Journal of Education and Practice
ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X (Online)
Vol.7, No.21, 2016

Parental Monitoring and Child Performance in Ghana

Kwadwo Gyamfi Michael Asamani Pobbi*
Accra Institute of Technology (AIT), Accra, Ghana

Abstract
The role of parents in the guiding and monitoring of child activities is critical towards the development of the child. In Ghana reforms taken, especially at the basic school level, have focused on improving school infrastructure and enrolment ignoring parents awareness to actively involve themselves both at home and in school activities which the researcher believe is critical toward the attainment of the much needed improvement in performance of students. The research will explore the practice of parental monitoring activities in Ghanaian homes which are needed to improve child performances at school. Specifically the study will explore the practice of parental monitoring in the Junior high school and to determine the relevant aspects of parental monitoring necessary to improve a child academic performance. A sequential explanatory mixed design strategy was adapted for the study. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire from parents of 810 selected basic school students across five regions in Ghana. Sampling of respondents in this study employed the use of multi-stage sampling techniques involving; a purposeful sampling of Five (5) Regions including: Ashanti, Greater Accra, Central, Northern, and Eastern, followed by simple random selection of 10 pupils per each grade in starting from Grade 1 to 6 in each of the selected randomly three selected schools in each Region. Data obtained during survey were entered into a SPSS statistical software subsequently analysed using both descriptive and inferential methods. Parental monitoring was measured using seven monitoring activities including: Setting Tv time for child, limiting playing time, monitoring homework, Selecting TV programme for child, Setting time for children to come back from school, setting study time for children and selecting subjects for children The Factor analysis technique was conducted on the measurement items of the parental monitoring construct. The study found that parent involvement in all monitoring activities of their children toward academic work was low. The study also establish six major aspects of parental monitoring which parents need to actively engage in for the realization of improved performance.

1. Introduction

Over the past five decades, Ghana has undertaken major decisions and changes in her educational system in order to improve on the standards of education. These reforms have gone along with huge financial outlays and investments into education. For example, Thompson & Casely-Hayford, (2008) stated that, US$1 billion was spent on the Ghanaian education sector in 2006. It is on record that these reforms and investments have although have improved enrolments at the basic level have somewhat failed to translate into the much expected performances of these student. Ankomah, Y. et al, (2005) iterated that despite all these huge financial interventions, and expenditures, the quality of basic education leaves much to be desired.

It is evident from the discussions points to the fact that the most influential concern of the basic school education is yet been addressed in the Ghanaian basic institution. Several study elsewhere have suggested that impact of parental involvement in their child's education is very significant in improving child performances and hence could be critical in addressing this gap between policy and expected performance of students at the basic level of education.

Parental involvement in a child's education is known to have substantial contribution towards a number of positive outcomes of the child. Such outcomes include high expectations of children, improved academic performance, and good behaviour. Epstein (1992) posited better school attendance, lower rates of suspension, decreased use of drugs and alcohol and fewer instances of violent behaviour are the results of parental involvement in their children's education. Despite such laudable benefit amassing from parent-school collaboration, it is yet to be established through an empirical study how the various aspects of parenting or family processes influence pupil achievement in the search for quality basic education in Ghana.

One key aspect of Parental involvement is the Parents ability to monitor child activities such as their time and choice of programmes on television, regulate playing time after school, supervise child to do homework. These factors are believed to influence the child's studies after school. Cho & Han (2004) also explained that a parent monitoring activities include the following; the ability of parents to regulate the child exposure to media content especially to television and computer games, set time for child to study and complete their homework after school hours, to regulate the time children spend playing after school , ability of the parents to guide the academic progress by helping student to select subjects , and lastly the ability of parent to monitor the return of their children from school.

It is for a fact when children spend so much time on activities such as playing computer games, watching Tv and do not study at home that the negative effects of such activities outweigh the positives and to

such effect Parents are supposed to take it upon themselves to monitor the activities of children. Studies from Ghana sadly, have shown that most parents do not show interest in their children's school (Casely-Hayford, 2000; Minor, 2006; Pryor & Ampiah 2003, 2003b). These parents due to the quest to make up for their family spend most of their day outside the homes and hence have little input in the monitoring of their children.

2. Statement of the Problem

Over the past five decades, Ghana has undertaken major decisions and changes in her educational system in order to improve on the standards of education. These reforms have gone along with huge financial outlays and investments into education. For example, Thompson & Casely-Hayford, (2008) stated that, US$1 billion was spent on the Ghanaian education sector in 2006. It is on record that these reforms and investments have somewhat failed to address the fundamental issues which affect child education. Ankomah, Y. et al, (2005) iterated that despite all these huge financial interventions, and expenditures, the quality of basic education leaves much to be desired. The situation is not only alarming but dangerous to the economic and social development of any country including Ghana.

The seeming low quality education at the basic level calls for research into new approaches to encourage parents to show active involvement in children's education towards the realization of quality basic education for all. Many studies, educators elsewhere like Desforges, (2003), Marchant et. Al. (2001) and DeGarmoetal (1999, p.1233) have underlined the tremendous impact that parental involvement have on the academic performance of students in school and without doubt a look at reforms targeted at parent involvement will be critical to addressing the gap in education.

The seeming low quality education at the basic level calls for research into new approaches to encourage parents to show active involvement in children's education towards the realization of quality basic education for all. The current research hence seeks to ascertain the effects of family processes on pupil academic achievement in Ghana.

The questions that guide this paper therefore include; how involved are parents toward the education of their children? Which parental monitoring activities should parents pay more attention to in order to achieve improved performances of their wards at school?

3. Research Objective

The General Objective of the research is to contribute to the general body of knowledge and research work in the area of parental involvement. More specifically, the paper seeks to;

- Explore the practice of parental monitoring in the Junior high school.
- Determine the relevant aspects of parental monitoring necessary to a child academic performance.

4. Review of Relevant Literature

The family is the primary social environment that influences the behaviour of children and adolescents. Desforges, (2003) in his study stated that what happens at home has been identified as a very significant factor for promoting pupil/student achievement. Several researchers elsewhere have reiterated the relevance of parental involvement in the development of children at an early age. Such studies have equated parent involvement with several outcomes including educational achievement and cognitive development (Sylva et al, 2004). The presence of parental guidance, rules and high educational targets are relevant towards steering a child toward such positive outcomes.

In Ghana, the few studies conducted so far have mentioned the lack of interest of parents in the education of their children. In a study conducted in Ashanti Region, Pryor and Ampah (2003a; 2003b) posited that most parents were apathetic to the schooling of their children. Parents lacked interest in education and as such did not bother to get involved in the learning activities of their children. This assertion has confirmed the phenomenon observed by Baker and Stevenson (1986) and Lareau (1987) that less educated parents are not willing or able to become involved in their children's education. Nyarko (2007) further reiterates that the standard of education in Ghana has assumed a downtrend in recent times. The study reports that in Ghana, not much parental involvement is encountered at the school level as many parents do not attend Parent-Teacher meetings.

Epstein's (2002) conceptualized parental involvement to include six types of involvement, including: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, collaborating with the community. The researcher explained parenting makes reference to parents' actions and activities that ensure children's learning and cognitive development, from good nutrition to health. Communicating covers all academically relevant information regarding children's academic development from home to school. Volunteering comprises parental attendance to school programmes and events ranging from classroom activities to school governance. Learning at home specifically involves school work, thus, helping with homework, encouraging hard-work in school and emotionally supporting the child in his/her academic challenges. Decision-making refers parents'

advocacy for their children's interest and how they influence the school environment. Community looks at how parents and community apply community resources to support children's learning. The study however failed to identify the aspects of parental monitoring and how these aspects can influence the performance of their children in school.

Kohl et al., (2000) in their study also emphasized the need for a multidimensional conceptualization of parent involvement that accounts for the distinction between parent- and school-initiated parent involvement and relies on ratings by multiple reporters (Kohl et al., 2000; Ho Sui-Chu, 1997). Kohl et al. in particular believe that making this distinction may help explain some of the contradictory research findings that have associated parent involvement with both positive and negative outcomes. Further, a 1994 study by Kohl and colleagues (as cited in Kohl et al.) pointed to the quality of the parent-child relationship as being more strongly associated with child outcomes than the amount of parent contact

In another study on parent-initiated involvement in Eccles & Harold, (1996) also emphasized the multidimensional of PI, They outlined five dimensions including: monitoring, volunteering at school, involvement in activities related to homework, contacting the school about their children's progress; and contacting the school to find out how to give extra help. According to Kohl et al. (2000), the dimensions *monitoring* and *involvement* appear to be two behaviors related to directly helping the child with homework and hence may be better conceptualized as one construct. The last two dimensions both involve contacting the school; in addition, these two were each measured by only one item and, therefore, the reliability of these dimensions cannot be determined.

Research elsewhere have shown that children after school spend much time on activities which are known to have devastating effects on their development and especially their performances in school. Susan R. Johnson, (1999) posited that children age two through eighteen spend more time watching TV than any other activity. Helsper EJ (2013); Tyrlík M, Sýkorová Z (2011) also added that the prevalence of extensive time spent on screen-based activities, such as playing games, is increasing in Slovak as well as in Czech children. Such activities tend to affect study time of children and adolescent and eventually their performances in class.

A parent monitoring activities are according to Cho & Han (2004) include the following the ability of parents to regulate the child exposure to media content especially to television and computer games, set time for child to study and complete their homework after school hours, to regulate the time children spend playing after school , ability of the parents to guide the academic progress by helping student to select subjects, and finally the ability of parent to monitor the return of their children from school.

5. Research Methods and Design

A sequential exploratory mixed design strategy as described by Creswell, (2005) was adapted for the study. Primary data was collected using semi-structured interviews and questionnaire from 810 parents selected across five regions in Ghana. Sampling of respondents in this study employed the use of multi-stage sampling techniques involving; a purposeful sampling of Five (5) Regions including: Ashanti, Greater Accra, Central, Northern, and Eastern, followed by simple random selection of 10 pupils per each grade in starting from Grade 1 to 6 in each of the selected randomly three selected schools in each Region. Only 800 questionnaires were returned during the survey. Data obtained during survey were entered into a SPSS 21 and data was screen for missing responses, normality and subsequently analysed using both descriptive and inferential methods. The factor analysis technique was the main inferential analysis tool employed in the study.

6. Findings and Discussions

The section presents the major findings and discussions garnered from primary data obtained during the study. Discussion will be presented thematically with regards to the various dimensions of parental monitoring.

Summaries presented in table 1 generally reveal that more parents did not monitor their children compared to parents who often monitored and those who do not often monitor. A critical analysis of summaries across table reveal the highest and lowest percentages of responses belonging to the variable *select subjects for child.* This was evident in estimated percentages of 56.40% in favour of "not at all" and 21.1% in favour of often.

Table 1: Distributions of responses on various monitoring activities toward child education

		not at all	not often	Often
Set Tv time for child	Count	325	277	264
	Row N %	37.50%	32.00%	30.50%
Limit playing time	Count	361	231	260
	Row N %	42.40%	27.10%	30.50%
Monitors homework	Count	290	270	299
	Row N %	33.80%	31.40%	34.80%
Select TV programme for child	Count	308	192	362
	Row N %	35.70%	22.30%	42.00%
Set time for children to return from school	Count	296	213	355
	Row N %	34.26 %	24.65%	41.09%
Set study time for children	Count	344	214	298
	Row N %	40.20%	25.00%	34.80%
Select subjects for children	Count	483	193	181
	Row N %	56.40%	22.5%	21.1%
TOTAL		40.01	26.43	33.56

Source: Survey

The finding generally suggest that most parents are not involved in the selection of subjects for their children. Results from analysis of responses to a follow up question on why parents did not give attention to the selection of subjects show that parent believed courses selected by the school for their children were good enough for them.

In analysis of the distribution of individual aspects of parenting reveals that more parents did not monitor the following: *Limit playing time* (42.40%), *Set study time for children* (40.20%), *Set Tv time for child* (37.50%). The more disturbing situation is the fact that among those who did monitor children more than 40% did not monitor these variables often. Further analysis of open ended responses to understand the observed distributions revealed a common underlying reason; that these parent were usually not back from work when children return from school (Appendix)

Some responses from some participants on programs and limit tv for kids are as follows;

Mother Accra:

"This is a big problem because most times I am not at home. But I make sure if there is any programme on the television that is above his age I switch it off or he goes to his room to read when I am around".

Mother Kumasi :

"This is a major problem for me. The child like watching TV too much and I have contemplated taking the TV from the hall but I am afraid she would go and watch elsewhere and that might bring trouble".

Similarly a father in Kumasi remarked

"I don't have much to say there because I am not usually here because of my work. But when I am around I keep an eye on them, by 9pm they should all be asleep, but there could be a lapse when I am not around".

Some reasons given by parents on why they did not set study times are outlined below:

In the words of one mother in Tamale,

"No, I don't set specific times because I am not around to supervise him. However when I am around I make sure he study".

Another mother responded.

"I am not aware, so I do not set time for studies after school".

A father in Kumasi remarked,

"No I have never decided what time he should learn. He decided when he wants to study".

Another mother in Accra commented,

"No, I don't do that for her because she's good at schoolwork".

The responses suggest that apart from the fact that parents spent much time at work illiteracy and negligence on the path of parents also contribute toward low levels of involvement in children's education.

These findings are supported by Haas, (1992), Milkie & Peltola, (1999) who stated that workplace barriers such as longer work hours are ranked by fathers as the most important reason for low levels of paternal involvement. Not only do children of these parent suffer academically but these children are also more likely to have social and emotional difficulties (Strazdins, Clements, Korda, Broom, & D'Souza, 2006).

Analysis of distribution reveals however that parent seem to pay more attention to *Select TV programme for child, Set time for children to come back from school* and *Monitors homework*,. This was evident in estimated percentages of 42.0%, 41.1% and 34.8% respectively for the response "often". A follow up question was asked from parent who monitored child homework to find out involved how parent are in their children

homework and studies. Responses suggest that these parent do not only encourage their wards to study but are actively monitor the progress of their child's performance (appendix).

One mother in Accra recount her experiences:

> *Whenever he comes back from school I make sure I look through his books to know the assignments he has been given, the grades he gets and how he answers his questions. This gives me an idea as to how well he is doing well in school.*

The next research objective of the current study involves identifying the relevant are aspects of parental monitoring needed for an improved child performance in school. Participants rated their agreement on how the seven parent monitoring items contribute to child academic performance. A factor analysis approach is adapted to test further the relevance of measured items of the model by testing the formulated hypothesis: Ha1: all measurement items of the study are relevant manifest variables of parental discussion in Ghana.

An explorative test toward the factor Analysis was conducted using correlation analysis. The correlation matrix with the probability values estimated using SPSS 21 are presented in appendix. It is observed from the output of correlation analysis that significant relationships exist among rating of all measurement items (manifest variables) used in measuring the Parental Monitoring Construct. Also the Matrix reveals that there are no evidence of multi-co-linearity between two variables. These result imply a substantial amount of relationship exist among variable hence suggest that they could be explaining a common underlying construct.

Table 3:KMO and Bartlett's Test of sampling adequacy

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.880
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2.759E3
	Df	21
	Sig.	.000

Source: Author

Table 3 shows the KMO test of sampling adequacy associated with the Monitoring construct. This test is used to verify the validity of the Factor Analysis (FA) used to screen for measured items of the construct. As a rule of thumb, the FA is valid when the associated value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is above .70 (Friel C. M., 2016). The estimated statistic of 0.880 indicate that the degree of common variance among the eleven variables is "Meritorious" and that when a factor analysis is conducted, the factors extracted will account for substantial amount of variance.

The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is also conducted to test if the non-zero correlations estimated in the sample matrix are due to sampling error. The test is conducted to test the formulated null hypothesis; Ho: The intercorrelation matrix comes from a population in which the variables are noncollinear. Result from analysis reveal that the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at 5% significance level (Chi-Square =275.9, p = .000). We therefore have sufficient evident to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the sample intercorrelation matrix did not come from a population in which the intercorrelation matrix is an identity matrix. The result from the KMO test and the Bartlett test therefore suggest that the FA being used is valid and factorable.

Subsequently factor analysis was conducted on the construct to confirm measurement validity. The Results of the Initial Solution of extracted eigenvalues using principal component analysis are presented in table 4.

Table 4:Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.900	55.719	55.719	3.900	55.719	55.719
2	.929	13.272	68.991			
3	.641	9.155	78.146			
4	.530	7.571	85.718			
5	.404	5.768	91.485			
6	.349	4.986	96.471			
7	.247	3.529	100.000			

Source: Author

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

From table 4 it can be observed that the 1st factor has an eigenvalue = 3.0. A result which imply that the single factor explains about 3.9 more variance than a single variable. This result also represents 55.719% (3.9*100/7

units of variance) of variance explained by the single factor. Factors 2 through 7 however have eigenvalues less than 1, and hence explain less variance that a single variable. The result is reflective of the KMO of 0.886, an admirable percentage of variance and further confirms that, one factor are adequate to explain the variation in the data used.

The table of communalities are also presented in table 5. The values in the Extraction column indicate that the proportion of each variable's variance can be explained by the principal components. Variables with high values are well represented in the common factor space, while variables with low values are not well represented. Higher communalities are desirable and rule communalities should exceed 0.50. If the communality for a variable is less than 50%, it is a candidate for exclusion from the analysis because the factor solution contains less than half of the variance in the original variable, and the explanatory power of that variable might be better represented by the individual variable (Hair et al., 2006).

Table 5: Communalities of items for Parental Monitoring Construct

	Initial	Extraction
Set Tv time for child	1.000	.733
Limit playing time	1.000	.629
Monitors homework	1.000	.526
Select TV programme for child	1.000	.650
Set time for children to come back from school	1.000	.538
Set study time for children	1.000	.713
Select subjects for children	1.000	.110

Source: Author

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

From table 5 the extracted communality of 0.733 implies that 73.3% of the variance in the original 'set TV time' variable is explained by the underlying factor cost. Similarly all remaining manifest variables, with the exception of ‘select subjects’ recorded high communalities hence suggesting that all items can be explained by the underlying construct are identified as relevant cost items. The variable ‘select subjects for children’ did not meet the criteria hence is deleted and analysis redone.

Subsequently factor analysis was conducted on the construct to confirm measurement validity. The total variation explained by the principal/underlying factor is presented in table 6.

Table 6:Total Variance Explained by measurement items

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.816	63.600	63.600	3.816	63.600	63.600
2	.651	10.845	74.445			
3	.530	8.834	83.279			
4	.405	6.753	90.032			
5	.351	5.846	95.877			
6	.247	4.123	100.000			

Source: Author

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The table of communalities from analysis with one item deleted is presented in table 7. Results also show improved values of the extracted variance for all remaining items suggesting more proportions of each variable's variance can be explained by the principal component.

Table 7: Communalities of items for Parental Monitoring Construct

	Initial	Extraction
Set Tv time for child	1.000	.738
Limit playing time	1.000	.641
Monitors homework	1.000	.526
Select TV programme for child	1.000	.657
Set time for children to come back from school	1.000	.543
Set study time for children	1.000	.710

Source: Author

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The results above hence reveals that there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis that measured items of parental monitoring were not relevant manifest variables of the of the Monitoring construct. We therefore, accept the alternative hypothesis.

A summary of results the component matrix of the factor analysis is presented in the model presented in figure 1.

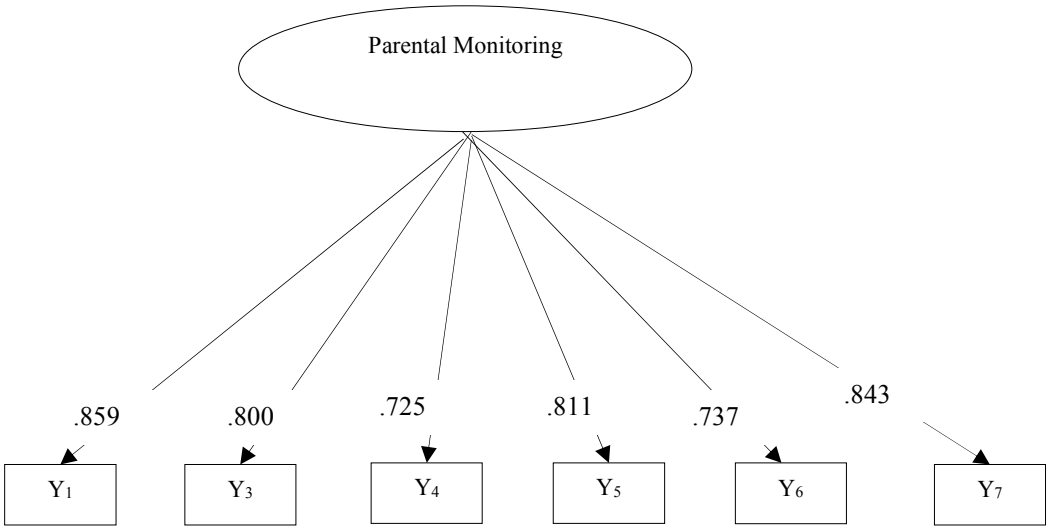

Figure 1: Parental monitoring model showing six relevant measure items

The model shows high factor loadings of each measurement item of the construct, Parental Monitoring. The high loadings are indicative of that fact that a substantial amount of variability in each items and could be explained by the underlying factor Parental Monitoring. The six measured items including: *Parent set Tv time for child, limit playing time, monitors homework, select TV programme for child, Set time for children to come back from school, set study time for children* are therefore critical toward defining parental monitor which yields improved education of children at the basic school level.

Parental monitoring effects on the educational pursuit and attainment of an individual is by a study conducted by Alika & Egbochuku (2009) who found that parental guidance exerts effects on the learning achievement of an adolescent. These aspects of monitoring when given keen attention would bring about considerable changes in the performance of children in school.

7. Recommendations

Based on the finding for the present study the following recommendations are suggested:

- Parents need to understand the relevance of their monitoring activities on the development of their child and make extra effort to get involved in the studies of their children.
- Parents also need to ensure rules focused at ensuing their children make maximum use of the time after school
- The parent should develop a time table for the child so as to regulate child activities such as learning, playing, and sleeping.
- Parents could also employ the service of teachers for extra classes, either at home or at school, so as to engage the children effectively after school hours.
- Schools should collaborate with Parents to incooperate into the PTA meetings subjects regarding

parental involvement so as to educate Parents more on the relevance of Parental monitoring in child academic progress. They could also organize workshops to assist parents to know how best they could get involved in monitoring their children's activities at home.

- The government of Ghana should consider policies which will encourage parents to show active involvement in children's education towards the realization of quality basic education for all.

8. Conclusion

Parent involvement in monitoring activities toward child academic work is found to be low in the country. Key contributing factors leading to the observed low involvement are the work schedules and the socio-economic status of parent. Parent need to understand that their role in the development of their children is critical toward their children's future. Result of the study suggest that Parents will need sacrifice and to pay keen attention to child activities such as setting Tv time, select TV programme for their child, limit playing time, monitors homework, setting time for children to come back from school, setting study time for children and most importantly help and encourage their child during studies. The finding for the present study the do not only have practical implications, but are also relevant towards policy and future studies. The finding of the study adds to literature as it establishes a standard measure of parental monitoring activities necessary to improve performance in the Senior High School. The finding are also necessary toward decision making at the school level. Schools need to organize workshops or meeting where they can communicate and educate Parents on the subject of monitoring. Future studies could also explore major parenting aspects such as Parental Discussion and Parents Press for Intellectual Development of the Child.

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