

IMPACT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON SENIOR SECONDARY TWO STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES IN GBOKO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of parental involvement on students' attitudes towards agricultural sciences in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue state, Nigeria. Two constructs of parental involvement, at-home and in-school were considered. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study; as to determine whether parental involvement at-home or in-school has any significant relationship on senior secondary two students attitudes towards agricultural sciences. The study adopted survey type of descriptive design using a researcher's self-developed structured question. The population for this study was 10202 and a sample of 384 was derived from it using the Taro-Yamene formula. The Parental Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ) was administered, collected and collated while chi-square was used in testing the two hypotheses. It was found that, parental involvement at-home and in-school significantly impacted on students' attitudes towards agricultural sciences. It was suggested that Parents should be sensitized on the importance of closely following up and monitoring of their children's academic progress besides guaranteeing them a conducive home environment that stimulates learning.

Keywords: Agricultural Sciences, Attitudes, Parental Involvement.

Introduction

The Federal Government of Nigeria, in recognition of the importance of agriculture in the national economy, introduced vocational agriculture in the secondary schools curriculum, in order to equip the students with necessary vocational or entry skills into agricultural occupations. The National Policy on Education (2004), gives agriculture a prominent position as a school subject, especially at the post-primary school level. The overall objective of agricultural education at the secondary school level, according to Abua and Apeyuan (2014) include among others to provide:

- i. Students with adequate skills to make a living and progressively advance in farming.
- ii. Food production through improvement of agricultural production techniques in secondary schools.
- iii. Occupational entry-level skills in agriculture to interested secondary school students.
- iv. Preparation of secondary school students for conservation of soil and other natural resources.
- v. Preparation of secondary school students for efficiency in production and marketing of farm commodities.

The focus of Agricultural Education at whatever level is the production of knowledgeable and skillful individuals, who would be useful to themselves and the society, through their contributions to productive agriculture in particular and national development. The mission of agricultural education in nation building is effective preparation of individuals for the world of work in agriculture. Egbule, (2004), defined agricultural education as the type of education that focuses on training learners in the process of agricultural production, as well as techniques for the teaching of agriculture. Presently, agricultural education in Nigeria takes place at the informal and formal levels. At the informal level, learners are trained to handle modern agricultural production processes, outside the formal school system. At the formal level, agriculture is studied at various levels in the Nigerian educational system.

Agricultural education is concerned with that aspect of learning that prepares people and personnel to become teachers of agriculture, extension and other professionals in areas that require a broad knowledge of agriculture. It among other things focuses on the development of leadership skills needed in planning and achieving long-range goals and objectives, including improved agricultural production, conservation of natural and human resources and provision of educational programmes for personal, family and community development.

Parental involvement in education has been defined as parents' interactions and participation with schools and their children to promote academic success (Hill *et al.*, 2004). Such interactions extend beyond the engagement with schools, to home life expectations and values for education that are communicated directly and indirectly to children. These conceptualizations focus on individual students, their families and the schools.

Parental involvement is a combination of commitment and active participation on the part of parents in schools and students' matters, especially those related to their involvement in schools. Parental involvement in the school, like many other forms of community partnerships such as the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) or Parents Teachers Organization (PTO), helps to improve students' success. Limited or lack of parental involvement has been considered part of the shortcomings of the children's education. (Malibiche, 2011). Various aspects of parental involvement such as participation, partnerships and a variety of interactions have differential effects on students' academic outcomes (Kimu, 2012).

From the perspective of these scholars, parental involvement is beneficial to students. Such involvements benefit students as well as teachers, the school, parents themselves, the community and other children within the families. Everything possible should therefore be done by the school system to encourage parents to get involved in school affairs. Some literatures suggest that parents and community involvement in school activities that are linked to students' learning have a greater effect on academic achievement than more general forms of involvement (Malibiche, 2011). More importantly, parents' involvement in activities may have a greater effect on academic achievement when the form of involvement revolves around specific academic needs. For example, Komunte, (2011), found that activities that engage families and children in discussing at home can contribute to increased interest in learning. Makwinya, & Komba, (2014) also concluded in a research done in Tanzania that family and community involvement can have a powerful and positive impact on pupil outcomes. Those studies agreed to some extent that parents' participation has a positive impact on learners.

When parents talk to their children about school as well as when they ask their children about what they do in schools, it signals parents' supervision of their children's school lives, and parents view of the importance of their children's success in school (Williams & Fan, 2010). It is beneficial for students' performance when parents highlight the

value of school and talk with their children about what they have learnt at school. Furthermore, parents' discussions of non-school-related matters such as political or social issues, books, films or television programmes with their children has been shown to have a positive effect on children's motivation and academic skills.

This work is based on the Epstein theory of Parental Involvement. Epstein propounded this theory in 1995 on parental involvement in their children's academic outcomes. The theory states that children learn and grow through three overlapping spheres of influences, namely, family, school and community. According to Epstein, these three spheres must form partnership to best meet the needs of the child. Epstein further defined six types of involvement based on the relationship between the three spheres, namely, parenting skills, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaboration with the community (Kimu, 2012).

Nigeria is one of the developing countries that is faced with the problems of unemployment and rising crime rate, not because the nation is not wealthy but because most graduates cannot get/create jobs, even in areas where they have been trained, that is to say, they lack skills necessary to enable them create or fit into created jobs, for their own development and that of their society. The wealth of a society, determines to a large extent, the development of that society. A rich society is one which is capable of meeting her economic, social, moral and political needs. A nation enjoys economic stability if she is industrially buoyant, agriculturally sufficient and technologically up-to-date. Vocational Agricultural Education is a vehicle towards making a nation rich (Emmanuel, Etok, Ime, Umoh, and Nse, 2013).

Parents or guardians and friends are the primary individuals who influence students' choice of a career. Although mothers or female guardians are the most influential in enhancing students' interest, parents and friends can influence students' choice of career options available, either within or outside agricultural education. Parental involvement is seen as an integration of home and school. This practice encourages parents to participate in the life of the school, as well as attend to the learning of their children at home (Adelodun, 2013). One of the parents' aspirations is to see their children make a success of schooling. Taking into consideration that parents are key stakeholders in the education process, the level of involvement in their children's academic activities is a question which needs to be addressed. Hence, the proposed study sought to assess parental involvement in students' interest in Agricultural sciences.

Parental involvement in children's academic schooling could be equally important regarding private and public schools. Schmitt & Kleine (2010) asserted that private schools vary widely, and the level of parental involvement varies from one private school to another. Of relevance is the fact that parents choose private schools that have the characteristics that conform to the aspirations of the family. Parents pay for the cost of educating their children in the private schools, and therefore tend to be more involved in dictating the quality of what is taught to their wards than parents whose children attend public schools. Agbatogun(2009) for example found that parental involvement in public schools is a strong determinant of school performance as measured by students' scores in achievement tests. Thus it is clear that parents have influence on the education of their children in schools.

Attitude towards studies has been identified as a necessary variable determining achievement. Research has shown that students' attitude plays an important role in their achievement levels (Kanksha & Santha, 2017). Attitude towards learning may be regarded as personality factors like motivation, enjoyment, confidence and value. Thus parents' aspirations for their children to succeed in life may create in students positive attitudes towards studies. This is because vocational education in today's world of scientific, technological and social development is necessary and significant (Kanksha & Santha, 2017).

Thus parental involvement in children's education could be a determining factor for higher achievement. Thus this study also looks at the influence of parental involvement and attitudes of students.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. Parental involvement at home does not significantly impact on students' attitudes towards Agricultural sciences.
2. Parental involvement in school does not significantly impact on students' attitudes towards Agricultural sciences.

Materials and methods

The study adopted the descriptive research design. Descriptive research seeks to find answers to questions through the analysis of variables' relationships; what factors seem to be systematically associated with certain occurrences, conditions, or types of behavior that influence students' attitudes.

The study was conducted in Gboko Local Government Area (LGA) which is one of the largest and most populous local government areas in Benue state, Nigeria. It has 14 council wards and a landmass of 2,264 sq. km with a population of 298,387 people (1990 Census). The LGA is in Senatorial Zone B of Benue state, with a typical savanna vegetation and climate. The people in the area show interest in the education of their children, which is manifested in the high number of both public and private schools, with high students' enrollment in both rural and urban settings. It comprises of five clans, namely, Mbayion, Ipav, Yandev, Mbatyerev, and Mbatiaiv. Gboko LGA shares boundaries with Tarka and Buruku in the North, Konshisha in the South, Gwer and Ushongo in the West and East respectively. It comprises of urban, sub-urban and rural settings which make it suitable for this kind of study.

Gboko LGA has a total of 111 senior secondary schools (Benue State Examinations Board, 2015), with 69 public and 42 private schools respectively. There are 3088 senior secondary two students in the public schools, comprising 1704 males and 1384 females, while the population of students from private schools in Gboko LGA, as at the time of this research, was 2013, comprising 1098 males and 915 females. Therefore, the population for this study is 10202 Senior Secondary II students. The Sample size for the study was determined using Taro-Yamena's formula which is 384 senior secondary students in Gboko LGA.

A self-generated questionnaire guided by Epstein's (1995) theory of overlapping spheres of influence to examine school and family connections and their relationships to family involvement and students' attitudes was used. A structured, four-point numerically scaled Likert-type questionnaire was used. The questionnaire titled: Parental Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ) was divided into two sections with 12 items. Section A consisted of parental involvement at home, while section B consisted of Parental involvement in school constructs as it affects the attitudes of students

The items of the research instrument were validated by three experts, two from Department of Science Education and one in Measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Educational Foundations and General studies, University of Agriculture Makurdi for face and content validation. They were requested to check for appropriateness of the items, constructions and structure of the questions, clarity of the questions and options as well as scope of the questions, with regards to the stated research objectives, after which corrections were made. Some of the questions with poor options were deleted, and some options that were poorly framed were either deleted or modified. Also items that were not well structured were restructured. In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, a pilot testing was administered on 15 students and 15 parents in two secondary schools in

Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. Cronbach-Alpha reliability coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument.

This study utilized a self-administered survey to gather data using participatory methodology and a structured questionnaire, for primary data collection. To ensure ethical considerations and confidentiality, all data was left anonymous for parents and the objective of the study were explained to sample elements and their approval and cooperation was solicited in carrying out the study.

Based on the raw data to be collected, Chi-square test was conducted to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis one

Parental involvement at home does not significantly impact on students attitudes towards Agricultural sciences

Table 1: Chi-square Test for the impact of Parental involvement at home and students attitudes towards Agricultural sciences

Item	SA		A		DA		SDA	
	Obs	Expt.	Obs	Expt	Obs	Expt	Obs.	Expt.
make my child set aside quite time for practice/home work	87	96	142	96	96	96	59	96
provide incentives to motivate my child learn at home	167	96	131	96	54	96	32	96
demonstrate to my child how to tackle problems	167	96	131	96	54	96	32	96
discuss problem solving strategies with my child	161	96	137	96	60	96	26	96
always check my child's home work	161	96	125	96	66	96	32	96
discuss the expectations of learning Agric. Sc. with my child	155	96	136	96	67	96	26	96

$X^2 = 105.56$ df = 3 Asyp. Significance.0001

Obs = observed responses, exp.= expected values

Table 1 shows that the X^2 cal=105.56, df=3 where the table value is found to be 2.366, p=0001. Since the calculated value of chi-square is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. This is established further as p=0.0001 p<0.05. That is parental involvement at home has a significant impact on students attitudes towards agricultural sciences.

Hypothesis Two

Parental involvement in school does not significantly impact on students’ attitudes towards Agricultural sciences

Table 2: Chi-square test for the impact of Parental involvement in-school on students attitudes towards Agricultural sciences

Item	SA		A		DA		SDA	
	Obs	Expt.	Obs	Expt	Obs	Expt	Obs.	Expt.
communicate with my child’s teachers regularly	155	96	113	96	90	96	26	96
support decisions made by the teacher	153	96	145	96	44	96	42	96
attend Parents-Teachers conferences	160	96	121	96	69	96	34	96
attend school events	143	96	155	96	37	96	49	96
check my child’s home work	154	96	144	96	39	96	47	96
talk to my child about school day/activities	157	96	141	96	11	96	75	96

$X^2 = 113.50$ df = 3Asyp. Significance.0001

Obs = observed responses, exp.= expected values

Table 2 shows that the X^2 cal=113, df=3 where the table value is found to be 7.815, p=0001. Since the calculated value of chi-square is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. This is established further as p=0.0001 p<0.05. That is parental involvement in school has a significant impact on students’ attitudes towards agricultural sciences.

In this study, after statistical manipulation, it is proved that there is a significant relationship between parental involvement constructs and students’ attitudes. The overall data indicated that there is significant relationship between the two variables and hypotheses were accepted in the light of above data. There was a significant relationship between parental involvement at home and in school on students’ attitudes towards agricultural sciences in Gboko LGA of Benue state. This agrees with earlier findings of Kanksha & Santha, 2017 and Sheldon and Epstein (2005) who also found significant relationships between various parental involvement constructs and students’ attitudes and achievement in learning.

Conclusion

This research sought to examine the impact of parental involvement on attitudes of students in secondary schools in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue state. The study revealed that to a greater extent, parents convey attitudes about education to their children during out-of-school hours. These attitudes are reflected in the children's classroom behavior and in the teachers’ relationship with the children and the parents. This shows an orientation towards enhancing positive attitudes towards agricultural sciences. The study further revealed that to a greater extent, parental involvement ensured a sustainable an intellectually stimulating environment that promotes and motivates the students’ drive towards studies. This nurtures their talents and boosts their self-esteem. The study shows the need to emphasize the role that parents have to play both in their children’s schools and at home.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered:

- Schools should put in place mechanisms, programs and structures that bring parents on board to participate in their children’s academic progress.

- Parents should be sensitized on the importance of closely following up and monitoring their children's academic progress, besides guaranteeing them a conducive home environment that stimulates learning.
- Schools should communicate targets and benchmarks set for individual children at school, to their respective parents, for them to be reinforced further, realizing greater academic achievement since the child would be monitored and hence encouraged from all angles.
- Since parental involvement at home and at school differentially relates to students' motivation, there is need for further investigations and/or studies into more relational aspects such as parental involvement in academic and non-academic activities.

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