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**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION IN OGUN-STATE, NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR  
COUNSELLING**

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*Abstract*

Parental involvement has a greater impact on the academic achievement of elementary aged students than secondary students hence the need for counselling intervention for parents. This research aims to provide descriptive data on the challenges faced by parents during involvement in early childhood education and obtain empirical data on the relationship between challenges of parental involvement and its effects on early childhood education. The research utilized descriptive survey design with a sample size of 230 respondents which were randomly selected from two private and public Nursery schools in Ogun State, Nigeria. Questionnaire was used to elicit responses and pilot study revealed Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.95. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Parents take children to places to learn special things" (mean = 3.47) ranked first among parental involvement in early childhood education. "Parents attend to their children's assignment" (mean = 3.45) ranked first among the factors considered in parental involvement. There is no significant relationship between challenges faced during parental involvement and its effect on early childhood education. It was concluded that parental involvement in early childhood education has a great role to play in the future educational pursuit of the children. It was recommended that counselling intervention should be done on disseminating knowledge of the roles expected of parents in early childhood education through seminars, workshops, parents-teachers' association forum, and mass media.

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**Keywords:** Parents, involvement, childhood, education, counselling, Nigeria.



## 1. Introduction

Most children have two main categories of educators in their lives – their parents and their teachers. Parents are the prime educators until the child attends an early years' setting or starts school and they remain a major influence on their children's learning throughout school and beyond. Early learning experiences at home may be initiated by informed parents and/or may be guided by children's preschool teachers (Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013). The school and parents have crucial roles to play in children's early learning. There is no universal agreement on what parental involvement is. It can take many forms including potty training, feeding, reading to the children at home, teaching songs or nursery rhymes and assisting with homework. (Okonkwo, 2014)

The pre-school years represent crucial opportunities for the development of parental involvement in children's early education (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008), as parents' active involvement in their children's learning has been shown to improve children's academic, behavioural, and social outcomes (Chazan-Cohen, Raikes, Brooks-Gunn, Ayoub, Pan, Kisker, Roggman, & Fuligni, 2012; Powell, Son, File, San Juan, 2010). Parental involvement facilitates children's development of pre-literacy skills such as phonological awareness and letter name knowledge (Powell et al., 2010). These skills have been shown to be essential for later school success. Moreover, the transition to preschool marks the beginning of an important relationship between home and school. A child's first experiences in school are often parents' first experiences as critical stakeholders in their children's formal schooling (Powell et al., 2010).

Parental involvement during pre-school may also allow parents to develop skills in working collaboratively with school personnel. It may be particularly important for children from low-income families. The pre-school years are therefore an optimal time to establish parental involvement and to familiarize parents of children at-risk for academic difficulties with the skills children need to acquire prior to entering elementary school (Reynolds, Weissberg, & Kaspro, 1992).

Trotman (2001) opined that parent involvement was designed to create a partnership that allowed for greater collaboration between home and school for the expressed purpose of improved student outcomes. It was intended to enhance the school's capacity to understand and appreciate values and cultures of families and be more effective in meeting student needs. Parent involvement in education was important because it added value to the educational development of students of all ages and populations (Ascher, 1988; Hickman, Greenwood, & Miller, 1995; Wehlberg, 1996; Montesinos, 2004).

Wehlburg (1996) indicated that parent involvement programmes might require making opportunities available for some parents while having to provide knowledge and skills for other parents so they could learn how to be involved and feel comfortable taking advantage of the opportunities to be involved. Parent involvement was by definition ambiguous and was often discussed in terms of inconsistent categories or types of parent involvement. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1987) defined parental role in the two categories of home based activities such as helping with homework and school-based activities such as tutoring and volunteering in schools.

Parental role was defined in six categories: (a) traditional (parent as audience or bystander-observer), (b) parent as a decision maker, (c) parent as a classroom volunteer, (d) parent as a paid paraprofessional or teachers' aide, (e) parents as learners (participants in childhood development or

parenting classes), and (f) parents as teachers of their own children at home (Banch, Vietze, & Morris, 1973, as cited in Wehlburg, 1996).

According to Wehlburg (1996) and Epstein (2005), parent involvement should be considered as basic obligations of the parent (health, safety, etc.), basic obligations of the schools (schools communicate to parents about programs/progress), participating in schools' activities (volunteering and participating in extracurricular activities, sports, plays, etc.), initiating learning activities in the home (parents initiating activities with their child or children initiating help through questions), and participating in governance and advocacy (parents assume decision making roles).

Jasso (2007) indicated there were still other definitions of parent involvement; however, he pointed out that often while social factors had been blamed for children's school failure, more in-depth examination revealed that parental intervention had a greater impact on student success than socioeconomic status and family dynamics. Further, he suggested that parental involvement extended beyond simply ensuring homework was completed successfully or attendance at Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Research has shown that parents involvement has a greater impact on the academic achievement of elementary aged students than secondary students (Jordan et al., 2001). Parental involvement during elementary, middle, and high school and later outcomes has been established (Domina, 2005; Altschul, 2011). Though, it has been found that the effectiveness of parental involvement declines as children age (Castanbis & Garland, 1997), few studies have however examined parental involvement during the pre-school years and its impact on later outcomes (Hindman & Morrison, 2012; Jeynes, 2012; St. Clair, Jackson, & Zweiback, 2012).

Many educators and researchers (Kleemans, Peeters, Segers, & Verhoeven, 2012; Arnold et al., 2008) view early childhood education as beneficial to children's cognitive and social development. These proponents base their conviction on personal observation and on studies linking early childhood programmes to desirable outcomes. The scant research available on the outcomes of parental involvement demonstrates its positive influences on children's academic, behavioural, and social outcomes. For instance, parents' active involvement during the pre-school years has been positively associated with children's pre-literacy development, acquisition of mathematical skills, well-developed social skills, and positive attitudes toward school (Kleemans et al., 2012; Arnold et al., 2008; Powell et al., 2010). Children's later reading achievement during the elementary and middle school years is an additional long-term benefit of parental involvement during pre-school stage (Landry et al., 2012; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). Hence, the need to focus research on the parents to know if they are involved in educating their children at the early childhood period.

## **3. Research Questions**

Four (4) research questions (RQ) were formulated to guide this study:

1. What are the parental involvements in early childhood education?

2. What are the factors responsible for parental involvement in early childhood education?
3. What are the challenges faced by parents during involvement in early childhood education?
4. What are the effects of parental involvement in early childhood education on the academic performances of the children?

### **3.1. Research Hypotheses**

This research also investigated the validity of two null hypotheses that were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H<sub>0</sub>1. There is no significant relationship between challenges faced during parental involvement and its effect on early childhood education.

H<sub>0</sub>2. There is no significant difference between the fathers' involvement and the mothers' involvement in early childhood education.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

This research sought to provide descriptive data on parental involvement in early childhood education as well the challenges faced by parents during involvement in early childhood education. The study sought to also provide empirical data on the relationship between challenges of parental involvement and its effects on early childhood education.

## **5. Research Methods**

The study was conducted in Abeokuta metropolis of Ogun State, Nigeria. The research utilized descriptive survey design. The population for this study comprised of parents of students from twenty (20) Nursery schools in Abeokuta South Local Government Area (LGA) of Ogun State.

Multi-stage sampling technique was used for the selection of respondents. At the first stage, simple random sampling technique (ballot system) was used to select two private and two public Nursery Schools for the research. At the second stage, simple random sampling technique (ballot system) was used to select two hundred and thirty (230) parents consisting of both male and female in the selected Nursery schools in Abeokuta South LGA.

A structured questionnaire was the instrument used to elicit responses from the participants. The questionnaire was content validated by expert judgment and tried out on twenty-three (23) randomly selected respondents for reliability purpose. A Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained.

Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools.

## **6. Findings**

### **6.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were obtained from respondents' information in the questionnaire. Summary is given in Table 01.

**Table 01.** Demographic characteristics of the respondents

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>1</b>	<b>Age</b>		
	21-30 years	103	44.8
	31-40 years	87	37.8
	41-50 years	18	7.8
	51-60 years	16	7.0
	Above 60 years	6	2.6
<b>2</b>	<b>Sex</b>		
	Male	82	35.7
	Female	148	64.3
<b>3</b>	<b>Marital status</b>		
	Single	94	40.9
	Married	120	52.2
	Separated	8	3.5
	Divorced	4	1.7
	Widowed	4	1.7
<b>4</b>	<b>Religion</b>		
	Christianity	155	67.4
	Islam	73	31.7
	Traditional	2	0.9
<b>5</b>	<b>Family type</b>		
	Monogamous	142	61.7
	Polygamous	54	23.5
	Single parent	34	14.8
<b>6</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>		
	Yoruba	192	83.5
	Hausa	14	6.1
	Igbo	24	10.4
<b>7</b>	<b>Educational level</b>		
	No formal education	42	18.3
	Primary education	42	18.3
	Secondary education	61	26.5
	Tertiary education	71	30.9
	Others	14	6.1
<b>8</b>	<b>Occupation</b>		
	Farmer	20	8.7
	Trader	66	28.7
	Civil servant	102	44.3
	Others	42	18.3

Table 01 revealed that 44.8% of the respondents were within 21-30 years, 37.8% were within 31-40 years, 7.8% were within 41-50 years. This implies that most of the respondents were still young and in their active age. In considering their gender, 35.7% respondents were male and 64.3% were female. Table 01 also showed that 40.9% of the respondents were single, 52.2% were married. Majority of the respondents were married which means that the respondents were matured because marriage is believed to confer responsibility on individuals. Table 01 further revealed that majority (67.4%) of respondents were Christians, 31.7% were Muslim and 0.9% were traditional worshippers. Table 01 indicated that 61.7% of the respondents were from monogamous family, 23.5% were from polygamous family and

14.8% were from a single parent family type. In considering their educational status, 18.3% of them had no formal education, 26.5% had secondary school education. This implies that the highest education acquired by the respondents was secondary school education. Education is said to be light, and parents who are educated are believed to be more concerned and involved in early childhood education and upbringing of their children than parents who are not educated (Gratz, 2006).

## 6.2. RQ1. What are the parental involvements in their children’s childhood education?

This question was answered with data from respondents on the parental involvements in their children’s childhood education in the questionnaire. Summary is given in Table 02.

**Table 02.** [Distribution of parental involvements in their children’s childhood education]

S/N	Statements	SD F (%)	D F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean	Ranking
1	Parents should take their children to places in the community to learn special things (e.g. Zoo, museum, etc...)	2 (0.9)	21 (9.1)	75 (32.6)	132 (57.4)	3.47	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	Parents should spend time with their children working on reading/writing skills	10 (4.3)	16 (7.0)	65 (28.3)	139 (60.4)	3.45	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3	Parent should maintain clear rules at home that their children should obey	-	8 (3.5)	132 (57.4)	90 (39.1)	3.36	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	Parents should share stories with their children about when they were in school	-	10 (4.3)	137 (59.6)	83 (36.1)	3.32	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	Parents should review their childhood’s school work	24 (10.4)	7 (3.0)	94 (40.9)	105 (45.7)	3.22	5 <sup>th</sup>
6	Parent should attend workshops or training offered by their childhood’s school	8 (3.5)	8 (3.5)	146 (63.5)	68 (29.6)	3.19	6 <sup>th</sup>
7	Parents should spend time with their children working on number skills	18 (7.8)	8 (3.5)	118 (51.3)	86 (37.4)	3.18	7 <sup>th</sup>
8	Parent should bring home learning materials for their childhood (tapes, videos, books)	9 (3.9)	38 (16.5)	87 (37.8)	96 (41.7)	3.17	8 <sup>th</sup>
9	Parents should spend time with their children working on creative activities (like singing, dancing, drawing, and story- telling)	14 (6.1)	12 (5.2)	159 (69.1)	45 (19.6)	3.02	9 <sup>th</sup>
10	Parents should praise their children for his/her school work in front of the teacher	81 (35.2)	43 (18.7)	72 (31.3)	34 (14.8)	2.26	10 <sup>th</sup>

Note: F = Frequency, SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The items on parental involvements in their children’s childhood education were ranked according to the mean responses. “Parents should take their children to places in the community to learn special things to improve the learning ability” ranked highest (mean =3.47) by the mean score rating among parental involvements in children’s childhood education and was followed by “Parents should spend time

with their children working on reading/writing skills” (mean =3.45). “Parent should maintain clear rules at home that their children should obey” ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> (Mean =3.36). This agrees with Wehlburg, (1996) who stated that parental role could be defined in six categories as traditional (parent as audience or bystander-observer), parent as a decision maker (PTA), parent as a classroom volunteer, parent as a paid paraprofessional or teacher’s aide, parents as learners (participants in childhood development or parenting classes), and parents as teachers of their own students at home. This is also in line with Epstein (2001) who described six types of involvement including parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, and decision making, and collaborating with the community. This is also in line with Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1987) who defined parental role in the two categories of home based activities such as helping with homework and school-based activities such as tutoring and volunteering in schools.

### **6.3. RQ2. What are the factors responsible for parental involvement in early childhood education?**

This question was answered with data from respondents on factors responsible for parental involvement in early childhood education. Summary is given in Table 03.

**Table 03.** Factors responsible for parental involvement in early childhood education

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>SD F (%)</b>	<b>D F (%)</b>	<b>A F (%)</b>	<b>SA F (%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
1	Parents should have time to attend to their children’s assignment	8 (3.5)	10 (4.3)	83 (36.1)	129 (56.1)	3.45	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	Parents should have the time to attend parents’ teachers’ association (PTA) meeting	2 (0.9)	14 (6.1)	98 (42.6)	116 (50.4)	3.43	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3	Parents should attend their children’s open day	20 (8.7)	14 (6.1)	67 (29.1)	129 (56.1)	3.33	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	Parent should afford adequate provision of their children’s school material	8 (3.5)	38 (16.5)	68 (29.6)	116 (50.4)	3.27	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	Parent should have passion for childhood education	19 (8.3)	16 (7.0)	79 (34.3)	116 (50.4)	3.27	4 <sup>th</sup>
6	My parents were involved in my childhood education	22 (9.6)	17 (7.4)	79 (34.3)	112 (48.7)	3.22	6 <sup>th</sup>
7	Parents occupation should help their involvement in their children’s education	26 (11.3)	18 (7.8)	77 (33.5)	109 (47.4)	3.17	7 <sup>th</sup>

The items responsible for parents’ involvement in early childhood education as perceived by the respondents were ranked according to the mean responses. “Parents should have time to attend to their children’s assignment” was ranked highest (mean=3.45) by the mean score rating among factors responsible for parental involvement and was followed by “Parents should have the time to attend parents’ teachers’ association (PTA) meeting” (mean=3.43). “Parents should attend their children’s open day” ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> (mean=3.33) while “Parent should make adequate provision of their children’s school material” ranked 4<sup>th</sup> (mean=3.27) along with “Parent should have passion for education”. These findings agree with the study of Hill & Taylor (2004) which posited that parental involvement has typically been

defined as parents’ engagement in activities such as volunteering at school, communicating with teachers, participating in academic activities at home, and attending school events, meetings, and conferences.

**6.4. RQ3. What are the challenges faced by parents during involvement in early childhood education?**

This question was answered with data from respondents on the challenges faced by parents during involvement in early childhood education. Summary is given in Table 04.

**Table 04.** Distribution of respondents according to challenges faced during involvement in early childhood education

S/N	Statements	No F (%)	Yes F (%)	Ranking
1	I usually have a busy schedule	55(23.9)	175(76.1)	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	My children’s school is far from home	125(54.3)	105(45.7)	5 <sup>th</sup>
3	My children’s school is far from my office/place of work	99(43.0)	131(57.0)	2 <sup>nd</sup>
4	I barely have time for my children	107(46.5)	123(53.5)	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	Our resident is not far from my children’s school	102(44.3)	128(55.7)	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Table 04 presents the findings on the challenges faced by parents during involvement in early childhood education. “I usually have a busy schedule” ranked highest (76.1%) among the challenges faced by parents during involvement and was followed by “My child’s school is far from my office/place of work” (57.0%). “Our resident is not far from my child’s school ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> (55.7%) while “I barely have time for my child/children” ranked 4<sup>th</sup> (53.5%). Barriers to parent involvement could be attributed to school practices and perceptions as an institution and the perceptions parents brought to bear relative to their role and life situation (Trotman, 2001; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The finding also corroborates Trotman (2001) who posited that factors contributing to the problem of low parent involvement in schools was the inconsistency of the definition of parent involvement, which represented a plethora of definitions that included parents being active with ongoing participation in a child’s education. She noted Epstein’s classification system, which included school and home interactions and activities, communication, providing home learning activities and parents serving as decision-makers.

**6.5. RQ4. What are the effects of parental involvement in early childhood education on the academic performance of the children?**

This question was answered with data from respondents on the effects of parental involvement on the academic performances of the children. Summary is given in Table 05.



**Table 05.** Distribution of effects of parental involvement on academic performance of the children

S/N	Statements	SD F (%)	D F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean	Ranking
1	Parental involvement in childhood education promotes parent-child relationship	12 (5.2)	4 (1.7)	54 (23.5)	160 (69.6)	3.57	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	Parental involvement enhances your childhood reading skill/ability	8 (3.5)	10 (4.3)	69 (30.0)	143 (62.2)	3.51	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3	Parental involvement encourages childhood learning	6 (2.6)	2 (0.9)	97 (42.2)	125 (54.3)	3.48	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	Parental involvement in your children's childhood education improves his/her spoken English	-	19 (8.3)	78 (33.9)	133 (57.8)	3.41	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	Parental involvement in childhood education can enhance good grades	6 (2.6)	4 (1.7)	124 (53.9)	96 (41.7)	3.35	5 <sup>th</sup>
6	Has there been improvement in your children's result since the commencement of your involvement	20 (8.7)	4 (1.7)	87 (37.8)	119 (51.7)	3.33	6 <sup>th</sup>
7	Parental involvement improves your childhood intellectual ability	16 (7.0)	17 (7.4)	77 (33.5)	120 (52.2)	3.31	7 <sup>th</sup>

Effects of parental involvement in early childhood education on academic performance of the children is ranked according to the mean responses. “Parental involvement in childhood education promotes parent-child relationship” ranked highest (mean =3.57) by the mean score rating and was followed by “Parental involvement enhances your childhood reading skill/ability” (mean =3.51). “Parental involvement encourages childhood learning” ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> (mean =3.48) while “Parental involvement in your childhood’s education improves his/her spoken English” ranked 4<sup>th</sup> (mean =3.41). The findings of this study are corroborated by Kgosodialwa (2010) who posited that parental involvement is one factor that has been consistently related to a child's increased academic performance. Parental involvement is grounded in the understanding that children’s success in mathematics is influenced by multiple contexts (e.g., home, school, and community) in a dynamic and bidirectional manner (Vukovic, Roberts, & Wright, 2013) while another research indicates that parental involvement has a greater impact on the academic achievement of elementary-aged students than of secondary school students (Jordan et al., 2001).

**6.6. Test of hypothesis: H<sub>0</sub>1. There is no significant relationship between challenges faced during parental involvement and its effect on early childhood education.**

The result of the test of hypothesis H<sub>0</sub>1 is presented in Table 06.

**Table 06.** Test of relationship between challenges faced during parental involvement and its effect on early childhood education

Variable	r-value	P	Remark
Challenges during parental involvement Effect on early childhood education	.040	.547	Not Sig

The result presented in Table 06 showed that there was no significant relationship between challenges faced during parental involvement and its effect on early childhood education ( $r = .040$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that the challenges faced by parents during involvement may not influence early childhood education of their children.

**6.7. Ho2. There is no significant difference between the fathers’ involvement and the mothers’ involvement in early childhood education.**

The result of the test of hypothesis Ho2 is presented in Table 07.

**Table 07.** Test of difference between fathers’ involvement and mothers’ involvement in early childhood education

Variable	N	Mean	Crit-t	Cal-t.	DF	P
Father	82	22.80	1.96	3.733	228	.000
Mother	148	24.60				

The result in Table 07 showed that there is a significant difference between fathers’ involvement and mothers’ involvement in early childhood education (Crit-t = 1.96, Cal.t = 3.733, DF = 228,  $P < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is significant difference between the fathers’ involvement and the mothers’ involvement in the early childhood education. Hence, it was observed from Table 07 that mothers (mean=24.6014) had a huge impact in early childhood education compared to the fathers (mean=22.8049) in the study.]

**7. Conclusion**

The study concluded that parental involvement in early childhood education must be taken with seriousness in the upbringing of the childhood because this will help the childhood to have a very good academic background to build on for a better future. The study concluded that there is no significant relationship between challenges faced during parental involvement and its effect on early childhood education. However, that there is significant difference between the fathers’ involvement and the mothers’ involvement in early childhood education of their children.

**7.1. Implication for Counselling**

Counselling intervention should be provided at the schools for parents on the importance of their involvement to the academic performance of their children. Guidance should be provided to the parents on how to employ multiple contexts approach in a dynamic and bidirectional manner to assist the childhood development of their children through parental involvement at home, school and community.

Parents should be counselled on time management as this will enable them to create time out their busy schedules for involvement in the learning and development of their children. Barriers to parental involvement, which has been attributed to school practices and perceptions as an institution, should be addressed through counselling intervention so that parental perceptions of their role and life situation could be positive.

## 7.2. Recommendations

It was recommended that parents should know what their involvement should be during their children's early education and carry it out well. Parents should never let challenges, especially their work, stop them from carrying out their roles on their children early in their childhood. |

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