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INFLUENCE OF PARENTS-STUDENTS COMMUNICATION ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AWKA EDUCATION ZONE

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Abstract

Communication is a very important aspect of human endeavour that should not be overlooked. Effective communication plays a vital role in the aspect of human existence. This study focuses on influence of communication between parents and students on academic achievement in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. The study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. The study was ex-post factor research design. The population of the study was made of 11,456 SS2 students in Awka Education zone. A sample size of 500 SS2 students was used for the study using stratified random sampling technique. The researcher adopted the Offordili (2012) Parent-Students Communication Scale (PSCS) to measure students-parents' communication. The instrument has a Cronbach's α of .88. The students' academic cumulative achievement scores were collected from the school records. The data collected were analysed using linear regression. R Adjusted was used to answer the research questions while F-test was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The researcher found out that parent-students' communication significantly influence the academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State. The researcher recommended that parents should imbibe and maintain good communication skills to improve academic achievement of their wards.

Key words: Parent-students' communication, Gender, Education, Achievement

Introduction

Secondary education is a crucial tier in the hierarchy of education in Nigeria. It is the midway between primary and tertiary schools. It is the form of education that students receive after their primary education and or before their tertiary education. It is intended for pupils between the ages of 11-17. According to FRN (2014), the aim of secondary education within the overall Nigerian educational policy is to prepare students for useful living within the society and

for higher education. Also, it is aimed at developing a child better than the primary level, because it is obvious that primary education is insufficient for children to acquire literacy, numeracy, and communication skills (Ige, 2011; Yusuf, 2009). The secondary education is meant to prepare the beneficiaries towards useful living within the society and higher education for those willing and able to withstand it. Consequently, the secondary level of education is not only a bridge between the primary and the tertiary level of education; it is also a means of living and fitting well into society for those who may not aspire further. The academic achievement of students in WASSCE and NECO SSCE represent the outcome of teaching and learning process of secondary education level.

Stiggings (2021) sees academic achievement as something a learner do or achieve at school, college or university, in class, in a laboratory or field work. In another development, Sarpong, Sarpong, and Asori (2020) said that academic achievement refers to achievement of individuals' objective to various types of knowledge and skills. Sorenson (2021) defines academic achievement as a change in behaviour exhibited at the end of a given period of time or within a given range. Onuoha (2019) defined academic achievement testing as a systematic and purposeful quantification of learning outcomes. Onuoha explained that it involves the determination of the degree of attainment of individual in tasks, course or programmes of which the individuals were sufficiently exposed. Based on the above definitions, the researchers define academic achievement as an act of accomplishing or finishing something, something accomplished successfully, especially by means of exertion, skill, practice or perseverance.

The academic achievement in secondary schools has been quite disheartening. The persistent poor performance of secondary school students in public examinations such as the Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) in Nigeria in the recent times has made the development of secondary education in the State a difficult task. Parents, guardians and other stakeholders in education industry have variously commented on the performances of secondary school students particularly in English Language, Mathematics and other core subjects (Adekunle, 2016). According to WAEC (2021), the percentage of candidates that had credit in English language in Nigeria between years 2017-2021 in West African Examinations Council (WAEC) are as follows: 27.53% in year 2017, 15.56% in 2018, 22.54% in 2019, 13.78% in 2020 and 24.94% in 2021. West African Examinations Council (WAEC) also stated that candidates who obtained credit passes in five subjects and above including English language and Mathematics between 2017 and 2021 are as follows: 8.53% in year 2017, 13.32% in 2018, 27.74% in 2019, 10.53% in 2020 and 1.80% in 2021. Researchers and stakeholders in education industry have in the recent past identified several factors as the causes of poor performance of students in public examinations. Among such factors identified are poor location of the school, incessant changes in government policies, closure of schools, which is contingent upon teachers' strike action, home-school distance, high student teacher ratio, lack of supervision, monitoring and evaluation machinery, lack of

good textbooks, poor content and context of instruction, non-conductive environment as well as poor parents- students communication (Ebenuwa – Okoh, 2010).

The success of the teaching-learning process depends on the teacher's knowledge and the teacher's ability to transfer the same to the students. Communication plays a vital role in the transfer of knowledge to take place (Rewat, 2015). Furthermore, the process is facilitated by the verbal communication that not only helps in the sharing of the knowledge but also creates an amicable environment to facilitate the sharing of ideas/opinions/feelings between the teacher and the students. The importance of communication in teaching and learning mostly reflects on the students' academic performance. Communication not only allows for the conveyance of information but also encourages efforts, modifies attitudes and stimulates thinking. Therefore, without effective communication, there is a risk of the poor academic achievement (Onuoha, 2019). Additionally, lack of effective communication could probably lead to distortion of messages and information, therefore, stifling the learning process.

Communication has become an inextricable phenomenon of human existence. Communication is from a Latin word, "communis" which means common or shared understanding. It is fundamental in the facilitation of growth and development of society because without the exchange of ideas there will be chaos and everything will be unstable. According to Canary (2011), communication is the transfer of information that must be understandable from one person to another. Similarly, Tourish (2010) perceived communication as a process that involves an exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, and emotions. From the aforementioned definitions, the researcher define communication as a way of transferring thoughts, ideas, opinions and knowledge from the teacher (sender) to the learner (receiver) during teaching and learning process. Effective communication plays a major role in motivating the students, knowing their aspirations and the problems that they may have. Both the verbal and the non- verbal communication play a vital role, effective verbal communication helps in building a strong teacher student relationship which acts as a platform for the strong cognitive development. Easy and effective verbal communication helps the teachers to get an insight into the child's thoughts/ideas/opinions/issues whereas the students get the knowledge of the teacher's expectations, knowledge and skills.

The manner in which parents communicate with their children could play an important role in the lives of these children. Communication enables parents and children to express their thoughts and feelings to one another. Effective communication helps strengthen parent-child relationship and increases mutual understanding (Munyi, 2013). In line with this assertion, the manner in which parents communicate with their children could either make them or mar them. Leidy, Guerra and Toro (2010) perceived that parent-child relationships without emotional bonds will likely breed disruption and unresolved issues during the child's schooling period. In the light of this assertion it becomes obvious that 21 parents who did not speak to their child about matters of

interest at a young age should not expect the child to easily express his/her questions and ideas about issues of interest when that child is of age.

Research provides inconsistent findings regarding the importance of parent-child communication and other forms of parental involvement activities to children's school success (Domina, 2005; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Rogers *et al*, 2009). Some studies report positive associations with academic achievement (Houtenville & Conway, 2008; Hong, Yoo, You, & Wu, 2010), other studies indicate no association (Caro, 2011 Kreuter, Eckman, Maaz, & Watermann, 2010), and even others point to negative associations (Baker, 2018; Korthegen, 2014). In particular, reported negative associations with parental involvement items could be severely affected by reactivity or simultaneity bias if parents get much more involved when children perform poorly in school and then relax their involvement when children are succeeding in school (Bassani, 2006; Levpušček & Zupančič, 2009). In contrast, Akinsola, (2011) stated that there was a significant relationship between authoritarians' parent-students communication pattern and educational success. Also, findings showed a significant relationship between firm parent students' communication styles and interest in academic activities (Zahedani, Rezaee, Yazdani, Bgheri & Nabeieei, 2016).

The importance of examining achievement in relation to gender is primarily based on the socio-cultural differences between boys and girls. Some vocations and professions such as engineering, arts and crafts, agriculture, etc. have been deemed as men's exclusive reserve while others like catering, typing, nursing are considered women's (Okpala, 2016). In fact, parents assign task like car washing, grass cutting, bulbs fixing, climbing ladders to fix or remove things to the boys. On the other hand, chores like dish washing, cooking, cleaning and the likes, are assigned to the girls. In summary, what are regarded as complex and difficult tasks are allocated to boys whereas girls are expected to handle the relatively easy and less demanding tasks. As a result of this way of thinking, the larger society has tended to see girls as the weaker sex (Ajayo, 2021). Consequently, an average Nigerian girl goes to school with these fixed exaggerated conceptions in mind.

Gender and academic achievement has be seriously investigated by different researchers (Baumrind, 2012; Baharudin & Kordi, 2010; Couchenour & Chrisman, 2011; Woolfolk 2010). Muhammed, Koorah and Hamid (2011) see gender as a specially constructed phenomenon that is brought about as society ascribes different roles, duties, behaviours and mannerism to the two sexes (male and female). It is a social connotation that has sound psychological background and it is used to refer to specific cultural patterns of behaviours that are attributed to human sexes. Starkey and Klein (2010) reported that parental support to the children through the intervention was effective in enhancing the development of children's mathematical knowledge. Jones (2019) revealed that parents gave more attention to male than female by helping them in studying. However, gender differences were observed on the attitudes towards male and female child. Kristjansson and Sigfusdottir (2019) revealed that parental monitoring has similar effect on academic achievement among boys and girls in

the same way. Bokszczanin (2018) highlighted that lower parental support is found to be associated with greater perceived conflict within the family and greater parental over protectiveness and female are likely more favoured than male students.

The findings of this study will enable teachers to design learning instructions that will accommodate children from the different parent-child communication pattern. It will also help parents to identify the best communication pattern that will promote the all-round development of their adolescents. It will assist school guidance counsellors to device a better way to handle the different behaviours exhibited by students who are nurtured by parents that have used diverse parent-child communication patterns. Furthermore, the study will help the educational planners to develop academic programs that will suit students from different family structures. The findings of this study will serve as a veritable instrument which psychologists can use to enlighten teachers, parents, guidance counsellors, educational planners and students themselves on the implications of the diverse communication patterns.

The general purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of parent-students communication on academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. The specific objectives of the study include:

1. Determine the influence of parent-students communication on academic achievement of public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone.
2. Ascertain the influence of parent-students communication on the academic achievement of male and female students in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone.

Research questions that guide the study include:

1. What is the predictive influence of parent-students communication on academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State?
2. What is the predictive influence of parent-students communication on academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State?

The study was further guided by the following hypothesis:

1. Parent- students' communication has no significant influence on the academic achievement of students in Awka Education zone.
2. Parent-students' communication has no significant influence on the academic achievement of male and female students in public secondary schools Awka Education zone.

Methodology

The design of this study was ex-post factor. According to Nworgu (2015), ex-post factor is when a researcher only attempts to link some already existing effects or observation to some existing variables as causative agents. Nworgu noted that in this type of design, the researcher has no control over the variables

of interest and therefore cannot manipulate them. The design is considered appropriate for the study since the variables are already known by the researcher. The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population for the study consisted of 11,494 students from all the 61 public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone in Anambra State, Nigeria. A sample size of 500 students was selected through stratified random sampling technique.

The researcher adopted Offordili (2012) Parent-Students Communication Scale (PSCS) to measure students'-parents' communication. The scale contains 28 items. Scores ranged from 1-4 rating Scale SA, A, D and SD format. Cronbach's α for the scale is .88. The students' annual academic achievement scores were collected from the school records.

The instrument was administered to the SS2 students with the help of their teachers in each of the sampled schools. The teachers involved in the administration were guided by the researcher to ensure uniformity in the administration and scoring of the instrument was done by the researcher assistants. 500 questionnaires were returned to the researcher by the research assistants.

The data collected were analysed using linear regression R Adjusted was used to answer the research questions while F-test was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significant.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the predictive influence of parent-students communication on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State?

The result of predictive influence of parent-students communication on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State is presented in table 1 for discussion

Table 1: Predictive influence of parent-students communication on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.663 ^a	.439	.438	6.22817

a. Predictors: (Constant), communication

Table 1 shows that R square of .663 with R adjusted square .438. This implies that 43.8% variance in students' academic achievement is explained by parent-students communication. In other words, the predictive influence of parent-students communication on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State is moderate.

Research Question 2: What is the predictive influence of parent-students communication on academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State?

The result of predictive influence of parent-students communication on academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State is presented in table 2 below for discussion

Table 2: Predictive influence of parent-students communication on academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State

gender	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
female	1	.806 ^a	.650	.649	5.27853
male	1	.297 ^a	.088	.084	6.88881

a. Predictors: (Constant), communication

Table 2 shows R square of .806 with R adjusted square .649 for female and R square of .297 with R adjusted square .084 for male respectively. This implies that 64.9% variance in students' academic achievement is explained by parent-students communication for female students while 8.4% variance in male students' academic achievement is explained by parent-students communication. The predictive influence of parent-students communication on academic achievement of female secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State is greater than that of male students.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: parent-students communication does not significantly influence the academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State.

F-test was used to test the null hypotheses which states that parent-students communication does not significantly influence the academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka Education Zone at .05 level of significance.

Table 3. F-test of significance influence of parent-students communication on academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka Education Zone.

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15127.522	1	15127.522	389.984	.000 ^b
	Residual	19317.478	498	38.790		
	Total	34445.000	499			

a. Dependent Variable: achievement

b. Predictors: (Constant), communication

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	23.663	1.706		13.871	.000
	Communication	1.069	.054	.663	19.748	.000

a. Dependent Variable: achievement

Table 3 shows that ($F(1,498)=389.984$, $p<.05$) with a Beta coefficient of .663. This implies that parent-students communication significantly influence the academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State.

Hypothesis 2: parent-students communication does not significantly influence the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students Awka Education Zone of Anambra State.

F-test was used to test the null hypotheses which states that parent-students communication does not significantly influence the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State at .05 level of significant.

Table 4. F-test of significance influence of parent-students communication on academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State.

gender	Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
female	1	Regression	13208.761	1	13208.761	474.062	.000 ^b
		Residual	7105.045	255	27.863		
		Total	20313.805	256			
male	1	Regression	1106.799	1	1106.799	23.323	.000 ^b
		Residual	11436.815	241	47.456		
		Total	12543.613	242			

a. Dependent Variable: achievement

b. Predictors: (Constant), communication

gender	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
		(Constant)	B	Std. Error	Beta		
female	1	(Constant)	20.094	1.644		12.222	.000
		Communication	1.174	.054	.806	21.773	.000
male	1	(Constant)	38.608	4.190		9.214	.000
		Communication	.621	.129	.297	4.829	.000

a. Dependent Variable: achievement

Table 4 shows that ($F(1,255)=474.062$, $p<.05$) with a Beta coefficient of .806 for female students while ($F(1,241)=23.323$, $p<.05$) with a Beta coefficient of .297 for male students. This implies that parent-students communication significantly influence the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State. However, the effect of parent-students communication on students' academic achievement is more significant for female than male as indicated by the Beta coefficient of .806 and .297 respectively.

Discussion of Findings

The researcher found that parent-students communication significantly influence the academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State. When young people feel unconnected to home, family, and school, they may become involved in activities that put them at risk academically. However, when parents affirm the value of their children, young people more often develop positive, healthy attitudes about themselves. Parents often have difficulty communicating some issues to their children and sometimes even when they communicate, they sound negative and such could make children scared of communicating issues of their interest to their parents. Nevertheless, positive communication between parents and children greatly help young people to establish individual values and to make healthy decisions about themselves. The above findings agreed with that of Woolfolk (2010) that reported one of the most important parents' practices is good communication. Furthermore, a relationship exists between parent-students communication and several adjustment outcomes such as students' self-esteem, academic achievement and well-being. Ige (2011) showed that effective parent-students communications is the basis of positive parent-child interactions and high self-esteem in children. It becomes obvious that parent-child communication patterns could bring about differences in students' self-esteem and academic achievement in school. It further indicates that students whose parents adopt the conversation orientation parent-child communication patterns have higher academic achievement mean score than students whose parents adopt conformity orientation parent-child communication pattern. This result agrees with the findings of Baharudin and Kordi (2010), which showed that the role of different family communication patterns lead to a higher academic achievement for both male and female students. The findings of this study also support those of Couchenour, and Chrisman (2011), which showed that significant relationship exist between academic achievement and parent-child interaction scores. The result of this work is also in line with the findings of Baumrind

(2012), which supports the belief that parental involvements has significant impact across various populations and enhance academic achievement of students. Also the finding sm. of Caro (2011) revealed a positive interaction of parent-child communication and parental education to enhance academic performance of students. This finding is related to the result of this work.

The researcher also found out that parent-students' communication significantly influence the academic achievement of male and female secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State. However, the effect of parent-students communication on students' academic achievement is more significant for female than male. Good parent-child relationship reflects successful academic achievement and contributes to it. The above findings is in agreement with that of Baker (2018) which found out that if parent-child relationship is poor, the home climate will be full of friction which makes academic achievement quite difficult. It is equally important that many students feel that their parents do not understand them and that their standards of behaviour or their ways are old fashioned. Specifically, children whose parents are more involved in their education have higher levels of academic performance than children whose parents are involved to a lesser degree. The study is also in line with Munyi (2013) who reported that the influence of parents' involvement on academic success has not only been noted among researches, but also among policy makers who have integrated efforts aimed at increasing parent involvement into broader educational policy initiatives. And there is no interaction effect between male and female as well as urban and rural subjects on parent-child relationship

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers conclude that Parent-students' communication has significant influence on academic achievement of students in Awka Education zone. Furthermore, parent-students' communication has significant influence on the academic achievement of male and female students in Awka Education zone. But the influence is more for female students than male students in the study area.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings, discussion and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Guidance counsellors should educate the students on the need to be open and communicate effectively with their parents because their parents mean well for them and will always direct them aright.
2. The parents whose sole responsibility of effective upbringing, molding and grooming of the children lies on, should be encouraged to create warm and conducive environment for proper development of the child by adopting the conversation orientation communication
3. Seminars and workshops should be organized by the government for parents through the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) forum. This will boost the parents' opportunity to be enlightened on the need to adopt the necessary conversation orientation parent-child communication skills.

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