulfill their educational roles effectively.

Barriers to Family-School Partnership
Family-school connection was affected by numerous factors that were varied from school to school setting of the study site. The study finding showed the most severe factors ranking first to fifth which includes, parents life context (50.29 mean rank), schools plan about family-school partnership (50.36), school culture and climate (50.54), school responsiveness to family-school partnership (50.7), and parenting style (50.73 mean rank). The first and the fifth ranked factors noted above implied the parents' life situations and parents' roles and approach as decisive issue to their children's education but found not contributing to children's learning success. The study conducted in Ethiopia (Mulugeta, 1998; Kassahun, 2008) explicitly showed the extent to

which the family leaders and characteristics of the family members affects children' education. Mulugeta (1998) investigated that household's demand for schooling significantly depends on the education, and sex of household head, location and education level of mother. Kassahun (2008) on his part found out that gender and education of household head as well as composition of household and wealth of household as important family level determinants of children school enrollment.

The remaining three factors ranged from 2nd to 4th referred to school efforts and experiences as impediment to students' learning. The implication of the data suggests that the schools under investigation could not discharge their leadership role to enhance the school-home connection for students' learning success as expected. Conversely, parents' sense of efficacy for helping their children education, language and traditional barriers, and teachers' perception about parents' involvement in students learning were identified as the three constraints from the last dimension of the ten factors identified. Importantly, the variations of degree of influence from school to schools or zone to zone may reflect local differences between the three zones. The finding revealed that socio-economic background of the setting, teachers' perception about parental involvement, absence of supportive school culture, as well as, parents lack of confidence in helping children's learning, and poor school's responsiveness to family-school collaboration were among factors reported by participants. Therefore, the consideration of the real local situations is important to minimize the negative impacts of each factor on family-school partnership.

CONCLUSIONS
The importance of education for human life is progressively increasing these days than ever, operating within complex process and demanding context. Hence, schools alone cannot effectively make students learning successful without family and community involvement and support. The present study has examined the status and the extent of school-family partnership connection to contribute to students learning success. It was found that student home environment to school environment and vice versa were not connected well to enhance students learning success. The finding revealed that family-school partnership was weak or found at low level to contribute to students learning success. The school agencies and parents' expectations of each others' and their corresponding actual roles tended to be in consistent to make learning successful. Schools initiative and leadership to involve parent and community in students learning was perceived as insufficient. They are not doing well to improve the role of parents to support their children's learning success. Home and school connection and collaboration to support students of primary school were weaker and less significant. The weak school-family partnership was attributed to major factors such as parents' life context, schools' plan about family-school partnership, school culture and climate, less responsiveness school to family-school partnership, and parenting approach and less commitment and misperception about the role of parents among others. The root causes of the weak partnership were believed to be caused by schools and parents related constraints where most of the school-teachers did not value the role of parents in contributing to students learning success. Contrastingly, parents believed that schools and teachers are responsible for children education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the study findings and the conclusions reached, the following suggestions were forwarded.

- In order to strengthen home-school connection teachers and parents should be encouraged to work closely on students learning progress and rewarded for good outcome by the immediate structures.
- Both Short and long term trainings should be arranged for school community on how to engage parents in educational activities in general and students learning success in particular.
- PTA and KETB members need refocus and recognize their roles in collaborating with schools and involving community in school affairs and children education.
- The Education offices of Zones and Woredas shall strengthen the school-family partnership; through awareness building and short trainings for parents and community to foster their capacity and skill about children education.
- It is suggested that all the educational structural agencies shall reconsider and apply the intended school improvement program framework or guidelines
- Administrative officials and educational leaders should take initiatives to involve and work with religious leaders and community elders to involve and work community at large on children's education and behavioral issues responsibly.
- It is also recommendable to empower parents and promote their awareness via different forms to link home environment and school environment for their children learning effectiveness consistently by all concerned institutions.

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