

INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT, PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION AND PEER GROUPS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the Influence of Parental Involvement, Parent-child Communication and Peer Groups on the Academic Performance of Public Secondary School Students in Kontagora, Niger State. The study adopted mixed-methods research design with a total population of all the 17662 students in all the 19 public secondary schools in Kontagora Local Government Area. Convenient sampling was used to select 372 students, eight (8) public secondary schools with 96 students as sample from the original 372 sample for qualitative studies; 48 teachers, and 48 parents across the sampled schools. The study was guided by three research questions and hypotheses respectively. Three research instruments including a self-structured questionnaire titled "Parent-Child Communication Questionnaire (PCCQ) and Achievement Test were used for data collection and Focus Group Discussion Schedule/Guide. The reliability coefficient for the PCCQ was determined using Cronbach Alpha which yielded an r value of 0.73, while reliability coefficient of Qualitative instrument yielded r value of 0.76. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the research data collected at 0.05 level of significance. Qualitative data obtained from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study revealed that parental involvement influences students' academic performance, it was discovered that parent child communication affects the academic performance of the students and also peer influence. There is a significant relationship between parent-child communication and academic performance ($r=0.237$, $p<0.05$). The study also discovered a negative significant relationship between parental involvement and academic performance. ($r=-0.124$, $p<0.05$). Likewise, the finding also revealed

negative but significant relationship between parental involvement and academic performance. ($r=-0.124$, $p<0.05$). The study concluded that parental-child communication; parental involvement and peer group influence has a significant influence on the academic performance of public secondary school students. The study recommends that parents should ensure an open, readily available and positive parent-child communication in order to enhance students' academic performance. Parents should be fully involved in their children/wards education.

Keywords: Influence of Parental, Parent-Child Communication, Peer Groups Academic Performance

Introduction

The influence of parental involvement, parent-child communication and peer groups on the academic performance of students. Academic performance can be affected many factors some of these factors include; social, psychological, economic, environmental and personal factors. These factors have a very strong influence on the student academic performance, but these factors vary from person to person, community to community and country to country (Stella 2020). Students' academic performance can be viewed as the apparent and computable performance of a student in relations to the scores they obtained from a test made by teachers. The test can be in both internal and external form such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE), National Examination Council of Nigeria (NECO) and so on (Ogundare, Ambode, & Babalola, 2022). The academic performance of students has been an important factor in measuring the impact of teaching and learning in schools. This is important because it determines whether the school is growing academically. Academic performance is defined as the educational outcome attained by a student after a period of learning engagement. It is commonly described as the level of success achieved by students in academic tasks and short-term learning activities.

Academic performance is frequently assessed through tests or formative assessments, but there exists no agreement as to how it is best tested or what components are more significant declarative information such as facts or procedural knowledge such as skills (Santovena-Casal, 2019). The most well-known indicator of measuring academic performance is grades which reflect the students score for their subjects and overall tenure. Academic performance is a term used in school to describe how well a student performs academically. It is a student's educational goal achieved over time (Abraham, 2018). Similarly, Duruji, Azuh, & Oviasosogie (2014)

posited that academic performance is the degree of a student's accomplishment of his or her task and studies.

Parents' involvement in children's education can be seen as the act of engaging parents in instructional matters, predominantly in the home and in the school. The learning process of a child starts at home. Even after going to school, the child spends a considerable amount of time with his/her parents and family. Parents, especially mothers, are the first teachers of their children; they make and shape the character of the child at home. In the early stage of life, parents provide basic education to their children at home, like speaking, good habits, reading, writing, etc. Parental participation in children's education plays a vital role in the students' lives (Ates, 2021). In the educational context, parent-child communication involves discussions between parents and children regarding school activities, academic progress, homework, examination performance, educational goals, and future career aspirations, Zhang, (2020). Through effective communication, parents become more aware of their children's academic strengths, weaknesses and challenges and are therefore better positioned to provide the necessary support and guidance.

At school, the child is exposed to classmates, teachers and peers (Ryan, 2012). They all influence the child in one way or the other. The peer group is therefore the first social group outside the home which the child interacts with. Each peer group has its code of conduct which may not always conform to advanced standards. Peer group plays an important part throughout one's life. It is more crucial during the developmental years of learners. The child's peer group consists of people or individuals that are within an age bracket. The school serves as the primary setting for the membership of a peer group. Based on existing literature, parental involvement is considered a potential factor that may contribute to students' academic learning achievements, although the extent of its influence may vary across contexts and learners. With high parental involvement, children have better academic learning and perform well in every field of life (Perez-Daes, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the efforts of educational stakeholders, government and non-governmental organizations in promoting secondary education through the establishment of new schools, provision of classrooms and offices, supply of instructional materials and equipment, training and retraining

of teachers, implementation of school feeding programmes and other educational interventions, students' academic performance in Niger State appears to remain unsatisfactory according chief WAEC examiner (2023). Studies have shown that parental factors such as poor communication between parents and children on academic matters, low parental expectations and inadequate parental participation in children's educational activities can negatively influence students' academic achievement (Ogunyemi & Adewale, 2023). The extent of parental involvement is therefore considered pivotal in complementing the efforts of government, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders aimed at improving educational outcomes and students' academic performance.

If a lasting solution is not provided to the problem of poor academic performance, the situation may result in the production of graduates with inadequate skills and competencies, increased involvement in antisocial and criminal activities and difficulties in gaining admission into higher institutions of learning. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the influence of parental involvement, parent-child communication and Peer groups on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State.

Objectives of the Study

1. Find out the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria.
2. Find out the influence of parent-child communication on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria.
3. Find out the influence of peer groups on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following questions were designed to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of parent-child communication on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria?

3. What is the influence of peer groups on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study.

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria.

HO₂: Parental-child communication has no significant influence on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria.

HO₃: Peer group has no significant influence on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted mixed-methods research design, specifically the convergent parallel design. The design involves the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase of the research process. The mixed-methods approach is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to combine the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. According to Creswell and Clark (2018), mixed-methods research provides a better understanding of research problems than either quantitative or qualitative methods alone.

Population of the Study

The population for the quantitative component consists of all 17,662 public secondary school students in the nineteen (19) public secondary schools in Kontagora Local Government Area. For the qualitative component, the population consists of students, teachers and parents who possess relevant information concerning parental involvement, parent-child communication, peer influence and students' academic performance.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for the quantitative component of this study consisted of 372 students drawn from the population of 17,662 public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State. The sample size was considered adequate based on the sample size determination

table developed by Research Advisors (2006) indicated that a sample size above 300 is adequate for populations exceeding 8,000 respondents at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Therefore, the sample size of 372 students was considered sufficient for the study.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select eight (8) public secondary schools from the nineteen (19) public secondary schools in Kontagora Local Government Area. The selected schools were considered suitable because they possessed the characteristics relevant to the objectives of the study and were accessible to the researcher. Thereafter, a proportionate sampling technique was employed to select students from the sampled schools based on their population sizes. This ensured that each selected school was fairly represented in the study.

The distribution of the sampled students was carried out using 4.5% of the male and female population in each selected school, resulting in a total sample of 372 students comprising 215 males and 157 females. For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select participants who possessed rich and relevant information concerning parental involvement, parent-child communication, peer group influence and students' academic performance. Consequently, ninety six (96) students, forty eighty (48) teachers and forty eight (48) parents were selected for interview, giving a total qualitative sample of one hundred and ninety two (192) participants. Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted that purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative research because it enables the researcher to select participants who can provide in-depth information relevant to the phenomenon under investigation.

Research Instruments

Three research instruments; self-structure questionnaire, achievement test and focus group discussion guide were used for data collection.

1. Self-structured Questionnaire

The questionnaire is titled: Influence of Parental Involvement, Parent Child Communication and Peer Groups on the Academic Performance (IPIP CGACQ). The questionnaire was sub-divided into four (4) sections: A demographic data of respondents and participants (age, gender, class level, ethnicity, parents' education status, and school community), section B had 1-5 questions on parental involvement, section C had 6-10 questions on parental-child communication and academic performance of students, and section D had 11-17 questions on peer group and academic performance of students'.

2. Student Achievement Tests (SAT)

Student Achievement Test (SAT) is a structured multiple-choice question (English and Mathematics) for students to measure their level of academic performance contained ten (10) structured objective questions each in Mathematics and English language.

3. Focus Group Discussion Schedule/Guide

A 10 item focus group discussion guide each was developed by the researcher to obtain qualitative information from students, parents and teachers regarding parental involvement, parent-child communication, peer group influence and academic performance. The instrument encouraged stakeholder participation with varying degree of information on the variables of this study.

Validity of the instruments

a. Validity of the quantitative instrument

The quantitative instrument used for this study was subjected to face and content validity to ensure that it adequately measured the variables under investigation. The draft questionnaire was presented to the research supervisor and other experts in the Department of Education, Faculty of Education, Abdullahi Fodio University of Science and Technology, Aliero (AFUSTA), for critical examination and evaluation. The experts assessed the clarity, relevance, appropriateness, and adequacy of the questionnaire items in relation to the research objectives, research questions, and variables of the study. Their observations and suggestions led to the modification, rewording, and elimination of some items that were considered ambiguous or irrelevant. Consequently, the initial 22-item questionnaire was reduced to 17 items, thereby improving its suitability and content coverage. The corrections and recommendations of the experts were incorporated before the final administration of the questionnaire to the respondents.

b. Validity of the qualitative instrument

The validity of the qualitative instrument was established through expert review. The interview guide was submitted to the supervisor and specialists in educational research for assessment of its relevance, comprehensiveness, and ability to generate information capable of addressing the research objectives. Their comments helped to refine the interview questions to ensure that they were clear, understandable, and capable of eliciting detailed responses from participants. Furthermore, the interview guide was subjected to repeated use during preliminary field

interactions, which provided opportunities to assess the appropriateness and consistency of the questions. The positive responses obtained during these interactions confirmed that the instrument was capable of generating rich and relevant data required for the study. This process enhanced the credibility, trustworthiness, and dependability of the qualitative data collection instrument.

Reliability of the instruments

a. Quantitative instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. The pilot study conducted among thirty (30) students from three (3) private secondary schools yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.75, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

b. Qualitative instrument

The validity of the qualitative arouse as it measured extensively the intent of the study and in accordance with the place, methods and the instruments used. The things that were observed and how these were recorded were formally worked out in advance and this enhanced reliability and validity (Danjuma, 2016).

Method of Data Collection

Data for the study were collected using a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected within the same period. The quantitative data were obtained through the administration of questionnaires and achievement tests to the sampled students, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews conducted with selected students, teachers, and parents. The data collection process was carefully planned and carried out in stages to ensure that the required information was obtained from the participants.

The data collection exercise lasted for approximately six (6) weeks. The exercise was conducted according to a planned schedule to ensure that all the selected schools and participants were covered. In the first week, the researcher visited the selected schools and communities to introduce the study, present the approval/introductory letter, obtain permission from the relevant authorities, and familiarize himself with the schools and communities.

Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive Statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. Inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses. While Qualitative data obtained from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, coded and organized into categories. Similar categories were grouped into themes and sub-themes based on recurring patterns in participants' responses. The themes were interpreted and discussed in relation to the research objectives and existing literature.

Data Analyses and Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance of public secondary school students?

Table 1: Relationship between Parental Involvement and Academic Performance of Public Secondary School Students

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD
My parent's involvement in my academics contributes to my success	96 (26.7%)	109 (30.3%)	116 (32.2%)	39 (10.8%)	2.7	1.0
My parents participate in extracurricular activities in my school	97 (26.9%)	111 (30.8%)	115 (31.9%)	37 (10.3%)	2.7	1.1
My parents provide a conducive study environment at home	108 (30.0%)	99 (27.5%)	115 (31.9%)	38 (10.6%)	2.5	0.9
My parents collaborate with my teachers to address my academic challenges	112 (31.1%)	94 (26.1%)	116 (32.2%)	38 (10.6%)	2.7	0.8
My parents attend all school event	98 (27.2%)	110 (30.6%)	115 (31.9%)	37 (10.3%)	2.8	1.0

Table above presents the result on the extent to which parental involvement in educational activities contributes to the academic performance of public secondary school students. The result shows that 57.0% (majority) of the respondents agreed that parent involvement in their academic performance contributes to their success academically. (Mean =2.7, S.D = 1.0). The result also shows that 57.7% (majority) of the respondents agreed that their parent get involved in extracurricular activities in their school. (Mean =2.7, S.D = 1.1). More so the result shows that 57.5% of the respondents agreed that their parents provide conducive study environment for

them at home. (Mean =2.5, S.D = 0.9). The result further shows that 57.2% (majority) of the respondents agreed that their parents joined their teachers to addresses their academic challenges. (Mean =2.7, S.D = 0.8). The result also shows that 57.8% (majority) of the respondents agreed that their parents attend all their school events. (Mean =2.8, S.D = 1.0).

Research Question 2: What is the Influence of parent-child communication on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State?

Table 2: Influence of Parent-child Communication on the Academic Performance of Students

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD
I discuss my school activities and progress with my parents	161 (44.7%)	108 (30.0%)	56 (15.6%)	35 (9.7%)	3.1	1.0
I feel uncomfortable telling my parents about the academic challenges I face	102 (28.3%)	35 (9.7%)	150 (41.7%)	73 (20.3%)	2.9	1.0
My parents inquire about assignment given to me in school	113 (31.4%)	164 (45.6%)	28 (7.8%)	55 (15.3%)	2.9	1.0
My parents and I collaborate on strategies to improve my study habits	112 (31.1%)	160 (44.4%)	33 (9.2%)	55 (15.3%)	2.9	1.0
My parents provide guidance in making decisions about my academics and extracurricular activities	108 (30.0%)	164 (45.6%)	35 (9.7%)	53 (14.7%)	2.9	1.0

Table 2, presents the result on the impact of parent-child communication on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State. The result shows that 74.7% (majority) of the respondents agreed that they discuss their school activities and progress with their parents. (Mean =3.1, S.D = 1.0). The result further shows that 62.0% (majority) of the respondents disagreed that they feel uncomfortable to tell their academic challenges to the parents. (Mean =2.9, S.D = 1.0). More so, the result shows that 77.0% (majority) of the respondents agreed that their parents always inquire about assignment given to them in school. (Mean =2.9, S.D = 1.0). The result also shows that 75.5% (majority) of the respondents agreed that collaboration with their parents on strategies to improve their study habits. (Mean =2.9, S.D = 1.0). The result also shows that 75.6% (majority) of the respondents

agreed that their parents provide guidance in making decision about their academic and extracurricular activities. (Mean =2.9, S.D = 1.0).

What is the influence of peer group on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria?

Research Question 3: What is the influence of peer group on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Influence of Peer Group on the Academic Performance of Public Secondary School Students

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD
I often engage in academic discussion with my peers outside of school	95 (26.4%)	104 (28.9%)	114 (31.7%)	47 (13.1%)	2.7	1.0
My peers influence my attitude towards attending classes and completing assignments	101 (28.1%)	106 (29.4%)	105 (29.2%)	48 (13.3%)	2.7	1.0
My peers support me during times of academic challenges or stress	87 (24.2%)	110 (30.6%)	115 (31.9%)	48 (13.3%)	2.7	1.0
I feel motivated to excel academically due to the achievement of my peers	141 (39.2%)	130 (36.1%)	17 (4.7%)	72 (20.0%)	2.9	1.1
I collaborate with my peers on group projects or study sessions	88 (24.4%)	111 (30.8%)	114 (31.7%)	47 (13.1%)	2.7	1.0
My academic performance is linked to my peer relationships	96 (26.7%)	108 (30.0%)	109 (30.3%)	47 (13.1%)	2.7	1.0
I feel connected to my peers based on shared academic interests	96 (26.7%)	105 (29.2%)	111 (30.8%)	48 (13.3%)	2.7	1.0

Table 3, presents the result on the influence of peer group on students' academic performance in the study area. The result shows that majority (54.3%) of the respondents agreed that their engagement on academic discussion with their friend outside the school improve their academic performance (Mean =2.7, S.D = 1.0) in addition 57.5% (majority) of the participants agreed that their friends influence their attendant in class which in-turn affects their academic performance positively (Mean =2.7, S.D = 1.0), similarly the result revealed that 54.8% (majority) of the

respondents opined that they received help from their friends when they have any challenges academically. (Mean =2.7, S.D = 1.0). Moreover, the result shows that higher percentage 75.3% of the respondents agreed that they feel motivated to excel academically due to the academic achievement of my peers (Mean =2.7, S.D = 1.0), in addition 55.3% of the students collaborates with their friends on study session. (Mean =2.7, S.D = 1.0). Also 56.7% of the participants agreed that their academic performance is linked to their peer relationships. (Mean =2.7, S.D = 1.0). Likewise, 55.9% (majority) of the respondents agreed that they feel connected to their peers based on shared academic interests (Mean =2.7, S.D = 1.0).

Hypotheses Testing

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State.

Table 4: Relationship between Parental Involvement and Academic Performance Public

Secondary School Students						
Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	R	P	Remark
Parental Involvement	360	13.691	4.447	-0.237	0.000	Significant
Academic performance	360	10.827	3.091			

Table 4, shows the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger state. The result shows strong negative, but significant relationship between parental involvement and academic performance ($r=-0.237$, p $0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected. In essence the findings reveal that parental involvement has a significant relationship with academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State.

H0₂: Parental-child communications have no significant influence on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State?

Table 5: Relationship between Parent-child Communication and Academic Performance of Public Secondary School Students

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	R	P	Remark
Parent-child Communication	360	19.069	6.437	-0.124	0.019	Significant
Academic performance	360	10.827	3.091			

Table 5, shows the influence of Parent-child Communication on academic performance of secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger state. The result shows a negative but significant relationship between Parent-child Communication and academic performance of secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger state ($r = -0.124$; $p = 0.019 < 0.05$). Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected. In essence the result reveals that Parent-child Communication has significant relationship with performance of secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State.

H₀₃: Peer group have no significant influence on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State.

Table 6: Relationship between Peer Group and Academic Performance of Public Secondary School Students

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	R	P	Remark
Peer group	360	14.789	3.475	-0.184	0.000	Significant
Academic performance	360	10.828	3.091			

Table 6, shows the influence of peer group and students' academic performance. The result shows a negative and significant influence of peer group on students' academic performance ($r = -0.184$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected. In essence the results indicate that peer group has a significant influence on students' academic performance in public secondary school in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data is presented and analysed based on the research questions under themes and sub themes which include for research question one; monitoring of students activities, assistance

with academic activities, provision of learning materials, supervision of homework and assignments, attendance at school programmes and meetings, financial support for education. Others are communication between parents and teachers, educational expectations of parents and challenges affecting parental involvement. From research question two, such themes as discussed educational matters with your child respond when your child performs well or poorly academically discuss future educational and career goals with your child communication challenges exist between parents and children while on research question three, the following themes are raised monitor the friends your child associates with positive or negative effects of peer relationships have you observed parents encourage positive friendships among students influence students' school attendance and behavior schools and parents work together to promote positive peer influence

Research Question One: What is the influence of parental involvement on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State?

Theme 1: Monitoring of Students' Academic Activities

During the focus group discussions, participants expressed different views regarding the extent to which parents monitor their children's academic activities and how such monitoring influences academic performance. The majority of participants believed that parental monitoring plays an important role in helping students remain focused on their studies. Out of the ninety-six (96) students who participated in the discussions, eighty-two (82) stated that their parents regularly monitored their academic activities by checking their assignments, asking about their classroom activities, inspecting their report cards and ensuring that they attended school regularly. Similarly, forty-three (43) out of the forty-eight (48) teachers and forty-five (45) out of the forty-eight (48) parents shared the opinion that parental monitoring positively influences students' academic performance.

Many students explained that knowing their parents would ask questions about their school activities encouraged them to take their studies more seriously. Some participants noted that students whose parents consistently follow up on their academic progress are less likely to engage in truancy, absenteeism and other behaviours that may affect learning.

One student explained:

One of the students explained that parents showed interest in their academic activities after school. A 15-year-old male student in SSS II at GSS Masuga stated:

Whenever I return from school, my parents ask me what I learnt in class and whether I have any assignment to do.

A teacher remarked:

A 35 years Male Teacher, with 10 years of teaching experience, from GSS Masuga, Masuga Community:

Most students who perform well academically usually have parents who monitor their school activities and progress.

A 42-year-old female parent, a trader from Masuga Community, stated:

If parents fail to monitor their children, they may not know when the children are facing academic difficulties.

However, not all participants agreed with this position. Fourteen (14) students, five (5) teachers, and three (3) parents argued that monitoring alone may not automatically lead to good academic performance. According to them, some students receive adequate supervision from their parents but still perform poorly due to lack of personal interest in learning, poor study habits, or negative peer influence.

Based on the discussions, it appears that parental monitoring contributes significantly to students' academic performance by promoting discipline, accountability and commitment to learning. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Kulloma and Kolo (2023), who reported that parental monitoring has a positive influence on students' academic achievement. The finding also agrees with John and Aliyu (2024), who found that students whose parents regularly monitor their educational activities tend to perform better academically than those who receive little parental supervision.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of parent-child communication on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State?

The discussions on parent-child communication revealed that communication between parents and children plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward education and their

overall academic performance. Responses obtained from students, teachers, and parents were organized into ten themes based on the focus group discussion guide.

Theme 1: Frequency of Communication between Parents and Children

One of the issues that featured prominently during the discussions was how often parents communicate with their children concerning educational matters. Most participants agreed that regular communication creates opportunities for parents to guide, advise, and monitor their children's academic activities.

Out of the ninety-six (96) students who participated in the discussions, eighty-four (84) stated that their parents communicate with them regularly about school-related issues. Similarly, forty-five (45) out of the forty-eight (48) teachers and forty-three (43) out of the forty-eight (48) parents shared the opinion that regular communication positively influences students' academic performance.

During the discussions, several students explained that their parents frequently ask questions about classroom activities, assignments, tests, and examinations. According to them, these discussions help them remain focused on their educational goals.

One 16 years old male SS II student from Government Day Secondary School Ungwan Nasarawa stated:

My parents ask me every day about what happened in school and whether I have assignments to complete.

Another 15 years old female SS I student from Government Secondary School Masuga remarked:

Whenever I have problems in school, I discuss them with my parents.

Teachers also observed that students who maintain healthy communication with their parents often demonstrate better academic attitudes and greater emotional stability.

One 41 years old female teacher, with 11 years old experiences of UBE Model School, Kontagora explained:

Students who communicate freely with their parents usually have fewer behavioural and academic problems.

Parents also emphasized the importance of maintaining regular conversations with their children.

48 years old male parent, famer from Kontagora stated:

Communication allows us to understand the challenges our children are facing in school.

However, twelve (12) students, three (3) teachers, and five (5) parents indicated that communication in some homes is often limited due to work schedules, family responsibilities, and poor parent-child relationships.

From the discussions, it was evident that regular communication between parents and children contributes positively to academic performance by providing emotional support, guidance, and opportunities for problem-solving. This finding agrees with Nwosu and Eze (2022), who found that effective parent-child communication enhances students' academic engagement and performance. Similarly, Adamu and Garba (2024) reported that students who communicate frequently with their parents tend to demonstrate better educational outcomes.

Theme 1: Influence of Friends on Academic Attitude

The discussions revealed that peer groups play an important role in shaping the academic attitudes of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area. Participants explained that the friends students associate with can influence how they perceive school, learning, assignments, class attendance, reading habits and general academic activities. The influence of friends was, however, not entirely positive, as some participants noted that students could also adopt negative academic behaviours from peers who are unserious about their studies. Out of the ninety-six (96) students who participated in the discussions, eighty-two (82) indicated that their friends have a significant influence on their attitude towards academic activities. They explained that when friends take their studies seriously, they are often encouraged to become more serious, while friends who show little interest in schooling may negatively influence their academic behaviour. This suggests that students' attitudes towards learning can be shaped through interaction, observation, encouragement and the desire to belong to a particular peer group.

A 15-year-old female SS II student from Government Science Secondary School, Kontagora, in Kontagora Central Ward, explained:

When my friends are serious about their studies, I also become serious because we study together.

Her response shows that positive peer relationships can create an environment where students

encourage one another to develop better academic habits. Studying together can provide opportunities for students to discuss difficult topics, exchange ideas and remind one another about assignments and examinations.

Similarly, a 16-year-old male SS III student from Government Day Secondary School Tundun Wada, Tundun Wada Community, Kontagora LGA, stated:

Good friends encourage one another to attend classes and complete assignments.

This response further demonstrates that peer influence may extend beyond academic discussion to students' daily school behaviour. When members of a peer group value regular attendance and completion of schoolwork, other members may feel encouraged to behave in a similar manner. The desire to remain accepted within the group may therefore motivate students to participate more actively in academic activities.

Another 14-year-old female SS I student from Government Day Secondary School Ungwan Nasarawa, Ungwan Nasarawa Community, Kontagora LGA, explained that the attitude of friends could determine whether a student becomes more interested or less interested in schoolwork. According to her, students who frequently associate with classmates who enjoy learning may gradually develop similar interests, while students who spend most of their time with friends who avoid schoolwork may also become less committed to their studies.

The views of the teachers also supported the students' responses. Out of the forty-eight (48) teachers who participated in the discussions, forty-five (45) agreed that peer relationships influence students' academic attitudes. The teachers explained that students spend considerable time interacting with their peers and may therefore imitate the behaviours, attitudes and study habits of their friends.

A 48-year-old male teacher with 18 years of teaching experience at Government Technical College, Kontagora, stated:

A student's academic attitude can improve or decline depending on the type of friends he or she keeps.

This view suggests that peer influence can operate through imitation. Students may observe the behaviour of their friends and gradually adopt similar patterns. For example, a student who begins associating with friends who regularly read, ask questions in class and complete assignments may become more academically responsible. Conversely, a student who frequently

associates with peers who avoid lessons, disregard assignments or show little concern for academic achievement may gradually develop similar attitudes.

A 44-year-old female teacher with 13 years of teaching experience at UBE Model School, Kontagora, further explained that teachers sometimes notice changes in students' classroom behaviour after they begin associating with particular groups of friends. She observed that some students who were previously active in class may become less attentive when they begin keeping company with academically unserious peers. On the other hand, students who join groups of serious learners may become more active and committed to their studies.

Similarly, a 52-year-old male teacher with 24 years of teaching experience at Government Secondary School Masuga, Kontagora, noted that peer groups create informal expectations among students. According to him, students sometimes adjust their behaviour to fit into the expectations of their friends. Where academic achievement is valued within the group, students may compete positively and encourage one another to perform better. However, where academic work is regarded as unimportant, students may discourage one another from taking school activities seriously.

The parents who participated in the discussions also recognized the influence of peer groups on students' academic attitudes. Out of the forty-eight (48) parents, forty-four (44) agreed that the friends their children keep can affect their approach to education. Parents emphasized that children spend a considerable amount of time with their friends, particularly during school hours and after-school activities. They therefore believed that parents should pay attention to the type of friends their children associate with.

A 43-year-old female trader from Masuga Community, Kontagora LGA, stated:

The friends a child keeps can affect the way the child behaves and takes school activities seriously.

Her statement indicates that peer influence is not restricted to the school environment. Students may discuss schoolwork, examination results, assignments and future educational goals with their friends outside school. Consequently, the attitudes developed within a peer group may continue to affect the student's academic behaviour at home.

A 50-year-old male civil servant from Rafin Gora Community, Kontagora LGA, explained that parents sometimes notice changes in their children's behaviour after they begin associating with

new friends. According to him, a child who previously devoted sufficient time to studying may begin spending more time on social activities when influenced by peers who do not prioritize academic work. He therefore emphasized the importance of parental supervision and communication concerning the friends children keep.

Likewise, a 38-year-old female farmer from Ungwan Tukura Community, Kontagora LGA, noted that positive friendships can also benefit students academically. She explained that some children encourage one another to read, attend school regularly and prepare for examinations. This suggests that parents do not necessarily view peer relationships as harmful. Rather, the academic effect depends largely on the characteristics and values of the peer group. However, not all participants believed that friends have a strong influence on students' academic attitudes. Fourteen (14) students, three (3) teachers and four (4) parents expressed contrary views. These participants argued that although friends may influence students to some extent, individual determination, parental guidance and personal goals may be more important in determining academic behaviour.

A 17-year-old male SS III student from Junior Secondary School Rafin Gora, Rafin Gora Community, Kontagora LGA, explained that a student who is determined to succeed academically may continue to study seriously even when some friends are not academically committed. According to him, personal ambition and the desire to achieve a good educational future can enable students to resist negative peer pressure.

Similarly, a 46-year-old female teacher with 15 years of teaching experience at Government Day Secondary School Ungwan Tukura, Kontagora, observed that students respond differently to peer pressure. She explained that some students are easily influenced by their friends, whereas others are able to maintain their academic priorities regardless of the behaviour of their peers. This indicates that peer influence may not affect every student in the same way.

The four parents who expressed contrary views also emphasized parental upbringing and individual discipline. They argued that children who have been properly guided at home may be able to distinguish between positive and negative peer behaviours. This suggests that parental supervision can serve as a protective factor against negative peer influence.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the study revealed that parental involvement has a significant influence on students' academic performance. This finding indicates that the extent to which parents participate in their children's education can make an important difference in students' learning outcomes. In the Nigerian educational context, parental involvement goes beyond the provision of school fees, uniforms, textbooks and other educational materials. It also includes monitoring students' attendance, supervising schoolwork, encouraging regular study, discussing academic progress with children, communicating with teachers, providing emotional support and creating a conducive environment for learning at home.

The present finding is strongly supported by the Nigerian study of Adetutu and Adebayo (2021), which revealed a significant influence of parent-child communication on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District. Although their study focused specifically on communication, its finding is relevant to parental involvement because communication is one of the major ways through which parents participate in their children's education.

The result of the study revealed that parent-child communication has a positive effect on students' academic performance. This finding indicates that the way parents communicate with their children can influence how students approach their academic responsibilities and ultimately affect their performance in school. In the Nigerian family setting, communication between parents and children provides an important avenue through which parents understand their children's educational needs, monitor their progress and provide encouragement when they experience academic difficulties. When students are able to discuss their school experiences

freely with their parents, they are more likely to receive appropriate guidance and support that can enhance their commitment to learning.

The finding is in agreement with the Nigerian study of Adetutu and Adebayo (2021), which revealed a significant influence of parent-child communication on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District. The finding of the present study therefore confirms that communication between parents and children is not only a family matter but also an important educational factor within the Nigerian secondary school system.

The findings therefore indicate that peer influence on academic attitude is neither completely positive nor completely negative. Rather, its effect depends on the characteristics of the peer group and the student's ability to respond to peer pressure. Positive peer groups can encourage regular school attendance, collaborative learning, completion of assignments, academic competition and better study habits. Negative peer groups, on the other hand, can encourage truancy, poor study habits, lack of interest in schoolwork and other behaviours that may reduce academic commitment.

The findings are consistent with Afolabi and Ojo (2024), who reported that students' peer relationships can significantly influence their attitudes towards learning and school-related activities. The authors observed that students are likely to adopt behaviours that are common within their peer groups, particularly when they strongly identify with those groups. Similarly, Musa and Abdullahi (2023) found that positive peer relationships can promote academic motivation and cooperation among secondary school students, while negative peer associations may contribute to poor academic attitudes and reduced commitment to schoolwork.s

Summary of Major Findings

The following is the summary of findings drawn from this study

- i. The factors that have been found to influence academic performance are Parental involvement and parent-child communication
- ii. There is a significant relationship between parental involvement and academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area
- iii. Parent-child communication has a significant influence on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area.

- iv. Peer group has a significant influence in academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area.

The strategies that could be used to overcome the negative influences are Parents constant involvement in their children/wards education Good level of parent-child communication and Keeping positive/good peer group

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that parental involvement, parent-child communication, and peer group relationships are significant factors associated with the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State. The quantitative findings revealed that a significant relationship exists between parental involvement and academic performance ($r = -0.237$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), indicating that variations in parental involvement are significantly associated with students' academic outcomes. Similarly, parent-child communication was found to have a statistically significant relationship with academic performance ($r = -0.124$, $p = 0.019 < 0.05$), suggesting that the quality and frequency of communication between parents and their children play an important role in shaping students' academic experiences and achievements.

The study further established that peer group influence significantly relates to students' academic performance ($r = -0.184$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This implies that the nature of peer associations can either promote or hinder students' academic engagement and achievement. Descriptive findings also showed that a majority of the respondents acknowledged the importance of parental involvement, effective parent-child communication, and positive peer interactions in enhancing academic performance. Specifically, between 57.0% and 57.8% of respondents agreed that parental involvement contributes positively to their academic activities, while over 74% reported regular communication with their parents regarding school-related matters. Furthermore, more

than 55% of the respondents indicated that peer relationships influence their academic attitudes, study habits, and motivation to excel.

The qualitative findings corroborated the quantitative results by revealing that parents who monitor academic activities, communicate regularly with their children, provide learning support, and maintain contact with teachers contribute positively to students' educational development. The findings also showed that positive peer groups encourage class attendance, assignment completion, collaborative learning, and academic motivation. Therefore, the study concludes that improving parental involvement, strengthening parent-child communication, and promoting positive peer relationships are essential strategies for enhancing the academic performance of public secondary school students in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State.

Recommendations

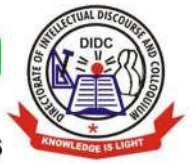
Based on the findings, this study recommends the following:

- i. Parents should continue to be involved in their children/wards education, because it helps to improve their academic performance.
- ii. Parents should ensure a good level of parent-child communication in order to enhance students' academic performance.
- iii. Parents, school management, teachers and entire community should ensure that their wards/children are having positive/good peer group which can positively improve their academic performance. Similarly, all stakeholders should help students to be aware and realize the influence of peer groups on their academic performance.

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