

Parents and Students Interest as Determinants of Students' Academic Performance in Agricultural Science in selected Secondary Schools in Oyo Metropolis, Oyo State

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Abstract

This study was designed to examine parents and students' interest as determinants of students' academic performance in agricultural science in selected secondary schools in Oyo metropolis, Oyo State.

It seeks to find out whether different parental interest, influence of students' interest in agricultural science as a subject, and parents' socio-economic status has any influence on the academic performances of students in Agricultural Science and practical activities.

The sample for the study consists of eighty secondary school students ranging from junior classes to senior classes in eight randomly selected secondary schools from the four Local Government Areas in Oyo metropolis, Oyo State. Data collected were hitherto analysed through the use of frequency percentage and chi square (X^2) test method. The research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance and appropriate degrees of freedom.

The result of the study showed that parents' interest in agricultural related activities will significantly influence students academic performance in Agricultural science, students' interest will significantly influence students academic performance in Agricultural Science and that parents' socio-economic status does not significantly influence their interest in Agricultural science and agricultural practical activities.

Keywords: Parents, Interest, Parenthood, Farming, Emotion, Socio-Economic Status.

Introduction

Students' academic performances are affected by a number of pedagogical and socio-psychological factors or intervening variables, Adeyemo (2005). Such variables include locus of control, self-efficacy, students' interest in schooling, self-concepts, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-regulation, study habits, parental involvement, and peer influence among others. Any of these factors will however have either a positive or negative influence on students' academic performance thereby leading to either poor or a good academic performance depending on how influential the factor is.

Poor academic performance according to Aremu and Sokan (2003), is a performance that is adjudged by the examinee/testee and some other significant as falling below an expected standard. Poor academic performance has been observed in school subjects especially mathematics and English language among secondary school students (Adesemowo, 2005). Aremu (2000), stresses that academic failure is not only frustrating to the students and the parents, its effects are equally grave on the society in terms of dearth of manpower in all spheres of the economy and politics.

Education at secondary school level is supposed to be the bedrock and the foundation towards higher knowledge in tertiary institutions. It is an investment as well as an instrument that can be used to achieve a more rapid economic, social, political, technological, scientific and cultural development in the country. The National Policy on Education (2004), stipulated that secondary education is an instrument for national development that fosters the worth and development of the individual for further education and development, general development of the society and equality of educational opportunities to all Nigerian children, irrespective of any real or marginal disabilities.

The role of secondary education is to lay the foundation for further education and if a good foundation is laid at this level, there are likely to be no problem at subsequent levels. However, different people at different times have passed the blame of poor performance in secondary school to students because of their low retention, parental factors, association with wrong peers, low achievement, low retention, low achievement motivation and the likes (Aremu & Sokan, 2003; Aremu & Oluwole 2001; Aremu, 2000).

The question therefore is what is the cause of this fallen standard and poor academic performance of students? Is the fault entirely that of teachers, students, parents or all of them? Is it that students of today are non-achievers because they have low intelligent quotient and a good neutral mechanism to be able to act purposefully, think rationally and deal effectively with academic tasks? Or is it because teachers are no longer putting in much commitment as before? Or is it in teachers' method of teaching and interaction with pupils? Or is the poor performance of students caused by parents' neglect, separation and poverty? The present study therefore sought to find out parents and students interest as determinants of students' academic performance in agricultural science in selected secondary schools in Oyo metropolis, Oyo State.

The past years have experienced the evolution of research pertaining to interest. Several studies concerned with the effect of interest factors on academic performance in secondary schools have yielded positive results. Adeyemo (2005), stated that "the importance of interest in whatever a person does cannot be underestimated". Interest has to do with a learners' predisposition to react positively in certain ways towards certain aspects of the environment and interest is usually developed in relation to and remained allied to more basic motives. Interest reaction to any situation depends on the situation's potential or actual fulfillment of personal needs and goals. When it comes to making choices, interest is of considerable importance. When making a distinction about the structure of interest Hidi and Anderson in Adeyemo (2005), identified two forms of interest, namely, personal and situational interest. They explain that a student can approach a learning situation with or without interest. Situational interest on the other hand, refers to an interest that people acquired by participating in an environment or context. In this study therefore, interest is linked to the parents and students in relation to schooling.

A parent's interest and encouragement in a child's education can affect the child's attitude towards school, classroom conduct, self esteem, absenteeism and motivation.

According to Comer (2006), parents' interest in, and support of their children's school help reinforce students' sense of belonging to school and their identification with teachers and other school personnel. Clark (2003), also noted that parent-initiated contacts with their children's school help strengthen students' identification with teachers. In examining the interaction among parental involvement, teacher's support and students' sense of belonging to school, students whose parents are involved and interested in their school activities are better able to take advantage of the benefits of supportive teachers or school environments for their academic performance.

Individual interest has been hypothesized to be a relatively enduring predisposition to attend to certain objects and activities, and it associates with positive effect, persistence and learning (Hidi & Ainley, 2002; Krap, 2000; Reninger, 2000). Reninger (2000), asserts that "people working with individual interests are motivated learners, their activity appears purposeful, sustained, and ever deepening; they do not really need to make a choice to learn subject matter that is of individual interest to them". Choice, to Reninger in this sense is largely an effortless process. As Schiefele (1991), observes, interest leads to a mastery goal orientation when learners are motivated by interest. Learners are motivated by intrinsic reward when they recognize that, in the pursuit of an interest, they will be drawn to master the knowledge skills, not just to demonstrate them (Bandura in Edelson and Diana, 2001).

Following the theoretical framework developed by Krapp (2000); Schiefele (1991); Koller *et al* (2001), interest is considered a person-object relation that is characterized by the value commitment and positive emotional valences. Interest driven activities are characterized by the experience of competence and personal control, feelings of autonomy and self-determination, positive emotional states under optimal circumstances, an experience of flow whereby the person and the object of interest coincide (Csikszentmihalyi and Schiefele, 1993). Schiefele *et al* (1992), conclude that the overall correlation between interest and academic achievement was about 0.30; however this relation was heterogeneous across different school subjects and indicators of achievement. Since most studies in this area of research are cross sectional based on correlations, Schiefele (2001), concludes that: Firstly, most of the cognitive ability and level of prior achievement or knowledge were not included as additional predictor variable. Consequently, one cannot say precisely whether interest predicts achievement. Secondly, most of these studies were correlational in nature and thus do not allow causal conclusion.

Empirically, Schiefele (1992), reports on an overall correlation between interest and academic achievement, while Odinko and Adeyemo (1999), find that interest in schooling together with other socio-psychological factors are good predictors of students' learning outcome in and attitude to English language respectively. In a longitudinal study conducted by Koller *et al.* (2001), which covers the high school years, it is found that interest in mathematics has no direct effect on achievement but has effect on course work selection and achievement.

It is on this note that it was expected that parents interest in schooling would have a large role in children's performance. The foregoing, have shown that one of the greatest barriers to high academic achievement in agricultural science for a good number of students is lack of parents' and students' interest in agriculture and farming.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to affirm the enhancement of academic performances of students in agricultural science in secondary schools. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the influence of parents' interest on students' academic performance in Agricultural Science
2. Investigate the influence of students' on the academic performance of students in Agricultural Science.
3. Examine the influence of parents' socio-economic status on their interest in Agricultural Science.

Research Hypothesis

The following research hypotheses were generated to guide the study.

- H₀₁ Parental interest will not significantly influence students' academic performance in Agricultural science.
- H₀₂ Students' interest will not significantly influence students' academic performance in Agricultural science.
- H₀₃ Parents' socio-economic status will not significantly influence their interest in Agricultural science.

Materials and Methods

Among the descriptive research type like case study and development study, survey type of research was made us of to select a very big faction of the system due to largeness of the target area. The survey was them made within the system concerning the opinions of secondary school students about their interests and their parents' interests in Agricultural science.

The study population was made up of all secondary school students in the four local government areas of Oyo town, Oyo State, Nigeria. It included all secondary school students ranging from both private to public schools in the rural and urban areas of the study area and from junior to senior secondary schools.

The sample for the study consisted of eight secondary schools randomly selected from the entire population. The name of the secondary schools considered for the purpose of this study in the study area in question was written on a separate sheet of paper. Separating schools in the rural area from the schools in the urban area, the sheets of paper were folded and mixed thoroughly. At a time, one school was picked from each pool (rural secondary schools' pool and urban secondary schools' pool) with replacement to ensure that all schools have equal chance or opportunity of being selected. As a result, four schools were selected from each pool resulting in eight secondary schools from the study area and these schools serving as the sample for this study.

The sampling ratio for rural secondary schools to urban secondary schools is therefore one to one. That is, 1:1. This study also made use of ten students in each school implying that eighty students were involved in this research work.

The research instrument used for collecting data for this study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of two sections with various items embedded in each section.

Section A is a demographic questionnaire with questions regarding the respondents' age, gender, school, religion e.t.c

Section B consists of items related to students interest and the means to measure the level of parental interest. Items such as 'Do you have special interest in Agricultural Science?', 'Do your parents have a garden at home or a farm?' e.t.c

Questionnaire for this study was administered to eight students of Agricultural Science in the selected secondary schools through their class teachers. The teachers and the researcher informed the respondents that the purpose of the questionnaire was to know how influential parents' and students' interest is in their education. The respondents were also informed that the instrument had nothing to do with either personality or their academic performance and that all responses would be treated with all confidentiality hence implore them to fill the instrument frankly.

The questionnaires already filled were retrieved personally by the researcher. The completed questionnaires were analyzed through the use of simple frequency percentages and Chi-Square test to determine the performance of students in Agricultural Science.

Results and Discussion

Hypotheses I

Parents Interests will not significantly influence students' academic performance in Agricultural Science.

Table 1

N	Table Value	Calculated (X^2)	DF	Level of significance
80	9.49	15.74	4	0.05

Source: Author's Computation, 2015.

From table 1, it is evident that table value of 9.49 is less than the calculated value 15.74 at 0.05 level of significance and 4 degree of freedom. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected.

Thus, parents' Interests will significantly influence students' academic performance in Agricultural Science.

Hypothesis II

Students' interests will not significantly influence students' academic performance in Agricultural Science.

Table 2

N	Table Value	Calculated (X^2)	DF	Level of significance
80	9.49	21.68	4	0.05

Source: Author's Computation, 2015.

From table 2, it is evident that the table value, 9.49 is less than the calculated value 21.68 at 0.05 level of significance and 4 degree of freedom. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

Therefore, students' interests will significantly influence students' academic performance in Agricultural Science.

Hypothesis III

Parents' Socio-economic status will not significantly influence their interests in Agricultural Science.

Table 3

N	Table Value	Calculated (X^2)	DF	Level of significance
80	5.99	4.41	2	0.05

Source: Author's Computation, 2015.

From table 3, it is evident that the table value, 5.99 is greater than the calculated value 4.41 at 0.05 level of significance and 2 degree of freedom. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

Therefore, parents' Socio-economic status will not significantly influence their interests in Agricultural Science.

The analysis of this study shows varied results regarding the influence of parents and students' interest on students' academic performance in agricultural science. It was found out that parental interest will significantly influence students' academic performance in Agricultural science. Students whose parents are interested in their education tend to perform better academically compared to students whose parents are not interested in their education. Also, students whose parents are interested in agriculture and farming tend to perform better in agricultural science compared to students whose parents are not interested in their agricultural related activities. This is in line with the opinion of Comer (2006), who opined that parents' interest in, and support of their children's school help reinforce students' sense of belonging to school and their identification with teachers and other school personnel. While investigating the influence of parental interest on students' academic performance based on the first research objective, it was found out that parental interest determines parental involvement and parental attitudes towards a child's schooling often reflected in their level of financial, moral and material support and encouragement.

Also, the second research objective which aimed at investigating the influence of students personal interest on their academic achievement in agricultural science revealed that students who have special interest in agricultural science often tends to perform better in agricultural science compared to students who are not interested in agricultural science. Not only will their interest have influence on their performance in agricultural science but on their academics generally. This implies that students who are interested in their academics performs academically than students who are not interested in their academics. Okebukola (1997) observed the link between attitude and academic success and noted that a positively high level of attitude towards a particular subject is said to translate into a high level of need for achievement and ultimately a high level of performance. In other words, if students have positive attitude towards a particular subject, there is assurance of good performance. This gives credence to the fact that interest contributes in remarkable dimensions to students' academic achievement.

Moreover, the last research objective examining the influence of parental socio-economic status on their interest in Agricultural Science showed that parents socio-economic status will not significantly influence their interest in agricultural science and agricultural related activities. It was discovered that parents with a high socio-economic status tends not to have a brilliant interest in agricultural science compared to parents with low socio-economic status. It was discovered that not only are they not interested in agricultural science because of their socio-economic characteristics but their interest is greatly influenced by their perceptions towards agriculture as a subject.

In conclusion, it is quite understandable as discovered from the findings of this study that parents and students' interest in agricultural science will significantly influence students

academic performance in agricultural science and that parental socioeconomic status will not significantly influence their interest in agricultural science.

Conclusion

At this point, it is pertinent to know that a good education does not happen by chance. It is a product of effective teaching and learning coupled with the conscious effort of the teachers, the school, the students, parents and their various home environments. Therefore, a child for excellent academic performance requires in addition to other factors a good parental motivation through parental interest, personal interest in agricultural science and in schooling generally. Children vary in their ability and attitude to learn, parents should therefore recognize this and attend to their children as an individual. They should try to establish and maintain a good environment where love, hardworking and excellence are encouraged in order to bring out the children's best academic performance. Parental interest should also be often expressed through effective support and provision of adequate learning materials that are needed by their children.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are here presented:

- Parents should provide their children/wards with essential materials that will help them improve on their academic performance.
- Parents should be educated on the importance of providing adequate learning materials as well as creating learning environments in their homes to their children. This could be discussed in the Parent/Teachers Association meetings.
- Parents should be educated on the roles they should play in the enhancement of their children's academic performance through active involvement and developed interest.
- Parents should endeavor to encourage and give their children/wards adequate time to read and do their home works at home rather than engaging them with domestic works and watching of non-educational movies most of the time.
- Parents are to strictly be in support of their wards and helping them at all cost to protect their interests rather than enforcing their own personal interest on their children.
- Parents should make out time to reach out with their children's teachers from time to time to update them with their children's academic progress. This will help identify the student's academic problems so as to handle it promptly before it affects the students.
- Parents and guardians should also erase their mind off the fact that agriculture and farming is a dirty profession and that it is meant only for poor people.

If the above recommendations are strictly adhered to, the problem of poor academic performance of students will be minimized if not totally eradicated.

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