
OCCUPATIONAL STANDING OF PARENTS AS A DETERMINANT OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to find out how occupational standing of parents influence the academic achievement of the students in English language. Correlational survey design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in selected public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The population of this study comprised senior secondary two students in Uyo Local Government Area. There are 14 public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area and the estimated population of SS2 students was 3162. Simple random sampling technique was used to select eight public secondary schools where 303 SS 2 students were randomly selected for the study. The instrument used in this study for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Students Factors Questionnaire (SFQ)". The instrument was vetted and content validated by the researcher's supervisor and two lecturers who are experts in language education in the University of Uyo to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.97, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The data were analyzed using t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics analysis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. The study discovered that parent with lucrative occupations provide sufficiently for their children academic pursuit. This will motivate their wards academic achievement. But student whose parents have low occupation standing find it difficult to achieve academic excellence. Financial capacities enhance achievement. That is to say, Students whose parents place high premium on their academic pursuit perform better than those students whose parents pay lip services to their education. study found a significant influence of parental occupation on students' academic performance in English language. It was thus concluded that students whose parents have regular jobs and income perform better academically than those with non-working parents. One of the recommendations made in the study was that students from low occupational background should not feel inferior to ask questions when they don't understand the material or assignments.

KEYWORDS: Occupational standing, Parents, Students' Academic Achievement, English Language, Public Secondary Schools and Uyo L.G.A.

Introduction

Parents have a lot of influence on the academic performance of their children in schools. They are the first teachers at home. Their ability to groom them early in life at home would exert significant influence on their total output in school. That is why Ebeniro (1987) asserts that parents are the social agents for language acquisition and development. A lot of findings have shown that socio-economic statuses of parents contribute immensely to the academic performance of students. Eze (2002) opines that among the home factors, which influence students' academic performance is socio-economic status of parents. Home environment influences positively and negatively, the academic performance of a student. Students from poverty-stricken homes find it difficult to get educational materials that can boost their academic achievement. But some homes whose parents are rich would readily provide learning facilities to their children. This would contribute to their academic success.

According to Atkinson, to achieve a goal is based on the need for achievement or the motive for success. The need for achievement implies a pattern of standard set out to attain excellence. The value of motive of success is constant in a person and across situations. This is prevalent when the condition makes the person feel responsible for the result experienced rather than environmental factors. But incentive value of success refers to the joy a person receives in achieving a goal. John Atkinson (1964) exposes further on McClelland's theory of motivation. He specifies mathematical relationship between various determinants of achievement behaviour. He also classifies human beings into achievement oriented and failure-oriented individuals. Achievement oriented people prefer moderately difficult tasks whereas failure oriented people prefer easier tasks as more appropriate motivators.

Statement of Problem

Undoubtedly, it has been observed that students' performance in English language in Nigerian secondary schools is consistently unsatisfactory. The poor performance of students in the above mentioned subject is so alarming and may continue to increase if appropriate measures are not implemented. The English language results from the West African School Certificate data base is a raw fact concerning the situation of English Language. This miserable performance can be attributed to many factors especially the occupational standing of the parents. However, this in the other way round affects the social, economic, political and educational factors in Nigeria. Sometimes people

attribute this ugly situation to the school management. Hence, this study was carried out to elaborate on the matter, and afterwards render the appropriate measures to cope the menace.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was:

1. To find out how the occupational standing of parents influence the academic achievement of students in English language.

Research Question

The following research question was developed to guide the study.

1. What is the influence of parents' occupation and academic achievement of a student in English Language?

Hypothesis

Base on the research question, the following null hypothesis was tested:

1. There is no significant influence of the academic achievement of a student in English from parents with high or low occupation level.

Theoretical Review

This study focuses on the students' factors and academic achievement in English. The theory of achievement motivation is employed in pursuance of the study. The theory was formulated by David McClelland in 1965. A student is faced with innate and external factors in his academic performance.

Achievement motivation is otherwise called affective arousal theory. The theory is based on the belief that motives develop as a result of affective arousal. That implies that emotion motivates behavior or accompanies it. The proponents of the theory maintain that emotional consequences are inherent traits of motivated behavior.

David McClelland (1965) postulates that motives are learned through the pairing of cues and affective experiences. The motive to achieve success varies from individual to individual. The associates of McClelland described it to be a persistent attempt to achieve what is thought to be success (Gibson, 1976).

Achievement motive results in the actual achievement as a reward. It is the opinion of McClelland that an individual could be encouraged to understand that a high level motivation to achieve results leads to a high sense of self-satisfaction as the goal is attained. The scholar reiterates that the most important determinant of achievement motivation is realized in childrearing practices. This notion is based on Freudian proposition that the unconscious is greatly influenced by parents-child interactions especially during the early psycho-sexual development. The study concludes that if children are assessed as having high achievement motivation, they are strongly rewarded by praises for their good performance.

Conceptual Review

Occupational Backgrounds and a Student Academic Achievement

Occupation undertaken by parents can affect the performance of a student in English Language. Parents who have lucrative work would provide sufficiently for their children's academic success. But parents who engage in menial work and earn meager allowance may not provide all the school requirements to their children. Onyejiaku (1987) states that parents' occupation may have some decided influence on the children's vocational interest. He argues that in Nigeria, there is a competition for prestigious as well as lucrative occupation between the rich and the poor families. The rich families aspire to maintain the statuesque by encouraging their children to train for the prestigious and lucrative positions. But he goes on to observe that moves of the poor families put in a great deal of their resources on their children to see that they rise above the poverty circle that has engulfed their families.

The argument by Onyejiaku implies that parents have interest and choice of future career for their children. They, therefore, strive to invest on their children education to realize their expectations. The occupation of the highly and lowly placed parents contributes to the academic achievement of their children. Many researchers have confirmed that the financial as well as occupational status of parents exert great influence on the academic achievement of students. Dubey et al (1989) emphasize that the relationship of socio-economic status, achievement is always consistent, no matter whether the measure of status is occupation of the father, education of parents, income of the family or a combination of these. They argue that the father's occupation or socio-economic status tends to be strongly associated with the style of interaction between members of the family. Other researchers who prove that financial, occupational and educational levels

of parents, significantly determine academic achievements of students include Azikiwe (1985), Ayodele (1987), Uqwuoke (1990), Ndukah (1991) etc.

Methodology

Survey design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in selected public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The population of this study comprised senior secondary two students in Uyo Local Government Area. There are 14 public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area and the estimated population of SS2 students was 3162. Simple random sampling technique was used to select eight public secondary schools where 303 SS 2 students were randomly selected for the study. The instrument used in this study for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Students Factors Questionnaire (SFQ)". The instrument was vetted and content validated by the researcher's supervisor and two lecturers who are experts in language education in the University of Uyo to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.97, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The data were analyzed using t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics analysis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the academic achievements of the students in English from parents with high or low occupational level.

Independent t-test was used in testing the hypothesis and in Table 1.

Table 1: Independent t – test analysis of the influence of occupational status of parents in students' performance in English.

Occupational Status	n	x	sn	t	Sig of r
High	207	6.39	9.75	11.14	Significant 0.000
Low	96	3.21	1.09		
*Significant at the 0.05 level of significance			Critical = 1.960	df = 198	

Since the computed t (11.14) was greater than the critical t (1.960) at df of 301 and .05 level of significant; the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus parents' occupational level has significant influence on the academic performance of the students.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one is shown on table 1. It states that there is no significant influence on the academic achievement of a student in English from parents with high or low occupation level. The null hypothesis was rejected because the result was significant. There is a significant difference existing between the academic achievement of a student in English from parents with high or low occupation status.

Parents who have good employment would give sound education to their children than parents who struggle to make both ends meet because of low occupational status. The results agree with the observation of Onyejiaku (1987). He states that parents' occupation may have some decided influence on the children's vocational interest. He argues that in Nigeria, there is a competition from prestigious as well as lucrative occupations between the rich and the poor families. The rich families aspire to maintain the statusquo by encouraging their children to train for the prestigious and lucrative positions. But most poor families strive to see that their children rise beyond poverty circle the find themselves.

Also, the findings confirm an earlier research by Helwison and Pizard (1980) who conclude that children whose parents are high working class are more intelligent than those of the lower class.

Conclusion

Parent with lucrative occupations provide sufficiently for their children academic pursuit. This will motivate their wards academic achievement. But student whose parents have low occupation standing find it difficult to achieve academic excellence. Financial capacities enhance achievement. That is to say, Students whose parents place high premium on their academic pursuit perform better than those students whose parents pay lip services to their education. The study found a significant influence of parental occupation on students' academic performance in English language. It can thus be concluded that students whose parents have regular jobs and income perform better academically than those with non-working parents.

Recommendations

1. Students from low occupational background should not feel inferior to ask questions when they don't understand the material or assignments.
2. Teachers should not disdain but encourage low-income parents to look for additional good business to augment their earnings in order to afford minimum learning/study materials for their children.

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