

# **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LITERACY ACQUISITION IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

**DR. HENRY OJATING**

*Department of Educational Foundations and Childhood Education,  
Cross River University of Technology, Calabar,  
Cross River State.*

## **Abstract**

*This study was a comparative analysis of parental support role for literacy acquisition on the basis of pupils' gender and residential locations (communities) of parents in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Two null hypotheses were developed and tested at .05 significance level. Data for analysis were collected through a structured questionnaire and the statistics used to test the two hypotheses were the independent t-test and the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results indicated that parental support role for literacy acquisition did not differ significantly between male and female pupils. It was equally found that parental support role differed significantly among locations (communities) of parents. The researcher also explored the implications of the study for educational assessment and national security.*

**Key words:** Parental support role, Literacy acquisition, Educational assessment.

Literacy is the sure foundation for any society with great prospects for sustained socioeconomic advancement. It has to do with the ability to read, write and carry our simple arithmetic operations. This level of learning, which should begin right in the home, sets the tone for effective higher learning in the school setting. Oludipe (2009) reported that the "home" is very germane and crucial to a child's well-being and development in later life. He said the reason for this is that parents in the home are children's first teacher. From the day a child is born and begins to hear, he/she begins to develop literacy as parents and other caring adults and preschool teachers speak, play, sing and read to them. As a child moves from infant to toddler and then to preschooler, he learns to be able to read, write, listen and speak. Early literacy development is a

significant part of preparing children to do well academically. Duruamaku–Dim, Anero and Arikpo (2013) stated that literacy is a catalyst for overall human and societal development. They maintained that literacy is a killer of ignorance, promoter of good health, economy and accounts for effective social and political participation.

It has become common knowledge that parents play a key role in the literacy acquisition and development of preschool and young school learners. However, the level parental stimulation for literacy acquisition among young learners may vary among parents.

According to Lee and Bowen (2006), ethnic minority parents are often less involved with their children's schooling than those from the majority population. This assertion seem to be supported by Heath and Brinbaum (2014), who reported that lower levels of educational achievement and attainment of children of immigrants are pervasive throughout the Western world and the entire educational career. Shahidul, Sarker, Zehadul, Mohammad, and Suffiun (2017) believe that, parents make educational decisions considering the best for the family's economic future and this situation is common in rural Asian countries. Girl children are therefore, disadvantaged in terms of support educationally as they are seen as liabilities rather than assets. Mahmud and Amin (2006) corroborate this position by reporting that enrolment or attainment disparities in developing countries observed that parents make decisions about schooling of children based on the expectation of future returns to the household. Chege and Sifuna (2006) observed that cultural expectations and values influence female participation in formal education and can have distinct effects on the educational outcomes of boys and girls. Parental aspiration for daughters' education is normative. Hannum, Kong, & Zhang (2009) observed that there is a pattern of cultural rules generating a system of gender stratification. Chingtham and Tinkhoiling (2017) argued that education was very important for every child regardless of gender. They said women and girls in developing countries were often denied opportunities for education, and that lack of education limits prospects, decreases family income, reduces health, put women and girls at risk of trafficking and exploitation and limit the economic advancement of the entire country.

Education, according to Haruna and Liman (2015), is regarded as an instrument for national development and social change as well as building an individual into becoming a functional and acceptable member of the society. It is widely recognized as a veritable tool for addressing issues of poverty, underdevelopment, population, illiteracy, ignorance, gender exclusion, health problems, conflicts and tolerance, human right as well as sustainability. Haruna (2011) argued that, for effective national development in Nigeria, the issue of quality education and equal educational opportunities must be taken serious, both between rural and urban learners as well as boy and girl child-education. Rural societies, as described by Haruna and Liman (2015), are strongly conservative in ideology, and strongly adhere to their primitive pattern of life. Their ideology govern their interpretation of the wider world and dictates for them the selection and arrangement of life style which is entirely different from the urban

societies (Mahuta & Inuwa, 2008). Omotayo (2009) cited gaps in parent children relationship and domestic works such as hawking, among factors that affect the performance of students.

The location of parents actually play a key role in the way they respond to the academic needs of their children. This is obvious, because, residents of such geographical locations, usually have shared cultures. Rogoff (2003) supported this assertion by stating that people are built up as participants in cultural communities and that their development can be understood only in the light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities which are subject to change. Corroborating this further, Irvin, Farmer, Leung, Thompson, & Hutchins, (2010), reported that, in one rural school district in western Tennessee, the perceptions, beliefs, and values of rural parents, teachers, and administrators were factors that decreased, or even negated growth in learning and affected the levels of parental involvement. The researchers concluded that such communities suffered from failures to thrive. Educational professionals suggest advocacy programmes that would enhance the involvement of rural parents in the academic support of their children. Howley and Maynard (2010) clarified that parental involvement programs for rural communities work best when they respond to the particular features of the communities they serve and these features tend to be different from those of urban and suburban communities and are said to be more prevalent in rural communities. The researcher's motivation for this study derives from the fact that parental support role for pupils' literacy acquisition in Cross River State was observed to be abysmally low. The study, therefore, examined the influence of pupils' gender and parents' residential location on parental literacy support role.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to carry out a comparative analysis of parental literacy support role on the basis of young learners' gender and parents' residential location.

### **Research hypotheses**

Two research hypotheses were formulated as a guide to the study. They are:

1. Parental support role for literacy acquisition does not differ significantly between male and female young learners.
2. Parental support role for literacy acquisition does not differ significantly among residential locations (communities) of parents.

### **Method**

A survey design was used for this study. Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria was the area of study. Seventy five thousand three hundred and twenty two (75,322) primary six pupils in the zone comprised the study population. A total of fourteen (14) schools were sampled across seven (7) Local Government Areas

of the zone. Sixty (60) pupils were sampled from each school, yielding a total sample of six hundred and forty (640) pupils.

The instrument for data collection was a 4-point scale Likert-type questionnaire titled “parental support role for stimulating literacy” (PSRSL). The questionnaire comprised sections A and B. Section ‘A’ had to do with the respondents’ demographic information, while section ‘B’ contained ten (10) items that measured parental support role. The items were both positively and negatively worded. The response options were ‘Strongly Agree’(SA), ‘Agree’(A), ‘Disagree’(D), and ‘Strongly Disagree’(SD). For positively worded items, the options of SA, A, D and SD were scored 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively, while responses for negatively worded items were scored in the reverse order. The instrument was scrutinized by experts in measurement and evaluation in Cross River University of Technology to ensure face validation. In order to ascertain the internal reliability of the instrument, a trial test was done with 44 pupils that were not part of the sample. The reliability coefficient obtained through Cronbach Alpha method of estimation was .708. Thus, the instrument was deemed internally reliability. Typical items were: (1) My parents have been making very serious efforts to help me know how to read and write; (2) Provision of relevant books for reading and writing has always been made by my parents, among others. The administration of the questionnaire was done with the help of research assistants. The subjects were in their classrooms while copies of the questionnaire were administered and explanation on how to go about filling them was given. At the end, the completed copies were retrieved. The independent t-test and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were employed to test the two hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Upon administration, five hundred and ninety one (591) copies of the retrieved questionnaire were found valid, with a retrieval rate of 92.3%.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Hypothesis one**

The null form of this hypothesis stated that parental support role for literacy acquisition does not differ significantly between male and female pupils.

Independent t-test analysis was carried out in testing the hypothesis at .05 level of significance with gender as independent variable, while parental support role is the dependent variable. The results are presented in table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Independent t-test Analysis of the Influence of Gender on Parental Support Role (N = 591)**

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value
Male	240	30.788	5.368	-1.227	.220
Female	351	31.302	4.747		

From Table 1, the p-value (.220) associated with the computed t-value (-1.227) is greater than the chosen level of significance (.05). Based on the outcome, the null hypothesis was retained. This means that parental support role for literacy acquisition does not differ between male and female pupils.

**Hypothesis two**

This hypothesis in its null form stated that parental support role for literacy acquisition does not differ significantly among residential locations (communities) of parents.

To test the hypothesis, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied at .05 level of significance with residential locations as factor and parental support role as dependent variable. The analysis is preceded by descriptive statistics of parental support role by Local Government Area shown in Table 2, following which, it is presented in Table2.

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Parental Support Role by Local Government Area**

Local government	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Err.
Akpabuyo	9	28.0667	2.34065	.24673
Akamkpa	9	33.6882	4.12832	.42809
Biase	8	31.6471	5.12628	.55602
Bakassi	5	32.0357	3.82796	.51153
Calabar South	8	31.7907	4.38478	4.7282
Calabar Municipality	8	33.1124	4.31551	.45744
Odukpani	9	27.7391	6.20328	.64674
Total	59	31.0931	5.01014	.20609

**Table 3**  
**Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Parental Support Role by Local Government Area**

Source of variation	Sum of squares	D f	Mean square	F - v a l u e	p-value
LGA	2966.136	6	494.356	24.376	.000
Error	11843.745	584	20.280		
Total	14809882	590			

\*Significant at .05 level. P < .05

In Table 3, the P-value (.000) is less than the chosen level of significance, thus, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternate. This means that the residential location (communities) of parents significantly influence their parental support role for literacy acquisition.

To find out which pair of group means was responsible for the observed significant results, a post hoc test was done. The results are presented in table 4.

**Table 4**  
**Post Hoc Pairwise Comparison of Parental Support Role by Local Government Area**

Local Government	Akpabuyo	Akamkpa	Biase	Bakassi	Cal.South	Cal.Mun.	Odukpani
Akpabuyo	28.0667	-5.6215*	-3.5804	-3.969*	-3.724*	-5.0457*	3.908*
Akamkpa	.000	33.6882	2.0411	1.6525*	1.8975*	0.5758	5.9491*
Biase	.000	.003	31.6471	-0.3886*	-0.1436	-1.4653	3.8060
Bakassi	.000	.030	.616	32.0357	0.245*	-1.0767	4.2966
Cal. South	.000	.005	.835	.751	31.7907	-2.3217	4.0516*
CalabarMun.	.000	.389	.032	.162	.053	33.1124	5.3733
Odukpani	.024	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	27.7391

\*Significant at .05 level.  $P < .05$

Values along the main diagonal are group means, above are mean differences and below are p-values.

In Table 4, most P-values (below the main diagonal) associated with the computed mean differences (above the main diagonal) are less than the chosen level of significance (.05). The mean differences that yielded such p-values accounted for the significant result.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **Hypothesis one**

The result of hypothesis one revealed that pupils' gender does not significantly influence parental support role in literacy acquisition. The finding agrees with the view of Chingtham and Tinkhoiling (2017) who maintained that education was very important for every child regardless of gender. They, however, reported, contrary to the outcome of the study, that women and girls in developing countries were often denied opportunities for education, and that lack of education limits prospects, decrease family income, reduce health, put women and girls at risk of trafficking and exploitation and limit the economic advancement of the entire country.

### **Hypothesis Two**

The result of this hypothesis revealed that parental support role for literacy acquisition differ significantly among residential locations (communities) of parents. This outcome was in agreement with the position of Rogoff (2003), who stated that people are built up as participants in cultural communities and that their development can be understood only in the light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities which are subject to change. Also, Irvin, Farmer, Leung, Thompson, & Hutchins,(2010), reported that in one rural school district in western Tennessee, the perceptions, beliefs,

and values of rural parents, teachers, and administrators were factors that decreased or even negated growth in learning and affected the levels of parental involvement. The researchers concluded that such communities suffered from failures to thrive. Howley and Maynard (2010) equally added that parental involvement programs for rural communities work best when they respond to the particular features of the communities they serve and these features tend to be different from those of urban and suburban communities and are said to be more prevalent in rural communities.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Based on the two hypotheses tested, the results indicated that (i) Parental support role for literacy acquisition does not differ significantly between male and female pupils. (ii) Parental support role for literacy acquisition differ significantly among residential locations (communities). Going by the outcome of the first hypothesis, it could be concluded that parents have had sufficient orientation on the culture of gender equality regarding right to education. The second outcome aligned with most studies. It is obvious that a parent's area of residence affects his/her disposition to supporting children's education.

### **Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings of the study, it was recommended as follows:

1. Government should evolve effective strategies of sensitizing parents to complement the school's effort of nurturing the child's literacy.
2. Parents in rural communities should benefit from public enlightenment programmes that promote parental literacy support. These would most likely cause them to let go their primordial mentalities and beliefs that inhibit child literacy support.

### **Implications for Educational Assessment and National Security**

Assessment in education is concerned with the array of tools and methods educators use to obtain information about learners with a view to tracking and making informed decisions about their learning (Ojating, 2018). Parents are, indeed, well positioned to effectively assist the classroom teacher perform the key role of assessing school learners. The methods and tools deployed in the day to day assessment of learners would hardly be of any importance or appreciated by parents who know little about them or have the least interest in supporting their children academically. The role of parents in the assessment of the learning of their children really complements what the teacher does and facilitates the overall process of learning. According to WETA Public Broadcasting (2019), successful parent involvement can be defined as the active, ongoing participation of a parent or primary caregiver in the education of his or her child. Parents can demonstrate involvement at home by reading with their children, helping with homework and discussing school events by attending functions or volunteering in classrooms. Schools with involved parents engage those parents,

communicate with them regularly, and incorporate them into the learning process. National security would be guaranteed to a very reasonable extent when every child in Nigeria has the benefit of being educated. Malala Fund (2018) reported that communities would be more stable and can recover faster after conflict when girls are educated, and that when a country gives all its children secondary education, they cut their risk of war in half. The Fund maintains that education is vital for security around the world because extremism grows alongside inequality.

According to Humanium (2019), educated girls are less likely to marry young or contract HIV – and more likely to have healthy, educated children, and that Children who live in urban or rural zones often find themselves in a precarious situation. Due to extreme poverty, they can hardly meet fundamental needs such as nutrition, access to healthcare and education. These situations, especially, the lack of formal education, make children become more vulnerable to social vices and in extreme cases, they join deadly gangs and become a real threat to the security of the nation.

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