ACADEMIC ORIENTATION AND PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND MATERNAL EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND DIFFERENTIALS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Humans live and interact within societal groups, influencing one another in various ways. These influences, particularly from the home, significantly impact a child's early development and achievement orientation, which is crucial for academic performance. A mother, as the primary caregiver, holds a vital role in shaping her child's academic outlook and success. In Nigeria, one of the most populous but poorest nations globally, illiteracy is a persistent issue. Many individuals, especially women, either lack access to education or drop out early. Women constitute a significant portion of the non-literate population, which adversely affects their children's education and poses risks to societal progress. This is particularly concerning in the 21st century, as other nations make significant advancements in technology and education. English, the official language of Nigeria, requires proficiency for admission into tertiary institutions. This study investigated the academic orientation and English performance of pupils with literate versus non-literate mothers. Using a survey and stratified random sampling, findings revealed that maternal literacy positively impacts children's academic outcomes. The study concluded that even minimal maternal education influences children's performance and recommended government policies to improve literacy rates, especially among women, to enhance societal development.

***Keywords*:** Academic orientation, performance, educational background, differentials, gender, maternal background

Introduction

Societies evolve over time and change at varied levels due to some factors and indices, one of being the home background. The home background most often than not in poor nations determines abilities and capabilities to train and train adequately a child to grow and mature fully. The home is critical to what therefore a child becomes at adulthood. Studies abounds of how significant the home is and its influences. Such include Crosnoe (2004) Kalil, Ryan & Corey (2012) Linn (2000) and Shumow & Lomex (2000). A child learns first hand values and orientations from the home. What is seen as important and what should be minimized. In most societies especially the developing societies such as Nigeria, the father is the bread winner while the mother is the care giver at home. Even for the mothers who are educated and are working mothers or those that are business

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hustlers trying to augment the provisions of the father, still caring for the child before and after school hours falls on the mother. It goes without saying therefore, that the child spends more time with the mother than the father. Time spent with the mother allows for interactions and teachings. It can also allow for after school tutorials from the mother and to help with school work. The child learns the values of education, good study habits and positive or negative orientations towards schooling, academics and learning. The mother as an agent of socialization can exert great influences on children, especially her females. She can pass on to her female wards, her own values and she may for instance, inculcate in them the habit of hard work, and the need to excel in school. For example, some writers postulated that the socialization process for most females tend to assume that they will spend most of their adult life as mothers. And that the effect of this on a girl, could be that her main objective may be to get married and to have children (Mowaiye Fagbemi, 2018, 2021, Niles, 1981). This type of orientation could limit aspirations and hard work. It has been suggested that independence training which a literate woman may enjoy, improves the achievement behavior of girls. In view of the above, the investigator assumed that literate mothers would most probably have daughters who are positively oriented towards achievement and who may thus perform better in school, as compared to their counterparts whose mothers are illiterate, and who may be negatively oriented towards achievement, just as same training is what the male children may receive. The significance of the home background and its effects cannot be over emphasized. It impacts all areas as enumerated by Carlson (2006) Duncan & Magnusson (2012) and Portes (2000).

Literature Review

Research reports indicate a central role that mothers play cum occupy in the lives of their kids. They most often than not spend more time with them and does impact their thinking, skills development and direction in life. Hill & Tyson (2009) as well as Holt (2003) enumerated concisely why such interactions counts and why such interactions cannot be glossed over. Other studies by Shumow & Lomex (2002), Holt (2003), Fen & Chen (2001), Nile (1981) and Obemeata (1976) have lent credence to the viewpoint that the child's background affects the child's performance in school. Children who come from literate homes are said to perform better in school than children from illiterate homes. (Carlson 2006, Faize & Duncan 2011 ; Holt, 2003 ; Perry, 1997; Shanahan & 1Walberg, 1985). This has to be so since literate parents would most likely be able to help their children in their school work, and knowing the value of education, would be able to "push" and encourage their children to excel in their academic work, more so in a poor society such as Nigeria where many do not go to school or drop out by junior high school. Mothers who are literate may be able to help and push for high academic achievement drive much more than mothers who are not literate.(Fen & Che, 2001, Hill & Tyson, 2009 & Holt, 2008).

Gender is one of the most obvious and salient of an individual's characteristics, (Condry, 1985). It is one trait that influences behavior and actions of humans in every facet of life. From childhood, every human lives with gender and its accompanied socialization, actions and reactions. Condry (1985), Jones & Prinz (2005), Ravis (2013) and Lee 2014 have argued that several studies employing a behavior dependent variable have

demonstrated the centrality of key indices that could be regarded as game changers and the single most significant being the mother's levels of education in a child's destiny.

. The socialization experiences of a child can affect academic and achievement orientation in school. However, it was also noted by Mowaiye Fagbemi (2000, 2002) that the education levels of mothers affect their gender role attitude, aspirations and expectations. Women become less traditional as their educational level becomes higher. It follows therefore that a mother's educational level may influence the academic and achievement training she is able to give her children especially the daughters, who are usually the sacrificed lambs in poor homes when it comes to who gets to go to school, and for those who gets to go, other encumbrances such as selling items and hawking after school hours may lead to lack of concentration, which may reflect in school performance. Many such as Shumow & Lommex (2002) and Crosnoe (2004) were definite on how determinant parents' impacts can be and how definitive it can turn out on a child's life.

The influence of achievement orientation on performance is well documented. For example, these include studies by Fen & Chen (2001), Holt (2003) Mowaiye Fagbemi (2018), Cobb, (1992), Mollburn (2016), Ringness (1990), Hill & Tyson (2009) and Shanahan & Walberg, (1985) and these studies indicate just how salient some behavioral tendencies and steps impacts performance and how significant orientation to learning and performance can be.

Also different studies amongst which are those of Crosnoe & Kalil (2004), Gooding (2001), Kalil, Ryan & Corey (2012). Essas & Enas (2003) have shown that mothers tend to have strong influences on what the child's academic and achievement orientation may be. She may train positively or negatively, depending on her own perception of the significance of education. Some believe having money is more important than education and education among the poor in Nigeria because money is needed for survival. Thus education may not be in the list of priorities. The educational level of a mother can be a determining factor on the drive and goals she encourages her children to aim at. And how she trains her child towards school achievement can also be influenced by her own educational background. As noted, the mother has the opportunity of exerting a great influence on her children. The home a child comes from can determine to a great length what a child's perception and orientation to achievement may be. This may invariably influence the child's performance in school. Literate and highly educated mothers who tend to give achievement training to their children have been found to be liberal and non-traditional in their perception of the roles of women (Astin, 1999, Fitzpatrick, 1998).

Other researchers such as Ravis (2013) Ploy (2004) and Sirin (2005) have also reported the influences of mothers to the education of wards. Hoffman (1977) believed that adolescent daughters of working mothers are more independent than daughters of non-working mothers. This, Hoffman attributed to the type of training given to the girls. The move from protector and nurturer to that of an independent trainer is said to be very difficult for the non-working mothers unlike the working mothers who welcome such training as lessening of strain on them does more of such training. Furthermore, various researchers like Crosnoe & Kalil (2010), Hurlock, (1978), Ruhland, Gold & Field (1978), Gooding (2001), Jansson (2010) and Lee (2014) have carried out varied studies on child

and gender development, and have pointed to the fact that children are influenced by parents in the acceptance of roles through the types of tasks and assignment given to them at home. Thus the socialization process tends to mold the child towards the adult role he or she will occupy, and much of the socialization process of girls is said to be geared towards motherhood (Hoffman, 1977). This may influence children to the extent that they "unconsciously" may know how to model their own sex father and mother figures such that the girl goes about modelling the mother while the boy, does the same on the father. The girl in time may start experimenting with the mother's make-up, and the boy with the father's shaving powder. Being meekly by the mother or authoritatively by the father may be copied by girls and boys respectively. A boy must not show any sign of weakness like crying or, he may be tagged "sissy" (Power and Parke, 1981). Such could become destiny determinants within the pupils' sub-consciousness especially if such mentality is taken to the school.

Crosnoe and Kalil (2010) used Mexican immigrants' as their subjects in view of identified peculiarities of such class of people with distinct variability and vulnerabilities and quite distinct and central of the study was the centrality of motherboard and the educational impacts which separates from other factors at so many levels..

In a related study, Saegert and Hart (1976), found that boys were allowed by parents to roam over wider area of the community without special permission, that which may not be allowed for a girl. And yet in another study conducted in 1953 and replicated in 1971, in Detroit area of the United States, Duncan, Schuman and Guncar (1973), attempted to find out from parents what was expected of their boys and their girls. Duncan et al's study on sex specific assignments over time found for many, such responses as; boys should be asked to shovel and wash the car but not the girls. However, by 1971, Duncan et al reported that things seemed to have changed slightly. That only boys should shovel was indicated by fifty percent of the respondents, and thirty-one percent said only boys should wash the car. In 1953, sixty percent had said only boys should wash the car. Till date in the twenty first century, especially among the so called developing economies and Nations, and more so in Nigeria,, very little has changed, bringing to question why there hasn't been much change, and what distinct factors could be said to account for the wide gap in literacy level and development between the developed and under developed worlds. And no doubt education is a key and central factor.

As enumerated above. One key factor is the literacy effects especially the literacy levels of the mother and the resultant trajectories. This postulations was supported by Crosnoe (2004), Engle (2007) and Duncan & Murnane (2011). Loreau (2011) enumerated varied trajectories to performance outputs and how determinants such as race, social class, economic power and crucially, the family does matters and counts and how these salient factors translate and modify social structures within given societies. Such factors potentiality become destiny shapers.

The home as the first port of life exposes the growing child to operational within his immediate environment and may follow societal stereotypes more often than not. By school age, the trend follows by everything from teachers who may exhibit stereo typical bias to mates to texts within the school system. And these may continue through the

education ladder. It is no wonder that males and females are found in "appropriate" fields and specialization and have the tendency to follow the tends rather than break free from it. This Stereo types are more rigid within societies that still continue the notion that it is a waste of money to spend training girls for years only for the girls to end up in a Man's house where she expends her earnings. And this perception still holds sway among Nigerians especially the non-literate and could still be a determining factor to achievement orientation for school girls.

The main purpose of schooling is to teach cognitive skills and information, but it does much more than that. It is a small social system in which children learn social conventions and etiquettes. Sources through which children learn roles appropriate to their gender in school include books, television programs and other media used in the school or outside it.

Kim in Mowaiye Fagbemi (2021) while reviewing textbooks used at the elementary school in Korea revealed that even with the changing roles in the Korean society, females are not depicted in a way that reflects the changing roles in society. Males appear as main characters 76 percent of the time and females 24 percent; and occupation wise, males and females were presented in the prescribed stereotype. This scenario as espoused is a major trending issue for a majorly non literate society as Nigeria even till date in the 21st century. A cursory study of just how relevant to children's academic pursuits holding on to rigid stereotypes which a non-literate may be apt to do and which may reflect in the achievement drive she is able to give her own children is needed to espouse on how essential it is to see a higher number of people study and go to school and be literate.

Children and adolescents engage more in watching television, (either in school or at home) than at any other activity. The television has therefore become a major source of environmental information for children. From the earliest years, children are exposed to programs which "inadvertently, teach them about gender, roles, attitudes and values" (Condry,1985). Various researchers, such as Block (1976), Fagot (1974), Hurlocxk (1978), and a report by the United States Commission on Civil Rights (1977) have studied the content of television programs. The research findings show that television is a "male" world. Males not only play the majority of roles but both sexes are depicted in gender stereotypical ways. Males are shown to be more active, lively, and taking the lead, and control of situations, while females are portrayed as passive, and helpless.

Outside television, textbooks and reading materials, differential expectations are often placed on girls and boys in school. Girls are expected to excel in the arts, at reading, language and verbal fluency while boys are expected to excel in the sciences, mathematics, manipulation of spatial relations, judgment task, and to be mechanically inclined (Hoffman, 1975). In furtherance of the stereotypical curriculum, seventh grade girls are regularly channeled into a year of home economics including a semester of sewing while boys are channeled into a year of industrial arts, including a series of three or four shops, such as wood, metal, electric, and graphic arts according to research findings. (Mowaiye Fagbemi, 2002). These situations "channels" children's future vocational decisions by teaching them there are appropriate occupational roles for males and females as made available in United States West Side Women's Committee report by

O'Leary, 1976.The influence of achievement orientation on performance cannot therefore be under- estimated as the situation and facts on gender stereotypes Stoll not in a state of flux in Nigeria unlike what operates in some other nations.

It has been suggested that independence training improves the achievement behavior of girls (Mowaiye Fagbemi, 2022). In view of this, the investigator assumed that literate mothers would most probably have children especially daughters who are positively oriented towards achievement and who may thus perform better in school, as compared to their counterparts whose mothers are not illiterate, and who may be negatively oriented towards achievement and that such would also subsist for the male children. Other studies by Ravis (2013), Hijazi & Naguri (2006), Essas & Enas (2023) have lent credence to the viewpoint that the child's background affects the child's performance in school. Children who come from literate homes are said to perform better in school than children from illiterate homes. This has to be so since literate parents would most likely be able to help their children in their school work, and knowing the value of education, would be able to "push" and encourage their children to excel in their academic work. Mothers who are literate may be able to do this more than mothers who are not literate. Others such as Lee (2014) & Mollburn (2016) all attest to this view point and affirm that mothers education is the single most significant factor associated with children's intellectual, social and emotional development.

Research Problem

In view of the above background, the present study was designed to find out:

A- If there could be any difference in the achievement orientation of students whose mothers are literate, vis-à-vis, those whose mothers are non-literate.

B- If there could be any difference in the academic performance (in English Language) of students whose mothers are literate as compared to those whose mothers are non-literate

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the investigator.

Do students whose mothers are literate and those whose mothers are non-literate differ in:

(i) achievement orientation and

(ii) academic performance in English Language ?

Methodology

The research used the survey method and stratified random sampling technique for the selection of participants in the study. Samples were selected from local government areas designated by the government as educationally advantaged and those regarded as educationally disadvantaged. Students (69) from the educationally disadvantaged areas

participated in the study while ninety-seven (97) participated from the areas regarded as educationally advantaged. The disparity in the number was as a result of factors beyond the investigator's control. For example, some students especially from the disadvantaged areas did not make returns of their questionnaires, while some did not complete the questionnaire fully. Moreover, in the educationally disadvantaged areas, getting the required number of students to participate in the study was a problem because, as the investigator found out in course of the research, the students especially female students do not value the western education as such, and so do not attend school regularly or do not even attend at all after registration. For some participants among those who do not attend regularly, questionnaires were filled but school scores were unavailable. While for some others, questionnaires were partially filled. These coupled with the uncooperativeness of not just the students but also the school administrators who seem to have anger issues and acted as if the investigator was responsible for whatever problems they had ongoing.

Kwara State as a state in Central Nigeria was purposively chosen because of its centrality and its comprising of virtually every major ethnic groups in the country because of its centrality. A questionnaire was designed for the study. Students were asked to tick where their mothers belonged on the educational ladder, which ranged from no attendance of western school education at all, to attending and finishing through the primary school level, then on to every level of educational ladder and on to the Ph.D. level.

The achievement orientation questionnaire (Mowaiye Fagbemi, 2018) comprised items amongst which were:

- I do not always take time to write given assignments.
- I do not have a complete note on my subjects.
- I usually attend school prep.
- I have my own private study time table.
- I do not usually make use of the library.
- I usually do not work towards getting a high grade in my examinations.
- I do not take any academic problem I have to my teachers.
- When I am reading, my mind most often stray away from the text.
- When I fail a subject or score below expectations, I put in extra effort.
- After the teacher's teaching of a topic, I am often curious to know more, so I find out more.
- I usually read after school hours.
- I read more than school assignments demands.
- I do not submit assignments on time.
- I am usually attentive in class.
- I am always curious to know more on topics taught.
- When reading, my mind often wonders away.
- I don't seek for help on topics I do not understand.
- During school free periods, I play around.
- I usually attend school prep promptly.
- I sometimes doze off during class lessons.
- I do not read beyond what the teacher teaches.

- I usually read topics ahead before it is taught in class.
- After class lessons, I go over it usually.
- I usually do not work to get school prizes.
- I usually do have complete notes on my subjects.
- I usually do not feel like reading after school.
- I belong to a class discussion group.
- I usually prepare well before examination begins.

A test-retest method was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument and it was computed to be 0.93 through the Pearson product moment method of correlation. For the purpose of data analysis, the achievement orientation questionnaire which was on a four point scale was scored.

Student's first and second term scores in English language, that is, for two terms were collected from the selected schools for use. Before use, the raw scores were converted to their standard z-scores. English Language as a subject was chosen because it is a compulsory subject for students to take at all levels of education before tertiary education and students must have a credit in the subject to gain University admission. Moreover, it is a subject generally perceived to be difficult by wards from the low social class whose first language at home is usually the mother tongue and who may find it difficult to not allow the mother tongue interfere with the learning of the second language which is English language, especially interference of the mother tongue with spoken English.

Data Analysis and Results

Mother's with at least the primary school certificate were regarded as being literate because of the paucity of mothers with western education while those who never underwent the western type of education were grouped under the non-literate group. The t-test and analysis of variance were made use of, for data analysis and the result are as follows:

- The mean score on the achievement orientation instrumentation for students whose mothers were non-literate was 36.4 with an S.D of 4.2. A mean score of 37.0 and S.D. of 3.0 were obtained for students whose mothers were literate. The observed t-value was 1 (136) = -100, $p > 0.05$, which is not statically significant. Thus, no difference was found in the achievement orientation of the subjects under study in the two groups.

The analysis of variance revealed that there was significant difference in the students' performance in English language for those with literate and non –literate subjects. Further analysis with the aid of the Duncan Multiple range test for English language performance with consideration for mothers' educational level revealed a significant difference in the mean scores for students with literate mothers and those with illiterate mothers, in favor of those with literate mothers, who performed better. The results are presented on table one.

Table - 1
Duncan Multiple range showing English performance for the students and their mothers' educational level

Level of Education	N	X	NSE	DF	Critical Range
Degree	13	59.3			
OND/HND	26	51.4	84.4	108	5.72
Primary/ Secondary	54	48.3			
Non-formal Education	46	46.6			

@ 0. 05.
Source: Investigator's research report.

Discussion

Findings from the study revealed no significance difference in the academic orientation of students with literate maternal background compared to those with non-literate maternal background even though the mean of those with literate maternal background was higher, it was not statistically significant. It thus seem to suggest that a mother's educational qualification is relatively related to students' academic orientation. However, further research in this area is no doubt still necessary taking into consideration the higher mean recorded for those with literate maternal background, this is desirable for more efforts to be put in place to raise the nations literacy level and more so in the 21st century when literacy is being redefined as digital and computer manipulation abilities and not just ability to read and write.

Table-1 revealed no significant difference in the English language performance of students with literate and non-literate maternal background.

As could be seen from the table, a significant difference exist between the mean scores in English language for students with literate mothers as compared with those whose mothers are non-literates, with those whose mothers are university degree holders performing better than those of the Ordinary National Diploma(O.N.D.), Higher National Diploma (H.N.D.) or holders of the primary and secondary school certificate holders and students whose mothers never had formal education. It is also interesting to find a consistent better performance as the level of maternal education rises than others. Mothers educational background cannot be under- estimated when it comes to its influences on their off springs.

Conclusion

Education of citizens is critical to a developing nation such as Nigeria. The study revealed that maternal educational background does relate to achievement orientation of students and their academic performance in school. And that this is at a significant level for school performance.

The study revealed most mothers were either non literates or of low educational background. Mothers by virtues of roles have great impact on children to determine future goals, direction and how serious school work is taken. Female population is higher in Nigeria than males. And such a high population being non literate or of low education has many implications. For one, such citizens could find it difficult to demand for change where needed within the society especially from the government and agencies. And this could probably account for why there is consistent low level of development and advancements within African States. And equally why there seems to be no measure of accountability form leaders. When there is no accountability, leaders feel no pressure to perform leading to vicious cycle of underdevelopment. It takes a level of awareness to know better or do better. And implications of such are dire, because the cycle could continue and the population of the non-literate get higher just as is happening now in northern Nigeria. Educational empowerment makes for economic empowerment and so much more. This disheartens in an age where the global world has redefined literacy away from ability to read and write but now talk of digital literacy. The need for the girl child education cannot be over emphasized.

The suggestion may be given that more women needs to be trained at higher levels of education, as educated mothers will be better able to train their children towards academic achievement goals and such children would therefore have a positive achievement orientation which could not only aid them in school and make them achieve better academically, but would also help in orienting them towards achievement values in the work force. They would, then be able to contribute better to the development of their country. This is necessary in a country where school drop out of students is consistently high every year and poverty level is high. It is desirable that things should improve and government has a lot to do as much is at stake. The government does need to step up at varied levels.

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