

Assessing Parental Support Role for Stimulating Literacy among Pupils in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria: Implication for Educational Research

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Abstract

The role of parents in the upbringing of their children can never be overemphasized. They provide the children with every necessity for good growth and development. Literacy is one of those important variables children need most, because they need to interact with people within their environment to enable them live well with others. Parents have a special role to play to help children acquire literacy. They can do this by interacting with children and providing worthwhile conversation with them. They can read for the children or children can read for parents. Parents can provide a wide range of reading materials and toys. They can allow children to listen to adult speeches which can encourage them to read. The aim of his study was to find out if parents have any special role in helping children acquire literacy. The study was carried out in Calabar education zone and made use of 591 pupils sampled from a population of 75,322 pupils in the study area. The stratified random sampling technique was used to sample the subjects. A questionnaire titled "parental support role for stimulating literacy" (PSRSL) was used to gather the data. The statistics used to analyse the data was the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The result revealed that parental level of education and socio-economic status of parents has significant influence on parental support role on pupils' literacy acquisition. Based on this result it was recommended that parents should always support their children in their effort to acquire learning especially literacy.

Key words: Parents, Support, Parental Support, Literacy, Literacy acquisition.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Literacy can be defined in a variety of ways. It can be defined as the ability of an individual to read and write. Some people see it as ability to access and response to messages Yandamo (2012) said it could be the ability to read and write, design, speak, listen in a way that allows effective communication and to make sense of the world. It is an individual's ability to read and understand what is written and be able to make use of it in life. It helps the individual acquire knowledge, receive and sent out information to enable him live an mingle with other people living in the same environment. Agi and Ejemba (2011) states that literacy is an art through which illiterate persons are liberated from the clutches of ignorance, bondage and backwardness. A literate person can see the world from his living room, from mere reading of books, newspapers, or any written materials. According to Wikipedia (2018), in modern times, literacy has expanded to include the ability to use language, numbers, images, computers, and other basic means to understand, communicate, and gain useful knowledge. The most important thing about literacy is one's ability to understand words, and codes, and be able to use them in one's daily activities and to the understanding of others. Introducing the teaching of literacy skills to children at a tender age can easily help them to understand the world better and faster.

Before children are introduced to school environment they tend to have learnt a little from home. Parents and other relatives at home provide these basic learning. Literacy acquisition has to do a lot with listening and making use of what has been heard. They learn to pronounce words that are often used around them. Such words may include come, go, eat, daddy, mummy, etc. children at that tender age hear these simple words and make use of them even before they are registered in school. It is the place of the parents to make sure they actually acquire these basic skills from home. At that age parents can begin to discuss with them, tell them stories, and even ask children to tell them their own stories. Parents must have the patience to listen to them and correct them. According to Apebende, Bassey, Idaka and Ifere (2010), parents have the intimate knowledge of their children and have the responsibility of bringing them up and so must know the best way to make their children become interested in learning to acquire literacy skills.

At school, children begin to learn to acquire literacy skills with the introduction of the letters of the alphabets. They learn how to read the letters of the alphabets, recognize them and recognize the sounds as

well. This has to do with phonological awareness. They learn a lot about recitation of poems and music. They learn how to write some few words and learn how to pronounce them. They learn how to use them in simple sentences and even read some few story books. As they grow from stage to stage new skills are being acquired until they are able to read and write and speak fluently.

Learning to acquire literacy skills at school may not be sufficient for learners to really acquire the skills. More effort may have to come from the parents. It is not just enough that parents pay school fees and buy other school needs such as books and uniforms. They have very important role to play. Parents must have to know about the children's activities in trying to acquire literacy skills at school. This will help them know how to go about helping them at home.

The parents must listen to the child recite the letters of the alphabet, asking the children to pronounce some words e.g. two letter or three letter words. The parents must practice such with the children, let the children listen to their own pronunciation of the words, asking the children to recite some poems, while the parents listen and correct them. Asking the children to tell stories or the parent can tell their own stories. They should allow free interactions and conversation, or discussion with the children. During these conversations according to Hirshe-Pasek, Gollingkaff, Berk and Singer (2009) children can ask questions, share personal stories, and identify objects in pictures. Epstein (2007) agree that parents can develop literacy by reading with children at home. Lopez (2015) suggested that parents should even buy books for their children as birthday presents. Also, Diamond and Guttohn (2013) states that parents can start to build literacy skills such as print awareness, vocabulary and comprehension skills. They also went on to say that children learn to acquire these skills by watching and listening to adults and practicing to do same. In addition, according to Tamis-Le Monda and Rodriguez (2009), children's familiarity with story books has been linked to their receptive and expressive vocabularies and early reading abilities. Apart from all these parents should give the children a comfortable home environment with free flow of interaction and discussion between the children and the parents.

Children in schools come from different home backgrounds. Some come from rich, or poor background, others come from literate or illiterate homes. The support role of parents depends on the background in which they come from. Anyaogu (2011) states that parents help the children identify their learning strength, interest and attitude. Parents of children from rich, and educated families can find time to support their

children in acquiring literacy. They do this because they know the outcome and they have the means and interest of doing it. According to Anyagu (2011), parents who are educated provide their children with academic assistance or their school work. She also went on to say that some parents create a conducive home environment, where both parents and children operate in a friendly atmosphere. This can help children through their frequent interaction improve their literacy acquisition. Some parents go a little further by getting lesson teachers at home. Ogbemudia and Aisha (2013) states that educated parents stimulate their children by providing educational materials at home. These may include materials such as talking books, toys, building blocks, video games, and television programmes for children.

On the other hand are parents who are not educated and are poor. Illiteracy and poverty are two big stumbling blocks to the process of understanding the need for children to go to school. Secondly, the poverty rate does not allow them support the children financially in buying what is needed in school if the children happen to be at school at all. Due to the compulsory nature of the UBE programme every child between the age of 6 to 11 is supposed to be at school. So children from such families suffer a lot because of poverty and illiteracy. The inability of parents to provide all the needed books, uniforms, etc. may affect the child's learning. Most often children from these families are sent out of school because of one thing or the other. Such children's performance at school would be very poor. A study carried out by Egbede (2010) revealed that children from poor homes/background lagged behind in most aspects of life and learning as parents find it difficult to provide financial and material assistance for them. Ikoh (2004) affirmed that uneducated parents tend to be unsupervised in their school activities and are allowed a great deal of unorganized freedom. According to Carroll (2013), young children with limited exposure to educationally stimulated experience are more likely to show deficiencies in basic literary and arithmetic skills. They do not motivate and encourage their children to study hard and do not care about what they are taught in school. Instead they would have preferred their children to stay back at home and run errands for them, sale wares along the streets and make some quick money for the upkeep of the family. Danesty and Akediron (2002) found that the poverty state of the home have thrown children to the street hawking which has often resulted in poor academic performance of children. Lots of children are always seen along the streets hawking, some throughout the day while some after school. That is, they may not even have time to rest. Parents of such children do not encourage them

and the result is poor literacy acquisition and poor academic performance.

Parents are the first teachers of their children, they need to be guided in all they learn to do, to enable them have a brighter future. Learning to acquire literacy from the foundation stage is the best for every growing child, parents therefore need to put more effort to support their children for better development. The aim of this study is to find out if parental support role has any influence on children acquisition of literacy.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Parents are the most important people in the life of every child. Life would be meaningless for children without parents. They have the sole responsibility of caring and providing for their children. They provide food, shelter and clothing. They are supposed to make sure the children go to school to acquire education. They teach morals and how to abide by the rules and regulations of the community. They are supposed to make sure children are obedient, to their elders. Of most importance is the fact that parents need to support their children in acquiring education. Many parents do but many cannot because of the situation they find themselves. The inability of the parents to support their children has often resulted in many difficulties.

It has been observed lately that some primary school children in some schools in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State cannot speak or read and write in English language which is the medium of instruction in schools and general language used as a means of communication in the country. This has become worrisome as the 2015/2016 placement examination into JSS 1 was very poor. Many people are wondering the reason behind this. Many are pointing accusing fingers at the teachers who they claim are not teaching well and some are accusing the government for not providing all the materials needed and good environment for learning.

It is against this background that the researchers have thought it wise to have a closer look at the parents, if they were responsible for this. The researchers therefore seek to find out if parental support role has any link to this problem. The question this study seeks to answer is: does parental support role has any influence on children's acquisition of literacy? Specifically how does this affect them?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out if education level of parents, and socio-economic status have any role to play in children's literacy acquisition.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

Two research hypotheses were formulated as a guide to the study.

1. Education level of parents does not significantly stimulate parental support role in their children's literacy acquisition.
2. Socio-economic status of parents does not significantly influence parental support role on their children's literacy acquisition.

2.1 Methodology

A survey research design was used in this study. The area of study was Calabar Education zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study population constituted seventy five thousand three hundred and twenty two (75,322) primary six pupils in the zone. The purposive sampling technique was adopted in sampling both schools and pupils. A total of fourteen (14) schools were sampled across seven (7) local government areas of the zone. Sixty (60) pupils were sampled from each school, yielding a total sample of six hundred and forty (640) pupils.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Parental support role for stimulating literacy" (PSRSL). The questionnaire comprised sections A and B. Section 'A' had to do with the respondents' demographic information, while section 'B' contained items that measured parental support role. This was scrutinized by experts in measurement and evaluation in Cross River University of Technology. The administration of the questionnaire was done with the help of research assistants. The subjects were in their classrooms while copies of the questionnaire were distributed and explanation on how to go about filling them was given. At the end, the completed copies were retrieved. The One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was carried out to test the two hypotheses of .05 level of significance.

Upon administration, five hundred and ninety one (591) copies of the retrieved questionnaire were found valid, with a retrieval rate of 92.3%.

3.0 Result and Discussion

3.1 Hypothesis one

The null form of this hypothesis stated that educational level of parents does not significantly influence parental support role in pupil's literacy acquisition.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied in testing the hypothesis at .05 level of significance with parental level of education as factor and parental support role as dependent variable. The results are presented in table 1.

Table 1
One-way analysis of variance of parental support role by level of education (N = 591)

Educational level	N	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Dev.	Std. Error
Highly educated	350	31.7971	4.35482	.23277
Moderately educated	186	30.7742	5.37789	.39433
Poorly educated	55	27.6909	6.10365	.82302
Total	591	31.0931	5.01014	.20609

Sources of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	f-value	p-value
Educational level	829.023	2	411.511	17.433*	.000
Error	13980.859	588	23.777		
Total	14809.882	590			

* significant at .05, $P < .05$

From table 1, the P-value (.000) associated with the computed F-ratio (17.433) is less than the chosen level of significance (.05). Based on this outcome, the null hypothesis is not retained. This means that parental level of education significantly influence parental support role in pupil's literacy acquisition.

To find out which pair of group means was responsible for the observed significant results, a post hoc test was done. The results are presented in table 2.

Table 2
Post Hoc pairwise comparison of parental support role by level of education

Level of education	Highly educated	Moderately educated	Poorly educated
Highly educated	31.7971*	1.0229*	4.1061*
Moderately educated	.021	30.7742*	3.0833
Educated			
Poorly educated	.000	.000	27.6909*

Significant at .05, $p < .05$

Values along the diagonal are group means, above are mean differences, below are P-values.

In Table 2, all the P-values (below the main diagonal) associated with the computed mean differences (above the main diagonal) are less than the chosen level of significance (.05). This means that all the paired comparisons are significant. That is, in terms of parental support role, there is a significant difference between highly educated parents, moderately educated parents and poorly educated parents.

3.2 Hypothesis two

This hypothesis in its null form stated that socio-economic status of parents does not significantly influence parental support role in pupils' literacy acquisition.

To test the hypothesis, one-way analysis of variance was applied at .05 level of significance with socioeconomic status as factor and parental support role as dependent variable. The results are presented in table 3.

Table 3
One-way analysis of variance of parental support role by socioeconomic status of parents (N=591)

Level of socioeconomic status	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i> (\bar{x})	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	
Very rich	215	31.0419	4.4886	.30566	
Moderately rich	322	31.8789	4.61350	.25710	
Poor	54	26.6111	6.72202	.91475	
Total	591	31.0931	5.01014	.20609	
Sources of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	f-value	p-value

Level of socioeconomic status	1284.149	2	642.074	27.913*	.000
Error	13525.733	588	23.003		
Total	14809.882	590			

*significant at .05 level, $P < .05$

From table 3, the P-value (.000) associated with the computed F-ratio (27.913) is less than the chosen level of significance (.05). based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative. That is, socioeconomic status of parents significantly influence parental support role in pupil's literacy acquisition.

To find out which pair of the group means was responsible for the observed significant results, a post hoc test was done. The result is shown in table 4.

Table 4
Post Hoc Pairwise Comparison of parental support role by socioeconomic status of parents

Level of socioeconomic status	Very rich	Moderately rich	Poor
Very rich	31.0419*	-0.837*	4.4308*
Moderately rich	.048	31.8789*	5.2678*
Poor	.000	.000	26.6111*

*significant at .05, $P < .05$

Values along the diagonal are group means, above are mean differences, below are P-values.

In table4, each of the P-values shown below the main diagonal is less than the chosen level of significance (.05). this follows that every pair of the group means significantly contributed to the observed significant result from the hypothesis test.

4.0 Discussion of findings

4.1 Hypothesis one

The result of hypothesis one revealed that parental level of education significantly influence parental support role in pupils' literacy acquisition. The result supports the a research carried out by Korat (2009) on maternal teaching talk on children's emergent literacy as a

function of a type of activity and material education level. He found that mothers who provided their children with a more cognitively challenging environment were able to pick up quickly in their oral development. He concluded that this can help in their academic development.

It is true that educated parents understand and have the means of providing for their educational growth, so they help them frequently. At home they interact and discuss freely with their parents. Udumo (2011) observed that parents who read with their children often lead to better performance of the children. Many children whose parents have shown interest in their education have always come out with outstanding results. Such parents try to find out children's activities at school, and always try to help them in their take home assignment, discuss with them and try to make sure their school needs are met. In the same vein, Igben (2013) found in his study that children whose parents find time to assist them in their school work have better grades in examination than those whose parents do not help. He concluded that parents should endeavour to put more effort in helping their children for better performance.

4.2 Hypothesis Two

The result of this hypothesis revealed that socio-economic status of parents significantly influence parental support role in pupils literacy acquisition. This result support Imeh-Imeh (2014) who carried out a study on socio-economic status of parents on pupils' interest in reading. He found that pupils from low socio-economic class performed lower than pupils from parents who are well to do. Parents who are rich are capable of providing their children with all that they need in school, including books, especially story books and having time to help them in their studies and discussing freely with them.

On the other hand, Johnson (1996) found in his study that many parents due to hard measures have become poor and cannot adequately provide for their children. This according to him has caused many children to drop out of school. Many of such children are found on the streets hawking and finding a means of livelihood. They hardly find time for studies and the parents do not care about it.

5.1 Implication for Educational Research

Educational research is concerned with the collection and analysis of data related to the field of education based on well defined procedures. Clearly, the problem of literacy among pupils falls within the purview of the broad field of education, which informed the researchers'

procedural approach to the problem being investigated. In obtaining and analyzing data from primary or first-hand sources, researchers could critically and empirically link parents' educational level and socioeconomic status with their support role in pupils' literacy acquisition. The outcomes followed the researchers' employment of well designed procedures and rigorous analysis, which are key features of research in education according to Anderson and Arsenault (1998). The detailed post hoc analysis of the support role of parents revealed that all the pairs of parents' educational and socioeconomic levels contributed significantly to the variations in the dependent variable. These results largely corroborate the import of educational research in critically unraveling solutions to the education-based research problems.

5.2 Summary and Conclusion

Based on the two hypotheses tested, the results indicated that (i) parental level of education significantly influence parental support role in pupils' literacy acquisition; (ii) socioeconomic status of parents significantly influence parental support role in pupils' literacy acquisition. From the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

- Parents that are highly educated are more likely predisposed to stimulating their children's literacy level.
- High level socioeconomic parents would easily commit their resources to boosting the literacy of their children. This study should be replicated in other research settings in Cross River State, Nigeria.

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