



Parental Involvement Level: A Factor Associated With Differences in Performance among Students at Tsodilo Secondary School in Botswana

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Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 27th November 2013, revised 13th February 2014, accepted 11th March 2014

Abstract

The study assessed the effects of parental involvement level on performance among students in Tsodilo Secondary School in Botswana. Based on the previous year standardised end of year examination results, students were divided into three strata of higher, medium and low academic performers. Simple random sampling was used to pick participants from each strata ending up with a total of 144 participants. Four standard indicators of parental involvement level were identified and close ended questions formulated in relation to those indicators. The resulting parental involvement level was categorized into three levels of high, medium and low. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to test for significant differences in mean performance across the three parental involvement levels. The findings of the study revealed that parental involvement level has a significant effect on academic performance among students in Tsodilo Secondary School. Since a significant difference was realised a further LSD (least significance difference) test was performed to find out which parental involvement levels actually differ in performance. The LSD results revealed that academic performance differed significantly across all the three parental involvement levels. The study recommended amongst others that School community partnerships should be strengthened as a way of increasing parental involvement for positive educational outcomes.

Keywords: Parental involvement, academic performance.

Introduction

Since independence, Botswana's education sector has witnessed tremendous growth in terms of physical infrastructure and teacher development. In spite of the growth, performance of students has been steadily declining^{1,2}. According to Mji and Makgato³ factors such as deviancy, school bullies, and exposure of students to some culture where school is considered a low priority and lack of parental involvement in children academic life can contribute to poor performance. Where families are involved in the education of their children, research has revealed a positive association between academic achievement levels and improved⁴. This is further emphasised by Driessen, Smith and Slegers⁵ who state that continued effort of parental involvement throughout education can improve academic achievement. The intense search for the cause of poor academic performance amongst students in Botswana, blames parent's inability to control and guide their children⁶.

According to Chavkin⁷, parents contribute an important and central function in the success of their children, failure to be a good parent can result in variation in children academic performance. Balogi⁶ further states that children have copy-cat tendencies, if parents do not value learning, their children are also less likely to value it. Parents are the first teachers to their children in terms of attitude, views, goals and perspective on life so what a child learns from parents has a long lasting

cognitive effect on the child, hence parental involvement should be encouraged for the benefit of the children.

Statement of the problem: Performance in many schools continues to decline and a lot of factors have been suggested as contributing to the decline. One of the common factors speculated is lack of parental involvement. If parents participate minimally in the education of their children, the burden is left to teachers alone. At the end, when academic results are poor, parents blame teacher's forgetting that they too have an important role of participating in their children's academic life. Teachers do not expect parents to implement the school curriculum but total education requires that parents and teacher work together to produce a total student who will be academically, socially and emotionally balanced. Teachers are also loco parents but parents should also contribute to the social and emotional needs that go with the education of their children. The education system is expected to produce students who will propel the society forward but if parents who are part of the system are not actively involved, product of the system could lead to an uneducated, deviant and immoral society. With such a society, Botswana cannot achieve its National Vision 2016 pillars of "an educated and prosperous nation".

Purpose of the study: The study assessed the effect of parental involvement level on performance of students as perceived by students in Tsodilo Secondary School. Specifically, the study investigated whether differences in students academic performance amongst students could be

attributed to difference in levels at which their parents get involved with their education.

Hypothesis: Null: There is no significant effect of parental involvement level on performance among students in Tsodilo Junior Secondary School.

Significance of study: The findings of the study will help schools come up with targeted interventions to address the problem of poor performance. If indeed differences parental involvement level contributes to differences in academic performance, management of Tsodilo Secondary Schools together with Parents Teacher Association (PTA) can come up with strategies to work hand in hand with parents to improve the performance of the children. The study also contributes to the body of knowledge of the area of parental involvement and education. The knowledge could be used by academicians for academic purposes or by social service professional to come up with new or improved intervention targeting parents.

Literature Review: Education is a vehicle towards individual prosperity and high social status hence students should aspire to be educated in order to be prosperous and to earn their place in the social strata. Some parents display low life aspirations and a negative attitude toward school and such characters might be transferred to their children^{8,6}.

Parental involvement drives attitude of learners towards education. High parental involvement is positively related to high attitude and performance scores in some subjects and low scores related to low parental involvement in others⁹. The more parents are involved, the better the attitude of students towards a subject leading to higher academic performance.

Mannathoko and Mangope¹⁰ investigated barriers to parental involvement in Botswana Primary Schools. The study attributed the non-involvement to several teacher and parent factors. Parents have a feeling that teachers do not consider them part of the school system, they only call them for progress report collection, PTA meeting or payment of school fees. Teachers on the other hand reported that parents are not cooperative and are less interested in the education of their children, they do not attend school meetings and neither do they come for report collection. This is corroborated by Isaiah¹¹ whose finding revealed that schools invite parents for meetings to discuss the academic progress of students but parents hardly come and the contribution of the few who come is so insignificant to positively influence academic performance of their children.

Students function in a dual environment being the school and home hence teachers and parents need to understanding the requirements of the two environments in relation to the academic performance of the child¹². This can only be achieved when there is constant communication and interaction between teachers and parents. There is need for a strong bond between

the school and parents. If no bond exists between parents and the school, parents are less likely to be informed about the progress of their children. If parents are less informed about the academic progress of their children, they are less likely to effect a positive change in the academic achievement of their children¹³. Authoritarian parenting has also been attributed to improvement in academic achievement¹⁴ and so is attending school conferences, parent organization meetings, volunteering and checking the student's homework¹⁵. It is during school meetings that parents are briefed about performance of their children and the day to day challenges they face as they interact with learners. Appreciating challenges faced by teachers and learners, parents may positively contribute solutions to these problems leading to improvement in academic results.

Parents need to help their students with their homework. Research has showed that parental help related to homework is associated with high levels of academic achievement¹⁶. Children spend their time between school and home. At school, teachers enhance their learning through teaching and class work ending with giving them homework. The expectation is that parents will then take over and ensure that the homework is done. The support at home can be in the form of ensuring that the homework is done or providing the actual academic support in person or through another person. If the child gets the support of the parent that can be enough motivation to perform better in school.

Methodology

Research Design, Study population and Sampling: The study was a quantitative, non-experimental survey in which numerical data was used to obtain the information. Quantitative research uses an objective approach to describe variables, examine relationship among variables and to determine causal interactions between variables¹⁷. The target population was form three students from Tsodilo Secondary School in Maun Village located in North West Botswana. The average age of the participants was sixteen (16) and the school was highly populated with an average of forty five (45) students per class. The sample size was determined using stratified sampling procedure. The population was picked and then divided into three strata (of higher performer, medium and low performer). The sample size per strata was determined and simple random sampling used to select participants from each of the three stratas ending up with 144 participants.

Instrumentation and data collection: Data was collected using a close ended questionnaire anchored with a likert scale running from 1 to 4. The questionnaire had two parts. The first part was based on the respondents; demographic characteristics and the second part questions were formulated based on the research question. For ethical purposes, each sampled student was given a consent form which parents signed allowing their children to partake in the study. The questionnaire was self-

administered to the sampled group through the help of the guidance teachers.

Operationalization of problem variables and data analysis:

The dependent variable (performance) has already occurred hence it was not measured. What was measured was the level of parental involvement. Four standard indicators of parental involvement were identified and questions formulated in relation to those indicators. The four standard indicators were; contribution of parents towards punctuality to school, collection of academic reports, attendance of school meetings and knowing the class and class teacher of the student. After collection of data, the data was then coded for analysis. The researcher then determined the differences in levels of the independent variable on the dependent. Mean performance was calculated across each parental involvement level of high, medium and low. The mean performance was then compared across the three parenting levels.

Data collected from the questionnaire was coded and analysed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to test if there was

significance difference in mean performance between the three parental involvement levels.

Results and Discussion

Results: Table-1 shows the mean performance across the three parental involvement level. Mean performance was 18.691, 33.889 and 53.917 for low, medium and high parental involvement respectively.

The above table (Table-2) is an analysis of variance table (ANOVA).The analysis of variance was performed to test the significance difference in mean performance between the three levels of parenting (being the higher, medium and the low performer). The results show that the F calculated is 56.609 and is greater than the critical F-value of 3.00; therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the level of parental involvement has a significant effect on performance among students in Tsodilo Junior Secondary School. Since the significance difference in performance was observed, the least significance difference (LSD) was further performed to check where the difference existed in relation to the three parental involvement levels.

Table-1
Descriptives

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	42	18.691	9.0809
Medium	54	33.889	16.497
High	48	53.917	19.215
Total	144	36.132	21.054

Table 2
ANOVA: Academic performance of the respondent

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	28230.517	2	14115.258	56.609*	.000
Within Groups	35157.976	141	249.347		
Total	63388.493	143			

*significant p< .05; critical F- value=3.00; df=2 and 141

Table-3
LSD comparison of the influence of the level of parental involvement on student’s performance

(I) Parental Involvement level	(J)Parental Involvement level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Low	medium	-15.198*	3.249	.000
	high	-35.226*	3.337	.000
Medium	low	15.198*	3.249	.000
	high	-20.028*	3.132	.000
High	low	35.226*	3.336	.000
	medium	20.028*	3.132	.000

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

LSD results shows that mean academic performance differ across all the three parental involvement levels. The mean difference in performance between students exposed to low and medium parental involvement levels is significant different (-15.198). The mean performance also differ significantly for students exposed to low and high (-35.226) and medium and high (-20.028) parental involvement levels.

Discussion: The ANOVA results revealed that parental involvement level has a significant effect on performance among students in Tsodilo Secondary School. Parental involvement was measured based on four standard indicators being; encouraging students to be punctual at school, collecting students academic report, attending school meetings and knowing the students class and class teacher. All the three parental levels differed in academic performance with high parental involvement having the highest average performance followed by medium parental involvement and low parental involvement having the least average performance.

Encouraging student to be punctual to school motivates them to learn. It also shows to students that their parents are interested in their academic life and this also motivates them to further. Students who go to school well on time perform better as evident by the high average performance of those students exposed to high parental involvement level. This might be due to the fact that when children arrive on time at school they have enough time to settle down and go through their school material over and over again, they can even use the time to study further before the arrival of the teacher and note down some concepts which might be complex to them so as to ask the teacher during the lesson. When children arrive early at school they do not miss any concepts discussed by the teachers during the onset of the lessons and this is a great advantage to them as their overall academic performance is improved. On the other hand results show that for the medium performers the encouragement was minimal, this means that some of them were either being encouraged by their parents to go to school well on time while some were not encouraged and this led to some improving their performance while for some, performance was not improved. As for low performers the encouragement of being on time to school was non-existence and this is even reflected by their results which are very low.

From the findings it shows that the parents of students exposed to high parental involvement level were involved in the collection of their children's academic reports and also attended school meetings. During report collection and school meetings, parents are able to consult teachers further and discuss how their children can be helped. Collection of the reports by the parents enables communication between the teachers and the parents. That is the time that the subjects teachers explain to the parents how the child perform academically. The student on the other hand would listen to the feedback attentively knowing very well how their parents take the exercise seriously. During this time parents might discuss with the teachers any

observation that they have noticed in their children, it can be on academic improvement, or even change in their overall behaviour or attitude of their children towards school work. The time can also be used by parents to interact with students and talk to them about their school work. The meetings tend to be followed by performance discussions with students at home. As for the group exposed to low parental involvement level, report collection was non-existence. Parents were not coming to collect the academic reports of their children and as such there is no feedback on how their children are performing at school. This negative attitude towards school learning by parents might be emulated by their children in the future and this seems to agree with Chavkin⁶ who observed that parents are the first teachers to their children in terms of attitude, views, goals and perspective on education.

Most of the parents of student exposed to high parental involvement level know the class teachers of their children and that on its own contributes to better academic performance. A class teacher is a loco parent who guides the children and encourages them to do well not only academically but also socially. Being known by parents present the class teacher with an opportunity to freely discuss academic and social issues related to the child with the parent anytime. On the other hand for students exposed to medium and low parental involvement levels, most of their parents did not know their class teacher hence it is difficult for class teacher to discuss with them matter related to their children as and when they arise.

Conclusion

Parental involvement was measured against standard indicators independent from academic qualification, employment status and other socio-economic indicators. From the finding of the findings it is concluded that all parents regardless of their education background or social status, can positively contribute towards their children's academic achievement. If the child is encouraged to be punctual at school, the parent attends meeting and collects academic reports and relates with the class teacher, positive academic performance is observed. Though the findings of the study cannot be generalised to other schools in Botswana they may present a true picture of what is happening in other schools in so far as parental involvement and education are concerned. The study makes the following recommendations: i. More research needs to be done to investigate what hinders parental involvement in schools. ii. The scope of work for Parents Teachers Association (PTA) should be improved to enable it to have more influence on the academic performance of students. The PTA could have sub committees like academic committee which could be made up of highly qualified parent and teachers who could in turn provide guidance on academic matters. iii. School community partnerships should be strengthened to enable communities to play a meaningful role in the education system. This can be done through the establishment of education oriented

community based organisations whose mandate will be solely be geared toward attainment of positive educational outcomes.

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