VOL. 07 NO. 8,
FEBRUARY, 2025
E-ISSN 3026-8893
P-ISSN 3027-1061

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of Education Research and Library Practice (JERLP)

Role of Parental Intervention in Enhancing Students' Learning in Omoku Communities, Rivers State, Nigeria

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/ajerlp.v7i8.019

Abstract

This research is an investigation of the role of parental intervention in enhancing students' learning in Omoku Communities of Rivers State, Nigeria. Being a survey research design, the population of the study comprises 3500 senior secondary school students(ss2) from all the government schools in the area. To facilitate this study, a sample of 360 students was drawn from the foregoing schools, through stratified random sampling technique. Two research questions were formulated to guide the study. Moreover, a validated role of parental intervention in students' learning questionnaire (RPISLQ) was employed to gather data for this work. The data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The findings indicated that although parents give minimal support to their wards, the students still encounter challenges related to paucity of learning materials, payment of school fees, and absence of computers, to name a few. Accordingly, conclusion was drawn. Finally, the study made some recommendations, including encouraging parents, government, and corporate organisations in the area to give adequate support to students' learning in a bid to expand educational development in the area, and by extension, Rivers State and Nigeria at large.

Key words: Learning, parents, intervention, academic success, students

Introduction

The correlation between parental intervention in students' learning and academic progress has sparked off enormous concern to sociologists of education and other intellectuals around the world, including Nigeria. Parental intervention, also referred to as involvement, is concerned with parents' interest, contribution, attention and commitment to their children's educational activities. According to Vincent (2017), parents have been identified as the persons positioned to cater for their wards' educational, physical, social and emotional wellbeing. Reay (2004) also argued that parents, rather than acting as passive consumers in the educational system, have transformed into actively collaborative members of the group engaged in producing educated children. For this reason, governments especially in western countries have prioritised parental involvement as a mechanism utilised by schools to exploit parents' cultural capital in order to enhance education standards.

Correspondingly, Parental involvement is widely perceived as a critical issue in boosting students' academic achievement and overall educational success. Researchers have taken cognizance of various practices going on in families which affect educational achievement and completion of senior secondary school education. These comprise parenting style, parents' engagement with wards' schooling affairs, and reactions of parents to their children's school achievements. Therefore, what demarcates students who drop out from school and other dull students who stay in school is the higher educational involvement of both the parents and the students in question (Schmid, 2021). In Nigeria where education is highly valued (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013), parental intervention can play a significant role in supporting areas where educational resources may be limited. This area of study- Omoku communities is one such area where parental involvement can make a meaningful impact in wards' educational outcomes.

This research is therefore investigating the role of parental intervention in promoting students' learning. In other words, this study aims to explore the avenues through which parents can support their children's learning, identify the challenges and measures to be employed in a bid to surmount the challenges.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the importance of education in Nigeria, students in Omoku communities of Rivers State continue to encounter challenges in achieving academic success. The area's educational system is plagued by scant availability of learning materials, lack of well-equipped libraries and science laboratories, lack of computers for information and communication Technology (ICT), general inadequate resources, lack of teachers re-training, through workshops and seminars, to mention a few. These have conduced to low learning outcomes for the students. What is more, the Omoku communities and its environs are characterised by poverty, despite the presence of oil and gas companies (the benefits which have been hijacked by a few members of the elite class) and attendant limited access to good educational opportunities.

Literature review

A parent is someone or a person who provides nurturing care throughout childhood, prepares children to live usefully in the society, create relationships, learn, work and succeed in life (UNICEF, n.d.). Accordingly, and on a broader note, the meaning of parent is not only confined to a child's biological mother or father. It embraces any care-giver or guardian whose responsibility is care of a child. The people specifically categorised here are fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, grandparents, other relatives or non-related careers.

Moreover, parenting is not often a single individual's role. It is better described as a role performed by a number of family members at once. The rights of the child, especially in relation to education, has been indicated by United Nations in United Nation's Convention on Rights of the Child (1990). Correspondingly, Okeke (2016) argued that the way parents pay attention to their children's education will definitely reflect on their ward's academic progress. The attitudes and aspirations parents express toward their children's school work could encourage them to support and encourage their children to be successful at school. Additionally, Wildmon et al (2024) indicated that parental involvement (PI) makes significant impact in early childhood education, focusing particularly on how it plays significant role on children's academic, socio-emotional, and behavioural outcomes. Moreover, they argued that PI plays a more prominent role in a ward's academic success when juxtaposed with socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, or

educational background. Being anchored on barriers to PI, Wildmon et al (2024) identified specific strategies that enhance the home-school partnership.

Expatiating on the foregoing, Reay (2004), pin-pointed that parental involvement is associated with the roles played by parents in their children's academic life. This encompasses involving children in extra-curricular activities, and encouraging improved language skill, to mention a few. In a similar view, Skaliotis (2010) asserted that the concept parental involvement is employed in a range of areas, such as parents' participation in school activities, as indicated earlier, aiding children to do their take home work, and also have parent-child conversations concerning their academic progress. Arguing in a similar direction, Lara and Saracostti (2019) stated that parental involvement can take a wide variety of forms as stated below:

(i) supporting learning at home;
(ii) communication taking place between family and school; and
(iii) parental involvement in school activities.

Through an empirical study; Lara and Saracostti (2019) have exposed the effects of parental intervention in children's academic progress in Chile. In their study, they assessed parental involvement (PI) by utilising five scales earlier suggested by Hover-Dempsey and Sandler (cited in Lara & Saracostti, 2019). The models are aimed at measuring the family involvement level in children's education in elementary school from the viewpoints of fathers, mothers, and guardians. Four of these models are stated below for enhanced comprehension of PI:

1. Parental involvement activities at school: This is concerned with the fact that someone in the family will attend parent-teacher association meetings or that a person in the family attends special occasions at the wards' school.
2. Parental involvement works in the house:
   This is a situation where somebody in the family, which may be mother, father, or guardians, helps the child study for test. The person can also assist the child practice spelling, mathematics, and other study skills.
3. Teacher invitation for involvement: This is the stage where the child's teachers ask parents to help out at school. In addition, the child's teacher could ask parents to talk with their children about what happened at school in a school day.
4. Child's invitation for involvement: This is a scenario that is reflected in a child asking parents or guardians to talk with his or her teacher. Additionally, the child could ask parents to supervise his or her homework.

Furthermore, some of the findings of Hover-Dempsey and Sandler's research (Cited in Lara & Saracostti, 2019) showed that differences exist, in which high and medium involved parents were the ones producing children with better academic achievement than those from backgrounds of low parental involvement. This work serves as a useful exposition about children's schooling and positive outcomes, and can be adopted in most organised or advanced nations. However, its application will be constrained by poverty, illiteracy, large or extra-large family sizes and other socio-economic and environmental factors seen in most developing countries in the globe.

Be that as it may, Adimora, et al (2019), studied the association between parental involvement and self-efficacy (self-confidence, courage, determination) of secondary school students in Enugu state, Nigeria. Their overall result reflected a positive moderate relationship between the variables, which comprise parental involvement and self-efficacy. On the contrary, the researchers had indicated earlier in the study that parental involvement appears low in the context of the study. In embarking on this study, the researcher has taken into consideration the dearth of research focusing on this topic and based in this environment. This work aims to address the existing knowledge gap.

Theoretical framework

Theory of overlapping spheres of influence

This is a theory of parental involvement, propounded by Epstein (1992). It is an eclectic theory, combining psychological, sociological, and educational perspectives on social institutions to describe and elucidate the relationships among schools, parents, local communities, and the environment where the school is situated. The three spheres are: the school, family and local community. The overlapping spheres are concerned with the partnership which exists between the foregoing entities, having the child at the centre, forming the focal position. Accordingly, Epstein argued that the degree of overlap of the spheres is affected by time, the age, grade level, and historical influences. Moreover, the experiences, philosophies, and practices of families, and schools influence the overlap. The spheres can also be forced on purpose to overlap more or less.

Epstein's foregoing schema makes a suggestion that schools should be free for more participation of different stakeholders. It accordingly suggests that educators should express the willingness to share responsibilities for students' learning with

families and community. The focal point of these partnership is students' achievement, with also an eye on home-school interaction, making schools more attractive or inviting to families, and existing families raise their general wellbeing. Epstein's theory can be applied to establish shared responsibilities across parties and can also indicate policy changes for improved leadership.

Other researchers such as Braunger and Lewis (1997), Hull and Shultz (2001), and Curry, et al (2023), among others, have supported this theory, arguing that the family, the school, and the community influence children's growth and development. Epstein's theory emphasises the significance of these contexts in a child's development, including the necessity for families, schools, and the community to share the responsibilities for the socialisation of the child. This theorist acknowledged the fact that some activities of the school, family, and community need to be performed separately. However, other important practices concerning the aforementioned groups need to be conducted collaboratively by persons from across the groups. It is on this basis that Epstein adopted the concept partnership to lay emphasis that schools, families, and communities share responsibilities for children through overlapping spheres of influence.

On the contrary, some scholars have criticised Epstein's theory for persisting in the focus on school-based practices and opinions while restraining the agency, voice, and viewpoints of families. For instance, Auerback (2011), argued that although Epstein's theory focuses on partnerships between families and schools, the elucidation of such activities indicates a school focused agenda that families merely support.

Furthermore, Price-Mitchel (2009) has criticised Epstein's theory for its parochial approach of parents helping children to learn rather than focusing on families, schools, and communities working cooperatively to promote positive students' outcomes. Accordingly, Epstein's indirect reference to social capital has also resulted to some scholars criticising its narrow-minded view of partnership as a market approach which target generation of capital, which in return tends to heap blame on families for their inability to take advantage of the openings provided by such partnerships. Instead, a more egalitarian approach would place families as community resources to be sought out rather than people, who participate only when given invitation (Price-Mitchel, 2009).

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this research is to ascertain the role of parental intervention in enhancing students' learning outcomes in Omoku Communities of Rivers State.

However, the specific objectives are stated below;

1. To identify the challenges faced by students in the Omoku Communities and its environs that hinder their academic success.
2. To examine the current level of parental involvement in children's education in the Omoku Communities and its environs.

Research questions

1. What are the challenges faced by students in Omoku Communities and its environs in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. How do parents in Omoku Communities and its environs currently support their children's learning?

Methodology

The researcher adopted the social survey research design (Haralambos, et al, 2013) to investigate the problem of this study. This is because the researcher collected data from the identified population to describe the current condition of the population utilising the variables under consideration (Ejimaji & Ellah, 2009; Osaat, 2009; and Kothari & Garg, 2016).

Area of study

This research is based in Omoku, the headquarters of Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State and its environs, comprising Omoku, Obrikom, Ebogoro and Okposi Communities.

Population of the study

The population of the study comprises public Senior Secondary School students in Omoku Communities. This is approximately 3,500 students.

Sample and sampling technique

Three hundred and sixty students were selected through stratified random sampling technique, since the population of the schools are not equal.

Instrument for data collection

The instrument for data collection captioned "Role of Parental Intervention in Enhancing Students' Learning Questionnaire (RPIESLQ) was developed by the

researcher. It has two sections. Section A contains students' demographic information while section B comprises 10 items with 4 point-Likert scale of strongly agree (SA-4points), agree (A-3points), disagree (D-2points), and strongly disagree (SD-1point). The instrument was validated by a specialist in measurement and evaluation. A test was conducted to obtain reliability coefficient. Finally, data was analysed using mean and standard deviation.

Validation of instrument

The instrument was validated by two experts who are Chief lecturers in Educational Measurement and Evaluation and Sociology of Education. They perused the instrument and made necessary corrections which made the instrument valid.

Reliability of the instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined by using test-retest reliability technique. The instrument was given to twenty students who are not part of the sample to answer. After about two weeks they were given again and the two results obtained from the same students were analysed, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the reliability which gave a correlation of 0.85, making the instrument reliable.

Data analysis/results

Research question one

What are the challenges faced by students in Omoku Communities and its environs in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean scores of responses on challenges faced by students in Omoku Communities and its environs

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Payment of school fees is a problem to you	40	30	30	100	2.20	1.21	Rejected
2.	Your textbooks are provided on time.	19	81	40	60	2.40	1.00	Rejected
3.	Sometimes learning materials are not available.	20	110	30	40	2.55	0.92	Accepted
4.	Teachers assigned to your class come to class regularly.	60	60	60	20	2.80	0.98	Accepted
5.	Some teachers are not regular.	20	100	100	40	2.50	0.94	Accepted
	Average Mean					2.51	1.01	Accepted

Results from table 1 above indicate that the mean of questionnaire items 1 and 2 were rejected since they are below the acceptable mean of 2.50. However, questionnaire items 3, 4 and 5 were accepted by the respondents since their means are above 2.50 acceptable mean. The average mean of 2.51 confirms that there are challenges faced by students in Omoku communities and its environs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research question 2

How do parents in Omoku Communities and its environs currently support their children's learning?

Table 2: Mean scores of responses on how parents in Omoku Communities and environs support their children's learning.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
6.	Your parents attend PTA meetings.	50	80	50	20	2.8	0.93	Accepted
7.	Your parents attend PTA meetings regularly.	50	90	10	50	2.7	1.10	Accepted
8.	Your parents encourage you to study at home.	120	65	10	5	3.5	0.71	Accepted
9.	Your parents assist you in your homework.	60	90	20	30	2.9	0.99	Accepted
10.	Your parents guide you in other areas concerning your progress at school.	20	100	40	40	3.3	0.85	Accepted
	Average Mean					3.04	0.92	Accepted

Results from table two above shows that questionnaire items 6-10 were accepted by the respondents. These are concerned with how parents in Omoku Communities and its environs currently support their children's learning process. Moreover, the

average mean of 3.04 further confirms the acceptability of the responses of the research subjects.

Discussion of findings

The result of this study showed that there are challenges encountered by students in the area of investigation in Rivers State, Nigeria. This implies that students face difficulties in areas of school fees, access to learning materials(textbooks), and teachers' attendance in classes, among others. Also, the second result indicates that parents are meeting up their responsibilities in terms of attendance at school activities, encouraging and assisting their wards, and giving general guidance in a bid to boost childrens academic progress. This is in tandem with the earlier postulations of skaliotis (2019), Lara and Saracostti (2019), and Adimora et al (2019). However, the finding of research question one and that of two are contradictory. This is because finding from the research question one has exposed parents' shortcoming in not giving enough support to their wards by providing the required learning materials and payment of school fees, to name a few. This development poses a serious threat to childrens learning and academic progress in the area, and by extension, Rivers State and Nigeria. It has also left a question sign on the role of government and corporate organisations in supporting educational development of entire society.

Conclusion

The results of this research have brought to limelight the major obstacles confronting students' learning. These have been identified as parents' inability to provide learning materials and pay school fees. Moreover, corporate organisations, government, and others, have failed to play their responsibilities aimed at uplifting education in this area, and by implication, the entire country. These pitfalls have adversely affected academic progress of the wards.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

1. Parents are advised to do their best possible in order to provide learning materials for their wards as a practical encouragement to boost their learning.
2. The parents should also realise that as sponsors and guardians, it is their responsibility to pay their wards' school fees regularly and punctually.

3. Government and corporate organisations are also encouraged to give support in terms of provision of libraries, laboratories and computer labs as well as employing, and retraining of competent personnel that are committed to teaching, in a bid to enhance learning and academic success of the students.

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