



## Students' Academic Engagement in Secondary Schools: Parental Involvement and Academic Resilience as Predictor Variables

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Parental Involvement, Academic Resilience, Academic Engagement, Secondary School Students

*Received :* 10, November

*Revised :* 20, December

*Accepted:* 25, January

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### ABSTRACT

Academic engagement is essential if students must fulfil their academic goals and key to their success. The research employed a correlational research design to assess the extent to which parental involvement and academic resilience can predict the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State. The study was guided by three research questions and tested three null hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. 19708 senior secondary class two (SS2) students made up the study's population, from which 960 samples were selected using a multi-stage simple random approach. The study employed three instruments, namely the Parental Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ), Academic Resilience Questionnaire (ARQ), and Academic Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ), which were validated by three experts in the field of Educational Psychology. To evaluate the instruments' reliability, the Cronbach Alpha technique was employed, yielding alpha coefficients of 0.72, 0.71, and 0.70 for PIQ, ARQ, and AEQ, respectively. Simple regression analysis was used to test the null hypothesis and simple correlation analysis was used to answer research questions. The results showed that academic engagement is positively correlated with parental involvement and academic resilience. It also demonstrated that parental involvement and academic resilience worked together to enhance secondary school students' academic engagement in Anambra State. The study's conclusions led to the recommendation that parents get active in their children's education to both strengthen their resilience and raise their academic engagement.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Concerns regarding the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State are arising among education stakeholders, who emphasize that the exposure to the curriculum would be futile if students do not actively participate in the learning process. Students who do not participate sufficiently in academic activities may suffer crippling effects that affect society generally, in addition to the individual students. For example, low academic engagement, which raises the risk of low academic performance and failures among students may have a trickle-down effect on lower student literacy and dropout rates (Chika, 2012), which may result in social marginalization. The stage of education known as secondary school acts as a link between primary and postsecondary education. It is expected of students at this level of school to gain the skills and information required to equip them for both further education and a productive life in society (NPE, 2013). The secondary education curriculum does this by expanding on the knowledge acquired at the primary education level. Therefore, the quality of education youngsters receive should not be viewed as children's playthings to ensure suitable preparedness of these students. Teachers are responsible for making sure that students are participating actively in their academic work and quickly following directions. Teachers use strategies like assigning take-home projects and using stimulus modification during curricular presentations to students to make sure they are actively engaged (Anierobi & Unachukwu, 2020).

Academic engagement is a path to academic success involving students' cognitive, behavioural, and emotive commitments to their learning. The process of understanding concepts and academic content offered to students involves cognitive processes and efforts on their part (Agah & Unachukwu, 2020). Furthermore, Agah and Unachukwu proposed that affective engagement refers to students' capacity to positively identify with the school and its extracurricular activities. In contrast, behavioural engagement involves students' manifest, overt, and observable behaviours like taking notes in class, attending regularly, and participating in discussions. By implication, students must be actively involved in their academic work to gain the knowledge and abilities that will help them in the future.

However, there are many distractions from their schoolwork that secondary school students must deal with. For instance, Okafor and Yakubu (2020) asserted that negative peer influence and deviant behaviours deter students from actively engaging in their academic responsibilities. To Odofin, and Ofojebe (2020) and Ipem & Okwara-Kalu (2020), the grip of social media and internet addiction are enemies to students' active participation in schoolwork. Some scholars identified substance abuse and cultism resulting in weapon carrying and use among secondary school students (Nwikpo, Anierobi, Okeke & Ifejiofor, 2020) as factors that distract students from being sufficiently involved in class activities. The ripple effect of poor academic engagement could be observed in poor academic achievement experienced by secondary school students. Some students could turn to cheating on exams to make up for not participating enough in their coursework and other academic obligations

(Meremu & Idoko, 2020). It makes sense, therefore, that students should be made to be fully involved in their academic and learning activities. In doing this both teachers and parents should be involved in the task. In other words, parents have a role to play in working with the teachers through their involvement in their children's education.

Parental involvement denotes the commitments, participation, and contributions that parents make towards getting their children educated in schools. Nnamani, Idoko, Onuigbo and Eze (2020) posited that parental involvement is parents efforts to making education needs of their children available. Parents has the responsibility of ensuring that their children are provided with school materials and as well receive their support for the smooth academic journey their children. As a matter of fact, the involvement of parents in the education of their children should begin from the home. Parental home-based participation in the child's academic life covers such efforts put in by parents in child-rearing, ensuring studying at home and educating the child on academic matters (Altschul, 2012). Parental home-based involvement entails parent's efforts at the home front as a way of partnering with the teacher on educating the child. Some of the parents' partnership efforts could range from disciplining the child into adopting good study habits, assisting them when necessary, with homework, interacting and enlightening them on school matters, communicating high expectations, motivating them to achieve success, and providing enabling environment conducive to learning (Amponsah et. al, 2018).

Scholars revealed that when parents play active role in the education of their children, such commitments usually impact positively on their interest in education which ripple effect could manifest in more positive academic outcomes than children with parents that are less involved in their education (Eboatu & Igboka, 2017). Similarly, scholars such as Onuigbo and Ezeh (2020); Anierobi and Unachukwu (2020); Anyamene, Nwokolo, Akunne and Akuezuilo (2020) and Nnamani, Idoko, linked parental involvement with emotional adjustment, academic engagement, and performance of students respectively. Nevertheless, literature showed that the involvement of parents in the academic study of their children had no positive impact on mathematics achievement of their children (Nwokolo and Obijindu, 2020). Interestingly, parents pay more attention to be part of the academic journey of their children in the early formative years but gradually slow down as the child progressively climbs the education ladder (Anierobi and Ezennaka, 2019). The dwindling parental efforts as the child progresses in levels of education as posited by Anierobi and Ezennaka raises a concern. This is given that a child's academic behaviour could be built and strengthened through parental involvement in education of the child. One of such academic behaviours that parental involvement could build in a child is academic resilience.

Being resilient is having the capacity to cope with difficult and stressful circumstances in one's surroundings (American Psychological Association, 2019). Resilience in the academic context simply refers to a student's capacity for adaptation and recovery from trying circumstances. To put it another way,

academic resilience is the capacity to keep going after obstacles in the way of achieving desired academic accomplishments and achievements (Romano, Angelini, Consiglio & Fiorilli, 2021). Academic resilience, according to Ye, Strietholt, and Blomeke (2021), is the capacity of a student to succeed academically despite obstacles and setbacks. Resilient students, in the opinion of Gamble and Crouse (2020), are able to interact with others, overcome obstacles in the classroom, and feel good about themselves. These traits all contribute to their resilience and higher capacity to recover from setbacks.

Empirically, scholars have not consistently demonstrated that resilient students always have positive outcomes. Academic accomplishment among students is positively correlated with academic resilience, according to research by Unachukwu, Anierobi, Nwosu, and Okeke (2020) and Karabiyik (2020). Romano et al. (2021) found that among Italian high school students, academic resilience was positively correlated with school engagement. Other researchers discovered a positive relationship among academic engagement, self-confidence, academic self-efficacy, and parental participation (Anierobi & Unachukwu, 2020; Anierobi & Ezennaka, 2019). However, in Ogun State, Nigeria, Buslig (2019) discovered no significant correlation between academic resilience and students' academic achievement. In a similar vein, Zuzill (2016) demonstrated that there is no connection between students' GPA and resilience. This suggests that students' academic performance was unaffected by academic resilience.

The academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Anambra State has fluctuated over the years in their external examinations, despite the positive academic outcomes related to students' academic resilience and parental involvement in their children's education. Pupils in these educational institutions continue to face various obstacles that hinder their active involvement in academic pursuits. This research seeks to address a gap in existing literature by investigating the roles of parental involvement and academic resilience as potential indicators affecting the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State. This study will be of great benefit in not only advancing the frontiers of knowledge but also in positioning parents to be committed to the academic lives of their children.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

The researchers utilized the correlation research design in this study to fulfil their goals of determining the nature of the correlation that exists between parental involvement and academic resilience (independent variables) and academic engagement (outcome variable). The researchers precisely examined the field data utilizing linear regression analysis. This specific analytical method was chosen as it is deemed appropriate for demonstrating the alterations resulting from the inclusion of each predictor variable in relation to the outcome variable. In this case, the researchers examined the associations existing between parental involvement and academic engagement; academic resilience and academic engagement; and the joint contribution of parental involvement and academic resilience on academic engagement.

**Research Participants**

Nine hundred and sixty (960) senior secondary class 2 (SS2) students were selected from a population of 19,708 students in the 261 public secondary schools in Anambra State using a multi-stage simple random sampling technique. The sample size consisted of 690 SS2 class students (male 47.7%, female 52.3%). The sample characteristics are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Students’ Socio-demographic Characteristics

	Mean	SD	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age			-	-
15 years	-	-	314	32.7
16 years	-	-	447	46.6
17 years	-	-	162	16.9
18 years	-	-	37	2.9
Gender				
Male	-	-	458	47.7
Female	-	-	502	52.3
Total	-	-	960	100.0

*Source: Field Work (2023)*

Table 1 revealed that the sample size consists of more female SS2 students (502, 52,3%) than male SS2 students (458, 47.7%). 314 representing 32.7% of the students are 15 years old; 447 representing 46.6% are 16 years old; 162 respondents representing 16.9 % are 17 years old and 37 participants representing 2.9% are 18 years old.

The researchers ensured compliance with established ethical norms in social sciences and education research by obtaining explicit permission from participants. Respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point if they deemed it appropriate. To maintain anonymity, a data collection process devoid of sensitive student information was employed, and researchers diligently avoided incorporating any identifying markers during the data-gathering phase.

**Instruments for Data Collection**

The Parental Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ), Academic Resilience Questionnaire (ARQ), and Academic Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ) are the tools used to collect data for the study. The Parental Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ), a 13-item measure modified from Grover (2015), was utilized in this study. Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1) were the four response levels for the items. A respondent's PIQ score might range from 13 to 52 at its highest point. Consequently, higher parental participation at home is indicated by a score of 26 or above, whereas lower parental involvement is indicated by a score of less than 26. The Academic Resilience Questionnaire was adopted from Luthans, Avalio, Avey, and

Norman (2007). It is a 5-item tool with a four-point response scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree weighted as 4, 3, 2, and 1 correspondingly. Each respondent might receive a maximum score of 16 and a minimum score of 4. Academic Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ) for this study is an 18-item instrument designed on a four-point response of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The minimum score for the instrument was 18 while the maximum score was 72. The instrument was adapted from the work of Hart, Stewart and Jimerson (2011). Experts in the field of education validated the three sets of instruments, and the Cronbach Alpha method was used to assess their reliability. The instruments produced alpha coefficients of 0.72, 0.71, and 0.70 for PIQ, ARQ, and AEQ, respectively.

### Method of Data Analysis

Using SPSS version 25, data gathered from the respondents were examined using linear regression models. To make sure the items in our data were consistent within, we first vetted them. Utilizing SPSS, the researchers conducted Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) testing to determine the dependability and internal consistency of our instruments. A significance level of 0.005 was used by the researchers to examine the data, and they found that any value less than 0.05 was not significant and any value greater than 0.50 was significant. This decided whether to accept or reject the study's null hypotheses.

### Results

Research Question 1: What is the nature of the relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State?

**Table 1: Simple linear regression analysis of the nature of the relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std Error
1	.468	.219	.211	.733

The information presented in Table 1 indicates that there is a moderate and positive correlation ( $r = 0.468$ ) between parental involvement and students' academic engagement, with a coefficient of determination of 0.219. This suggests that in Anambra State, there exists a beneficial relationship between parental involvement and the academic engagement of secondary school students. Essentially, parental involvement contributes to enhancing the level of academic engagement among these students. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination, at 0.219, implies that approximately 21.9% of the variation in students' academic engagement can be attributed to their level of parental involvement.

Research Question 2: What is the nature of the relationship between academic resilience and academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State?

**Table 2: Simple linear regression analysis of the nature of the relationship between academic resilience and academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std Error
1	.427	.205	.197	.912

The information presented in Table 2 indicates a correlation coefficient of 0.427 between academic resilience and students' academic engagement, along with a coefficient of determination of 0.205. These findings suggest a moderate and positive association between parental involvement and the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State. Essentially, active parental participation appears to contribute to enhanced academic involvement among secondary school students. Moreover, the coefficient of determination of 0.205 signifies that approximately 20.5% of the variation in students' academic engagement can be attributed to their level of parental involvement.

Research Question 3: What is the joint contribution of parental involvement and psychological capital on the prediction of academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State?

**Table 3: Model Summary for a joint contribution of parental involvement and psychological capital on the prediction of academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std Error	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.492	.230	.226	2.03602	2	957	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Resilience, Parental Involvement

The information presented in Table 3 demonstrates that there is a positive correlation ( $r = .492$ ) between parental involvement and academic resilience in relation to the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State. The coefficient of determination is .230, signifying that 23% of the variation in students' academic engagement can be attributed to the combined influence of both parental involvement and psychological capital. In essence, the collaborative impact of parental involvement and academic resilience accounts for 23% of the academic engagement observed in secondary school

students in Anambra State, indicating a significant contribution to their educational involvement.

Hypothesis 1: Parental involvement does not significantly predict the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State.

**Table 4: Regression on the predictive power of parental involvement on academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	25.306	4.227		5.987	.000
	Parental Involvement	.443	.081	.468	5.140	.000
	R	.468 <sup>a</sup>				.000
	R <sup>2</sup>	.219				.000
	F	26.421				.000

b. Dependent Variable: Academic Engagement

The analysis presented in Table 4 demonstrates that there is a statistically significant predictive relationship between parent involvement and the academic engagement scores of secondary school students in Anambra State. The beta coefficient ( $\beta$ ) associated with this relationship is 0.47, and the p-value is less than 0.05 ( $p \leq .000$ ), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. With a sample size of 960 participants, the findings indicate that parental involvement significantly predicts the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State.

Hypothesis 2: Academic resilience does not significantly predict the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State.

**Table 5: Regression on the predictive power of academic resilience on academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	23.035	2.079		6.075	.000
	Academic Resilience	.402	.065	.427	4.348	.000
	R	.427				.000
	R <sup>2</sup>	.205				.000
	F	22.153				.000

c. Dependent Variable: Academic Engagement

The analysis presented in Table 5 demonstrates that academic resilience has a significant predictive impact on the academic engagement scores of secondary school students in Anambra State, with a beta coefficient ( $\beta$ ) of .43, and a p-value of less than .05 ( $p \leq .000$ ) based on a sample size of 960. The rejection of the null hypothesis indicates that there is a meaningful association between academic resilience and academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State, highlighting the importance of academic resilience as a predictor in this context.

Hypothesis 3: Parental involvement and academic resilience do not significantly predict the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State.

**Table 6: Model Summary for joint predictive effects of parental involvement and psychological capital on academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	23.035	2.079		6.075	.000
	Academic Resilience	.231	.052	.205	3.816	.000
	Parental Involvement	.334	.081	.354	4.121	.000
	R	.492 <sup>a</sup>				.000
	R <sup>2</sup>	.230				.000
	F	15.203				.000

Table 6 displays results indicating a regression coefficient (R) of .492 and an R-squared value (R<sup>2</sup>) of .230. This suggests that the predictor variables collectively accounted for 23% of the variance in the response variable. The corresponding F-statistic (2, 957) = 15.203 is statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . Consequently, these findings imply that the simultaneous influence of parental involvement and academic resilience is substantial in explaining the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State, with a higher impact expected. The null hypothesis was, therefore, not accepted. Thus, parental involvement and academic resilience jointly predicted the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State.

**DISCUSSION**

The study sought to find the relationships between the predictor variables (parental involvement and academic resilience) and the outcome variable (academic engagement). The study's outcomes indicated that there is a moderately positive correlation ( $r = 0.468$ ) between parental involvement and

the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State. Additionally, the findings demonstrated that parental involvement is a significant predictor ( $p < .05, 0.00$ ) of secondary school students' academic engagement. This implies that as parental involvement increases, the academic engagement of students increases with it. Deductively, the academic engagement of children will be promoted if parents are involved in their education by providing all the necessary materials and support needed. This finding aligns with Anierobi and Unachukwu (2020); Anyamene, Nwokolo, Akunne and Akuezuilo (2020) and Nnamani, Idoko, Onuigbo and Ezeh (2020) who found a positive relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement; academic achievement, and emotional adjustment students respectively. However, the finding disagrees with Nwokolo and Obijindu (2020) that parental involvement in their children's learning had a negative relationship with their academic achievement in mathematics. This disparity in findings could be because some students seem to have a negative attitude towards mathematics as a difficult subject or as a result of other variables not controlled in both studies.

The study revealed a moderate and favorable correlation ( $r = 0.427$ ) between the academic resilience and academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State. Additionally, the findings indicated that academic resilience had a significant predictive effect ( $p < .05, 0.00$ ) on the academic engagement of secondary school students. This implies that an increase in students' academic resilience brings about an increase in their academic engagement. This finding corroborates with Unachukwu, Anierobi, Nwosu and Okeke (2020) and Karabiyik (2020) who found a positive relationship between academic resilience and academic achievement among students. It also aligns with Romano et al (2021) who observed a positive relationship between academic resilience and school engagement among high school students. On the other hand, the finding of this study disagrees with Buslig (2019) that academic resilience has no significant relationship with students' academic performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. The disparity in findings could be traceable to the time interval both studies were conducted or other intervening variables not controlled in both studies.

The study further showed that parental involvement and academic resilience made a positive and joint contribution ( $r = .492$ ) to the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State. When further tested, the joint contribution made was significant ( $p < .05, 0.00$ ). This implies that when parents become involved in the education of their children, it can boost the children's academic resilience. In other words, the presence of both parental involvement and academic resilience can greatly improve the academic engagement of students. This finding is supported by Anierobi and Unachukwu (2020) who found that home-based parental involvement and academic self-efficacy have a positive relationship with the academic engagement of students. The finding also aligns with Anierobi and Ezennaka (2019) that parental involvement and academic confidence have a significant relationship with the academic engagement of students.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the description above, it can be concluded that the millennial generation is unknowingly trapped in the realm of the sandwich generation at an age that is still considered productive, from 15 to 64 years old. The time that should be used for education is instead used to work to support the lives of family, younger siblings and so on. The Sandwich generation is a generation that is squeezed when they have a family, or are not yet married but must and need to think about their other families, both emotionally and financially. There are many families under one roof, so this means that the sandwich generation does not have better priorities, both psychologically and financially. The impact could be bad for this sandwich generation, such as becoming easily stressed, often feeling tired, being overly anxious and so on. Talking about this is certainly a sensitive topic to discuss, but it must be discussed because it is important for society, including those who are part of the sandwich generation, to be able to understand more broadly about this sandwich generation.

## ADVANCED RESEARCH

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

1. Educational psychologists and school counsellors should work together with school authorities to provide stimulating and enriching learning environments to enable students to get more involved in their learning.
2. Parents should make more efforts to involve themselves in the education of their children by providing their educational needs and other necessary support. This will go a long way in boosting students' academic resilience and engagement in their studies

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