

THREE PSYCHO-SOCIAL FACTORS IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG FRESH SCHOOL- GOING ADOLESCENTS IN BAYELSA STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated three psycho-social factors (self-efficacy, parental involvement and peer influence) in the improvement of academic achievement among fresh school-going adolescents in Bayelsa State. Two hundred and fifty students were randomly sampled from fifteen stratified randomly selected Basic Junior Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State. Their age ranged between 8 and 13 with a mean age of 11.7. Data were collected using three valid instruments. The multiple regression was used to analyse the data. Findings revealed that the three psycho-social variables jointly and relatively contributed to the improvement of academic achievement among fresh School-going adolescents in Bayelsa State. Based on the findings, implications for the findings are highlighted.

Psycho – Social factors are very crucial in intellectual functioning and adjustment in all ramifications. Operationally, Psycho-Social factors refer to factors within and around the learner that buffer his/her intellectual functioning and adjustment for a better living.

There are a number of Psycho-Social factors which this research could not accommodate. On the basis of that, this research would focus on three psycho-social factors/variables that could be very useful in the intellectual functioning for better academic performance. These variables are self-efficacy, peer influence and parental involvement.

Academic achievement can be conceived as the degree or level of success attained at the end of an academic endeavour. Other scholars conceived academic

achievement as the successful attainment of goal, requiring a certain effort in a discipline or a subject or the degree of success attained in an academic pursuit or endeavour (Asagwara, 1987; Onyejiaku, 1987). According to Iwundu, (1995), the yardstick for measuring one's level of academic achievement is by assessing the academic performance of the individual through test and systematic observation.

In the literature, there are numerous factors influencing academic achievement. These include School quality (Obemeata, 2001), teacher quality (Labo-Popoola, 2002), School environment (Ilori, 1995), Poor implementation of policy on education (Salami, 1992) and provision of researches such as textbooks (Farombi, 1998). Other research findings have shown individual characteristics such as motivation, orientation, self-esteem and learning approaches as important factors influencing academic achievement (e.g, Minnaert & Jasen, 1992, Watkins, 1996). While all these individual variables are believed to influence academic achievement and adjustment, little is known about the combination of self-efficacy, peer influence and parental involvement as psycho-social factors in improving academic achievement.

Previous researchers, despite their scope and perhaps depth, only examined through univariate approach, the relationship between one and a combination of two variables as a correlate of academic achievement. This background emphasized the need to bring into focus a research approach which examined three psycho-social variables, self-efficacy, peer influence and parental involvement in improving academic achievement among school-going adolescents. To fill this gap, it is the researchers' contention that a better understanding of these variables would be of considerable help in improving intellectual functioning for better academic achievement in Nigeria with a view to improving adjustment for high academic achievement.

Self-efficacy is grounded in a larger theoretical framework known as social cognitive theory, which postulates that human achievement depends on interaction between one's behaviour, personal factors (e.g., thoughts and beliefs), and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Self-efficacy therefore, refers to an individual's belief or confidence that he/she is capable of successfully performing a task. This means that how we think we can perform affects how we actually do perform.

Previous research works show that self-efficacy influences academic motivation, learning and achievement (e.g. Pajares, 1996, Schunk, 1995). Learners obtain information to appraise their self-efficacy from their actual performance, their vicarious experiences, and the persuasion they receive from others and their physiological reactions.

Self-efficacy beliefs influence task choice, effort, persistence, resilience and achievement (Bandura, 1997). Compared with students who doubt their learning capabilities, those who feel efficacious for learning or performing a task participate more readily, work harder, persist longer when they encounter difficulties, achieve at a higher level (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). To corroborate the above, in a Nigerian sample, Alarape and Afolabi (2001) identified that people with low self-efficacy are more likely to lessen their effort or give up altogether, while those with high self-efficacy will try harder to master challenges. This finding illustrates that the higher an individual's self-efficacy, the more confidence he/she has in his/her ability to succeed in a task.

Peers are influential on adolescent's day to day behaviours and feelings, including how much they value school and how well they perform in class (Steinberg, 1996). More often than not, peers reinforce family values, but they have the potential to encourage problem behaviours as well. Although the negative peer influence is often overemphasized, more can be done to help teenagers experience the family and the peer group as mutually constructive environment. The peer group is a source of affection, sympathy and understanding; a place of experimentation and a supportive setting for achieving the development tasks of adolescence.

Researchers have established the pertinent peer influence and academic achievement. For instance, Berndt, Laychak and park (1990) found that peers do influence achievement, motivation, particularly when they have a close, non-conflicting relationship. Erika (2000) found that the availability of peers who endorse achievement – related behaviours may serve as a buffer from negative attitudes, and a school culture that is not conducive to the motivation of its students.

The last variable to be discussed is parental involvement. The child's first place of contact with the world is the family. The child, as a result, acquires initial education and socialization from parents and other significant persons in the family. This reinforced the choice of Adeyemo (2004) who referred to the parents as the first teacher. Thus, the parents are the first and primary source of social support for young children.

Available and accessible research evidence have indicated that students with parents who are involved in their education tend to have fewer adjustment and behavioural problems and inclined to better academic achievement and are less likely to drop out of school than students whose parents are not involved in their school, (Adeyemo, 2004; Adeyemo & Torubeli, 2006; Torubeli, 2004). Corroborating the above findings, Reynolds and Gill (1994) demonstrated that a significant relationship existed between parental involvement and academic achievement. It is the desire of most parents that their children excel in life and they would not leave any stone unturned to make sure that their children are given necessary support. In a situation

where the school and the home are working towards the same goal, the result is a happy one.

To achieve the research objectives, the following research questions were raised and answered in this study.

Research Questions

1. What is the composite influence of self-efficacy, peer influence and parental involvement (independent variables) on the improvement of academic achievement among school-going adolescents (dependent variables)?
2. What is the relative influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable?

Method

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research. Such an approach does not involve the manipulation of variables in the study. It neither adds to nor subtracts from the existing fact. It only carefully observes and records information as it naturally occurred at the time the study was conducted.

Population/Sample

Fifteen secondary schools selected through stratified random techniques were used for the study. In each of the randomly selected schools, participants were selected through a simple random technique. On the whole, two hundred and fifty students (250) comprising 140 boys and 110 girls participated in the study. All participants were fresh students in junior secondary school class one (Jss1). Their age ranged between 8 and 13 years with a mean age of 11.7 years.

Instrumentation

Self-efficacy Scale

The Morgan-jinks student self-efficacy scale developed by Morgan and Jinks (1999) was used to access the self-efficacy of the participants. The instrument is a thirty-item scale and had an over all reliability coefficient of 0.2. The subscales Alphas were 0.7 for talents, 0.70 for context and 0.66 for efforts. The instrument has a response format ranging from really agree (1) to really disagree (4).

Peer Influence Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed by the researchers to suit the purpose. The questionnaire has a total of 18 items with a 5 point Likert response format ranging from (1) not at all like me to (5) very much like me. A typical item is “most of my friends are doing well in their study”. The instrument was pilot tested and established a test – retest reliability index of 0.76.

Parental Involvement Questionnaire

The family involvement questionnaire constructed by Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Child (2000) was used as a measure of parental involvement. It is a forty – two item scale with response anchor based on Likert 4 – point format. Some of the items of the scale read as follows:

1. My parents always emphasize doing school assignments and reading at home.
2. My parents always check on my school work everyday.
3. My parents participate in parents/teachers activities in the school.

The three scale factors demonstrated adequate internal consistency with Alpha coefficient of .70. The reliability indices for the three subscales are: .85 for section A; .85 for section B and .81 for section C.

Procedure

The instruments were administered to the participants on days approved by the school authorities for the exercise. The investigators were assisted by school guidance counsellors in the administration and collection of the instruments. In each of the selected schools, the instruments were administered and collected on the same day of the administration. On the whole, data collection lasted for two weeks. Out of the three hundred and twenty questionnaires distributed, only 250 were properly filled in and considered useful for research purpose.

Method of Data Analysis

The multiple regression analysis, ANOVA and t – test statistical tools were employed to analyse the data.

Results

The first research question sought to find out the combined effect of self – efficacy, peer influence and parental involvement on academic achievement of the fresh school – going adolescents. The result is presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: Multiple regression analysis on Academic Achievement

Multiple R (adjusted) = 0.483 Multiple R ² (adjusted)= 0.224 Standard Error of Estimate = 5.12				
Analysis of Variance				
	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F
Regression	1960.332	3	653.444	24.944
Residual	644.424	246	26.197	
	8404.75	249		

The table above shows that the independent variables (parental involvement, self – efficacy and peer influence) when pulled together have significant effect on the academic achievement of the participants. The values of R (adjusted) = 0.483 and R² (adjusted) = 0.224. The analysis of variance performed on multiple regressions yielded an F – ratio value of 24.944 and was found to be significant at 0.05 levels.

Table 2: Relative Contributions of the Independent Variables to the Prediction.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	p
MODEL	B	Standard Error	BETA		
Constant	28.395	2.909		9.701	<0.05
Parental Involvement	.289	.066	.212	3.05	<0.05
Self – efficacy	.219	.085	.250	4.39	<0.05
Peer Influence	.174	.057	.173	2.57	<0.05

The above table shows that each of the independent variables made a significant contribution to the prediction of academic achievement. In terms of the magnitude of contribution, self-efficacy made the most significant contribution (Beta = .259; t = 3.05; P < 0.05) to the prediction. Other variables made significant contributions in the following order; parental involvement (Beta = .212; t = 3.05; p < 0.05) and peer influence (Beta = .173; t = 2.57; p < 0.05).

Discussion

The results of the first research question revealed that the three independent variables have a joint effect on the academic achievement of the participants. The magnitude of the effectiveness of the three independent variables was reflected in the value of R= 0.483 and R² (adjusted) = 0.224. The result thus demonstrated that 22.4% of the variance in the academic achievement of the fresh students is accounted for by the linear combination of the three variables. The result was further strengthened by the value of F – ratio (f = 24.944, p < 0.05). What the results are saying is that the capacity of the three independent variables to predict academic achievement could not have happened by chance. The finding is in consonance with the work of previous researchers (Adeyemo, 2004, Pajares, 1996, Schnk & Pajares, 2001, Berndt et al, 1990, Torubeli, 2004).

In the study, it is shown that self-efficacy is the most potent contributor. This is best understood when it is realized that self-efficacy beliefs influence task choice, effort, persistence, resilience and achievement. This corroborates the study of Schunk and Pajares (2001) which established that those who feel efficacious for learning participate more readily, work harder, persist longer when they encounter difficulties,

achieve at a higher level. To support the above, Torubeli (2007) established that the will and ability to achieve are resident with the child.

Parental involvement is the second contributor variable in the study. It is the desire of most parents that their children should excel in life and they would not leave any stone unturned to make sure that their children are given necessary support. This corroborates the finding of Adeyemo (2004) who established that, in situation where the school and the home are working together towards the same goal, the result is a happy one.

The last in the potency of the three psycho-social variables is peer influence. As new entrants arrive at Secondary School, the school environment which is made up of peers presents a lot of challenges and task varieties which may have motivational effects on the new entrants. This finding thus, is in line with Berndt et al (1999) who established that peers do influence motivation and academic achievement.

Implication of the Findings

It is important to mention the implication of the present study for educational and counseling applications. First, there is the need to forge home-school partnership for the purpose of not only enhancing the academic well-being of the students but their overall well-being as well. The responsibility of educating the child should not be left to the school alone. For the child to be academically efficacious, the need to foster the home-school partnership and positive peer influence is indeed highly germane. As parenting and parental involvement practices require training, school counselors can organize seminars and/or workshops where parents are exposed to parenting skills and practices.

As fresh students may encounter frustration situations in Secondary School, the school authority should consider it necessary to organize orientation programmes for the new intakes. They would need to be guided and counseled on the various aspects of school life. Educational, Personal – Social and Career counseling, all of which can enhance the Psycho-Social environment of the school, should be provided for the new intakes.

Parental involvement and creation of enabling school environments will help to foster the positive peer influence, interest in schooling and make them develop high academic self-efficacy. Both the home and the school have the onerous responsibility of improving their Psychophysical environment and of making the home and school child-friendly, as these are prerequisites for enhancing the academic self-efficacy of the students. Thus, there is need for policy makers to put in place an appropriate involvement in the education of their children.

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