

PARENT-COMMUNITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP: A KEY TO UNLOCKING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SUCCESS IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

The study examines parent-community-school partnership: A key to unlocking early childhood education success in Lagos State. The specific objective is to determine the challenges and opportunities associated with establishing and maintaining effective partnerships. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population were parents and school administrators selected from six primary schools in Badagry and Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State. The sample consisted of 168 respondents sampled through a multistage sampling procedure. A well-designed instrument, titled Parent-Community-School Partnership in Early Childhood Education Questionnaire (PCSP_ECEQ), was used for the study. The Cronbach alpha method of reliability was used to determine the instrument's reliability, and a $r=0.794$ coefficient value was obtained. The result affirms a positive and significant relationship between parents-community-school partnerships and children's academic achievement in early childhood education centres ($r = 9.16$; $p < 0.05$). The results also depict a significant difference in the level of parents-community-school partnerships across different socioeconomic backgrounds ($t = 8.47$; $df = 166 < 0.05$). The study recommended that Teacher training programs should incorporate modules on effective communication strategies, cultural sensitivity, and partnership-building techniques to equip educators with the skills necessary to engage parents and community members from diverse backgrounds. Also, community leaders and local organisations should be actively involved in the planning and implementation of school programs, contributing their expertise and resources to enrich the curriculum and provide additional support to students and families.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Holistic Development, Parent-Community-SchoolPartnership, Parental Involvement

Introduction

Early Childhood Education is a crucial period in a child's development, laying the groundwork for future academic and social success (Sooter, 2013). Recognising its importance, this study explores the pivotal role of parent-community-school partnerships in enhancing early childhood education outcomes, specifically within the context of Lagos State, Nigeria (O'Connell *et al.*, 2016). Such partnerships recognise that education is not confined to the classroom but is a collaborative effort involving parents, community members, and educators (Bierman *et al.*, 2023).

Lagos State, being a diverse and rapidly growing urban centre, presents unique challenges and opportunities for early childhood education. The state's educational landscape is characterised by a mix of public and private institutions, each catering to diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Despite government efforts to improve early childhood education, disparities persist in terms of access, quality, and resources (Owojori & Gbenga-Akanmu, 2021). Many schools struggle with inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching materials, and a shortage of qualified educators. The utilisation of locally made resources is critical for effective teaching, learning, and the development of communicative competence in early childhood education (Okudo & Omotuyole, 2013). Furthermore, parental involvement in education varies widely, influenced by factors such as parental education levels, socioeconomic status, and cultural beliefs.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is popularly recognised as a critical foundation for a child's cognitive, social, spiritual, emotional development and character formation. At this stage, children begin to develop skills

that help them read, write, solve problems and relate with others. In Lagos State, the government and private sectors are working to improve early childhood education, but many children still lack access to quality learning at this critical stage (UNICEF, 2019). Studies have shown that children who have access to quality early childhood education programs tend to perform better academically, exhibit stronger social skills, and have a greater likelihood of lifelong success (Heckman, 2011). However, achieving success in early childhood education requires a collaborative effort from parents, schools, and the community. Parent- community-school Partnership is a crucial factor in ensuring the effectiveness of early childhood education, particularly in developing regions such as Lagos State, Nigeria.

Lagos State, as Nigeria's most populous and economically vibrant region, faces several challenges in the provision of early childhood education. These include inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, disparities in educational quality, and low parental involvement in children's learning (Adeosun, 2016). Research has established that when parents, schools, and communities work together, they create a more supportive learning environment that enhances children's academic and social development (Epstein, 2001). The parent involvement in education through home-based learning support, participation in school activities, and collaboration with teachers has been shown to significantly improve student outcomes (Odebowale & Oyedapo, 2022).

The community also plays a vital role in strengthening early childhood education by providing resources, mentorship programs, and advocating for better policies (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Schools, in turn, serve as the central institutions that facilitate collaboration by engaging parents and community stakeholders in decision-making processes and curriculum implementation. In Lagos State, while government policies exist to promote early childhood education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013), their success largely depends on how well schools, parents, and communities interact to enhance learning experiences for young children. Despite the benefits of a strong Parent-Community-School Partnership, several obstacles hinder its effectiveness in Lagos State. These include economic constraints, cultural perceptions about parental roles in education, and a lack of structured engagement frameworks between schools and communities (Ajayi, 2017). Therefore, understanding the influence of this partnership on early childhood education success is essential for developing strategies that can enhance learning outcomes.

Parent and community engagement in education has become increasingly recognised as a crucial element in improving educational results and promoting societal advancement (Eden *et al.* 2024). Effective parent involvement includes numerous elements, such as parents participating in their children's academic lives, involvement in school events, and advocating for educational fairness (Eden *et al.* 2024). Such partnerships are essential for creating a supportive and enriching learning environment for young children. When parents, teachers, and community members work together, they can provide children with a more holistic and integrated educational experience, which prepares children for formal schooling (Bierman *et al.*, 2023). Parents' attitudes, knowledge, and perceived social standards all play important roles in determining the implementation of inclusive education, highlighting the importance of incorporating parental perspectives in educational strategies (Odebowale & Oyedapo, 2022). It has also been demonstrated that parents of low socioeconomic status spend less time engaging in developmental activities with their children, which contributes significantly to inequalities, highlighting the importance of targeted initiatives ("Reducing Inequalities by Investing in Early Childhood Education and Care," 2025). By leveraging the resources and expertise of parents and community members, schools can enhance their capacity to meet the diverse needs of their students. Community participation provides children with access to a wider range of learning opportunities, cultural experiences, and support networks.

Parental involvement in children's education is a multifaceted construct encompassing various activities and behaviours aimed at supporting children's learning and development (Boonk *et al.* 2018). The most powerful strategy to promote accomplishment is parent involvement, which is an active strategy that significantly boosts children's academic achievements (Sium, 2014). There are several variables that are consistently associated with high levels of academic achievement, including an authoritative parenting style, high and clear expectations and aspirations for their children's school results, communication between parents and children about their school activities and plans for the future, and parents' communication with teachers regarding their

child's progress or difficulties (Porumbu & Necşoi, 2013). Academic achievement includes grades, test scores, and academic awards, as well as the effective completion of educational activities and the attainment of learning objectives (Kumah *et al.*, 2024). Academic achievement not only reflects pupils' cognitive abilities but also their motivation, perseverance, and engagement in the learning process. When parents set high expectations for their children's academic achievement and schooling, engage in regular communication about school-related matters, and provide encouragement and support, children are more likely to succeed academically (Boonk *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, academic success is significantly influenced by an authoritative parenting style and ongoing communication between parents and children about their academic endeavours (Lim, 2021).

Research indicates that effective home-school partnerships have a positive impact on children's literacy development, especially for diverse families (Hindin *et al.* 2017). Parental involvement has a substantial impact on student academics, and the more parental involvement, the more likely students are to excel academically and become productive members of society (Cole, 2017). Parental involvement improves children's self-esteem, academic achievement, and behaviour, and the relationship between these systems is theorised to promote children's academic and behavioural development (Topor *et al.*, 2010; Feng & Tan, 2022).

Theoretical framework

Epstein's framework of six types of involvement provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and promoting parent-community-school partnerships (Porumbu & Necşoi, 2013). The structure strives to bring school, parents, and community together in a positive manner, acting as a guide to educating and supporting parents to enhance their involvement in their children's education (Oranga *et al.*, 2023). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Ali *et al.*, 2020) is another framework that emphasises the interconnectedness of different environmental systems, including the family, school, and community, in influencing child development. The Ecological Systems Theory emphasises the significance of understanding the complex, interactive relationships between a child and their surroundings, including the microsystem (family, school, peers), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (community, workplace), and macrosystem, in order to promote optimal development. This theory highlights the importance of collaboration and communication across these systems to create a supportive and nurturing environment for children's learning and development (Leonard, 2011).

Parents, teachers, and community members all play essential roles in a child's education, and their collaboration is critical for creating a supportive and enriching learning environment (Mahuro & Hungi, 2016). Parent involvement bridges the home and school environments, serving as a mesosystem within an ecological framework, where interactions between these microsystems uniquely influence the child (Nokali *et al.*, 2010). Parental engagement encompasses activities such as parent-child discussions, monitoring learning, and fostering positive relationships, which are linked to enhanced academic success in early grades (Nokali *et al.* 2010). However, differences in socioeconomic status can lead to disparities in family-school connections, impacting academic outcomes, such as poor parents experiencing misunderstandings with school personnel regarding their child's education (Crosnoe, 2023). Therefore, effective partnerships are characterised by mutual respect, open communication, shared decision-making, and a focus on the best interests of the child (Tan *et al.*, 2022; Cabral *et al.*, 2024).

Active parental involvement in school is essential for healthy child development, but it is still relatively rare (Paccaud *et al.*, 2021). Parents and communities play a crucial role in creating inclusive educational practices, with parental involvement being a primary factor (Muhammad *et al.*, 2024). Family engagement strategies and practices can be informed by insights and principles of ecological understanding, and parent-teacher relationships should positively shape the child's development (Paquette & Ryan, 2001; Weiss *et al.*, 2018). The family environment significantly influences a child's engagement in school, with parental support ranging from providing learning resources to setting high educational expectations (Ali & Hassan, 2018). Parental participation, defined as active engagement in a child's education, has been shown to yield significant improvements in student achievement across various forms (Oranga *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, when parents are actively involved in their children's education, children tend to develop more positive attitudes towards school, exhibit fewer behavioural problems, and experience greater success with homework (Kingston, 2021).

Moreover, parental involvement extends beyond academic support to include emotional input, daily interactions, and efforts to foster a child's physical and mental development (Wei, 2022). Effective communication between parents and schools is vital for coordinating efforts and ensuring that students receive consistent support both at home and in the classroom. Teachers' engagement efforts and the school's climate for involvement can impact parents' involvement in their children's schooling (McDowall *et. al.*, 2017). The partnership between parents and the school fosters enhanced education, encouraging friendly interactions, collaboration, and networking, as well as optimistic communication, constructive feedback, and cooperation (Massucco, 2020). Effective communication is essential for developing trust and mutual understanding between parents and teachers, ultimately enhancing student outcomes.

Closing the achievement gap and increasing student learning necessitates collaboration among interested parties, with parents playing a pivotal role (LaRocque *et. al.*, 2011). Children who have been guided by their parents at an early age tend to have better learning outcomes and good cognitive development (Hafiz & Farik, 2017). Parental involvement has a beneficial impact on students' academics, leading to increased motivation, better attendance, and higher levels of accomplishment (Cole, 2017; Leander & Fabella, 2020). According to research, when parents express interest in their children's education, it has a substantial and positive impact on their overall academic performance in secondary school. A child's school-related activities at home, according to research, have a considerable impact on their academic achievement (Latif, 2021). A child's academic performance is greatly influenced by how much their parents are involved (Cole, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the acknowledged benefits of parent-community-school partnerships, numerous obstacles impede their establishment and efficacy in Lagos State. These obstacles include a lack of communication between parents, teachers, and community members, as well as cultural differences, socioeconomic disparities, and a lack of resources. Many parents, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, may face barriers to participation due to time constraints, language barriers, or a lack of understanding of the educational system. Teachers may lack the training and support needed to effectively engage parents and community members, while schools may struggle to create welcoming and inclusive environments for all stakeholders. Furthermore, communities may not fully recognise the importance of early childhood education or may lack the resources needed to support local schools. There is frequently insufficient communication between parents and teachers, as well as a lack of parental knowledge about inclusive education, which impede the involvement of parents of children who are hesitant to provide treatment to their children (Nurjanah & Diana, 2020). Investigating these obstacles is critical for developing targeted interventions and strategies to promote successful parent-community-school partnerships in Lagos State. To address this problem, this study aims to investigate the current state of parent-community-school partnerships in early childhood education in Lagos State.

Purpose of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- i. Examines the nature and extent of parent-community-school partnerships in selected early childhood education centres in Lagos State.
- ii. Determine the challenges and opportunities associated with establishing and maintaining effective partnerships.
- iii. Explore the impact of these partnerships on children's academic, social, and emotional development.

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between the level of parent-community-school partnerships and children's academic achievement in early childhood education centres in Lagos State.

H02: There is no significant difference in the level of parent-community-school partnerships across different socioeconomic backgrounds in Lagos State.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research. Parents and school administrators formed the population of the study. The target population was parents and school administrators selected from six primary school in Badagry and Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State. The sample consisted of 168 respondents sampled through a multistage sampling procedure. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 2 LGAs: Badagry and Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 6 schools from each of the selected LGAs. The stratified sampling technique was used to select 13 preschool parents from each of the selected schools, and 1 school administrator was selected from the selected schools, which give total of 156 preschool teachers and 12 school administrators. A well designed instrument was used for the study, titled Parent-Community-School Partnership in Early Childhood Education Questionnaire (PCSP_ECEQ). The instruments were validated by experts in the Department of Educational Foundations and Counseling Psychology, Lagos State University, Ojo. The items in the instruments were designed to meet both construct and content validity. The Cronbach alpha method of reliability was used to determine the reliability of the instrument, and a coefficient value of $r=0.794$ was obtained. Data collected were analysed using inferential statistics of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) and t-test at 0.05 level of significant.

Results

Testing the Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between the level of parent-community-school partnerships and children's academic achievement in early childhood education centres in Lagos State.

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Correlation on Parents-Community-School Partnerships and Children's Academic Achievement in Early Childhood Education Centres

Variable	N	Mean	Std.D	r	Sig.	Remark
Parent-community-school partnership	168	4.367	13.685			
Children academic achievement	168	5.437	20.039	.916*	0.000	significant

The result in table 1 affirms a positive significant relationship between parents-community-school partnerships and children's academic achievement in early childhood education centres ($r = 9.16$; $p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is rejected. The positive relationship implies that parental participation as active engagement in a child's education has been shown to yield significant improvements in student achievement across various forms of education.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the level of parent-community-school partnerships across different socioeconomic backgrounds in Lagos State.

Table 2: Summary of Independent t-test Showing Difference in the Level of Parent-Community-School Partnerships Across Different Socioeconomic Backgrounds in Lagos State

Variable	N	Mean	Std.D	df	t	Sig.	Remark
home based involvement	96	6.34	10.13				
school based involvement	72	9.26	17.42	166	8.47	.000	significant

The results in Table 2 depicts a significant difference in the level of parents-community-school partnerships across different socioeconomic backgrounds ($t = 8.47$; $df = 166 < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis 2 is

rejected. This implies that parent and community engagement in education has become increasingly recognised as a crucial element in improving educational results and promoting societal advancement. Effective parent involvement includes numerous elements, such as parents participating in their children's academic lives, involvement in school events, and advocating for educational fairness.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between parents-community-school partnerships and children's academic achievement in early childhood education centres. The finding is in line with Muhammad *et al.* (2024) opines that parents and communities play a crucial role in creating inclusive educational practices, with parental involvement being a primary factor. Parents are actively involved in their children's education, children tend to develop more positive attitudes towards school, exhibit fewer behavioural problems, and experience greater success with homework (Kingston, 2021). Moreover, parental involvement extends beyond academic support to include emotional input, daily interactions, and efforts to foster a child's physical and mental development (Wei, 2022).

The findings from hypothesis two depict that there is a significant difference in the level of parents-community-school partnerships across different socioeconomic backgrounds. The finding is in line with Eden *et al.* (2024) says parent and community engagement in education has become increasingly recognised as a crucial element in improving educational results and promoting societal advancement. Effective parent involvement includes numerous elements, such as parents participating in their children's academic lives, involvement in school events, and advocating for educational fairness (Eden *et al.*, 2024). Also, it has been demonstrated that parents of low socioeconomic status spend less time engaging in developmental activities with their children, which contributes significantly to inequalities, highlighting the importance of targeted initiatives ("Reducing Inequalities by Investing in Early Childhood Education and Care," 2025). By leveraging the resources and expertise of parents and community members, schools can enhance their capacity to meet the diverse needs of their students.

Conclusion

The study underscores the crucial role of parent-community-school partnerships in fostering successful early childhood education outcomes in Lagos State, affirming that a collaborative ecosystem significantly enhances children's learning experiences and overall development. It is imperative to offer appropriate and meaningful educational experiences to children, and this can be achieved through the utilisation of locally made resources for effective teaching and learning. The investigation highlights that active parental engagement, encompassing both commitment to the school and direct participation in children's educational activities, correlates strongly with improved cognitive development and academic achievements. Schools that actively cultivate community relationships and integrate local resources into the curriculum demonstrate enhanced learning environments and foster a sense of belonging among students. Effective partnerships necessitate that schools implement deliberate strategies, like regular communication channels, parent-teacher associations, and community-based programs, to surmount challenges such as socio-economic disparities, cultural differences, and logistical hurdles.

Recommendations

To amplify the impact of parent-community-school partnerships, the study recommended that;

1. Teacher training programmes should incorporate modules on effective communication strategies, cultural sensitivity, and partnership-building techniques to equip educators with the skills necessary to engage parents and community members from diverse backgrounds.
2. Schools should establish parent-teacher associations and community-based forums that provide regular opportunities for dialogue, feedback, and collaborative decision-making, fostering a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for children's education.
3. Community leaders and local organisations should be actively involved in the planning and implementation of school programs, contributing their expertise and resources to enrich the curriculum and provide additional support to students and families.

4. Educational interventions should prioritise the integration of community resources and cultural experiences into the curriculum, providing students with relevant, real-world learning opportunities that connect classroom instruction with their daily lives.
5. Parents of low socio-economic status may spend less time on developmental activities because of limited resources and higher exposure to stress.

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