

Parental Involvement as a Determinant of Academic Performance of Gifted Underachieving Students in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State

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Abstract

Extensive research has shown that the underachievement of capable children is an area of concern for many parents and educators. This study investigated the role of parents in enhancing academic performance of underachieving students in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A sample size of one hundred (100) was randomly selected using stratified random sampling technique with forty nine (49) males and fifty one (51) females. Majority of the subjects used fell within the ages of seventeen (17) and nineteen (19). A structured questionnaire and verbal interview method were used to collect data from the selected subjects. Three hypotheses were tested using percentiles and normal distribution as statistical tools for data analysis. The findings showed that there was no significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students with single parent and those with both parents (Crit - $t = 1.96$, Cal. $t = 0.798$, $df = 98$, $P > 0.05$ level of significance). The findings also showed that there was no significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents live in the urban area and those whose parents live in rural area (Crit - $t = 1.96$, Cal. $t = 0.186$, $df = 98$, $P > 0.05$ level of significance). Finally, the result also indicated that there was no significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents are of low socio-economic status and those whose parents are of high socio-economic status (Crit - $t = 1.96$, Cal. $t = 0.135$, $df = 98$, $P > 0.05$ level of significance).

Keywords: Parental involvement, Academic performance, Gifted Underachieving students.

Introduction

The underachievement of capable children is an area of concern for many parents and educators. Although the study of student underachievement has a long educational history, it is more productive to consider what motivates students to do well. Students tend to be motivated when they find a task meaningful, believe that they have the skills to do it, and find their efforts supported by those around them.

Unfortunately, many gifted students do not view their school experience as meaningful. For instance, they may not find school intellectually stimulating, because they have already mastered the content or can master it quickly. Repetition bores many of these students, and once they have learned to expect boredom in class, they will fail to embrace new learning experiences when they arise. Other gifted students find school topics uninteresting regardless of the level of challenge, because they have developed a well-defined area of interest that is not matched by what happens in school. This leaves them "turned off" to what is taught. Still others do not appear to be uninterested in anything, either because their early school experiences failed to nourish their natural curiosity or because they doubt their ability to do well. Generally, a student views tasks as meaningful if they gratify a personal interest, are tied to the child's identity, have an immediate use, or will clearly be useful in the future. Parents can however help their children find school meaningful in so many ways.

Extensive research has shown that students achieve more in school when their parents are involved in their education. The critical role of parental involvement in a child's education has been examined in countless studies and reports. Chen (2008) is of the opinion that research overwhelmingly supports that parental involvement enhances academic performance. He stressed that academic performance is enhanced when parents are involved in their children's education. According to him, the more intensively involved the parents are, the greater the positive impact on academic performance.

Christenson (2006) also stressed that parental involvement leads to better classroom behaviour. Parental involvement not only enhances academic performance but it also has a positive influence on student attitude and behaviour. A parent's interest and encouragement in a child's education can affect the child's attitude toward school, classroom conduct, self-esteem, absenteeism and motivation.

According to Comer (2006), parents' interest in, and support of their children's school help reinforce students' sense of belonging to school and their identification with teachers and other school personnel. Clark (2003) also noted that parent-initiated contacts with their children's school help strengthen students' identification with teachers. In examining the interaction between parental involvement, teacher's support and students' sense of belonging to school, students whose parents are involved in their school activities are better able to take

advantage of the benefits of supportive teachers or school environments for their academic performance. Therefore, one can emphatically conclude that the effect of parental involvement in academic performance of under-achieving students cannot be overemphasized.

Statement of the Problem

Researches have shown that parental involvement not only enhances academic performance but it also has a positive influence on student attitude and behaviour and even that of their teachers. When parents are involved, not only would their children's academic performance be enhanced but teachers' morale are also boosted and this will also develop greater appreciation for the challenges that teachers face in the classroom.

Unfortunately, majority of parents do show non-challant attitude to the educational pursuit of their children. Once they manage to make provision for their children's school fees and pocket money, they leave other roles into the hands of the teachers in pursuit of money. They have no time to attend parents and teachers' association meetings, not to talk of checking their children's notebooks, create time to monitor their reading habits nor visiting the school occasionally to inquire from the teachers how their children are faring. A lot of children are no longer emotionally attached to their parents. In some homes, both parents leave home early and come back late, even if their children were faced with some difficulties or challenges in the school, there is no parent to report to when they get home. Undoubtedly, accumulation of these challenges can make a child to become depressed, misbehave and even underachieve. It stands to reason that a study like this be conducted so as to enhance the academic performance of our underachieving students.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to affirm the enhancement of academic performance of underachieving students in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State as a result of their parental involvement.

The specific purposes are to:

- (i) find out whether there will be significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students who have single parent and those with both parents as a result of their parental involvement.
- (ii) see whether there will be significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students who live in rural area together with their parents and those in urban area.
- (iii) discover if there will be significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents are of high socio-economic status and those whose parents are of low socio-economic status.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study should enable the parents to become aware of the critical role their involvement plays in academic performance of their underachieving children. It will be an eye-opener to the fact that the more intensively involved the parents are, the greater the positive impact on their children's academic performance.

Based on the findings of this study, it will also become apparent to the whole world that schools and teachers also benefit from parental involvement. This is because involved parents develop greater appreciation for the challenges that teachers face in the classroom thereby boosting the morale of the teachers. Communication between home and school helps a teacher to know a student better, which in turn allows the teacher to teach the student more effectively. Above all, this type of study will also reveal the fact that communication helps to dispel any mistrust or misperceptions that may exist between teachers and parents.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There was no significant difference in the academic performance of underachieving students who have single parent and those with both parents as a result of their parental involvement.

H₀₂: There was no significant difference in the academic performance of underachieving students who live in rural area together with their parents and those in urban area.

H₀₃: There was no significant difference in the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents are of high socio-economic status and those whose parents are of low socio economic status.

Literature Review

It is expected that, with the growing body of literature and increasing number of researches on student performance and achievement, an agreed definition of underachievement would be easy to come by. Surprisingly, educationists have found it difficult to proffer a universal definition of underachievement. This problem of a unified definition has persisted over the years. Fehrenbach (2008) posited that defining the term "underachievement" has been a difficult task for psychologists and educators for quite a long time.

Dowdall and Colangelo (2006) also stressed that despite all the assessment tools available to today's educators and mountains of existing research, a straightforward definition of underachievement is not available. Divergences of opinion among educationists on what constitutes underachievement appear to be one of the major reasons for disagreement, and different researchers may use different measures to determine who is an

underachiever. For example, Gallagher (2005) pointed out the danger of using intelligence tests for some gifted students who are labeled underachievers because of poor academic performance. This is because less is known about their intellectual functioning.

Weiss (2002) observes that underachievement is a behaviour, and not an attitude or set of work habits. Behaviour changes overtime and can be more directly modified as opposed to attitude. Research conducted with students in Nigeria which aimed at determining the causes of underachievement found that a major cause was behaviour problems other than deficiencies in ability or intellectual capability. However, underachievement is a pattern as complicated as the children to whom this label is applied, and some researchers believe that a more accurate way to define it is to consider its various components (Fehrenbach, 2008).

On the issue of parental involvement, Jeynes (2007) studied one thousand, two hundred and five (1,205) United State's children from kindergarten through to grade 3 in a 3 year longitudinal research programme. He rated four forms of involvement, namely; frequency of parent-teacher contact; quality of parent teacher interaction; participation in educational activities at home and participation in school activities. These factors, as well as family background variables were examined to find any relationship they might have with school environment as indexed by school grades. Consistent with other studies, Jeynes (2007) showed that all forms of parental involvement declined with child's age and that involvement in the home predicted the widest range of performance variance.

In another longitudinal study, Paulson (2004) showed that family support and the quality of parent/child relationships significantly predicted school adjustment in a sample of 159 young United States' adolescents (aged 10 – 12) followed in a two year longitudinal study. Parental involvement clearly and consistently has significant effects on pupils' performance and adjustment which far outweighs other forms of involvement. The question is "why is parental involvement so significant? How does it promote performance and adjustment? The broad answer to these questions seems to be that it depends on the age of the child. For younger pupils parenting provides the child with a context in which to acquire school related skills and to develop psychological qualities of motivation and self-worth. For older children, the specific skills component seems to be less salient and the motivational component assumes increasing importance.

Research Design

Descriptive survey design was employed to investigate the effects of parental involvement on academic performance of underachieving students in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State. No variable was manipulated.

Population

The population for this study are the gifted underachievers of the Senior Secondary School year two (SS2) of public schools in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample for this study. There are ten Senior Secondary Schools in Akinyele Local Government Area, out of which four were randomly picked. In the four schools picked, all the gifted students in Senior Secondary School two (SS2) were first identified with the use of both parents' and teachers' nomination. Having identified the gifted ones in the four schools, the underachievers among them were discovered with the use of their continuous assessment records since they were admitted to Senior Secondary School One (SS1). Thirty five (35) gifted underachievers each were discovered in two of the schools while thirty eight (38) each were discovered in the remaining two. From these numbers, twenty five (25) samples were randomly drawn from each of the four schools and the total number of samples used for the study summed up to one hundred (100). Out of the one hundred subjects selected for the study, forty nine (49) were males while fifty one (51) were females. All the subjects used fell within the ages of seventeen and nineteen (17-19) years.

Instrumentation

A self-constructed questionnaire and a face-to-face method of interview were used to collect data from the samples drawn. A structured questionnaire was administered to a total number of one hundred respondents used. The instrument used was revalidated through a pilot study using the test-retest method. The four schools used during the pilot study were not involved during the real study. During the course of the revalidation, a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was arrived at.

Data Collection Procedure

Permission was first sought from the principals of the four schools used. To facilitate the administration of the questionnaire, eight research assistants were trained and used for the administration and retrieval of questionnaires. Two research assistants were allocated to each of the four schools. Only senior secondary school two (SSII) of the chosen schools were used.

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using percentiles and normal distribution statistical tool.

Results

Hypothesis One

There was no significant difference in the academic performance of underachieving students who have single parent and those with both parents as a result of their parental involvement. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: No significant difference in the academic performance of underachieving students who have single parent and those with both parents

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t	Df	P
Both Parents	70	22.3857	7.9241	1.96	0.768	98	0.445
Singe Parents	30	21.0333	8.4179				

Table 1 above shows that there was no significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students with single parent and those with both parents (crit-t = 1.96, cal.t = 0.798, df = 98, $P > 0.05$ level of significance). The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis Two

There was no significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents live in the urban area and those whose parents live in rural area.

Table 2: No significant difference in the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents live in the urban area and those whose parents live in rural area

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t	Df	P
Urban Area	63	22.0952	7.7516	1.96	0.186	98	0.853
Rural Area	37	21.7838	8.6575				

Table 2 above shows that there was no significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents live in the urban area and those whose parents live in rural area (crit-t = 1.96, cal.t = 0.186, df = 98, $P > 0.05$ level of significance). The hypothesis two is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis Three

There was no significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents are of low socio economic status and those whose parents are of high socio economic status.

Table 3: No significant difference in the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents are of low socio economic status and those whose parents are of high socio economic status

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t	Df	P
Low	37	21.8378	7.2208	1.96	0.135	98	0.893
High	63	22.0635	8.5645				

Table 3 above shows that there was no significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents are of low socio economic status and those whose parents are of high socio economic status (crit-t = 1.96, cal.t = 0.135, df = 98, $P > 0.05$ level of significant). The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Discussion

The first hypothesis investigated whether or not there was significant difference in the academic performance of underachieving students who have single parent and those with both parents as a result of their parental involvement. The result of the findings revealed that there was no significant difference between the academic performance of underachieving students with single parent and those with both parents. The hypothesis was therefore accepted.

The above result is consistent with the findings of Jeynes (2007) who discovered that underachieving children whose parents were actively involved in their education and had both parents performed as well as those with single parent. This result also corroborates with that of Fehrenbach (2008).

The result of the second hypothesis also revealed that there was no significant difference in the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents live in the urban area and those whose parents live in rural area. This result is in line with that of Weiss (2002) who tried to compare the academic performance of underachieving children who were living in remote areas with those living in urban centres. The finding is also similar to that of Paulson (2004).

The result of the third hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference in the academic performance of underachieving students whose parents are of low socio economic status and those whose parents are of high socio economic status. This result is consistent with that of Dowdall and Colangelo (2006) who found out that parental involvement plays a crucial role in enhancing academic performance of underachieving students irrespective of the parental socio economic status of such students

Recommendation

The following are some recommendations for parents who wish to get involved, or become more involved, with their children's education. It is important to note that doing even one thing on the list can make a difference in one's child academic progress.

- Read with your children and talk with them about the books and stories you read.
- Help your children work on homework assignments.
- Organize and monitor a child's time.
- Tutor a child with materials and instructions provided by teachers.
- Attend and actively support school activities.
- Attend parent-teacher meetings.
- Talk with your child about school on a daily basis.
- Be an advocate for your child to make sure that the child's needs are being met.
- If a problem arises, address it quickly by requesting a meeting with the teacher.
- Advise the teacher of any issues at home that may affect the child's school performance.
- Encourage your child on successes and support them on poor performances.
- Participate in PTA or other parent organizations, school advisory councils, or committees.
- If your child's school does not have a programme for reaching out to parents, become an activist and persuade the school or school district about the importance of parental involvement.

Conclusion

It is pertinent to point out that parental involvement policies must be developed jointly with schools and parents. Parental feedback about the parental involvement policies has to be encouraged and parents must have a say in the use of the parental involvement fund. Undoubtedly, parental involvement in a child's education is an advantage that money cannot buy. All parents, regardless of economic status, race, or primary language, can do simple things like asking a child about school or attending a parent-teacher meeting. Being involved in your child's education not only helps your child to achieve more academically, but it also lifts teacher morale and provides you with the satisfaction of making a difference in your child's education.

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