

Full Length Research Paper

Parents' involvement and students' academic performance in Ryakasinga centre for higher Education-Sheema District, Uganda

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The study examined parents' involvement (PI) and students' academic performance (SAP) in Ryakasinga Centre for Higher Education (RCHE) - Sheema district - Uganda. The objectives were to examine the effect of parenting, learning at home, and volunteering on students' academic performance in RCHE. The study was underpinned by Systems theory. The sample size was 117 with 43 teachers and 74 Form 4 students selected using simple random sampling giving a sample size of 117. The response rate was thus 93.6%. Data were collected using a questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS. The findings revealed positive significant relationships between parenting ($r=0.576^{**}$), learning at home ($r=0.378^{**}$), and volunteering ($r=0.519^{**}$). Regression analysis indicated significant prediction effects of parenting ($t = 5.363$, $p < .05$), learning at home ($t = 3.11$, $p = 0.003$), and volunteering ($r=0.519^{**}$) on academic performance. The study concluded that communication was a major reason for success in SAP and that a good learning environment positively influences SAP. Recommendations for policy and practice are provided.

Key words: Parents' involvement, students' academic performance, systems theory.

INTRODUCTION

Parents' involvement in their children's education has long been viewed as crucial to optimal childhood development and academic achievement (Powell, 1989). In the recent decade, the positive impact of parental involvement on children's intellectual achievement, particularly throughout elementary school, has been gathered (Henderson and Berla, 1994; Johnson and Walker, 1991; Stevenson and

Baker, 1987). The accumulation of evidence has prompted both education scholars and practitioners to seek measures to increase parental participation. In particular, among parents of socio- economically disadvantaged and non-English speaking students, whose children have a history of low academic achievement, there was a significant increase in the number of students enrolled in

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college (Coleman et al., 1966). To enable many parents to assist their children in reaching their intellectual potential, it is necessary to identify generally effective parental practices that promote cognitive maturation. Given concurrent worries over the school performance of poor and minority children (a growing demographic) and the low performance of American children in general, especially in comparison to Asian youngsters such as the Japanese, this is not a trivial objective (McKnight et al., 1987; Pallas et al., 1989).

Given that the majority of children's development and socialization occurs in two primary contexts - families and schools - it seems logical that connecting these two spheres of influence so that they are mutually reinforcing and mutually supportive of children's development would produce many positive outcomes for children. In her idea of "overlapping spheres of influence," Epstein (1987) argues that productive families and schools share responsibility for the children in their care and, as a result, a portion of their job must be performed collaboratively. This research was underpinned by the Systems Theory of (Von Bertalanffy (1972) which states that a system consists of various components (or sub-systems) that must work together in order for it to function effectively and efficiently.

Statement of the problem

Parents' involvement has always been crucial to students' success in any particular educational institution (Barnard, 2004; Fan and Chen, 2001; Feuerstein, 2000; Jeynes, 2003; McWayne et al., 2004). Many parents at Ryakasinga CHE do not appear to care about their children's academic performance. They have made few efforts to create a conducive learning atmosphere at home. Some are reticent when it comes to discussing school matters, and they never attend meetings of the parents' and teachers' association (PTA). In addition, the majority of parents do not read or enquire about the material on their children's reports and in the end-of-term letter to parents. They appear to have ignored their parental duties.

However, the government has provided textbooks and chemicals and assigned trained employees, the school administration has attempted to excite the staff, and the teachers have scheduled remedial classes. In addition, external benefactors have supplemented government support by constructing classrooms, laboratories, and dormitories.

Nonetheless, academic achievement has not improved (Uganda National Examinations Board [UNEB], 2008-2011). The statistics of the past four years indicate that only 2.5% of UCE students received distinctions. At advanced (A) level, only 0.25% were able to obtain a Principal A (just one A in four years), and only 37% were able to obtain two principal passes, allowing them to enter higher education institutions. In business studies, only 43% of courses were passed over the course of four years,

with only six subjects receiving distinctions. If this tendency continues, it is feared that parents may remove their children, which could lead to the demise of Ryakasinga CHE. This study sought to examine the regression effect of academic achievement of students of Ryakasinga CHE on their parents' involvement in their study activities. The following objectives and hypotheses were achieved:

Specific objectives

1. To examine the prediction effect of parenting on students' academic performance in Ryakasinga CHE.
2. To evaluate the influence of parents' involvement in children's learning at home on the children's academic performance in Ryakasinga CHE.
3. To examine the regression effect of students' academic performance on parents' involvement in volunteering in Ryakasinga CHE.

Study hypotheses

1. Parents' involvement in provision of basic needs and regular communication (parenting) to their children significantly predicts the children's academic performance
2. Parents' involvement in children's learning at home significantly predicts the children's academic performance in Ryakasinga CHE.
3. The regression effect of students' academic performance on parents' involvement in volunteering in Ryakasinga CHE is statistically significant.

Conceptual frame work

This study examined the association between the various characteristics of parental participation as an independent variable and students' academic success as a dependent variable. Academic achievement is based on a wide range of other factors. The conceptual framework given in Figure 1 indicates that parental involvement in the provision of basic necessities, effective communication, participation in children's school and home activities, infrastructure development at school, and decision making influence students' academic achievement. It is expected that the academic achievement of students would improve when parental participation increases.

Significance of the study

The findings of the study are anticipated to benefit the parents, PTA, BOG, and administration of Ryakasinga CHE and similar schools. Parents can now understand what they are expected to accomplish and how they should contribute to their children's academic

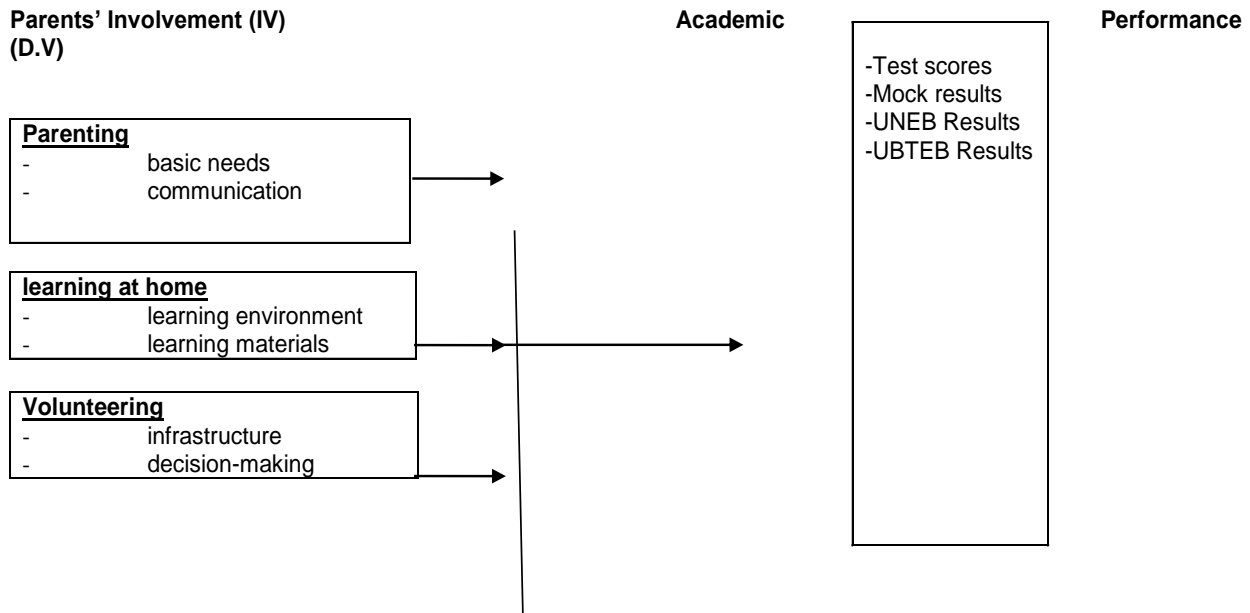


Figure 1. Conceptual frame work showing relationship between parents' involvement and students' academic performance. Source: Adopted from Epstein, 1995 and modified by the researcher.

achievement. The PTA, BOG, and Administration are able to determine how parental involvement in the school system affects the academic achievement of students and take steps to involve them in the day-to-day administration of the school. The research has added to the current body of evidence regarding the effect of parental involvement on students' academic performance.

Justification of the study

Numerous scholars have compiled comprehensive literature assessments on the effects of parental participation on adolescents' academic success (Beecher, 1984; Henderson, 1987, 1994; Illinois Board of Education, 1993; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). These scholars concur that parental participation enhances learning and, consequently, academic success at all levels of education. The researcher discovered that not all studies support parental participation as a strong factor of academic achievement (Baker and Soden, 1997).

Several causal model studies on the topic have determined that direct parental participation had minimal, null, or negative effects on the academic performance of secondary school kids (Anderson, 1991; Keith et al., 1986; Natriello and McDill, 1986). Coupled with the fact that no such research had been conducted in Ryakasinga CHE – Sheema District – Uganda, the researcher felt compelled to investigate the impact of parental involvement on students' academic achievement at Ryakasinga Centre for Higher Education, Sheema District-Uganda.

Scope of the study

The study was done in RCHE in Nyakatokye cell, Kisyabya Parish, Shuuku Sub County- Sheema District-Uganda. The relationship between PI and SAP in RCHE in the period of four consecutive years (2008-2011). The researcher focused on PI as an independent variable and the researcher considered parenting, helping learning at home and volunteering as its indicators. The dependent variable in this study was SAP and the researcher measured this using test scores, mock, UNEB and UBTEB results.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative approach of collecting and analyzing data collected using questionnaires (Bruce, 1994). The use of the two approaches was based on the principle of triangulation, which helps in converging opinions to be able to arrive at better conclusions (Amin, 2005; Bruce, 1999). Cross-sectional survey research design was used to select a sample of participants from the target population at a given point in time. The design catered for ease and cheapness of data collection (Amin, 2005).

The sample size was 125 out of 143 determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table of sample selection which ensures good decision model. Fully filled questionnaires were obtained from 43 teachers and 74 Form 4 students selected using simple random sampling giving a sample size of 117. The response rate was thus 93.6%. Data collection was done quantitatively using questionnaires. The questionnaires for this study were valid with a content validity index (CVI) of 0.84, greater than the 0.50 advocated for by Amin (2005) and Kothari and Palls (1994). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient calculated using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) was 0.72, which was above the 0.70 value for a reliable research instrument (Amin, 2005).

Table 1. Linear regression of academic performance on parenting.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.608	0.383		4.197	0.000
	Parenting	0.550	0.103	0.576	5.363	0.000

^aDependent Variable: Academic Performance $R^2 = 0.320$, $F = 28.757$, $p < 0.05$.

Source: Researcher's Field Data

The items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale, 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The results are further explained using correlations in order to show the relationships between the variables followed by regression analysis to find out the extent to which parents' involvement impacts students' academic performance. The mean response which is above 3.0 meant that the respondents were in agreement, mean of 3 denotes neutral and mean below 3.0 suggest disagreement with the statement. The standard deviation is a measure of how spread out numbers are; a small standard deviation indicates that the scores are very close to the mean which denotes a stronger agreement, large standard deviation indicates more widely spread-out from the mean which denotes a weaker agreement. Overall scores were obtained by summing the individual score for each subscale. The data were analyzed using SPSS to derive relevant descriptive statistics (Frequencies, pie chart and percentages) which was further analyzed in order to arrive at relevant conclusions. It was also presented using tables. The relationship between variables was computed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Study hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression analysis.

The data were presented using descriptive statistics, frequency tables, percentages and pie charts. Descriptive statistics allowed the generalization of the data to give an account of the structure or the characteristics of the population as represented by the sample. The higher the score: the better the level of parental involvement and academic performance.

Frequencies allowed data to be looked at more objectively since it was organized, carefully summarized and presented. Percentages and pie charts facilitate comparisons between two or more sets of data that is continuous and discrete data (Chandan, 2004). Ethical considerations were duly followed in the conduct of the study. The researchers obtained an introductory letter from Uganda Management Institute (UMI) and to access the research gatekeepers at RCHE. The researchers obtained permission from the administration of the school to meet the different participants.

RESULTS

This study examined the relationship between parents' involvement and students' academic performance in Ryakasinga CHE – Sheema District – Uganda. The results are presented in Tables in order of objectives.

Parenting and academic performance

Parents' involvement in parenting was considered in two dimensions: provision of basic needs and regular communication to the children. The overall parenting level was generally high ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.67$), indicating that

the majority of the participants agreed that parenting affects students' academic performance. There was a strong significant positive correlation between parenting and academic performance ($r = 0.576$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that as parenting improved, academic performance in Ryakasinga CHE also improved.

To establish the extent to which parenting influenced academic performance, a simple linear regression analysis conducted using the ANOVA techniques revealed an adjusted R^2 value of 0.320 ($p < 0.05$). This implies that parenting alone predicted 32.0% of the variance in academic performance, suggesting that parenting was a relatively strong significant predictor of academic performance. The linear regression analysis results are presented in Table 1.

Analysis of variance gave a significant difference effect ($F = 28.757$, $p < 0.05$) of parenting in predicting the students' academic performance. From Table 1, results indicate that every unit increase in the level of parenting causes a 0.55 unit increase in academic performance ($t = 5.363$, $p < .05$). Therefore, the hypothesis that "parental involvement in parenting through provision of basic needs and regular communication to their children significantly predicts the children's academic performance" is accepted.

Learning at home and academic performance

Parents' involvement in children's learning at home consisted of setting up a conducive home learning environment and provision of appropriate learning materials. The mean parental involvement in learning at home was low ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.67$), which indicates that an absolute majority of the respondents disagreed that parental involvement in learning at home affected students' academic performance significantly. There was a moderate positive significant relationship between learning at home and academic performance ($r = 0.378$, $p = 0.003$). The linear regression analysis coefficients for the prediction effect of parental involvement in learning at home on academic performance are presented in Table 2. To establish the extent to which learning at home influenced academic performance, a regression analysis was conducted using the ANOVA technique of adjusted R^2 values, standardized beta values, t-values and the

Table 2. Prediction effect of parents' involvement in learning at home on academic performance.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.574	0.348		7.399	0.000
	Learning	0.360	0.116	0.378	3.110	0.003

^aDependent Variable: Academic Performance; $R^2 = 0.320$, $F = 28.757$, $p < 0.05$.
Source: Researcher's Field Data

Table 3. Prediction effect of parents' involvement in volunteering on students' academic performance.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.199	0.318		6.924	0.000
	Volunteering	0.434	0.094	0.519	4.621	0.000

^aDependent Variable: Academic Performance; $R^2 = 0.256$, $F = 21.353$, $p < 0.05$.
Source: Researcher's Field Data

significance measured at 0.05 levels (Table 2). The model summary showed an adjusted R^2 value of 0.128 between parents' involvement in children's learning at home and academic performance, which implies that parents' engagement in their children's learning at home predicted up to 12.8% of the variance in the children's academic performance.

Analysis of variance ($F = 9.673$, $p = 0.003$) shows that the parents' involvement in children's learning at home significantly explains the variance in the children's academic performance. The beta and t -test results in Table 2 indicate that for every unit increase in the level of parents' involvement in children's learning at home, there was a 0.36 unit increase in academic performance ($t = 3.11$, $p = 0.003$). Therefore, the Hypothesis 2 that, "parents' involvement in children's learning at home significantly predicts the children's academic performance in Ryakasinga CHE" is accepted.

Volunteering and academic performance

The dimensions of parents' involvement in volunteering included participation in infrastructure development and decision-making at school. The mean volunteering level was high ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.76$), which indicates that majority of respondents agreed that parents' volunteering affects students' academic performance significantly. There was a strong significant positive correlation ($r = 0.519$, $p < 0.05$) between parents' volunteering and academic performance in Ryakasinga CHE, with an adjusted R^2 value of 0.256 which suggests that volunteering predicted up to 25.6% of the variance in

academic performance. The regression model is presented in Table 3.

ANOVA results indicate that parents' participation in volunteering significantly explained the variance in students' academic performance ($F=21.353$, $p < 0.05$). From Table 3, the beta and t -test results show that for every unit increase in parents' involvement in volunteering infrastructure development and decision making, there was a 0.434 unit increase in the students' academic performance ($t = 4.621$, $p < 0.05$). Hence, Hypothesis 3 showed that, "the regression effect of students' academic performance on parents' involvement in volunteering in Ryakasinga CHE statistically significant" was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The results generally prove that learners' academic performance is a function of several parental involvement aspects.

This confirms the systems theory of Von Bertalanffy (1972) which states that a system consists of various components (or sub-systems) that must work together in order for it to function effectively and efficiently. The discussion of the specific findings by objective is as follows.

Parenting and academic performance

The study findings revealed that parenting in form of provision of basic needs and effective communication to their children significantly predicted the children's

academic performance. This is in agreement with Christian et al (1998) who asserts that parent-child interactions, specifically stimulating and responsive parenting practices, are important influences on a child's academic development. This view is further supported by Trina (2010) who asserts that parents can teach children how to form positive, constructive relationships that do not revolve around harmful behaviors or substances. However, the findings of this study differ from Bobetsky (2003)'s findings that parents come to school to check on their children's discipline with the teachers or administrators only when they are suspended without necessarily caring for the children's basic needs.

According to Maslow (1943), people strive to satisfy the lower basic needs before they can think of the higher more aesthetic ones. Parenting in form of provision of basic needs and effective parent-child communication is therefore a primary provision which will enhance children's academic performance through class attendance, active participation in class work, engagement in co-curricular activities, and ultimately assessment scores. Students who miss some basic needs are likely to underperform in their academics. Bude (1991) asserts that parents' involvement in their students' academic performance helps children understand their parents' attitudes and expectations which help them perform well.

Learning at home and academic performance

The study findings revealed that parents' involvement in their children's learning positively predicted the children's performance in academics at school. The study further agreed that parents encourage their children to do some reading while at home. These findings are in support of Fan and Chen's (2001) finding which similarly affirms that parental involvement in children's learning at home positively affects the child's performance at both primary and secondary schools. Melhuish et al. (2001) further reveal that effective parenting leads to higher academic achievement, greater cognitive competence, greater problem-solving skills, greater school enjoyment, better school attendance and fewer behavioral problems at school.

These findings, in conformity with Flouri and Buchanan (2004), confirm that parental involvement in children's literacy practices is a more powerful force than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education. The study findings also confirm those of OECD, (2002) which reveals that parents get involved in knowing what their children study in some subjects and also parents reward their children whenever they improve academically or see that they are working hard on their studies. According to Dave (1963) who defined educational environment as "the conditions, process and psychological stimuli" which affect the

educational achievement of the child, home surrounding is conducive for revising and doing homework. Gottfried et al. (1998) affirm that home environment has a statistically positive and significant effect on academic intrinsic motivation.

Volunteering and academic performance

The study findings revealed that parents' voluntary participation in infrastructural development and decision making at school positively predict students' academic achievement. Parents were shown to volunteer in fundraising for school to improve infrastructure such as classrooms, laboratories, and others. Zellman and Waterman (1998) assert that volunteering is critical for skill development, to socialize, and to have fun. According to Dornbusch and Ritter (cited in Hickman et al., 1995), parent attendance at high school activities had a positive correlation with students' school attendance. Printing parents' involvement in school newsletters was shown to increase parents' attendance at school events. Dornbusch and Ritter's study show that parents take time to consult school administration when certain decisions are made. The findings of the study similarly revealed that parents were involved in attending school functions such as parents' and teachers' annual general meetings, class meetings, and others where major decisions are made. Bwire (2012) advises parents to participate in parents' meetings and trainings and always assist with classroom activities so as to harness the academic excellence of their children.

Conclusion

The findings of the study reveal that parents' involvement in children's education through provision of basic needs and effective communication significantly influences the children's academic performance. Basic needs such as smart school uniforms, shoes, socks and sweater enhance learners' participation in school activities. It can thus be concluded that having basic needs at school enhances learners' academic performance. Communication is also a major parenting activity for the children's academic success given that parent and children are able to express their academic progress challenges and tease solutions.

Parents' provision of a good learning environment at home positively predicted students' academic performance. It can be concluded that all parents need to be brought on board to provide adequate learning materials and conducive study environments at home to enable the children to revise while at home. Parents' direct participation in knowing what their students study in some subjects and also encouragement to study at home would be beneficial to the academic progress of the children.

Given that parents' voluntary participation in infrastructural development and decision making significantly predict students' academic performance, it can be concluded that more volunteering activities such as fundraising for the school need to be initiated to improve infrastructure and hence support teaching and learning. All this requires proper decision-making that calls for regular meetings involving parents.

Recommendations

On the basis of this study finding, it was recommended that schools should initiate parents' activities that will sensitize them on the need for better provision of basic necessities such as balanced diet in feeding to enable the children concentrate on their academic engagements. It was further recommended that the parents need to check on their children, not necessarily waiting for disciplinary causes to visit them at school. It was also recommended that the parents be supported to make children's learning environment at home more comfortable so as to encourage the children to study at home. Initiatives such as establishment of home libraries and provision of stationery at home can enhance learners' home schooling. The researchers also recommended that parents should support provision of holiday packages, black boards, chalk and white boards to improve the children's academic performance.

Limitations of the study

This study focused on parents' involvement and students' academic performance in RCHE. The challenges faced by RCHE may be unique and different from those faced by all other high schools. Therefore, the findings are not readily generalizable to all high schools. The study did not investigate the effects of intervening variables which may also have influence on parents' involvement and students' academic performance in RCHE.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors has not declared any conflict of interests.

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