

**Parental Marital Status And Involvement As Correlates Of Academic Performance Of
Secondary School Students In Northern Parts Of Delta State, Nigeria**

By

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between the parental marital status, parents' involvement, and secondary school students' academic performance in the northern parts of Delta State, Nigeria. two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The design of the study was a correlational research design. The population comprises 40,603 students (Post Primary Education Board, Asaba2023) the study sample consists of 307 students. The multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample of the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled Parental Involvement and Academic Performance Questionnaire (PIAPQ). The Cronbach Alpha was applied for the computation of the reliability coefficient. The instruments were administered by the researcher and two research assistants to respondents in the selected Secondary Schools. Regression statistics and Fisher's Z were used to test the formulated null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that no significant relationship between the marital status of parents and academic performance. There is a significant relationship between the parental involvement and academic performance of secondary School students in Delta North. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that schools should implement parents' engagement initiatives, such as regular parent-teacher meetings, workshops on effective home-based learning support, and communication channels that encourage active parental participation in their children's education.

Keywords: academic performance; parental background; secondary school students; Delta North, Nigeria.

Introduction

Education remains a crucial pillar for societal development across economic, social, political, and technological spheres, which explains the emphasis placed on its acquisition at all levels. As noted by Mbare and Ngumi (2017), an individual's educational attainment significantly influences life chances, income, and overall well-being. At the secondary school level, education plays a vital role in shaping learners' physical, mental, emotional, social, and ethical development. Through both formal and informal means, education raises human standards and reinforces the values needed for personal and societal adjustment (Muktar, 2018). Family life, in particular, is deeply influenced by education, as the family's stability, decision-making, and daily functioning are often tied to parents' educational level.

Within the family context, marital status is one of the structural factors that may shape children's learning experiences. The marital status of parents, whether single, married, divorced, separated, or widowed, presents different relational dynamics that may influence students' readiness to learn and their overall approach to schooling. Scholars such as Gishiwa (2018) describe marital status as a demographic indicator of an individual's relationship state within societal or legal norms. When parents experience marital instability or separation, children may be exposed to emotional strain, inconsistent support, or limited supervision, which can affect their engagement with academic tasks.

The literature suggests that children from stable, intact homes with actively involved parents tend to exhibit better academic and behavioral outcomes. Egbule (2021) and Magnuson and Berger (2009) found that students from such families experience fewer behavioral problems, reduced psychological distress, and higher academic achievement compared to children from divorced or less-involved households. Furthermore, access to both parents, particularly when they jointly participate in their child's academic development, has been identified as a protective factor associated with improved academic adjustment (Gishiwa & Amadu-Muktar, 2021). Even non-custodial parents, often fathers, can exert significant influence when they remain positively involved.

Parental involvement more broadly has also been established as a strong determinant of students' academic performance. Research by Gishiwa (2018) and Buote, as cited in Ogbugo (2016), highlights the role of family cohesion, parental support, and the home environment in shaping

learning outcomes. The home is the child's first and most influential learning environment; it forms early impressions, attitudes, and values that may persist throughout life. Studies by Pinantoan (2013) and Ort (2022) affirm that parental involvement significantly enhances students' academic success, noting that students with highly engaged parents are far more likely to enjoy school and excel academically than those whose parents show minimal interest. Academic performance is generally understood as a student's ability to study, retain information, and demonstrate understanding through oral or written assessments. At the secondary school level, strong academic performance lays the foundation for future educational and career pursuits. However, students' academic outcomes are influenced by multiple interacting factors. As explained by Egbule (2020), academic performance is multidimensional, encompassing educational, psychological, and sociological components. Therefore, variables such as parental marital status, level of parental involvement, home background, motivation, study habits, and intellectual ability collectively shape students' academic outcomes. Utami (2022) emphasizes that improving academic performance requires identifying and addressing these interconnected factors. Within this context, examining parental marital status, parental involvement, and parental background is essential for understanding the academic performance of secondary school students in the northern parts of Delta State. These family-related variables, whether acting independently or jointly, may significantly influence learning attitudes, emotional adjustment, study patterns, and overall academic achievement among students in the region.

Statement of the Problem

Several factors have been identified as contributing to students' poor performance in secondary schools. These include students' negative attitudes toward schooling, teachers' attitudes and qualifications, inadequate instructional materials, and socio-economic or environmental challenges. The researchers' observations, particularly regarding students' nonchalant approach to their education, often prioritizing irrelevant or ostentatious pursuits over academic responsibilities, prompted this study. Considering the potential influence of parental marital status and parental involvement, the researcher sought to determine their effect on students' academic performance in secondary schools. Although numerous studies have attempted to address the decline in students' academic outcomes, the problem persists. Evidence suggests that many Nigerian students perform poorly not only due to school-related issues but also because of challenges originating from the

home; when a child lacks adequate parental attention and support, there is a higher likelihood of academic deviation.

Aim and objectives of the Study

The study aimed to examine marital status and parental involvement as correlates of academic performance of students in Secondary Schools in the northern parts of Delta State. Specifically, the study:

1. examined the relationship between the marital status of parents and academic performance;
2. explained the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance;

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. To what extent will the marital status of parents correlate with the academic performance of secondary school students in the northern parts of Delta State?
2. To what extent will parental involvement correlate with the academic performance of secondary school students in the northern parts of Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between the marital status of parents and academic performance
2. There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and academic performance

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship between parental marital status, involvement, and background in relation to students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in the northern parts of Delta State, a method deemed appropriate for determining the extent of association between variables without manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The population comprised 40,603 senior secondary school students across public schools in the nine Local Government Areas of Delta North Senatorial District (Post Primary Education Board, Asaba, 2023). From this population, a sample of 307 students was selected using

a multi-stage sampling technique, where two schools were chosen from each local government area and 10% of students were drawn from each selected school in line with Okorodudu’s (2013) recommendation for adequate representation. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Parental Involvement and Academic Performance Questionnaire (PIAPQ), consisting of Section A on demographic information and Section B containing eight items measuring parental background on a four-point Likert scale. Students’ school scores served as indicators of academic performance. The instrument underwent face and content validation by three experts from the Department of Guidance and Counseling and the Department of Measurement and Evaluation at Delta State University, Abraka, leading to the refinement and adjustment of unsuitable items. Reliability was established through Cronbach Alpha, using responses from 50 students from Abraka Grammar School—outside the study area—which yielded a reliability index of 0.823, confirming internal consistency. For data collection, the researcher, with help from class teachers and research assistants, administered the questionnaires in the selected schools, ensuring independent responses. The completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion. Data analysis involved the use of Pearson’s coefficient of determination to answer the research questions, while regression statistics and Fisher's Z were employed to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance

Result and Discussion

Research Question 1: To what extent will the marital status of parents correlate with the academic performance of secondary school students in the northern part of Delta State?

Table 1: Pearson’s correlation and coefficient of determination of the relationship between the marital status of parents and academic performance of secondary school students

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> ²	<i>r</i> ² %	Remark
Marital Status of Parents	307	0.047	0.002	0.2	Positive Relationship
Academic Performance					

Table 1 shows a very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.047$) between parents’ marital status and students’ academic performance. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.002$) indicates that only 0.2% of the variation in performance is explained by marital status, meaning the relationship is negligible and not significant

Research Question 2: To what extent will parental involvement correlate with the academic performance of secondary school students in the Delta North Senatorial District?

Table 2: Pearson’s correlation and coefficient of determination of the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance of secondary school students

Variable	N	r	r ²	r ² %	Remark
Parental Involvement	307	0.115	0.013	1.3	Positive Relationship
Academic Performance					

The table indicates a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.115$) between parental involvement and students’ academic performance. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.013$) shows that parental involvement accounts for only 1.3% of the variation in performance, suggesting the relationship is minimal and not strongly influential.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the marital status of parents and the academic performance of secondary school students in the northern part of Delta State.

Table 3: Regression analysis of the relationship between the marital status of parents and the academic performance of students

Model Summary					
R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std Error		
.047 ^a	.002	.001	16.915		
ANOVA					
	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	193.558	1	193.558	.677	.411 ^b
Residual	87264.357	306	286.113		
Total	87457.915	306			

a. **Dependent Variable:** Academic Performance; b. **Predictors:** (Constant), Marital Status of Parents

Table 3 shows that the marital status of parents has almost no influence on students’ academic performance. The model explains only 0.2% of the variance ($R^2 = .002$), and the adjusted R^2 (.001) confirms the effect is negligible. The ANOVA result ($F = .677, p = .411$) indicates the relationship is not statistically significant. Overall, marital status does not meaningfully predict students’ academic performance.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and the academic performance of secondary school students in the northern part of Delta State.

Table 4: Regression analysis of the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance of secondary school students

Model Summary					
<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj. R</i> ²	Std Error		
.115 ^a	.013	.010	16.822		
ANOVA					
	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Regression	1147.649	1	1147.649	4.056	.045 ^b
Residual	86310.267	306	282.984		
Total	87457.915	307			
Coefficient					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	<i>t</i>	Sig.
	B	Std. Error B			
(Constant)	5.896	9.829		.600	.549
Parental Involvement	1.080	.536	.115	2.014	.045

a. **Dependent Variable:** Academic Performance, b. **Predictors:** (Constant), Parental Involvement

Table 4 show that parental involvement has a small but statistically significant influence on students' academic performance. The model explains 1.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .013$), indicating a weak relationship. The ANOVA result ($F = 4.056$, $p = .045$) indicates a significant, though modest, effect. The coefficient for parental involvement ($B = 1.080$, $p = .045$) suggests that higher parental involvement slightly improves academic performance. Overall, the impact is positive but weak.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 shows a very weak positive correlation between parents' marital status and students' academic performance. Table 3 further indicates that there is no significant relationship between the marital status of parents and the academic performance of secondary school students in the northern part of Delta State. This suggests that parental marital status alone does not meaningfully determine students' academic outcomes. Instead, other factors such as the quality of parental support, socio-economic conditions, school environment, and individual student characteristics appear to have a greater influence. One possible explanation is that students from single-parent or divorced households may receive substantial social, emotional, and financial support from extended family members, which can mitigate the potential negative effects of parental separation. Although empirical studies show that children from stable, intact homes with actively involved parents generally perform better academically and exhibit fewer behavioral problems (Egbule,

2021; Magnuson & Berger, 2009), the current finding suggests that marital status by itself is not the determining factor. Rather, access to both parents and the degree of active parental involvement in a child's education are more critical in promoting academic adjustment (Gishiwa & Amadu-Mukhtar, 2021). Therefore, the quality and nature of parental engagement, rather than marital configuration, may have a more meaningful impact on students' learning outcomes. Table 2 shows a weak positive correlation between parental involvement and students' academic performance. Table 4 further indicates that parental involvement has a small but statistically significant influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in the northern part of Delta State. This suggests that while parental involvement positively affects students' academic outcomes, the impact is modest. Students whose parents actively participate in their education, providing guidance, motivation, and necessary resources, tend to perform slightly better academically than those whose parents are less engaged.

Empirical evidence supports this observation. Research by Gishiwa (2018) and Buote, as cited in Ogbugo (2016), highlights the critical role of family cohesion, parental support, and a nurturing home environment in shaping learning outcomes. The home serves as the child's first and most influential learning environment, forming early impressions, attitudes, and values that often persist throughout life. Similarly, studies by Pinantoan (2013) and Ort (2022) emphasize that students with highly engaged parents are more likely to enjoy school and achieve academic success compared to peers with minimally involved parents.

Conclusion

The study reveals that parental marital status has a negligible and non-significant influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in the northern part of Delta State. Whether students come from single-parent, divorced, or intact households does not meaningfully determine their academic outcomes. Instead, other factors such as socio-economic conditions, school environment, and the quality of parental support appear to play more substantial roles in shaping students' performance.

In contrast, parental involvement, while showing only a weak correlation with academic performance, exerts a small but statistically significant positive effect. Students whose parents actively participate in their academic life, providing guidance, motivation, and necessary resources, tend to perform slightly better than those whose parents are less engaged. This suggests

that the quality of parental engagement, rather than marital configuration, is a more meaningful determinant of students' academic success

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Schools and educational authorities should develop programs and workshops to educate parents on the importance of actively participating in their children's academic activities, including monitoring homework, providing study support, and fostering positive learning attitudes.
2. Teachers should establish regular communication with parents, providing feedback on students' progress and suggesting ways parents can support learning at home.
3. Policymakers and school administrators should consider interventions that address broader home and socio-economic challenges affecting students' performance, such as access to learning resources, stable home environments, and counseling services.
4. Beyond parental involvement, schools should implement mentorship programs, peer support systems, and individualized learning plans to mitigate the limited effect of parental marital status and enhance overall academic achievement.

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