

## PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ADOLESCENTS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated parental expectations and academic achievement of their adolescents in Abia and Anambra state in the South east of Nigeria. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. Multistage sampling technique was used to select the sample of 1,597 (676 male and 921 females) from a population of 3738 (1621 males and 2117 females). Parents of senior secondary school students chosen from 28 schools (14 schools from each state) were used. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire which solicited for parental expectations on the academic achievement of their adolescents (PEAAA) and the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results which were collected from state education commission of each state. Person product moment correlation and Z-test correlation were used in answering research questions and the hypothesis. The result showed that there was positive relationship between parental expectations and academic achievement of their adolescents. The size of correlation between parental expectation and academic achievement of their adolescents was not significantly different among parents dwelling in urban and rural areas.*

*Based on the findings, recommendations were made which include that parents should endeavor to have realistic expectations for the academic achievements of their adolescents. This would make the students increase their efforts and so work harder towards better achievement.*

### **Introduction**

Achievement can be seen as the level of attainment in a given discipline. Academic achievement refers to the level of schooling one has successfully completed and the ability to attain success in his or her studies. Academic achievement could also be the extent to which a student or institution has achieved their short or long term educational goals. In school

setting, test and examination are given to students to assess their achievement. Feedbacks are given to them in form of scores and grades. Pradham and Khirwadkah (1999) asserted that the academic achievement is the degree of attainment a student reaches after being subjected to period of learning. Santrock (2012) in his view referred academic achievement to what students have learned or what skills the students have learned and is usually measured through assessment like standardized tests, and performance assessments. However studies of adolescents achievement in Nigeria show that they score below average in core subjects like English and Mathematics (Abijor 1993 and Adeyemi 2003). On academic achievement, Uzoezie (2004) Adeyemi (2003) and Adoboye (1992), all asserted that adolescents do not perform well in their external examinations.

Adolescence is a transitional period that extends from the end of childhood to the beginning of adulthood (Unachukwu and Ebenebe 2009). Daniel (2001) posited that one of the challenges facing adolescents in Nigeria is their academic achievement. Njoku (2003) in his own view holds that most predictors of adolescents academic achievements are parental expectations of the adolescents' academic successes and failures.

Parental expectations are desires, wishes or goals that parents have regarding their children's future attainment. It can also be said that parental expectations are beliefs or estimates that parents hold about their children's future. Parents have educational expectations for their adolescents and they communicate these expectations in their remarks to these adolescents.

Gardner (2007) revealed that parents expect their adolescents to strive and excel academically. He further said that parents have high expectation for their adolescents academic achievement. Gardner (2007) was of the opinion that parents who have high expectations believe that their adolescent children will meet up with their high expectations. Aldous (2006) found that adolescents who perceived that their parents had high expectations perform well academically. On the other hand, when these adolescent perceived their parents have low expectations, the adolescents 'academic performance suffers. Goldenberg (2009) opined that parents' expectations are dynamic and responsive to adolescents' academic achievements across time. A similar study by Goyett and Xie (2001) examined the reciprocal relationship between parental expectations and students' school performance in sample of Latino families. Finding from the study indicated that parents expectations influence students' expectations and academic achievement. Taken together these studies indicated the important influence parents expectations can have on adolescents' academic achievement. These adolescents might have been meeting their parents' expectations in their primary school but fail to meet up

with those expectations in their junior secondary school examination. This academic achievement of these adolescents constitute a great concern to their parents. Patrikokou (2000) suggested that parents' academic expectations for their adolescent children influence their adolescents' own academic expectations. According to Johnson and Ranson (2004), for some parents, social and welfare expectations are paramount in their thought about school. They hope that the school years will be enjoyable and constitute happy experience for their adolescents. They view the school as providing their adolescents with a opportunity for social education, which is learning how to get on with the other people. Male parents on the other hand found their adolescents school years as good opportunity of exposing their adolescents to the outside world. Thus they view their adolescents as having acquired knowledge and learnt how generally to cope with life as well as being exposed to different careers (Johnson and Ranson 2004). Parents from urban areas have been shown to value ability to a greater extent in their expectations of their adolescents' academic achievement compared to parents from rural areas. (Bugental and Happaney 2002). They further posited that parents from the urban area tend to have more realistic expectation than those in the rural area.

Parental expectations in this study refers to belief, goals, desires parents have for their adolescents' academic achievement. According to Hart and Risley (2005) Parental expectations refers to the level of expected performance held by key adults. Dorobusch and Darling (2009) asserted that when parents clearly stated their expectations for their adolescents' achievement, state specific goals and standard for designed behaviour and achievements, it facilitates adolescents successes in school. Fan and Chen (2001) found out that parents who were aware of what their adolescents were studying in school, communicated regularly with teachers and reinforced school work had adolescents who made greater achievement.

Parents have also been shown to value ability to a greater extent in their expectations of their adolescents' academic achievement (Tulviste & Ahtonen 2007). It is then necessary to determine empirically how parental expectations relate to the academic achievement of their adolescents and this is what the present researchers set out to do in this work. Mathematics and English Language were used by the researchers to assess adolescents' academic achievement. Parents of SS1 students of government schools in the south east Nigeria comprised the population of the study that cut across the urban and rural areas of the zone.

The main purpose of this study is to find out the extent of which parental expectations relate to academic achievement of adolescents. Specifically the study sought to:-

- i) Determine the relationship between parental expectations and the academic achievement of their adolescents.
- ii) Determine the relationship between parental expectations and academic achievement of adolescents in urban and rural areas.

The study was guided by two (2) research questions and one (1) hypothesis and they includes:

What is the relationship between parental expectations and academic achievement of adolescents in Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE)

Is location of parents (Urban/Rural) a factor in the relationship between parental expectations and the academic achievement of their adolescents?

There is no significant relationship between parental expectations and academic achievement of adolescents in BECE.

### **Method**

The study was conducted using a correlational survey design because it sought to determine the relationship between parental expectations and academic achievement of adolescents.

The population for the study comprised parents of senior secondary one SS1 of twenty-eight government owned secondary schools in Abia and Anambra states. The population size was 3738 parents of adolescents, 1621 males and 2117 females from the two states.

The sample size of the study consisted of 1597 parents of SS1 students in Abia and Anambra states. The procedure used in choosing the sample size was simple sample procedure. First, simple random sampling technique was used to select two out of five states that make up south-east. The states selected were Abia and Anambra. Secondly, by simple random sampling technique two out of six education zones from Anambra and two out of four education zones were selected from Abia. The education zones selected were Aguata and Nnewi (for Anambra state), Aba and Umuahia (for Abia State). Thirdly, by simple random sampling, 14 schools were selected (7 urban and 7 rural) from each state making it 28 schools. The instrument used to gather the information was developed by the researcher and validated by experts in measurement and evaluation and educational psychology unit in the faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.

A 12 – item questionnaire named Parental Expectation and Academic Achievement of their Adolescents (PEAAA) was used to collect information

from parents of SS 1 students from Abia and Anambra states. The questionnaire was given to the concerned parents before the BECE was taken.

The copies of the questionnaire were given to students to take home for their parents to fill and return the next day. Parents whose wards were boarders were given theirs to fill during PTA meeting and the questionnaire were collected on the spot. Then the final results of the adolescents were collected from state education commission of each state to determine how they fared academically. The study only considered English and Mathematics.

**Results**

**Table 1:** Research question 1: What is the relationship between Parental expectations and academic achievement of adolescents in BECE?

Person Product Moment correlation coefficient on parental Expectation and Academic Achievement of Adolescents.

Variables	Parental expectation	English	Mathematics
1) Parental Expectations	-		
2) English language	.417		
3) Mathematics	.364	.652	

As shown by the correlation matrix in table1, the correlation between Parental Expectation and English Language Achievement was r.417 while the correlation between expectations and achievement in mathematics was .364. This shows that there was positive relationship between parental expectations and academic achievement of their adolescents.

**Table 2:** Research question 2 Is location of parents a factor in the relationship between parental expectation and academic achievement of adolescents?

Z-test on parents expectations on the Academic Achievement of their Adolescents based on place of domicile.

	Location	N	Mean	STD Dev	:	z-cal	P. value
Parental Expectations	urban	940	19.06	2.56	1,595	-63	532
	rural	657	19.14	2.60			

In table 2, parents from urban areas and those form rural areas do not differ significantly on the expectations they have on the academic achievement of their adolescents as calculated z-value (-63) was less than critical z-value (1.96)

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between parental expectations and academic achievement of their adolescents in BECE.

**Table 3:** Pearson Product moment correlation coefficient on parental expectations and academic achievement of their adolescents.

Variables	Parental expectation	English	Mathematics
1) Parental Expectations	-		
2) English language	.417	-	
3) Mathematics	.364	.652	

### Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that there is positive relationship between parental expectations and academic achievement of their adolescents. The finding agrees with the assertion by Heart and Reisley (2005) that success in school is facilitated by parents' realistic expectations for the adolescents' academic achievement. Goldenberg also revealed that parents' expectations did enhance actual performance of students. Also Yangan (2010) in his study found out that there was a reciprocal relationship between parents' expectations and adolescents' academic achievement.

The finding further revealed that there is no significant difference on the expectations of parents due to place of domicile. Bugental and Hapaney (2002) posited that parental expectations are not influenced by their place of domicile. Parents who live in the urban and rural areas have the same expectations on the academic achievement of their adolescents.

From table 3, there was a significant positive correlation between Parental expectation for the academic achievement of their adolescents in English Language ( $r=0.417$ ) and Mathematics ( $r=0.364$ ). Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

### Conclusion

Many parents complained that their adolescents do not usually meet the academic expectations they have for them. These parents often equate success in school with academic achievement. Parents have the view that academic achievement appears to be the only concrete measure of success in colleges. This perhaps explains why academic achievement appears to be the only concrete measure of success in colleges. This perhaps explains why academic achievements have become topical in educational research and population. One of the factors that has been identified as affecting adolescent academic achievement is parents unrealistic expectations. Sometimes parents give support for their wards to go for "special centres" in order to meet their

expectations. Then the adolescents end up more confused and not seeing the need to work hard to achieve. Findings from this study revealed that parents expectations have positive relationship with the academic achievement of their adolescents. Therefore parents are advised to always have realistic expectations and also encourage their wards to put in necessary effort to achieve.

### **Recommendations:**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents should encourage their adolescent children to work hard in examinations and tests in order to meet up with their expectations. They should emphasize to their adolescents that self actualization can only be achieved through hard work.
2. Parents should have realistic expectations for the academic achievement of their adolescent children.
3. Government should provide schools with adequate facilities and learning materials and make school environment more conducive for teaching and learning.

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