

Predictive Influence of Parental Involvement on Academic Self-Confidence and Academic Engagement among Junior Secondary School Students in Awka, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the predictive influence of parental involvement on academic self-confidence and academic engagement among junior secondary school students in Awka. Two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population comprised of 560 JS2 students in 5 co-educational public schools in Awka from which a sample of 200 JS2 students were drawn to participate in the study. The instruments used for data collection were three, namely: Parental Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ), Academic Self-Confidence Questionnaire (ASCQ), both structured by the researchers and also Academic Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ) adopted from Hughes et. al's Academic Engagement Questionnaire. Both validity and reliability of the instruments were determined. After a test retest of the instruments, reliability coefficient of 0.70 was obtained for PIQ, 0.81 for AEQ and 0.72 for ASCQ using Cronbach Alpha method. Findings indicated that parental involvement has a high and positive relationship for both academic self-confidence and academic engagement of junior secondary school students in Awka. Based on the findings, it was recommended that government and school authorities should take advantage of the media and other enlightenment programmes to educate parents on the importance of getting involved in their children's academic lives. Parents also should make out quality time for their ward's learning activities and through motivation boost their academic self-confidence.

Keywords: parental involvement, academic self-confidence, academic engagement, junior secondary school students

Introduction

Academic engagement is gaining increasing attention in education as a means of promoting positive academic and social behavior outcomes for diverse learners across all levels of education (Maha, 2012). When students feel confident about their academic lives, there seems to be the tendency that they will crave for active engagement in the academic activities available in their schools and in their classrooms in particular. At all academic levels, teachers and educational authorities seek to engage students in academic and learning activities (Rashedi, Abolmaali & Shaterian, 2015). Thus, all the efforts that teachers make during teaching and learning processes are directed to be in tandem with the desire of every parent for students to be actively engaged in the learning opportunities offered in their learning environment. This trend has resulted from researchers' and university leaders' increasing attention to student-centeredness in educational pedagogy and development (McCormic, Kinzie & Gonyea, 2013). Academic engagement refers to the extent to which students identify with and value school outcomes, and participate in academic and non-academic activities (Muriana & Muriana, 2014). From the above definition, it is obvious that academic

engagement covers academic activities and other learning opportunities offered to students by the schools which may not be limited to the classroom. This study, therefore, involves itself to students' active engagement in academic activities and opportunities presented in their classroom learning environment only.

Although there exists various models of academic engagement in literature, the model presented by Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) as a multidimensional construct comprising of three interrelated dimensions namely: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of engagement has been mainly considered by researchers ((Alrashidi, Phan & Ngu, 2016; Rashedi, Abolmaadi & Shaterian, 2015; Sakurai, 2014; Kahu, 2013; Axelson & Flick 2011). Behavioural Engagement represents the observable and overt dimensions of engagement especially as it pertains to classroom activities. According to Fredrickset. al (2004) in Alrashidi, Phan & Ngu, (2016) , behavioural engagement could be defined in three ways. The first way involves positive conduct, such as adhering to the classroom norms, following the rules and refraining from engaging in

disruptive behaviours. The second way pertains to participation in learning and academic-related tasks, and involves behaviours such as discussion, contribution, asking questions, paying attention, concentrating, exhibiting persistence, and putting forth effort. The third and last way according to Fredrickset. al cited in Alrashidi et. al (2016) is the involvement in school based activities such as governance and sports. In a nutshell, behavioural engagement connotes students' manifest participation in academic and extracurricular activities.

Emotional Engagement refers to an array of students' emotions and feelings which could be either positive or negative associated with the institution, teachers, peers, and classroom tasks (Fredricks et. al 2004 in Alrashidi et. al 2016). It refers to the sense of identification with school and to the affective reactions arousal by school, teachers and colleagues (Christenson 2012 in Veiga, Burden, Appleton, Taveira & Galvao, 2014). Affective engagement parallels the construct of situational interest and is task specific and less stable than personal interest (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Disaffected students were reported to be passive, do not try hard and give up easily in the face of challenges; they can be bored, depressed or even argue about their presence in the classroom; they can also be withdrawn from learning opportunities or even rebellious towards teachers and classmates (Skinner & Belmont, 1993 in Rashedi, Abolmaali & Shaterian, 2014).

Cognitive Engagement refers to students' personal investments and efforts in understanding the subject matter, acquiring skills as well as to their learning approaches and self-regulatory strategies (Fredricks et. al 2004 in Alrashidi et. al 2016). It could also imply students' thoughtfulness and willingness to master difficult tasks. Indicators of cognitive engagement include asking questions for clarification of ideas, persistence in difficult activities, flexibility in problem-solving, relating new information to existing information and use of self-regulation to support learning (Finn & Zimmer, 2012).

Academic engagement is very paramount in teaching and learning processes. This calls for the involvement of parents in the education of their children all through their academic lives especially in the junior secondary school stage. Ngwoke and Ede (2016) studied parental support as predictor of school adjustment and academic achievement of secondary school students in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State and found that parental involvement significantly predicts school adjustment and academic achievement of the students noting that a student who is encouraged by their parents when facing failure of self-regulation to engage in school activities will persist to work harder to excel than the student who is not. Similarly, Gonzalez-Dettass, Williams and Holbein (2005) in Ngwoke and Ede (2016), observed that students are motivated to learn when they observe that their parents are actively interested in school. Junior secondary school stage is seen as a period of transition from primary education to secondary education with seemingly transitory and teething adjustment in the academic lives of the students. Estrom (1996) in Okoiye, Okezie and Best-Njoku (2015) implied that psychologists and educationists are becoming aware of the fact that self-confidence is intimately related to how students engage in academic activities.

Academic self-confidence has been defined as the student's belief about performing a task at a particular level in order to attain a specific academic goal (Sander & Sanders, 2005). It reflects a strong belief or sure expectation of success in an academic field comprising of both self-esteem and self-efficacy. Generally, students perform those task and activities in which they feel confident about (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Confidence plays a role in students' learning. Students with high level of academic confidence are proved to be high achievers (Stevens, 2005) while students with low academic confidence were reported to enter college with lower academic skill and are found to be less engaged and face more transition difficulties (Sander & Sander, 2005). The home is the primary place of socialization, learning and training of children for a wholesome all round development to become properly adjusted to his environment and made ready for schooling. It is the responsibility of the parents to play their various roles by ensuring that the child grows up healthy, mentally, physically, psychologically and morally (Ikiyie & Wodi, 2016). Parents through their interaction and nurturing of their children build or mar their children's self-confidence. Erik Erikson in his theory of psycho-social stages of human development asserted that during the early formative years of children through their school age years, precisely from birth to twelve years, children are impacted either positively or negatively from their experiences and interactions from the parents. Their experiences at the stage of industry versus inferiority could either lead to the development of a sense of self-worth, confidence or inferiority (Unachukwu & Ebenebe, 2009), which the child carries all through his life which might also extend to the child's disposition towards engaging in academic activities. To be academically confident and actively engaged in academic activities, parental involvement should be explored as one of the leading factors.

Parental involvement refers to the degree to which parents are committed to their role in providing guidance, showing interest, motivating their wards and having a good communication skill geared towards promoting their children's active engagement learning activities in the school. It typically concerns the amount of effort that parents put into child-oriented education as well as other activities (Nyarko, 2011). Apparently, parental involvement refers to parent behaviours related to the child's school or schooling that can be observed as manifestations of their commitment to their child's educational affairs. This means that a parent who shows these behaviours in a larger extent, can be regarded as higher involved than a parent who shows these behaviours in a lesser degree (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). In this study, parental involvement is delimited to the degree to which students feel that their parents get involved and put efforts into their education to ensure their active engagement in academic activities revolving around teaching and learning processes in the classroom. This role could come in many ways such as helping with homework, setting and achieving academic goals, revising what they did in school daily, checking their notes to ensure correctness, helping them tackle and understand seeming difficult concepts (Shahazad, Abdullah, Fatima, Raiz & Mehmood, 2015), other ways include frequent verbal support and praise, regular feedback for school work (Acharya & Shobhna, 2011) an also by teaching children problem-solving and negotiating skills to help them learn and achieve (Christenson & Peterson, 2007). It was found that when parents play important role in their children's learning, they

provide a home environment that can affect learning, serve as a model for learning and influence the cultivation of attitudes and values towards education (Selvan, 2013 in Okoie, Okezie and Best-Njoku, 2015). No wonder Antoine (2015) asserted that children tend to work harder when parents get involved in their academics.

Statement of problem

Parental involvement in the academic activities of their children, no doubt, plays a vital role towards developing academic self-efficacy and engagement of the students. As the primary socializing agent of the children, parents have the responsibility of nurturing them for all round development through their interaction. However, in this contemporary time where parents are very busy with making money and pursuing their different careers and vocations, they seem to pay less or no attention by getting involved in the academic activities of their wards, thereby, leaving them solely in the hands of teachers or all by themselves. This development seems to be a slap on the expectation that parents through nurturing their children build their self-confidence which could in turn affect how they engage in academic activities. It is against this scenario that the researcher determines to explore the predictive influence of perceived parental involvement on academic self-confidence and academic engagement among junior secondary school students in Awka, Nigeria.

Two research questions guided this study and they are:

- What is the relationship between parental involvement and academic self-confidence of junior secondary school students in Awka?
- What is the relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement among junior secondary school students in Awka?

Two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study and they include:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and academic self-confidence among junior secondary school students.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement among junior secondary school students.

Results

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and academic self-confidence among junior secondary school students in Awka.

Table 1: Relationship between parental involvement and academic self-confidence

Variables	N	DF	Mean	SD	r	P
Parental involvement	200	180	69.23	06.96	0.796	Sig. P<0.05
Academic self-confidence			63.82	05.71		

The table 1 above shows that there was a high and positive relationship between parental involvement and academic self-confidence. It also revealed a significant relationship between parental involvement and academic self-confidence among junior secondary school students ($r=0.796$; $P<0.05$). This means that students with parents that are involved in their academics tend to exhibit higher academic self-confidence than students whose parents are not involved in their academics among junior secondary school students. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. It could then be concluded that parental involvement is significantly related with academic self-confidence among junior secondary school students in Awka.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement among junior secondary school students in Awka.

Table 2: Relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement

Variables	N	DF	Mean	SD	r	P
Parental involvement	200	180	71.33	07.26	0.810	Sig. P<0.05
Academic engagement			72.15	09.93		

Method

The study adopted a correlational survey/ ex-post facto research design. It ascertained the effect of the independent variable (perceived parental involvement) on the dependent variables (academic self-confidence and academic engagement) without manipulations. The population of this study consisted of five hundred and sixty (560) Junior Secondary class 2 (JS2) students in 5 public co-educational secondary schools in Awka. The sample for the study consisted of two hundred randomly selected JSS2 students, 40 students from each of the schools. Three sets of instruments were used in data collection from the respondents. Parental involvement questionnaire (PIQ) was developed by the researchers in line with the purpose of study and used in eliciting responses from the students on their perceived parental involvement in their academic lives. PIQ was a 5 itemed questionnaire with a 4 point likert type ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Academic engagement questionnaire (AEQ), a 20-itemed questions developed by Hughes, Luo, Kwok, and Loyd (2008) based on five point likert scale was adopted, and also Academic Self-confidence questionnaire (ASCQ), a 5- itemed questions developed by the researchers on a 4 point likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used in eliciting responses from the participants on their level of self-confidence to academic activities.

The 3 instruments were validated by three experts, one in the department of Measurement and Evaluation and the 2 others in Educational psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instruments was determined using test retest method within the interval of two weeks. The Cronbach alpha technique was employed in determining their respective reliability and an alpha coefficient of 0.70 for PIQ, 0.81 for AEQ, and 0.72 for ASCQ were obtained showing that the instruments were obtained. The researchers were present to guide the students on how to properly respond to the questionnaires without manipulating them. Pearson's moment correlation coefficient was employed in both answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses.

The table 1 above shows that there was a high and positive relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement. It also revealed a significant relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement among junior secondary school students ($r=0.810$; $P<0.05$). This means that students with parents that are involved in their academics tend to be actively engaged than students whose parents are not involved in their academics among junior secondary school students. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. It could then be concluded that parental involvement is significantly related with academic engagement among junior secondary school students in Awka.

Discussion

The result of the first hypothesis revealed a significant relationship between parental involvement and academic self-confidence among junior secondary school students in Awka. It also provides an answer to research question one, indicating a high and positive relationship between the two variables. This finding agrees with the findings of Selvan, 2013 in Okoiye, Okezie and Best-Njoku, 2015 that when parents play important role in their children's learning, they provide a home environment that can affect learning, serve as a model for learning and influence the cultivation of attitudes and values towards education. This is true because in the home, parents have the responsibility of building their ward's self-confidence which carries them all through their academic lives. The finding of this study is in line with that of Eccles & Wigfield (2002) who observed that students perform those task and activities in which they feel confident about. Similarly, this result aligns itself with the findings of Stevens (2005) and Sander & Sander, (2005) which revealed that students with high level of academic confidence are proved to be high achievers while students with low academic confidence were reported to enter college with lower academic skill and are found to be less engaged and face more transition difficulties.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement among junior secondary school in Awka. It also provided an answer to research question one and showed a high and positive relationship between the two variables. This study agrees with the findings of Okoiye, Okezie and Best-Njoku (2015) that children whose parents provides with support in their academics tend to engage actively in learning activities in their schools. It also aligns itself with the findings of Antoine (2015) which observed that children tend to work harder when parents get involved in their academics. Similarly, the findings of this study is in line with the study by Shahazad, Abdullah, Fatima, Raiz & Mehmood, (2015) which observed that parental involvement promotes active engagement in learning activities among students. This is explainable because when parents are involved in their wards education, it is expected that they provide materials needed for study, motivates and helps the wards to study at home, and so on which in turn could serve as a driving force towards active academic engagement for the students. The finding of this study equally agrees with that of Ngwoke and Ede (2016) which found that parental involvement significantly predicts school adjustment and academic achievement of the students noting that a student who is encouraged by their parents when facing failure of self-regulation to engage in school activities will persist to work harder to excel than the student who is not. Parents' involvement, therefore, is germane towards the academic engagement of students. This implies that the onus does not only lie on teachers to get students engaged in learning activities as was posited but the efforts and involvement of parents are also paramount. Parental involvement in students' academics for active engagement could also be likened to fueling a vehicle while the efforts of teachers to

engaged students could be likened to driving the vehicle. It is obvious that none could effectively function without the efforts of the other.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that parental involvement has high and positive correlation with academic self-confidence of junior secondary school students in Awka. It was also concluded that parental involvement has a high and positive relationship with academic engagement of these students. If parents gets involved and interested in the academic activities of their children, it not only boost their academic self-confidence but also drives them into active engagement in learning activities offered in their classroom in particular.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that government should educate parents on the need to be involved in the academic activities of their children. This could be done through jingles and bill boards and sponsoring of programmes that could serve such a purpose. Government should also make a policy that will scrape the practice of extra-mural classes. This gets hold of students from the close of school hours till late in the evening which makes students too exhausted and also gives parents the opportunity to neglect their role in getting actively involved with their children's learning activities. School authorities should also enlighten parents through interactive forums on the importance of getting involved with their children's academic lives. It is further recommended that parents should make out quality time to show interest in their children's class works not just leaving the children at the sole mercy of the teachers and or nannies for tutorials.

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