Student-Student Relationship And Academic Performance Of Students In Secondary Schools Of Calabar Municipality Local Government Area Of Cross River State, Nigeria

Ekpang , Pauline U. Ph.D And Esuabana , S. B. Ph.D

Department of Guidance and counselling Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies University of Calabar Calabar-Nigeria

Introduction

Education is regarded as a promoter of human development and seen by many to be in the center of any society's life and concern. It is a social artifact embodying aspirations about the welfare and development of the society it deems to serve. Over the years, education stakeholders such as parents, teachers, curriculum planners, examination bodies, researchers and concerned non-governmental organizations have observed with dismay the recurring decline in academic achievement of secondary school students in both internally and externally administered examinations. This situation is very disturbing because some students are promoted on trial and this continuous promotion on trial of some student leads to poor academic achievement in the externally administered examination, and when this persist, the ticket for further educational advancement by the affected students may be farfetched.

The problem of poor academic achievement among secondary school students has become a serious social problem for the entire social and economic system. For example, students' school and national performances have always been judged by having a credit pass in the core and compulsory subjects (English Language, Mathematics) and one other subject critical for Arts, Science or Social science studies streams respectively. The present study perceives that this recurring event for years have caused apprehension among learners in the secondary school system and some education stakeholders. For example, some educators are worried about poor academic achievement of students in the core subjects despite the much importance attached to them as a prerequisite for admission into higher education and even as minimum job qualification for secondary school learners by many employers. The issue of poor academic achievement has become a big problem that

even education policy makers were left with only one choice to lower the cut off mark for 2017 Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination just to allow a reasonable number of school learners have access to tertiary institution's admission.

Students seem not to be serious in their academic pursuit. Their dispositions towards learning activities show lack of direction and most times instead of putting in more effort in their study that could enhance their academic achievement, one rather finds some of them engrossed in their use of social media and networking with friends on issues that have least bearing with their academic work. It is quite unfortunate to note that Cross River State could not make the top ten positions. More saddening is even the fact that Cross River State was the least performed state in the whole of South-South and South-East geopolitical regions.

The consequences of poor academic achievement for secondary school students include poor attitude towards school, class repeat and school dropout. Academic failure is an early indicator of potential dropout which is link to social inequality. Low performing students are less likely to graduate from high school. Both educational and occupational attainment significantly predict mental health, longevity, relationship formation and public service (Mirowsky& Ross, 2013) while academic failure can destabilize the individual life course, changes in the rate of academic failure will have serious effect on the stability of society. Academic failure therefore, is an aspect of an individual life course that has implication for larger social problems and as such needs further attention.

The interactions among peers in the classroom are a normal and essential part of the learning process that influences the lifelong learning habits of students. The potential effects of peer relationships are reciprocal: Some students are more receptive than others. On one extreme, for example, is the student who values and seeks peer input on every decision; on the other is the social isolate who avoids interaction in and out of the classroom. Despite evidence that student-student relationships matter for students' academic outcomes, one critical issue remains unresolved. It is the direction of influence.

Some stakeholders have expended several efforts at proffering solutions to the recurring problem of poor academic achievement. For example, the state government has renovated its schools and furnished the laboratories with the view to improving students' learning outcome. Guidance counsellors are recruited in schools to help counsel students in their educational and personal-social challenges, yet students' performance show that such services are not impactful. Parents and curriculum planners have not been left out in the quest for solution to this problem. In spite of these efforts by various stakeholders to check students' poor academic achievement in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River State, problems rather get worse day by day. It is based on this problem that this study examines students-students relationship and academic performance in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to examine students-students relationship and academic performance in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research question

What is the relationship between students-students relationship and students academic performance in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between students-students relationship and academic performance in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Literature review

Peer relationship plays an important role in the lives of adolescents. It determines to a reasonable extent the quality of adjustment which they make in their school life (social and academic).The peer group is seen to be an influential group consisting of members who have similar traits and characteristics, could be of the same age range or mixed group. They also set goals for themselves which they strive to achieve for the survival of the group. In striving to achieve the standards they set for themselves they tend to bond stronger, many a time believing in one another more than their parents or teachers.

Literature reveals that in the relationship among peer group members, acceptance, rejection, compliance and non-compliance and so on, are common phenomena. These features in peer relationship give the members some status within their group. Four types of children who exist in the school learning environment based on their status are; (i) Popular, (ii) neglected (iii) rejected and (iv) controversial (Wentzel & Ahser as cited in Irozuru, 2016). Sometimes, famous children are nominated as 'best friends' by their peers, seldom hated by them; rejected children are also rarely nominated as 'best friends' by their peers. In between, divisive kids will also be nominated both as best mates and as hated. In other words, the quality of a child's relationship determines his or her acceptability by peers (Jranks Articles, 2013). A popular child is considered the accepted one. He or she is socially competent, friendly, cooperative and good in conversation. Also, the popular child is assertive, possess problem solving skills and good spirit of sportsmanship. According to Zettergreen (2013) accepted students tend to display positive peer relation, pro-social behaviour, good academic skill, good conflict resolution skills and leadership qualities.

Azua (2016) conducted a study to discover the impact of peers and parental encouragement on the academic success of senior high school students in the education region of Giwa. For the analysis, the Ex-post factor design was introduced. The sample was chosen using a cluster and a basic method of random sampling. For the study, a total

population of 1606 and a sample size of 338 students were used from four senior secondary schools. Two peer support questionnaires and inventories of parental support were used for the analysis. The academic achievement was derived from the scores obtained from the students' mock test in English language and mathematics. Using Pearson product moment correlation, 3 formulated theories were tested. The outcome shows that there is a substantial association between parental psychological assistance and academic achievement (r = 0.742, p = 0.018) and academic achievement (r = 0.756, p = 0.003).A significant relationship exist between parental monitoring of homework and academic achievement (r = 0.838, p = 0.002). It was recommended that parents should offer psychological support to their children by way of counselling and fostering educational career and aspiration in the child. They are to monitor the type of friends their children keep and give appropriate advice.

Anakwue, Ntamu, Udosen and Orji (2021) described the influence of students-student relationship and academic achievement of secondary school students in Cross River State. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. Literature was reviewed according to the variable under study. The ex-post facto design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 15,080 SS2 students, in all the 272 public secondary schools in Cross River State. A sample of 1, 029 students was used for the study. An instrument named "Student-student relationship questionnaire was` used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability method .77. The study equally involved data from school administrative records which were students' academic achievement records for 2018 promotion examinations in English language, Mathematics and Biology obtained from school authorities. Data collected from 1,029 of the subjects were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings from the results revealed that students-student relationship had positive significant influence on students' academic achievement. It is therefore concluded that students-students relationship influence academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Cross River State. Based on the above finding, it was recommended among others that peer group has both positive and negative influence on adolescent students' academic achievement. Hence, parents should urge their wards to relate with responsible friends who know the importance of education

A related study by Luke and Mavis (2020) was carried out to investigate factors which contribute to the decline in students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Botswana since 2010. The study was mainly quantitative and used the positivist inquiry paradigm. The study employed critical theory for its theoretical framework. Questionnaires were used to gather data from two hundred participants. Some documents were analyzed to supplement the information collected through the questionnaire. Data were analysed using the computer package known as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15. The findings of the study showed that there were several factors that can contribute toward students' low academic performance ranging from low

staff morale to students unpreparedness for the examinations and student-student relationship. The study, therefore, recommends that high teacher's morale, availability of resources and parental involvement are critical for the attainment of high quality education in Botswana secondary schools. Furthermore, the findings of the study have implications for research and practice.

Methodology

The research design for this study is the survey research design. The design is concerned with the analysis of the characteristics of the entire population through a selected sample. The design was considered appropriate for this study as it allows the researcher to assess views, beliefs , emotions, perception and interaction of respondents. The area of the study is Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State. The study area has a projected population of 5,672 students (Cross River State Secondary Education Board, 2020). There are seventeen (17) public secondary schools in the study Area. Simple random sampling technique was used to sample 250 respondents in the study area. A validated 10 items four point modified likert scale questionnaire titled; Student-student relationship Questionnaire and academic achievement test (AAT) were used for the collection of data. The first instrument was divided into two parts. Part A and B. Part "A" was on the bio-data of the respondents' gender and Age while Section "B" is a 10 items question on students-student relationship. The second instrument is a 40 items question on academic performance. The instrument's reliability index was .83 when checking the degree of consistency of the instruments using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The statistical tool for data analysis was the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation at 95 degree of freedom.

Result and discussion

The hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between students-students relationship and academic performance in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The independent variable in this study is students-students relationship while the dependent variable for this study is academic performance. Pearson's product moment correlation was used for data analysis. The result is presented in Table 1. The items used in measuring this hypothesis were derived from questionnaire items 1-10 of Section B and academic achievement test.

The result of the analysis in Table 1 revealed that students-students relationship produced a mean score of 8.04 with a standard deviation 3.07 while students academic performance produced a mean score of 12.45 with a standard deviation of 3.22. The result further revealed that the calculated r-ratio of .029 obtained with a p-value of .008 at 248 degrees of freedom met the condition required for significance at .05 level. Based on this, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between students-students relationship and academic performance was rejected indicating that there is a

significant relationship between students-students relationship and academic performance in the study area. The finding of the study supports Anakwue, Ntamu, Udosen and Orji (2021) who concluded in their study that students-student relationship had positive significant influence on students' academic achievement. The findings of the study also supports Wentzel & Ahser as cited in Irozuru (2016) that the relationship among peer group members, acceptance, rejection, compliance and non-compliance and so on, are common phenomena. These features in peer relationship give the members some status within their group. Four types of children who exist in the school learning environment based on their status are; (i) Popular, (ii) neglected (iii) rejected and (iv) controversial.

TABLE 1 Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis of the relationship between student-student relationship and academic performance (N=250)

Variables:	$\bar{x}$	S.D	r	P-value
Student-student relationship (x):	8.04	3.07		
			.029	.008
Academic performance (y):	12.45	3.22		

*significant at 0.05 level; df= 248

Conclusion

Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between students-students relationship and academic performance in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Implications for counselling

Counselling will necessarily direct students to exhibit acceptable attitudes and behaviours toward fellow students within and outside the school. It will also help students to understand themselves in order to deal with life experiences in a healthy manner through their relationship with fellow students, by being able to recognize the factors that cause problems of isolation and look for appropriate methods of resolving or avoiding the situations that may lead to unhealthy lifestyles among students.

Recommendation

It was recommended among others that there is need for enhanced supervision of instruction as it is also fundamental for positive student-student relationship. In this regard, the principals or head teachers should also intensify supervision of students and instructional process as regards student's academic needs and performance.

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