

Effect of Parental Involvement on Students' Test Scores in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

For decades, school administrators have been at variance with parents on whose role it is to improve on the academic life of the learner and the academic performance of the student has remained at the center of this debate with some students getting worse-off. This study therefore investigates the effect of parental involvement on students' test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised and answered in the study as well as two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. Survey design was adopted while the target population was 40,047 senior secondary school students in the State out of which 396 students were sampled using stratified random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire and the test score of the students in English Language and Mathematics were used for data collection while the data gathered were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, Ordinary Least Square regression analysis and z-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the study showed that the provision of learning materials was the major way parents got involved in the education of their children. The hours of assistance provided by parents and their level of education were the two major determinants of students' test score. Time constraint was identified as the major reason why parents are not fully involved in the academics of their children and the male and female students did not differ in their opinion on how parents were involved and challenges to their involvement in their academics for improved test scores. The study recommended that parents should increase the number of hours they engage with their children on educational issues.

Keywords: Academics, Education, Parental Involvement, Students, Test Score

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Introduction

Parents have a great level of influence on the overall development of their children as they represent the first agent of socialization that the child interacts with. The social, emotional and physical development of the child is determined by the kind of environment created by their parents and the influence of parents on the academic development of their children has also been an issue of discussion in the educational space.

Parental involvement in the educational life of their children has for years been restricted to servicing educational expenditure such as paying fees and attending school meetings. However, researchers believe that if parents are more involved in the education of their children, it can improve on their overall academic performance. According to Utami (2022), the involvement of parents in the academics of their children such as assisting with school work, participating in extracurricular activities and interacting with the child's teacher can improve on their academic life.

In a related manner, Sharma (2024) pointed out that it is not just the wellbeing of the child that is significantly affected by parental involvement but their academic success especially when the parent decides to take an active, and not a passive role in the education of the child as the child begins to build passive attitude towards learning.

However, it is important to understand the critical parental factors that has more influence on the test score of the learner as this determines the overall academic performance of the child in the long run.

Statement of the Problem

For several years, school administrators, teachers and parents have been at variance as regards whose responsibility it is to assist students perform better academically. While some studies have indicated positive relationship between teachers and parents' involvement in the academic life of the learner, it is still difficult to identify the parental factors that influences the test scores of the learner in school. The inability to identify these factors have further complicated the ability of school administrators to clearly define what the responsibilities of parents will be in the academic life of their children. The implication of this is that several students who would have done better in their test score particularly in Mathematics and English Language which are critical subject areas for transiting to higher classes have been forced to struggle. This study therefore intends to investigate the effect of parental involvement on students' test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine the effect of parental involvement on students' test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria, while the objectives of the study were specifically to:

1. determine the ways parents are involved in the academics of their children for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria
2. find out the parental factors that influence students' test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria
3. ascertain the challenges limiting parental involvement in the academics of students for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in the study:

1. What are the ways parents are involved in the academics of their children for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. What are the parental factors that influence students' test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges limiting parental involvement in the academics of students for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of the male and female students on the ways parents are involved in the academics of their children for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of the male and female students on the challenges limiting parental involvement in the academics of students for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Literature Review

The academic performance of students is one of the important school information sought out by parents and guardians and this is because, this determines the academic progression of the learners. The overall academic performance of the learner is determined by their test scores in the immediate which culminates into their overall performance in the long run particularly in compulsory subject areas. According to and Mapp as cited in Magwa and Mugari (2017), the report card and grade, enrolment in higher classes, attendance and remaining in school as well as improved behaviour of students are products of parental involvement in the education of their children. Henderson as cited in Magwa and Mugari (2017) further stated that learning-at-home where parents assist their children has been linked consistently with students learning outcomes particularly in Mathematics achievement tests.

According to Miksic (2015), parental involvement can be broadly defined as the ways in which parents support their children's education both in words and deeds. Similarly, Shimi et al., (2024) stated that parental involvement can take different forms, such as providing the child with learning materials, learning at home, volunteering, communicating with the child's teacher, and setting education goals. It also includes assisting the child with school work, participating in co-curricular activities and discussing with the child's teacher so that the child can perform better academically.

The involvement of parents in the education of their children has a lot of benefits particularly when they assist with homework activities (Romero *et al.*, 2020) and this is because the child is able to better understand the activities that have taken place in school. Emm-Collison *et al.*, (2019) pointed out that students are better positioned to do well in their examination particularly in areas that they have been previously assisted by their parents. Similarly, Xu *et al.*, (2020) noted that the involvement of parents in the education of their children is diagnostic as it enables the parents to spot out areas of educational challenges where the child needs help for immediate resolution.

Levine and Munsch (2019) were of the opinion that when parents engage in the education of their children, it does not only promote the solution of specific problems but also aids in the development of overall cognitive abilities which are required for higher level learning. This means that the child can solve complex learning problems if supported by the parent. This involvement according to Casillas *et al.*, (2020) can be major or minor such as attending parent-teacher conferences, school plays, and other school events which are all opportunities for parents to show their support for the child's education.

However, despite all of these benefits, there are several instances of parents failing to be actively involved in the academics of their children. Xu *et al.*, (2010) noted that parental involvement is a good way of keeping parents well-informed of the child's strengths and weaknesses in several subject areas, mainly reading but most parents will not do this when the school has not given them the opportunity to do so. Similarly, some schools limit the extent to which parents can be involved in the education of their children (Donkor *et al.*, 2024) and this is why some parents show little or no support. Magwa and Mugari (2017) pointed out that other factors such as the economic status and level of education of the parents, age of the child and other social factors can hinder the full involvement of parents in the academics of their children which is expected to improve on their test scores and overall performance.

Review of Empirical Studies

Some researchers have attempted to investigate how parental involvement affects the academics of students and one of such studies was by Takwate *et al.*, (2019) on the impact of parental involvement on students' academic achievement in senior secondary schools in Mubi-North Local Government Area, Adamawa State. The study employed a descriptive survey design and two instruments to gather data from 192 parents and students who were chosen via quota sampling from 28 public and private senior secondary schools in the state. Analysis using the mean, standard deviation, t-test, and ANOVA revealed that parental participation had a significant impact on students' academic performance. It was discovered that methods for increasing parental involvement included setting up parents' days in schools, holding twice-yearly meetings, and forming additional groups like the School Base Management Committee.

In the same manner, Donkor *et al.*, (2024) investigated the effects of parental involvement in education on the academic achievement of students in Ghana. Purposive sampling was used in the study to select 363 parents. While the school provided the students' academic accomplishment results for two academic sessions, the study employed a questionnaire to gather information from the parents. The study's findings demonstrated that most parents did not assist students' ICT learning in the classroom and did not occasionally provide teachers or school administrators with important information. Additionally, they neglected to talk to teachers about their pupils' academic progress and did not assist them with their homework. Additionally, it was demonstrated that the majority of parents participated in school events, gave their children educational resources, asked for extra lessons, and helped choose their children's textbooks. The study also found a strong significant positive correlation between parental involvement in education and students' academic achievement.

Furthermore, Fareo and MUusa (2018) conducted another study on the influence of parental involvement on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria. The study used a survey design, with 11,745 students in the local government as the population, 400 of whom were sampled using a stratified sampling technique. The questionnaire was called "Parental Involvement as a Correlate of Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students" (PICAASSS), and experts evaluated its validity and reliability using the test-retest method, yielding a coefficient of 0.89. The data were analyzed using mean, Pearson moment correlation coefficient, and t-test statistics, and the study found that the students' below-average performance in Mathematics, English, and Integrated Science was caused by a lack of parental involvement. It revealed that parents' incapacity to check their children's school note books, their lack of time to learn about their daily activities at school, their failure to help their children with homework, and their incapacity to find tutoring teachers for their kids all had an impact on the academic performance of the kids. The degree of

parental involvement and students' academic success were significantly correlated. Additionally, there was a strong correlation between parental participation in students' academic success at the home and school levels.

In the same way, Aladejebi (2024) conducted a study on factors impeding parental involvement in academic performance of students in the junior secondary schools of Ondo State. The study used a survey-type descriptive research design. The parents of every junior secondary school in Akure City and its surrounding town made up the study's population. It has been demonstrated that parental involvement is hampered by technology use and language limitations. For the majority of parents, cultural differences and school policy were not major obstacles. These studies point to the fact when parents get involved in the academics of their children, there is the likelihood that the child will improve academically.

Methodology

The study adopted survey design as data was collected from senior secondary school students in Rivers State with a population of 40,047 out of which 396 students (190 boys and 206 girls) were sampled using stratified random sampling technique based on the number of students in each class. The instruments used for data collection was questionnaire tagged "Parental involvement in Students Education Questionnaire" (PESEQ) which was ranked on a four point modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with weighted values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 which yielded a criterion mean score of 2.50 from the average of the weighted scores and the test score of the sampled students in Mathematics and English language was also collected and the average used as their test score. The instrument was validated by Measurement and Evaluation experts in University of Port Harcourt and the reliability was estimated as 0.84 using Cronbach alpha statistics. Out of the 396 students who were sampled, 348 students (167 boys and 181 girls) representing 87.9% provided valid responses that were used for analysis. Data generated were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, Ordinary Least Square regression analysis and z-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the ways are parents involved in the academics of their children for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Std. Dev. Scores on the Ways Parents Are Involved in the Academics of Their Children for Improved Test Scores in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

S/No	Statements	Male Students (n=167)		Female Students (n=181)	
		Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
1	Good communication channel between parent and teacher on student's educational progress	2.73	0.68	2.84	0.79
2	My parents assist me with any assignment that is complex for me to handle	2.55	0.81	2.62	0.88
3	Learning materials for my academics are adequately provided as at when due	2.85	0.62	2.92	0.73
4	Educational goals and objectives are set by parents to guide student's educational choices	2.76	0.66	2.80	0.84
5	Parent participates in school meetings to make valuable academic contributions on behalf of me	2.81	0.64	2.86	0.77
Average		2.74	0.68	2.81	0.80

Table 1 revealed that the male students' response to items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were 2.73, 2.55, 2.85, 2.76 and 2.81 while the female students responded to the same items with mean values of 2.84, 2.62, 2.92, 2.80 and 2.86 and since these item were above the criterion mean score for decision making, it was believed that parents involved in the education of their children in all these ways. However, item 3 with the highest mean score implied that the

major way that parents got involved in the education of their children was by providing them with learning materials.

Research Question Two: What are the parental factors that influence students' test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Regression Analysis on the Effect of Parental Involvement on Students' Test Scores in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	55.000	.000		15802976.891	.000
Level_of Education	34.091	.000	8.347	18540102.492	.000
Learning_Hours	53.182	.000	9.145	20207468.419	.000
Parent_Teacher_Communication	6.818	.000	.547	14540527.209	.000
Resource_Support	.455	.000	.036	1036228.825	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Test_Score

Table 2 indicated that while the parents level of education, number of learning hours devoted by parents, parents-teachers' communication and parents resource support were all significant determinants of the students' test scores, the learning hours devoted by the parents had the highest coefficient of 9.145 and this was followed by the parents' level of education at 8.347 with resource support having the least contribution on the students' test score.

Research Question Three: What are the challenges limiting parental involvement in the academics of students for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and Std. Dev. Scores on the Challenges Limiting Parental Involvement in the Academics of Students for Improved Test Scores in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

S/No	Statements	Male Students (n=167)		Female Students (n=181)	
		Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
6	Rules and regulations put in place by the school	2.73	0.68	2.84	0.79
7	Time constraint due to other daily demands	2.90	0.60	2.95	0.71
8	Financial barriers to meet educational needs	2.68	0.74	2.78	0.85
9	Lack of subject knowledge in the area of need	2.49	0.98	2.52	0.92
10	Students inability to comprehend parents intervention	2.47	0.97	2.35	0.98
Average		2.65	0.79	2.69	0.85

Table 3 showed that with mean response scores of 2.73, 2.90, 2.68, 2.49 and 2.47 from the male students and 2.84, 2.95, 2.78, 2.53 and 2.35, the students agreed that time constraint was the major barrier to their parents' involvement in their education and this was followed by rules and regulations of the school and financial constraint. The students differ on whether the knowledge of the subject was a barrier to their parents' involvement but they both disagreed that their inability to comprehend their parents' intervention was a barrier to parental involvement.

Test of Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of the male and female students on the ways parents are involved in the academics of their children for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Table 4: z-test Analysis of no Significance Difference between the Mean Ratings of the Male and Female Students On the Ways Parents Are Involved in The Academics of Their Children for Improved Test Scores in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of Sig.	Decision
Male Students	2.74	0.68	167	342	0.88	1.96	0.05	Null Hypothesis Retained
Female Students	2.81	0.80	181					

Table 4 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance and a degree of freedom of 342, the value of z-crit. was 1.96 and this values was more than the value of z-cal. of 0.88 as such, the null hypothesis was retained implying that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of the male and female students on the ways parents are involved in the academics of their children for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of the male and female students on the challenges limiting parental involvement in the academics of students for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Table 5: z-test Analysis of no Significance Difference between the Mean Ratings of the Male and Female Students On the Challenges Limiting Parental Involvement in The Academics of Students for Improved Test Scores in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of Sig.	Decision
Male Students	2.65	0.79	167	342	0.45	1.96	0.05	Null Hypothesis Retained
Female Students	2.69	0.85	181					

Table 4 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance and a degree of freedom of 342, the value of z-crit. was 1.96 and this values was more than the value of z-cal. of 0.88 as such, the null hypothesis was retained implying that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of the male and female students on the challenges limiting parental involvement in the academics of students for improved test scores in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The data collected and analyzed from the students showed that the students agreed that there are several ways in which their parents got involved in their education and there was no significant difference between the opinion of the male and female students concerning this. However, the provision of learning materials was the area in which parents were majorly involved. This result aligns with that of Donkor et al., (2024) in their study which also pointed out from the result that majority of the parents gave their children educational resources, asked for extra lessons, and helped choose their children's textbooks. The active participation of parents in this regard may be due to the fact the school where the child attends sometimes make it compulsory for students to acquire some learning materials which parents cannot shy away from. It can also be because parents understand that without these materials, the student will not be able to learn and this is why they see this as an obligation. However, the students also pointed out that their parents got involved by helping to set educational goals and objectives for them which can be in the form of choice of course and other educational decisions. The parents also communicated with their teachers to address educational issues and participate in meetings. However, providing assistance with assignments which is expected to have direct impact on test scores is the area where parents are least engaged and this may be because the parents believe that the student is matured enough to handle his or her own academics personally, but this might not suffice when the child is confronted with learning challenges in some subject areas. This is why parents must be directly involved.

The study identified that there are several parental factors that influence the students' test score and the most contributor was the number of hours spent with the child solving educational problems. This finding agrees with that of Takwate et al., (2019) which also pointed out that parental involvement is a determinant of students' academic performance. This means that if parents can create more time for their children's academics, the child

has a higher likelihood of performing better. The level of education of the parents which may also directly relate with their level of academic exposure and subject expertise also contributed significantly and more to students' tests scores. Communication between the parents and teachers was also significant but providing resource support alone which could be financial, material or otherwise was also significant but low. This means that providing learning resources alone for the child cannot suffice in improving the child's performance. Parents must play active roles in solving their children's educational problems in each subject area.

The male and female students both agreed that there were several challenges serving as hindrance to parents involvement and time constraint was the major among these challenges. This finding agrees with the outcome of the study by Fareo and Musa (2018) which found that parents had no time to check the daily school activities of their children and this affects the child's academic performance. There is no doubt that parents have other responsibilities which usually make it difficult for them to create time for the academics of their children. The rules and regulations put in place by the school was also identified as a major barrier. This finding however differ from the outcome of the study by Aladejebi (2024) which indicated that school policy was not a barrier to parental involvement. This means that there are school rules and regulations which make parents passive and not active participants in the academics of their children and except these rules are relaxed, parents' involvement in the academics of their children both within and outside the school will be limited. This may however differ from one school to another. The financial status of the parent was also identified as a barrier by the students implying that their parents cannot do must when the funds are not available especially in an environment like ours where education is capital intensive. However, the students differ in terms of whether lack of knowledge of the subject area was why the parents were not involved or not. This means there are parents who may have knowledge about the learning needs of the child but still find it difficult to create time for them. However, the students disagreed that their inability to comprehend their parent's intervention may be a barrier and this suggest that the learners are willing to receive academic help if their parents are ready to provide it.

Conclusion

The conclusion from the findings of the study was that parental involvement was significant to the test score of students in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The was the parents got involved was mainly through the provision of learning materials for the students among others. Similarly, while resource support from parents, parents-teachers' communication, hours spent assisting student and parents level of education were significant to the students' test score, the hours of assistance provided and the level of education of the parents were major contributors. The major challenge to parental involvement was time constraint. The male and female students did not differ in their opinion on how their parents were involved in their education and the challenges limiting parental involvement for improved test scores among the students.

Recommendations

The recommendations made based on the findings of the study are as follows:

1. Parents are encouraged to increase the number of hours they spend assisting their children especially during school assessment as this will go a long way to influence the child's academic performance.
2. The involvement of parents in the academics of their children should be holistic including physically, socially, mentally and otherwise and should not just be material alone as this will affect the overall development and performance of the child in the long run.
3. Parents should set apart specific hours, days, weeks and time to give attention to the education of their children and ensure that nothing encroaches into this time. This can be done using a scheduler to avoid default.
4. School administrators should open a wider network of communication to make parents active and not passive participants in the education of their children.

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