

SPARENTAL SUPPORT AS A PREDICTOR OF ACADEMIC STRESS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NSUKKA EDUCATION ZONE OF ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated parental supports as predictor of academic stress among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The study was guided by one research question and one corresponding null hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance. The research design used for the study was correlational research design. The population of the study consists of 1,616 SS 2 students in public secondary schools. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample of 321 students was selected through proportionate random sampling. The instrument for data collection was two sets of questionnaire titled: "Parental Support Questionnaire (PSQ)" and "Students' Academic Stress Questionnaire (SASQ)". The instruments were developed by the researchers and face validated by three experts in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of PSQ and SASQ were determined using Cronbach alpha and reliability estimate values of 0.77 and 0.77 were obtained for PSQ and SASQ respectively. The data collected were analyzed using coefficient of determination (R^2) for research question, while linear regression was used in testing the hypothesis at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that parental support positively predicts academic stress among secondary school students. The result also revealed that there is a significant predictive power between parental support and academic adjustment of secondary school students. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that secondary school counsellors should organize seminar on parental support and academic stress to help reduce academic stress of students.

Keywords: Parental support, academic stress, secondary school

Introduction

Stress is becoming a threat in Nigerian education system and could manifest in a range of ways as academic stress. This ugly situation usually leads to students to withdraw and isolate these students from academic activities. These secondary school students in the study area encounter a lot of problems and situations that make them vulnerable to stress.

In Nigeria education system, there are three categories of education which include: primary, secondary and tertiary education. In this study, the researchers are focusing on secondary education. This is because secondary education is the gateway to whatever an individual can achieve in education (Udeh, 2018). The broad goals of secondary education according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) shall be to: prepare the individual for useful living within the society and higher education. Secondary education refers to an institution where people are admitted after completion of their primary school subjects and providing a course of full-time instruction based on the approved syllabus approved by the government (Udeh, 2018). In addition, Nigeria government and society have recognized the significant of secondary school as an instruction that provide the bulk of its workers and introduces the basic technological skills

within the first three years (Ncheke&Nwosu, 2023). Thus, the secondary education absorbs the graduates of primary level and prepares them for the higher education which is the manpower base of the nation (Ugwoke, 2024).

However, despite all the laudable objectives of secondary school education, students at this level seem not interested in schooling, and as such could be as a result of stress. Stress is becoming a serious threat in Nigerian education system. The effect of this ugly phenomenon is usually a failed society. According to Ncheke (2021), secondary school students in Nigeria are dropping out of school as a result of too much workload, poor motivation by teachers and too many take home assignments. Oha (2022) equally found out that secondary school in Nigeria is not attending school regularly due to too many school activities and negative attitude to schooling. According to Ezurah (2023), secondary school students are exposed to academic stress and this usually leads to poor academic performance of these students.

In Enugu State, specifically, Nsukka Education Zone, the researchers have observed over the years during their practicum supervision exercise in public secondary schools that students in these area experience symptoms like headaches, low esteem, pressure from peer groups, lack of concentration in the classroom, fear and stomach aches, among others. The researchers equally observed that most students in this area complain of not coping with home and school work and this is usually as a result of stress. There is no doubt that these ugly phenomenon leads to academic stress. The students expect to get their take home assignment and other academic activities ready as when due; when these are lacking, stress usually do not allow such a person to achieve as expected and it results to a failed society. To buttress the above claim, Kano (2021) found out that too much workload on the students is the result of their low achievement and dropout of school. Vacdut(2022) noted that academic stress usually leads to feeling of pressure, anxiety and burnout among secondary school students. Also, Cain (2023) found out that secondary school students lack the ability to concentrate when the teacher is inculcating knowledge due to stress and most times the stress comes from too many assignments, too much academic workloads, peer group among others.

Academic stress affects not only the students, teachers, but equally the entire society. Academic stress is a state of emotional tension experienced by learners as a result of their perception of academic demands exceeding their perceived ability to cope and this can involve a wide range of cognitive, emotional, behavioural and physical responses, including feelings of pressure anxiety and burnout among secondary school students (Akande, Olowonirejuarao & Okwara-Kalu, 2014). Academic stress is the emotional psychological distress associated with an individual's perception of academic workload and the perceived value of academic outcomes (Cain, 2023). When the students are experiencing a certain level of stress, this can lead to depression and anxiety because at every degree of learning, there is a certain amount of knowledge that the students should be exposed to anything; above that may be regarded as academic stress (Lum&Su, 2019). James (2020) has reported strong relationship between academic stress and secondary school students. Academic stress is the perceived ability to cope with academic demand and the physical and cognitive strain experienced by the students due to academic pressures, such as high expectations from parents, limited resources, materials and financial burdens (Bonnie, 2021). Academic stress can equally lead to guilt, decreased confidence and eventually resulting in numerous diseases (Burns, 2022).

These academic stress have serious effects not only the students but the entire society. The negative consequences of academic stress on secondary school students, teachers and physical wellbeing reveal the need for interventions on the stress (Burns, 2022). Such intervention includes parental support which according to Ramsdal (2018) is capable of reducing

the consequence of stress among teachers and counsellors. In addition, parental support is the yardstick for general molding of children and when applied leads to stability in the home and school.

Parental support is a factor that may associate with academic stress of secondary school students. In other words, parental support is a variable that may predict academic stress of students. According to Bernstin (2019), parental support has been defined as parental behaviours toward the child, such as praising, encouraging, and giving physical affection, which indicate to the child that he or she is accepted and loved. The author further found out that parental support is both a way of working and a set of activities that provide information, advice and assistance to parents and cares about bringing up children. According to Barnes; Reifman; Farrell, &Dintcheff (2000), parental support has been defined as parental behaviours toward the child, such as praising, encouraging and giving physical affection, which shows to the child that he is being cared for. parental support refers to the emotional, instrumental and informational assistance that parents provide to their children throughout their development, especially during adolescence (Kohu, 2021). This support according to the author can significantly influence an adolescent's self-esteem, academic performance, and overall wellbeing. It plays a vital role in helping teenagers navigate the various challenges they face during this critical period of their lives. According to Ibe (2021), parental support is linked to positive outcomes in adolescents, such as higher academic achievement and lower levels of risky behaviours. Ado (2022) noted that the type of parental support can vary; emotional support includes affection and encouragement while instrumental support involves providing resources or assistance with tasks. According to Huang (2023), adolescents who perceive higher levels of parental support report better mental health outcomes, including lower rates of anxiety and depression. Hasan (2023) defines parental support as the help provided by the parents to their children in relation to their studies. The author further noted that parental support is one of the most important factors in children's education and has been associated with academic performance of students.

Academic stress among secondary school students in Enugu State, Nigeria, specifically Nsukka Education Zone is assuming an alarming rate. Teachers, parents among others have often worried that this academic stress of secondary school students usually cause serious problems. Vacdut (2022) found out that academic stress leads to feelings of pressure, anxiety and burnout among secondary school students. Also, Cain (2023) found out that secondary school students lack the ability to concentrate when the teacher is inculcating knowledge due to stress.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate parental support as a predictor of academic stress in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the predictive power of parental support on academic stress of secondary school students.

Research Question

1. What is the predictive power of parental support on academic stress of secondary school students?

Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant predictive power between parental support and academic stress of secondary school students.

Methods

The research design used for the study was a correlational survey design. The population of the study consisted of 360 students in secondary schools identify by the school counsellors in the 59 secondary schools in the study area. The entire population of 36 students were used as sample. In this case, there was no sample. The instrument for data collection was two sets of questionnaire titled “Students Academic Stress Questionnaire (SASQ)” and “Parental Support Questionnaire (PSQ)”. The instruments were developed by the researchers with much insight from literature reviewed and was validated by three experts in relevant field from Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of SASQ and PSQ were determined using Cronbach Alpha Statistic and reliability estimate value of 0.75 and 0.79 were obtained for SASQ and PSQ respectively. The data collected was analyzed using coefficient of determination (R²) for the research question while linear regression as used for testing the hypothesis at p<0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What is the predictive power of parental support on academic stress of secondary school students?

Table 1: Regression analysis on the predictive power between parental support and academic stress of secondary school students

Variable	R	R ²
Parental support and academic stress of students	0.70	0.86

R² = Coefficient of determination

The result on Table 1 shows that the coefficient between parental support and academic stress of students was 0.70. This implies that there exists a high positive prediction between parental support on academic stress of students. Table 1 also revealed that the coefficient of determination (R²) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.70 was 0.86. This coefficient of determination (R²) indicates that 70% of variation in academic stress of students is attributed to parental support. Thus, parental support predicts to a high extent academic stress of students.

Hypothesis

There is no significant predictive power between parental support and academic stress of secondary school students.

Table 2: Regression analysis on the significant predictive power between parental support and academic stress of secondary school students

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.215	1	.215	1.000	.003 _a
Residual	66.215	269	.138		
Total	66.512	270			

The result on Table 2 shows an F-ratio of 1.000 with associated exact probability value of 0.003 which is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The researchers therefore conclude that there is a significant predictive power between parental support and academic stress of students.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that the correlation coefficient between parental support on academic stress of students was high. This means that there exists a high positive prediction between parental support and academic stress of students. By implication it means that the coefficient of determination with a high percentage variation in the academic stress of students can be attributed to parental support. It also shows that increase in parental support. It also shows that increase in parental support predicts to a high extent academic stress of student negatively. Further analysis of the prediction between parental support on academic stress of students revealed that at the associated probability for the calculated value of F; is less than the level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is significant prediction between parental support and academic stress of students.

The findings of this study is in agreement with the study of Bernskin (2019), who found out that parental support is a set of activities that provides information, advice and assistance to parents and cares about bringing up of children. Similarly, parental support according to Ibe (2021), is linked to positive outcomes in adolescents, such as higher academic achievement and lower levels of risky behaviours. Equally, Huang (2023) showed that parental support report better mental health outcomes, including lower rates of anxiety and depression. the findings suggest that secondary school students should be aware of parental support and harness it since it predicts to a high extent academic stress.

Educational Implication of the Findings

The result of the study revealed among others that parental support predicts to a high extent academic stress of students. By implication, secondary school students should be aware that parental support predicts academic stress and should seek parental support to avoid academic stress.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study was conducted to address the need for strategies to reduce academic stress among secondary school students. The findings revealed a high positive predictive relationship between parental support and students' academic stress, indicating that the level of parental support significantly influences students' academic experiences. Based on this finding, parents should be adequately informed and sensitized on the importance of providing appropriate support to their children in order to help reduce academic stress. In addition, school guidance counsellors should organize workshops and sensitization programmes to educate parents on effective parental support practices that can positively influence students' academic well-being.

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