

Original Research

Influence of Parental Education Level and Involvement on Students' Academic Achievement in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the influence of parental educational level and parental involvement in the child's education on students' academic achievement in the Nsukka Local Government Area (LGA) of Enugu State in South-East Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated for the study. The study adopted a descriptive design. The sample size comprised 384 grade 9 (JSS3) students in junior secondary schools in Southeast Nigeria. The instruments for data collection were a questionnaire on parental involvement in students' education and a test instrument covering English Language, Mathematics, and Civic Education components. The data collected for the study were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test. Findings revealed that parental education level significantly influenced students' academic achievement; students whose parents have lower levels of education performed better than their counterparts in the achievement test. On the other hand, students whose parents were more involved in their education scored higher than those whose parents were less involved, although the mean difference was not statistically significant. The study concluded with a recommendation that schools should encourage parents to be actively involved in their children's education, such as volunteering in the classroom or attending parent-teacher conferences, as well as home tutoring.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Parents bear most of the responsibility of training a child in school. The families begin the process of educating a child and provide for the physical and psychological needs of the child, along with other environmental experiences. Parents have the potential to influence students' academic achievement through their contribution to the training of their children. However, the extent to which parents contribute to their children's education is determined by many factors, such as parental educational level, income level, placement of the child in the family, the family type, parental involvement and attitude towards education and life, and even the worldview of the parents. Parental educational level is one of the major factors that may affect students' academic achievement. Specifically, this study examined parental educational level and

involvement in relation to students' academic achievement measured with literacy, numeracy and civic test scores.

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs and habits (UNESCO, 2015). Education is one of the most important investments a country can make for its future, and it is the key to national development. This is because it unlocks the economic potential of the people; empowers and equips the individuals in the society to participate in and benefit from their national economy as it is a powerful agent of change, and improves health and livelihoods and also contributes to social stability and drives long-term economic growth. Davis-Kean (2005) maintained that bright children from an underprivileged family environment may turn dull due to a lower level of education and enlightenment by the parents. The educational level of the parent could be viewed from the angle of the level of academic qualification of the parents. It is the level of educational exposure of the family that influences the life of the child as he/she grows. Parents with higher levels of education are more likely to believe strongly in their ability to help their children learn. Highly educated parents have greater success in providing their children with the cognitive and language skills that contribute to early success in school.

In addition to parental level of education, Oguniola et al. (2014) also identified their attitudes towards the child's education and/or academic achievement as another parental factor determining the academic achievement of the child. Parents' attitudes to education vary. Parents either have expectations of their child that it will do its best, or they are passive in their understanding of education. Ogunshola and Adewale (2012) reported a strong positive relationship between mothers' education and children's academic achievement. However, in contrast, Pinkett (2002), Pantao-O and Baldonado (2025) reported that parental involvement towards their children's academics has no significant effect on the academic achievements of the students. These contradictory findings call for further studies in varying contexts to provide more robust evidence. Hence, the present study sought to investigate the impact of parental educational level on students' academic achievement in literacy, numeracy and civics.

1.1. Previous literature on the relationship between parental education level and involvement and students' academic achievement

Parental educational level is among the several parental factors that have been linked to students' academic achievement (Adzido et al. 2016; Ani & Osuji, 20223; Ogunshola, 2019; Okesina, 2018). Davis-Kean (2005) maintained that bright children from an underprivileged family environment may turn dull due to a lower level of education and enlightenment by the parents. Hence, under this section, existing literature was reviewed on the impact of parental educational level on students' academic achievements, focusing on literacy, numeracy, and civics.

Studies on students' achievement in Mathematics in various countries, including Yemen (Tarig et al., 2012), Ireland (Ryan et al., 2021), and Nigeria (Alordiah et al., 2015; Osonwa et al., 2013), showed that students' achievement in Mathematics is usually poor. This could be attributed to the level of parental education. Studies in India (Paulpandi & Govindharaj, 2017), Nigeria (Muraina & Ajayi, 2011; Akinsanya et al., 2011), and Nordic and Gulf countries (Alghamdi, 2020) revealed that parents' educational level has a significant influence on students' academic achievement in Mathematics. In India, the mean score of the mathematics screening test of students of literate parents was higher than that of students of illiterate parents (Paulpandi & Govindharaj, 2017). In Nigeria, previous findings revealed that parental education has a significant influence on the academic achievement of students in Mathematics (Muraina & Ajayi, 2011). According to this finding, students of educated parents might perform better than students of uneducated parents in Mathematics achievement. Similar findings were recorded by Akinsanya et al (2011), who also found that parental education has a significant influence on the academic achievement of students in Mathematics. Alghamdi (2020) also found that parental educational level has a significant positive relationship to student mathematics achievement levels in Nordic and Gulf countries.

Studies in Indonesia (Marzulina et al., 2018), India (Rana et al., 2015), and across 22 countries (Araújo & Costa, 2015) have shown that parental educational level is a predictor of students' success in English. In Indonesia, it was found that there was a positive and significant correlation between parental educational background and students' English achievement. In India, the study observed that parental education level has a significant influence on the academic achievements of secondary school children. However, in Pakistan, the performance of highly educated parents' children in English was found to be good as compared to that of less educated parents. The civic competency of citizens, including students, has been investigated in various countries such as Singapore, Nigeria, and China. Findings usually point to high civic literacy and achievement (Bello et al., 2017; Yao et al., 2022). Evidence also points to family background, including education, as a key determinant of how well students perform.

Parents who are eager to provide the necessary instructional/learning facilities for their children will always serve as motivating agents for their children to be serious about their academics. On the other hand,

parents who care less about the academics of their children will likely breed a spirit of truancy and lack of seriousness towards academics in their children (Kearney, 2008). In this case, since parents are the first figure of modelling the children look up to, their attitudes toward academics go a long way to shape their children's academic achievement. Darko-Asumadu and Sika-Bright (2021) maintained that students' academic achievement is not only determined by their parents' socio-economic status but also by parental involvement in the education processes of their children.

Studies have shown that parental involvement can have an influence on students' academic achievement. Studies in the United States (Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Araceli, 2015), Canada (Cathlene, 2021) and Thailand (Naite, 2021) found a positive association between parental involvement and students' academic achievement. Fantuzzo et al. (2004) in the United States found that parental involvement was related positively to receptive vocabulary. Similarly, in the United States, Araceli (2015) found that students with highly involved family members significantly outperformed those with family members who were not involved in their education based on scores of the cumulative end-of-year district benchmark tests for English Language Arts. In Canada, Cathlene (2021) found that parents' aspirations have a causal effect on student achievement and that it is possible that the relationship is reciprocal; parents who "aspire" have children who do better, which then encourages parents to aspire higher. The findings in Thailand indicated that students with highly involved parents had better academic performance and higher test scores in all the subjects, including Mathematics, compared to students whose parents were not involved in their education (Naite, 2021). Studies in Nigeria (Akinsanya et al., 2011), the United States (Araceli, 2015), Thailand (Naite, 2021) and Pakistan (Idris et al., 2020) showed a positive association between parental involvement and academic achievement in Mathematics. In Nigeria, Akinsanya et al. (2011) found that parents' academic motivation of wards had a significant effect on students' academic achievement in Mathematics. In the United States, highly involved family members significantly outperformed those with family members who were not involved based on scores of the cumulative end-of-year district benchmark tests for mathematics (Araceli, 2015).

The literature reveals contradictory findings regarding the relationship between parental factors and student achievement. While several studies demonstrate positive associations between parental education and student performance (Alghamdi, 2020; Rana et al., 2015; Paulpandi & Govindharaj, 2017), Pantao-O and Baldonado (2025) reported that parental attitude toward their children's academics has no significant effect on student achievement, indicating that contextual variations may influence these relationships. However, few studies have simultaneously examined both parental education level and parental involvement in relation to student achievement across multiple subject areas (literacy, numeracy, and civic education) within the Nigerian educational context, specifically in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. This study addresses this gap by investigating the combined relationships between parental education level, parental involvement, and students' academic achievement in English, Mathematics, and Civic Education among junior secondary school students.

1.2. Purpose of the study

There is no doubt that parental educational level and involvement help to shape their children's academic achievement. A parent who shows complete regard for education might have some effect on his or her children's educational progress. To buttress this, Ahmed et al. (2019) observed that the educational accomplishment of students may not only depend on the superiority of schools and the teachers, but also on the level of parental participation in the education of their children. Academic achievement is one of the measures of learning outcomes and quality. As shown in reviewed studies, parental educational level impacts students' learning differently. The way in which parents behave toward their children also influence the way in which the children relate to them concerning their academics. Normally, parents who help their children with assignments, study, and also ask them about their activities in school will likely instill in them the spirit of seriousness toward academics. Ghuntla et al. (2012) found that educated parents paid more attention to the facility used by their children, related to their study.

Following the above, it is logical to argue that parental educational levels may be associated with the low performance, especially in Mathematics and English language, usually reported over the years in the context of the present study, Nsukka L.G.A. in Enugu State of Nigeria (Post Primary Schools Management Board [PPSMB], Nsukka Zonal Office, 2022 as cited in Ngwu et al. (2025). Despite the low performance of students in these subjects, studies have yet to consider whether parental educational levels and parental involvement in education impact students' academic achievement in these subjects. This paper, therefore, argues that parental educational level and involvement are factors in the academic achievement of students in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State, Nigeria. Hence, the aims of this study include the following:

1. To ascertain the impact of parental educational level on students' academic achievement.
2. To ascertain the impact of parental involvement in education on students' academic achievement.

Specifically, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the impact of parental educational level on students' academic achievement?
2. What is the impact of parental involvement in education on students' academic achievement?

Based on the research questions, we hypothesized the following:

H_01 : Parental educational level does not have a significant impact on students' academic achievement.

H_02 : Parental involvement in education does not have a significant impact on students' academic achievement.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

The population for this study comprise of all the 2,877 junior secondary school (JSS) 3students (Grade 9) in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State (Statistical Unit, PPSMB, Nsukka Zonal Office, 2022). JSS 3 students were selected for the study because they were preparing for the basic education certificate examination, from which some of the items in the test instruments used for the study were adopted. They have already written many examinations in the school, unlike the JSS 1 and JSS 2students. Thus, they are in a better position to respond to the questionnaire objectively. Using Taro Yamane's sampling formula, the study sampled 384 JSS3 students from 5 schools in the study area. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in sampling this number. At the first stage, the study used a stratified sampling technique by stratifying the schools into urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. In the second stage, from each of the strata, the study sampled 2 schools from the urban areas, 1 school from a semi-urban area, and 2 schools from a rural area to make up a total of 5 schools. At the third stage, the study used a purposive sampling technique to sample the JSS3 class and all JSS3 students in the selected schools who agreed to participate in the study. Table 1 presents participants' profiles based on educational level.

Table 1. Sample Distribution (n=384)

Gender	Parental educational level		Total
	Low	High	
Male	158	52	210
Female	130	44	174
Total	288	96	384

2.2. Measures

The instruments for data collection were a questionnaire and a test instrument. The questionnaire comprises the biodata of the respondents as well as a cluster of items aimed at eliciting information based on parental involvement in education. The bio-data section includes information on parental educational level, among other factors. International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) from UNESCO (2012) has grouped education into nine levels, namely early childhood education, primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education, post-secondary non-tertiary education, short-cycle tertiary education, bachelor's or equivalent level, master's or equivalent level, and doctoral or equivalent level. Notably, for this study, a high educational level of parents is defined as parents holding a bachelor's degree or its equivalent and above; a low educational level is defined as those with a national diploma or lower. The cluster of items on parental involvement in children's education includes 11 items rated on a four likert-scale of strongly agree (SA=4), agree (A=3), disagree (D=2), and strongly disagree (SD =1). The items on parental involvement in children's education are presented in Table 3.

Students' achievement test comprised of English (literacy), Mathematics (numeracy), and civic education (civic literacy) tests. All of the test items for literacy were adapted from previous BECE questions. The literacy test had 16 total items and was divided into two sections: a comprehension passage and a lexis and structure part, with an estimated completion time of 15 minutes. The numeracy test had 16 question items with an estimated completion time of 20 minutes. Items testing numeracy ability were adapted from BECE and other mathematics past exams. The civic literacy test had 23 questions and was supposed to take 15 minutes to complete. Some of the topics were taken from the BECE, while others were based on the material covered in the junior secondary school civic education curriculum. The cumulative total of questions for the three subjects was 55 (16+16+23). The final score for academic achievement is 55. A score of 33 and above (60%+) is defined as high achievement, while a score below 33 (below 60%) is defined as low achievement.

The items underwent face validation by three experts from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to ensure that the instrument is reliable and meets the criteria for the research questions. The tests had to pass the examiners' scrutiny for readability, word simplicity, and relevancy to both the study's goals and the students' grade levels. In order to check the items' internal consistency, the instrument was given to a group of 20 JSS 3 respondents who were randomly selected from a different school than the one utilized for the study. Students' answers to the academic test instrument and the questionnaire were analysed using K-R 20

and Cronbach Alpha, respectively; the analysis produced reliability coefficients of 0.74 and 0.85. This reliability value demonstrates the instrument's dependability for use

2.3. Data collection

Two researchers administered the equipment utilizing the direct administration and retrieval approach to acquire the data. Prior to beginning the study, the researchers had to secure the informed consent of the sampled students as well as ethical approval from their host department at their institution and authorization from the school administration. The researchers gave the test to the pupils after receiving the required authorizations and consent. They waited and immediately took the finished test for analysis.

2.4. Data analysis

The research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation, while the null hypotheses were analysed using a t-test. A mean score of 2.50 or more is considered to be high parental participation, whereas a mean score of less than 2.50 is considered to be poor parental involvement. The standard for overall academic success is 33 out of a possible 55 points. Low achievement is indicated by any score below the benchmark. The benchmark of 0.05 for the p-value will serve as the basis for the judgment about the hypotheses. The null hypothesis was rejected if the P-value is less than 0.05.

3. RESULTS

Generally, the overall mean achievement of students is low at 27.18, which is below the acceptance benchmark of 33. This section presents the findings of this study regarding the influence parental education and involvement have on students' academic achievement, under two subheadings.

3.1. Influence of parental education level on students' academic achievement

Results from the analysis, as shown in [Table 2](#) also showed that the overall mean academic achievements of children of highly educated parents and children of lowly educated parents were 25.15 and 27.85, respectively.

Table 2. Academic achievement based on Parental educational level

	Mean	SD	Df	t-test	Sig
Lowly Educated Parents	27.85	5.84	382	3.610	0.00**
Highly Educated Parents	25.15	7.66			
Overall Academic Achievement	27.18	6.44			

The result of the analysis showed that parental educational level influenced students' academic achievement. Students whose parents are lowly educated had a higher mean achievement score ($M=27.85$) than those with a high level of parental education ($M=25.15$). Further analysis using a t-test revealed that there is a significant difference in students' academic achievement based on parental education level. This implies that parental educational level significantly influenced students' academic achievement.

3.2. Influence of parental involvement on students' academic achievement

Findings showed that a high number of parents in Enugu state are involved in their children's education, as shown in [Table 3](#).

Table 3. Parental Involvement in Children's Education

S/N	My Parental Involvement in My Education	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	My parents encourage me to read my books at home	351	29	2	2	3.89	Agree
2	My parents remind me about the importance of reading my books	343	33	5	3	3.86	Agree
3	My parents wake me up to read at night	258	76	39	9	3.52	Agree
4	My parents ask me questions about what I learnt in school each day I return from school.	224	111	40	9	3.43	Agree
5	My parents provide me guidance on my homework	212	117	40	15	3.36	Agree
6*	My parents do my homework for me by themselves	145	59	57	122	2.59	Agree
7.	My parents tell me that doing well with my education is the best way to be successful in life	295	73	11	5	3.71	Agree
8.	My parents provide my educational needs, such as school fees, uniform, and other dues, before any other needs in the house.	277	79	21	7	3.63	Agree
9.	My parents provide me with a home teacher after school hours	183	86	77	32	3.12	Agree
10.	My parents do check my books each time I am back from school	206	103	46	26	3.28	Agree
11.	My parents do rebuke me any time I do not perform well in school	210	113	25	34	3.30	Agree
Total	Mean Parental Involvement in Children's Education					3.43	

*reverse coded

Table 3 shows mean values of items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11, which are all above the 2.50 benchmark for acceptance, thus implying that they are accepted as parental involvement in students' education. However, item 6, which was a negative involvement, was reverse-coded, and the mean value was also above the acceptance benchmark, which implies that students disagreed that parents do their homework for them, indicating that parents allow their children do their homework by themselves.

Table 4. Parental involvement and Students' academic achievement

	Mean achievement	SD	df	t-test	Sig
Less Involved Parents	25.33	8.14	382	-0.489	0.619
Highly Involved Parents	27.19	6.44			

Findings from the analysis in Table 4 showed that the students with less involved parents recorded low academic achievement (25.33), while students with highly involved parents recorded higher academic achievement. Further analysis using a t-test to review these scores showed that there is no significant difference in students' academic achievement based on parental involvement, with a p-value greater than 0.05 (0.619). This implies that parental involvement did not significantly influence students' academic achievement.

4. DISCUSSION

The study investigated the influence of parental education level and involvement on students' academic achievement in Nsukka L.G.A of Enugu State in Southeast Nigeria. The study revealed that parental education level significantly influenced students' academic achievement. This finding is in line with previous studies that found that parental education level has a significant and positive influence on the academic achievements of secondary school children (Alghamdi, 2020; Marzulina et al., 2018; Idris et al., 2020; Rana et al., 2015; Paulpandi & Govindharaj, 2017). However, unlike previous studies that found the difference in favour of children with higher educated parents, this study found that students whose parents are less educated had a higher mean achievement score. It is difficult to explain this contradiction with previous studies. A possible explanation why children from less educated backgrounds performed better may be that these less educated parents, together with their children, aspire for growth.

The students with less involved parents recorded low academic achievement, while students with highly involved parents recorded higher academic achievement. This finding is consistent with that of previous studies, such as the findings of Naite (2021), which indicated that students with highly involved parents had better academic performance and higher test scores in all the subjects, including Mathematics, compared to students whose parents were not involved in their education. This study found that the influence of parental involvement on students' achievement was not significant. This is also in alignment with the findings of Pinkett (2002) and Pantao-O & Baldonado (2025), who also reported no significant difference. The lack of significant impact could be explained by the fact that other factors (e.g., quality of the involvement, child's ability, teacher factors, etc.) interact to influence achievement.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that parental education level and involvement are factors that influence students' academic achievement. The educational implication of this is that schools and educators should focus on increasing parental engagement in their children's education. This could include initiatives such as parent-teacher conferences, family literacy programs, and home-school communication. Schools should provide resources and support to help parents better understand and be involved in their children's education. Based on the findings, the study recommends that schools should provide parents with clear information about their child's progress and how they can support their child's learning. Schools should also encourage parents to be actively involved in their child's education, such as volunteering in the classroom or attending parent-teacher conferences as well as home tutoring. Schools can also create a welcoming and supportive environment for parents at the school. This could involve offering childcare, or hosting events for parents to connect with each other.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest in this study.

RESEARCH FUNDING

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ETHICAL STATEMENT

This research has been approved by the ethics committee of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

AI USE STATEMENT

The manuscript was written without using AI.

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