

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL CARE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ONITSHA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract: The main purpose of the study was to investigate influence of parental care on the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study. The population of the study was made up of all parents of children in secondary schools in Onitsha South Local Government Area. The categories of parents involved in the study include civil servants, artisans, and traders. The rate of mobility of parents in the area is high. People come and go on transfer and people who are self-employed might decide to relocate to another area and so this makes it difficult to determine specifically the number of parents in Awka South Local Government Area. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 70 parents, 10 parents from each of the seven communities in Onitsha South. The communities are Omagba Layout Phases 1 & 2, inland Town, GRA, Federal Housing Estate Trans Nkisi GRA, Akpaka, Odoakpu and Ose. A structured validated questionnaire was used to collect data for the study and the reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot test. Mean was used to answer the research questions. The finding of the study revealed that parents helping with their children homework, parents participating in school events and parents providing supportive home environment influences the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Based on these findings the researcher concludes that parental care influences academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State. The researcher therefore recommended among others that Parents as a matter of importance should actively be involved in their children's academic activities by helping them in their homework based on the instructions of the teachers.

Keywords: Parental Care, Parental Participation, Academic Performance, Secondary Schools

Introduction

Secondary school education is the phase of education students receive after secondary school and before the tertiary level. Its importance lies in its position both as the bridge between secondary and tertiary education and the agent for preparing individuals for useful living in the society. In Nigeria, secondary education is structured to last six years, comprising two distinct stages: junior secondary and senior secondary, each spanning three years. The junior secondary phase offers a broad-based curriculum, including core subjects like Mathematics, English Language, Science, Social Studies, and vocational training (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). The senior

secondary level focuses on specialisation, allowing students to concentrate on disciplines such as sciences, arts, or technical subjects, thereby equipping them for tertiary education or vocational pursuits. The Nigerian government acknowledges the important role of secondary education in the nation's development.

The broad goals of secondary education in Nigeria are preparing people for useful living in the society and for higher education (FRN, 2013). Secondary level of education in Nigeria is geared to cater for disparities in abilities, opportunities, and future responsibilities, as well as to deliver technical knowledge and vocational skills required for agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economic development. The realization of the goals of secondary education is reflected in secondary school students' academic performance.

Academic performance refers to the level of achievement a student attains through participation in school activities and the completion of assigned tasks. Cyril (2015) described academic performance as a combination of ability and effort, where individuals with higher motivation and commitment tend to achieve better grades. It can also be defined as the proficiency or accomplishment demonstrated by an individual in a particular skill or area of knowledge. Academic performance signifies the knowledge gained and skills developed in school subjects, often assessed through test scores or grades assigned by teachers. Chaturvedi (2016) noted that academic performance can be measured using various types of tests, either verbal or written. Given its role in selection, promotion, and recognition in different spheres of life, academic performance holds significant importance. In this context, academic performance represents the extent to which students, teachers, or institutions achieve their educational goals. Teachers must manage their time effectively to ensure the realisation of these goals. Okafor, Uwede, Uyanne, and Chibundum (2018) observed that the level of academic performance among secondary school students may be influenced by the extent of parental care provided.

Parental care encompasses any post-positional behaviour by parents that enhances the survival and well-being of their children at some cost to the parents themselves. Adegboyega, Famolu, and Yusuf (2023) described parental care as an investment by parents in their offspring to increase their chances of survival, even if it reduces the parents' ability to allocate resources to themselves or other offspring. It includes behaviours that contribute to the welfare of the child, such as providing food, protection, and a conducive environment for growth. Tamara (2023) highlighted that parental care may involve offering shelter, safeguarding against dangers, and providing necessities that boost the offspring's chances of success. Bariroh (2018) identified various responsibilities parents have towards their children, including naming them, providing a home, ensuring safety, instilling discipline, arranging education, determining their religious upbringing, and offering necessary medical care. Oranga, Obuba, Sore, and Boinett (2022) elaborated that parental care in education involves activities such as helping with homework, attending school functions, participating in parent-teacher interactions, and creating a supportive environment for learning.

Previous studies have examined the role of parental involvement in education, focusing on collaborative efforts between families and schools. Such efforts include monitoring students' progress, attending open days, engaging in school-based tasks, and maintaining written communication between parents and teachers (Matejević & Jovanović, 2017; Tóblová, Ferková, & Poliaková, 2020; Veljković, 2021). This study specifically focuses on parents assisting with homework, attending school events, and fostering a supportive home environment. The purpose of these actions is to promote students' independence and motivation. Modern research has underscored the significance of parental engagement in managing their children's homework, encouraging active involvement, and fostering behavioural and emotional engagement. Núñez, Suárez, Rosário, Vallejo, Valle, and Epstein (2015) identified two key aspects of parental involvement: direct support and active management. Similarly, Thomas,

Muls, De Backer, and Lombaerts (2020) suggested that parental involvement positively influences students' motivation, behaviour, and academic outcomes. Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen, and Brand-Gruwel (2018) highlighted specific forms of home-based involvement, such as assisting with homework, sharing school experiences, and maintaining open communication with children.

Parental involvement also extends to participation in school activities. Research by Kohl, Lengua, and McMahon in Naite (2021) revealed that students whose parents are actively involved in their education exhibit better attendance, behaviour, and academic performance. They are also more likely to continue their education and attend prestigious institutions. Barger, Kim, Kuncel, and Pomerantz (2019) noted that parental care conveys a strong message about the importance of education, fostering students' interest and motivation. Boonk et al. (2018) further emphasised the value of parents engaging in school-based activities and discussing educational topics with their children. Additionally, creating a conducive home environment is another vital aspect of parental care.

The home is a child's immediate environment and serves as a critical foundation for their development. Ajibade (2022) argued that both home and school environments play essential roles in shaping a child's education and character. According to Obiakor, Ugwu, and Eze (2018), the education a child receives at home significantly influences their behaviour and future outcomes. The motivation and resources provided at home often determine a student's academic success or failure. Ajibade (2022) observed that various home-related factors, including parental education level, occupation, family size, and socio-economic status, impact students' academic performance. Parveen (2017) described the home environment as comprising the human and material resources that affect a student's learning and overall well-being. Jayanthi and Srinivasan (2015) found a positive correlation between home environment and academic performance, highlighting the influence of home-related factors on students' success.

Poor parental care is characterised by a lack of attention to children's social and economic needs, often results in poor academic performance. Conversely, supportive parenting and a stable home environment can significantly enhance academic achievement. Faradina (2016) observed that positive parental acceptance promotes both academic success and personal development. However, these observations have not been empirically verified among students in Onitsha South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Therefore, this study investigated the perceived influence of parental care on the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of secondary education in Onitsha South Local Government Area cannot be overstated, as it provides foundational knowledge and skills essential for academic advancement. However, field observations suggest a rise in poor academic performance among students in secondary schools, which has contributed to an increased dropout rate. Disturbingly, some parents appear unconcerned about their children's declining performance, while others attribute the problem to teachers and schools. Conversely, teachers and school administrators often hold parents accountable for failing to provide adequate support or monitoring their children's activities. This raises the question of whether parental care significantly influences the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of parental care on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Specifically the study:

1. Ascertained the influence of parents helping with their children home work on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State.
2. Investigated the influence of parents participating in school events on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State.
3. Examined the influence of parents providing supportive home environment on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the influence of parents helping with their children home work on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State?
2. What is the influence of parents participating in school events on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State?
3. What is the influence of parents providing supportive home environment on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State?

Methodology

The research design adopted in this study was descriptive survey. The study was conducted in Onitsha South Local Government area of Anambra State. The population of the study was made up of all parents of children in secondary schools in Onitsha South Local Government Area. The categories of parents involved in the study include civil servants, artisans, and traders. The rate of mobility of parents in the area is high. People come and go on transfer and people who are self-employed might decide to relocate to another area and so this makes it difficult to determine specifically the number of parents in Awka South Local Government Area. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 70 parents, 10 parents from each of the seven communities in Onitsha South. The communities are Omagba Layout Phases 1 & 2, inland Town, GRA, Federal Housing Estate Trans Nkisi GRA, Akpaka, Odoakpu and Ose.

The instrument for data collection for this study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire is titled “Influence of Parental Care on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students (IPCAPSSS)”. The questionnaire contains 18 items in three clusters, 1 to 3 based on the research questions. Cluster 1 contains six items on influence of parents helping with their children homework on academic performance of secondary school students; Cluster 2 contains six items on influence of parents participating in school on academic performance of secondary school students and Cluster 3 contains six items on influence of parents providing supportive home environment on academic performance of secondary school students. The instrument is structured on four-point rating scale response options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD).

To ascertain the validity of the instrument for the study, the research questions, purpose of the study and the 18 items questionnaire were given to three experts in the Department of Early childhood and Secondary Education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation unit of Educational Foundations Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka for face validation. These experts were requested to validate the instrument relative to the appropriateness and coverage of the items, wordings and item construct as well as clarity of the instructions. To establish the instrument’s reliability, it was administered on a sample of 20 parents whose children or wards are in public secondary schools in Onitsha North LGA who are not included in the population of the study. The application of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 using Cronbach Alpha reliability method

on the obtained data yielded a score of 0.86 for internal consistency which was deemed reliable for the study. As a result of the fact that the instrument is in three clusters, the researcher had to ascertain the reliability of each cluster using Cronbach Alpha reliability method which yielded coefficient values of 0.87, 0.88 and 0.84 for clusters B1, B2 and B3 respectively. These coefficient values indicate that the instrument is highly reliable.

The researcher and two assistants administered the questionnaire to the respondents in three PTA meetings respectively. The research assistants were adequately briefed on the modalities for administration and retrieval of the questionnaires. The researcher or research assistants gave out the questionnaire to the respondents and allowed sometime for the completion and return of the instruments. On-the-spot questionnaire delivery and retrieval was used to avoid loss of the research instrument. Out of 70 copies of the questionnaire administered, 66 were returned in good condition and used for the analysis of data. This amounted 94 percent questionnaire return rate.

Data collected was analyzed using the arithmetic mean. The level of the rejections or acceptance of the questionnaire items was determined based on the cut-off mean of 2.50. Decision on the research questions was based on the item and cluster mean score in relation to the cut off mean score of 2.50. Thus, an item or cluster with mean score of 2.50 or higher is agree while any item or cluster below 2.50 is disagree.

Research Question 1

What is the influence of parents helping with their children home work on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State?

Table 1: Respondents Mean Ratings on the Influence of Parents Helping with their Children Home Work on the Academic Performance of Students in Secondary Schools (N=66)

S/No.	Item Statement	X	Decision
1.	Explaining difficult concepts in a way that is more relatable my child would improve their understanding	3.59	Agree
2.	Showing interest in my child's assignment could promote positive attitude towards learning	3.44	Agree
3.	Assisting my children in their home work could help the child model effective study skills	3.62	Agree
4.	My children knowing that I will review their work will be encouraged to take their homework seriously	3.61	Agree
5.	Regularly help with my children's homework will help me notice any gaps in their understanding	3.70	Agree
6.	Encouraging my children in their study can improve their self-esteem	3.54	Agree
Cluster Mean		3.58	Agree

Data in Table 1 reveal that the respondents rated items, 1-6 with mean ratings ranging between 3.44 and 3.70 as the influence of parents helping with their children home work on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State. The cluster mean of 3.58 indicate that the respondents opined that parents helping with their children homework influences the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State.

Research Question 2

What is the influence of parents participating in school events on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State?

Table 2: Respondents Mean Ratings on the Influence of Parents’ Participating in School Events on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students (N=66)

S/No.	Item Statement	X	Decision
7.	Participating in school events are more likely to reinforce the values promoted by the school in my home	3.48	Agree
8.	Engaging in school events would help me build relationships with my children’s teachers	3.50	Agree
9.	My children often feel proud when they see me involved in their school activities.	3.56	Agree
10.	My involvement in school events can help my children develop a positive attitude toward school.	3.39	Agree
11.	My active participation in school events facilitates better communication between me and my children’s teachers which keeps me updated on my children’s educational needs	3.46	Agree
12.	Participating in school events could lead to the implementation of enriched educational experiences for my children.	3.54	Agree
Cluster Mean		3.49	Agree

Data in Table 2 reveal that the respondents rated items, 7-12 with mean ratings ranging between 3.39 and 3.54 as the influence of parents participating in school events on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State. The cluster mean of 3.49 indicate that the respondents opined that parents participating in school events influences the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State.

Research Question 3

What is the influence of parents providing supportive home environment on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State?

Table 3: Respondents Mean Ratings on the Influence of Parents Providing Supportive Home Environment on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students (N=66)

S/No.	Item Statement	X	Decision
13.	Constantly encouraging a growth mindset in my children will make them understand that perseverance is essential to academic success.	3.62	Agree
14.	Giving my children emotional support can boost a child's confidence and self-esteem	3.65	Agree
15.	Providing a structured home environment with consistent routines helps my children manage their time efficiently.	3.52	Agree
16.	Providing required learning resources enable my children to explore subjects in depth.	3.29	Agree
17.	Promoting healthy lifestyles help to ensure that my children are physically prepared for school.	3.32	Agree
18.	Modelling healthy lifestyles help to ensure that my children are mentally prepared for school.	3.55	Agree

Cluster Mean**3.49****Agree**

Data in Table 3 reveal that the respondents rated items, 13-18 with mean ratings ranging between 3.29 and 3.65 as the influence of parents providing supportive home environment on academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State. The cluster mean of 3.49 indicate that the respondents opined that parents providing supportive home environment influences the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State.

Discussion of the Findings

Findings of the study revealed that parents helping with their children homework influences the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State. The finding of the study might have resulted because when parents help their children in their homework, children will get the necessary guidance needed in completion of the task as recommended by the teacher or instruction in the text. This finding is in agreement with Manasi, Judah and Anthony (2015) who reported that parental involvement in homework positively correlated with school academic performance. Conversely, Núñez, Suárez, Rosário, Vallejo, Valle, and Epstein (2015) revealed that the profile of the students and the parental involvement in homework has no significant effect to their performance in terms of grades in third quarter. Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen, and Brand-Gruwel (2018) revealed that most of parents accepted that they do not help their children with homework. Most parents are ignorant of their responsibility pertaining homework. However, Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen, and Brand-Gruwel (2018) reported that all the teachers' in the study reported that there is influence of homework on the academic achievement of students' in public secondary schools.

Findings of the study showed that parents participating in school events influences the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State. The finding of the study may have resulted because parents participating in school events will motivate their children to do well in their academic work so as to make their parents proud. This finding is in agreement with Manduku, Cherono and Amdany (2017) who revealed that majority of the parents believed that the responsibility for their preschool children's learning depended on the shared participation between them and the school. Manduku, Cherono and Amdany further found that there was a strong correlation between parental monitoring of school work and performance. In the same vein, Barrioh (2018) revealed that parents participating in school events influences their children academic performance.

Findings of the study showed that parents providing supportive home environment influences the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State. The finding of the study may have resulted because when students learn in a conducive home environment they will be more mentally stable to study. This finding is in agreement with Adeyemi, Adediran and Adewole (2018) who revealed that parents providing a conducive home environment influences students' academic performance. Adeyemi, Adediran and Adewole (2018) concluded that parents have a lot to do in creating a conducive home environment that would promote students' adjustment in schools. However, Koskei (2015) revealed that parents providing a conducive environment did not significantly influence students' academic performance in Kuresoi district. The difference in finding may have resulted because of geographical difference and time frame within which the study is carried out. The researcher believes that students require resources to be able to perform optimally in their education. So parents providing conducive home environment can influence students' academic performance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that parental care influences academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha South LGA of Anambra State. Furthermore, parents helping with their children homework, parents participating in school events and parents providing supportive home environment influences the academic performance of secondary school students. It is therefore imperative that measures are put in place to enhance students' academic performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proffers the following recommendations:

1. Parents as a matter of importance should actively be involved in their children's academic activities by helping them in their homework based on the instructions of the teachers.
2. Parents should be committed in participating in their children's school activities.
3. Parents should be try as much as possible to ensure that they provide their children with the necessary resources required for their academic success.

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