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Article

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PARENT-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP: CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Parent-school partnership has become an important consideration in understanding how schools and families can work together to support students' academic development in secondary education. In Nigeria, however, concerns about students' academic performance and the uneven level of parental engagement make it necessary to examine the contribution of home-school collaboration. This paper reviewed conceptual and empirical literature on parent-school partnership and students' academic success in Nigerian secondary schools, with specific attention to parent-school involvement and parent-school communication. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model of the Parent Involvement Process provided the theoretical foundation for the review. The review drew on conceptual literature and empirical studies cited in the paper to synthesise evidence on the two dimensions of parent-school partnership. The reviewed evidence generally indicates that active parental involvement through homework support, school activities, monitoring, volunteering, decision-making and other forms of engagement is associated with improved academic achievement, engagement, motivation and related student outcomes. Similarly, regular, open and supportive communication among parents, teachers and students is associated with academic engagement and achievement, although some studies reported weak or non-significant relationships. The review therefore concludes that sustained academic success requires shared responsibility among parents, teachers and school administrators, supported by inclusive and transparent communication and meaningful opportunities for parental involvement. The paper recommends the use of digital and face-to-face

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communication channels, flexible participation structures and collaborative school-family activities to strengthen parent-school partnerships across diverse Nigerian secondary school contexts.

Keywords: Parent-School Partnership, Parent-School Involvement, Parent-School Communication, Academic Success.

Introduction

Academic success is the ultimate measure of how effectively students have developed intellectual capabilities and mastered their learning aims, goals and objectives making it the bedrock of secondary education. Thus, when students thrive academically, it substantiates the operational efficiency of the secondary school system and generates the intellectual capital necessary to power sustainable national development in the nation. In the context of this work, academic success is associated with students' academic achievement and performance. It is operationalised as the accomplishment of academic tasks under well-established conditions, achievement of high academic results, rewards and social recognition (Anghel, 2023). Although traditionally quantified through marks and career readiness, academic success transcends the narrow boundaries of numeric grades and course completion. Its foundational value lies in nurturing critical thinking, problem-solving capabilities, and a lifelong commitment to learning which ultimately fosters individual student's advancement while driving broader societal well-being. In secondary school education, academic success is measured via metrics such as grades, test scores, and completion rates (Paperpal, 2024). Despite the vital role of academic success in shaping students' future achievements, available empirical evidence indicates that academic performance among many secondary school students in Nigeria remains a concern. This low trend of academic success has been validated by recent empirical studies. For instance, academic performance was found to be low among secondary school students in Nigeria's North Central Zone (Obaizamomwan, 2023). Recent studies confirmed widespread poor academic performance and character decline across public secondary schools nationwide (Ojetunde & Ayodabo, 2024; Olubunmi & Kolawole, 2023). Recent data highlights poor student performance on the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (Sheu, M. A., Olawumi, E. T., Simiat, O. R., & Kamaldeen, O. S., 2024), reflecting a broader trend of below average success across both internal and external examinations in Nigeria. Self-esteem, school environment, and economic hardships have been examined as factors responsible for poor academic success (Obaizamomwan, 2023; Olubunmi & Kolawole, 2023), whereas the impact of parent-school partnerships remains understudied.

A parent-school partnership is a collaborative alliance where parents and teachers share equal responsibility and accountability for a student's academic and personal growth. In this alliance, both parties act as co-equals, actively brainstorming joint solutions such as custom homework schedules or behaviour plans in order to ensure the student's healthy development into adulthood (Kretchmar-Hendricks, 2024; McIntosh, 2023). Additionally, this partnership requires parents to maintain consistent dialogue with both students and teachers, participate in school activities, and offer structured behavioural support to cultivate healthy, responsible, and capable students (Scott, 2022). Good parents-school partnership may enable children to adjust better emotionally and probably do well academically. The above definition highlights two primary dimensions of parent-school partnership: parent-school involvement and parent-school communication. Parent-school involvement deals with parents' participation in children's learning activities both at school

and home. It involves parents attending Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) and various school events, volunteering in the school and classroom, monitoring children's homework, and creating an environment that is conducive to children's learning (Nnamani et al., 2020; Shilpa & Sandhya, 2024). Parent-school communication refers to the active exchange of information, and feedback especially between parents, teachers and children, characterized by openness, warmth, and responsiveness, creating a consistent learning environment that can influence children's achievement (Musa, S., Dakasku, U. M., Audu, J. H., & Mamudo, S. W., 2020).

Various studies have examined the relationship between parent-school partnership, particularly parent-school communication and parent-school involvement, and students' academic success in Nigerian secondary schools. Several studies have reported positive relationships between parental involvement, communication, collaboration with teachers and students' academic outcomes (Ejuchegahi, 2025; John & Umar, 2024). Conversely, some studies have reported weak or non-significant relationships between parental involvement or communication and students' academic achievement (Iyoha & Nwankwo, 2020). These mixed findings make a synthesis of the conceptual and empirical evidence relevant to understanding how parent-school partnership may contribute to academic success in Nigerian secondary schools. The two specific objectives of this review were to:

- i. Examine the impact of parent-school partnership in the aspect of parent-school involvement on students' academic success; and
- ii. examine the influence of parent-school partnership in the aspect of parent-school communication on students' academic success.

This paper adopted a conceptual and empirical review approach. The review considered conceptual discussions and empirical studies cited in the manuscript on parent-school partnership, parent-school involvement, parent-school communication and students' academic success, with emphasis on secondary school contexts in Nigeria. The evidence was organised thematically around the two dimensions of parent-school partnership identified in the paper: parent-school involvement and parent-school communication. Findings from studies reporting positive, weak and non-significant relationships were considered in order to present a balanced synthesis of the available evidence.

Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model of the Parent Involvement Process: A theoretical model of the parental involvement process was proposed by two authors in 1995 and 1997 (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1999; Walker, J. M. T., Wilkins, A. S., Dallaire, J. R., Sandler, H. M., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. 2005). Taking a psychological perspective, this model outlines what motivates parents to participate in schooling and how their support elevates student success (Walker, J. M. T., Wilkins, A. S., Dallaire, J. R., Sandler, H. M., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. 2005). The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of the parent involvement process suggests that family engagement is a process that begins with families' decision-making about being involved and culminates with student academic outcomes. The cognitive component of involvement decision-making consists of role construction for involvement and self-efficacy for helping children succeed in school. The model suggests that parents' attempts to support children's learning can be classified into one or more of the following categories: involvement through encouragement, involvement through modeling, involvement through reinforcement, and involvement through instruction (Walker, J. M. T., Wilkins, A. S., Dallaire, J. R., Sandler, H. M., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. 2005; Whitaker, 2018).

The adjusted form of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model also pointed out that the involvement of parents is multidimensional, both at home and at school. In Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, home involvement consists of the parent-student relationship outside school and how parents communicate and support students in learning-related activities such as homework. However, school involvement can be seen when parents attend parent-teacher associations and are involved in activities that happen at school (Malatji, C. E., Beeken, C., Haasbroek & Zyl, I. V. 2023; Whitaker, 2018). According to the model, parental communication is central for engagement in that communication influences parents' decision to be involved and enact that involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 199; Malatji, C. E., Beeken, C., Haasbroek & Zyl, I. V. 2023; Walker, J. M. T., Wilkins, A. S., Dallaire, J. R., Sandler, H. M., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. 2005).

Students' Academic Success

Academic success is the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours a student acquires through school instruction and evaluation. It encompasses cognitive, behavioural, and psychological outcomes, formally recognized through credentials like certificates and degrees (Jackson, 2021). Academic success represents a holistic evaluation of a student's intellectual, social, and creative progress within an educational setting. It is a measurable index of how well a student masters skills, retains content, and demonstrates understanding through testing and examinations (Anyanwu & Emesi, 2021). Academic success refers to a student's progress toward specific educational goals, reflected in their GPA, intellectual development, and personality growth across levels of study. It serves as a measurable index of learning, assessed through performance on specific tasks and scholastic standing at any given moment (Adegoke & Orekelewa, 2020; Suleiman, 2023).

Parent-School Partnership

A parent-school partnership is a collaborative alliance where parents and teachers share equal responsibility and accountability for a student's academic and personal growth. In this model, both parties act as co-equals, actively brainstorming joint solutions such as custom homework schedules or behaviour plans to ensure the student's healthy development into adulthood (Kretchmar-Hendricks, 2024; McIntosh, 2023). Additionally, this partnership requires parents to maintain consistent dialogue with students and teachers, participate in school activities, and offer structured behavioural support to cultivate capable, responsible students (Scott, 2022). By fostering mutual trust, open communication, and shared guidance, a parent-school partnership creates a safe, nurturing environment that directly enhances a student's academic exploration and personal growth (Williams, 2023). This parent-school partnership manifests in several ways such as parent-school communication and parent-school involvement.

Parent-School Communication

Parent-school communication is a responsive dialogue among parents, teachers, and students that addresses academic concerns and fosters collaboration, ultimately driving higher student achievement (Musa, S., Dakasku, U. M., Audu, J. H., & Mamudo, S. W., 2020; Williams, 2023). Parent-school dialogue regarding academic progress provides a foundational model for children, teaching them how to communicate effectively, interpret emotions, and build social relationships across both home and school environments (Anibueze & Ugwuanyi, 2020; Falayi, 2023). Parent-school communication establishes a two-way dialogue among parents, teachers, and students to track academic development. This

communication includes consistent feedback on schoolwork alongside regular verbal support and praise (Nnamani et al., 2020).

Parent-School Involvement

Parental school involvement comprises both institutional and home-based actions that support a child's education to directly improve learning outcomes. School-based engagement includes attending PTA meetings, participating in school events, volunteering, and consulting with teachers. Concurrently, home-based involvement entails monitoring homework and establishing a supportive learning environment to optimize student academic outcomes (Shilpa & Sandhya, 2024; Nnamani, O., Idoko, E. J., Onuigbo, L. N., & Eze, U. 2020). School-based involvement specifically includes volunteering, fundraising, attending meetings, assisting with events, and contacting teachers regarding student welfare (Anierobi & Unachukwu, 2020; Nnamani, O., Idoko, E. J., Onuigbo, L. N., & Eze, U. 2020). Parent-school involvement takes several forms: fulfilling obligations like parent-teacher conferences, reinforcing learning at home via tutoring and homework monitoring, and supporting the school directly through advocacy, classroom volunteering, and administrative governance (Gimba, 2019).

Impact of Parent-School Partnership and Parent-School Communication on Students' Academic Success

The findings of a study showed a significant positive relationship between parental involvement and academic performance, with teacher communication being the strongest predictor in Ibadan Metropolis. The study underscored the importance of collaboration between parents, teachers, and schools for improved student outcomes (Ejuchegahi, 2025). The findings of a similar study suggested that parental involvement plays a substantial role in influencing students' academic achievements in sciences, in Lagos State, Nigeria. This result underscored the importance of active parental engagement in enhancing student outcomes. The study established that when parents are effectively involved in their children's studies, they would excel academically. In addition, the study showed a significant relationship between various types of parental involvement and academic success, indicating that the nature or quality of parental involvement significantly impacts how well students perform academically (Bamidele, 2024). In a study, Oladipo-Abodunwa and Adeleke (2024) reported a significant influence of parent-teacher partnership in areas of knowledge, attitude and practice on students' academic engagement and mathematics achievement in Nigeria. The results of a similar study showed that parental involvement plays a significant role in influencing student academic success in Nigerian secondary schools. Schools with higher levels of parental engagement saw markedly better academic outcomes, especially in urban regions where parents were more likely to participate in school-related activities, largely due to better socioeconomic conditions and access to resources. In contrast, in rural areas, parental involvement was limited by factors such as illiteracy, long working hours, and lack of communication between parents and teachers (John & Umar, 2024).

Haastrup (2024) in a study in Rivers state revealed that parental participation in decision-making increases school commitment and improves home learning environments, allowing parents to align motivation strategies, monitor academic weaknesses, and provide targeted homework support that boosts student engagement. Parental involvement in infrastructure maintenance and school financing secures functional, resource-rich, and safe learning environments. By funding educational materials, modern technology, teacher training, and extracurricular programs, this dual collaboration cultivates community pride

and shared ownership while directly driving student well-being and academic performance. Oni and Osuji (2024) in a study confirmed a significant positive relationship between parental involvement and school management. It emphasized that parental engagement not only improves student academic performance but also supports effective school governance and decision-making in Lagos District IV, which includes Surulere, Mainland, and Apapa. Nwogbo (2022) in a study revealed that students whose parents were involved in their academic activities performed better than those whose parents were not involved. There was also a significant effect of parental involvement on academic performance of secondary school students in Nnewi Education Zone, Anambra State. Males performed better than females when their parents were involved in their academic activities. A study in the Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State established that parent-school factors influencing secondary student achievement include PTA attendance, textbook purchases, and prompt tuition payments. Additional factors included tracking student behaviour, attendance, and peer groups through regular phone updates, school events, teacher consultations, and financial support for school projects (Fareo & Musa, 2018). A study demonstrated that parental involvement in aspects of text material provision, guidance counseling, and home teaching all maintain a significant, positive relationship with secondary school student academic achievement in Imo state (Bethel-Eke & Eremie, 2020).

In Kwara State private secondary schools, high parental involvement was shown to directly drive high student achievement, which is evident in strong classroom participation, assignment completion, attendance, and extracurricular engagement. Specifically, funding facilities builds conducive environments, while meeting attendance improves home-school communication. Homework assistance enhances study habits, event participation boosts student confidence, and progress monitoring ensures early intervention for learning difficulties (Olaifa, A. S., Ayoola, A. O., Mustapha, A. I., Warrah, S. M., & Yusuf, A. A.2026). Parent involvement was found to be positively associated with several child outcomes including academic achievement, social development, and emotional well-being in urban schools within Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno state. Nigeria. Even though parental involvement affects children's education; provided that the parents, teachers, school-based committees, and other community-based structures are greatly involved in the education of the children, can provide all the necessary needs of the children in terms of academic performance improvement, self-efficacy, and wellbeing (Mala & Muhammad, 2023). Secondary school students in Awka, Anambra State, showed a moderate positive relationship overall between parental involvement and academic engagement, a trend that holds true for students from both highly educated and less educated households. However, when comparing the two groups, the positive relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement is notably lower for students from less educated homes than for their counterparts from more educated backgrounds (Anatoh, N. J., Obikeze, N. A., & Obikeze, N. 2024).

Abbas, A., Ademilua, T., & Olawuwo, A. A. (2024) found that secondary school students with highly involved parents achieved better academic performance and higher test scores across all subjects. The study highlights the need for parents to increase awareness regarding visiting and supporting their children at school. The finding of Okpako and Egbule (2025) in a study showed a noteworthy connection between parental involvement and academic performance of secondary school students in northern part of Delta State. The finding confirmed that active parental involvement is crucial for academic success. Students whose parents provide guidance, motivation, and resources consistently outperform those

with uninvolved parents. A study in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State concluded that parental involvement significantly increases secondary school students' motivation and academic self-efficacy (Ozoemena, L. C., Ogidi, C. I., Nzewuji, A. U., & Nwobodo, P. 2025).

Impact of Parent-School Partnership in the Aspect of Parent-School Communication on Students' Academic Success

Conversely, a study in Edo State revealed a very weak or negligible relationship between secondary school students' parental involvement and their academic success in Mathematics and English (Iyoha & Nwankwo, 2020). Although, a study showed that the students with less involved parents recorded low academic achievement while those with highly involved parents recorded higher academic achievement, there was however no significant difference in students' academic achievement based on parental involvement. This implied that parental involvement did not significantly influence students' academic achievement (Okafor, I. G., Eze, M. U., & Ihediwa, E. 2026). A study in the Nsukka education zone, Enugu State, showed a moderate positive relationship between students' academic self-efficacy and parental involvement, specifically through communication, volunteering, and learning at home. Conversely, decision-making and community collaboration showed a low positive relationship with self-efficacy (Adimora., 2019).

Impact of Parent-School Partnership in Aspect of Parent-School Involvement on Students' Academic Success

A study in the Awka Education Zone of Anambra State confirms that positive parent-student communication significantly improves academic success and builds healthy self-esteem. While negative parental tones can deter open sharing, maintaining a supportive, open dialogue remains crucial to prevent academic risk and guide positive student choices (Unachukwu, D. I., Obumse, N. A. & Okafor, S. O. 2023). A similar study revealed that parental communication patterns contributed to the students' academic achievements in English language in Enugu State (Anyamene & Odo, 2025). The regression analysis of a study indicated a robust association between successful teacher-parent communication and enhanced kid academic performance, highlighting the crucial importance of regular and high quality interactions. The study emphasized the need to use efficient communication tactics in order to improve parental engagement and, as a result, enhance student academic performance. It emphasized the importance of continuously exploring and adapting communication strategies in response to the changing educational environment (Adeyeye & Dasoo, 2025).

A study showed that family communication patterns have a significant positive relationship with class participation. This implies that students, who communicate their expectations and needs, actively participate in class discussions, ask questions, contribute to group activities in the classroom, seek feedback from teachers and peers, and engage in debates and arguments with classmates. It further showed a significant positive relationship between family communication patterns and class attendance. This implies that students who engage in discussions about their individual strengths and weaknesses, attend their classes regularly, and feel guilty when they miss classes; also perceive class attendance as crucial for academic success (Nnome, C. I., Agbe, N. N., Hanior, E. A., Zading, D. D., & Ameh, A. J. 2024). Sulyman (2023) in a study revealed that teacher-parents communication level is average. It was also discovered that Parent-teacher communication significantly influenced pupils' academic performance, it was therefore recommended that teacher-parent

communication be employed always to improve educational system. Conversely, a study revealed that there is no significant relationship between the impact of school communication and students' academic performance in selected secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria (Dikeh & Jonathan, 2023).

Implications

The impact of parent-school partnerships demonstrates that collaborative engagement and open communication are critical to student academic success, requiring a unified educational framework between home and school. When parents actively participate in school-based activities such as attending meetings, volunteering, and serving on committees, they strengthen their connection to the learning ecosystem, which visibly increases student motivation and dedication. To ensure superior student outcomes, teachers and school administrators must prioritise proactive communication by establishing transparent channels, digital portals, and structured forums to share prompt feedback, behavioural insights, and academic guidance. This systematic collaboration allows parents and teachers to co-create individualised growth plans, build student self-esteem, and swiftly resolve any behavioural, academic, or social-emotional challenges.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper has demonstrated that building robust parent-school partnerships, driven by active parent-school involvement and open parent-school communication is essential for driving students' academic success within Nigerian secondary schools. Parental involvement is not merely an external support mechanism, but a key component of the learning milieu. When parents participate in school activities such as volunteering to work with students, helping in homework, and attendance at meetings/school events, and schools on the other hand provide open digital and face-to-face communication, home and school environments would align. This synergy would directly increase students' motivation, engagement, and early intervention for academic or socio-emotional challenges which will ultimately result in academic success. Thus, sustained academic success requires administrators, teachers, and parents to share partnership responsibility. Open parent-school communication and inclusive parent-school involvement are therefore essential to build a resilient Nigerian secondary education system that aid students' academic success.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore proffered:

- i. Secondary school administrators should use digital portals, SMS, chat groups, and print newsletters to share student progress and bridge the home-school gap across diverse backgrounds;
- ii. School administrators should design flexible volunteer tiers and parent committees to encourage participation from both highly and less-educated households;
- iii. Schools should replace traditional report card distribution with quarterly, interactive workshops where teachers and parents co-create individualised growth plans for students; and
- iv. Ministries of Education and secondary school proprietors should integrate parental diplomacy and inclusive outreach into teacher training to foster welcoming, positive interactions with families.

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