

Influence of Parental Support on the Academic Performance of Some-In-School Adolescent with Cerebral Palsy in Ilorin Metropolis

Oluwatoyin Rachael Moses

Department of Special Education
Faculty of Education, Kwara State University, Malete
racheal.moses@kwasu.edu.ng
08135526932

&

Musa Sufiyan Aliyu

Department of Special Education
Faculty of Education, Kwara State University, Malete
sufiyanu.musa@kwasu.edu.ng
09036889942

Abstract

This study investigated the influence of parental support on the academic performance of some in-school adolescents with cerebral palsy in Ilorin metropolis, Nigeria. Cerebral palsy presents significant physical, communication, and learning challenges that often impede educational participation, making parental support critical for academic success. A descriptive survey research design was employed, with 40 adolescents with cerebral palsy aged 13–19 years selected from inclusive and special schools using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Parental Support and Academic Performance Questionnaire (PSAPQ)" and analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores. The content validity and reliability was found to be 0.76 respectively. Findings revealed that emotional parental support significantly influences academic performance, with a weighted mean of 3.40, indicating that parental encouragement, confidence-building, emotional comfort, and affirmation positively shape educational outcomes. Additionally, parental involvement in school activities was found to affect academic performance to a high extent (weighted mean = 3.40), with parents actively monitoring attendance, collaborating with teachers, providing learning materials, and participating in school events. The study concludes that both emotional support and active parental engagement are essential determinants of academic success among adolescents with cerebral palsy. Recommendations include consistent parental encouragement, school-based parental training programs, strengthened parent-teacher communication, and inclusive education policy enforcement to enhance educational outcomes for learners with disabilities.

Keywords: Parental Support, Cerebral Palsy, Academic Performance, Adolescents, Inclusive Education

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental human right and an essential tool for development, social integration, and individual empowerment. It equips individuals with the knowledge, values, skills, and competencies required for meaningful participation in society and contributes significantly to economic growth and social transformation (UNESCO, 2021).

For children and adolescents living with disabilities, education serves not only as a means of academic development but also as a pathway to independence, social inclusion, self-confidence, and improved quality of life (United Nations, 2022).

Parental support refers to the emotional, financial, educational, psychological, and social assistance provided by parents to facilitate the development and well-being of their children. In educational settings, parental support may involve paying school fees, providing educational materials, monitoring academic progress, assisting with assignments, communicating with teachers, attending school meetings, and encouraging positive attitudes toward learning (Castro et al., 2022). For adolescents with cerebral palsy, parental support often extends beyond ordinary care-giving responsibilities to include therapy coordination, mobility assistance, transportation support, emotional reassurance, and advocacy for inclusive educational opportunities.

Globally, the educational needs of persons with disabilities have continued to attract scholarly and policy attention due to persistent inequalities in access to quality education. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over one billion people worldwide live with some form of disability, while children with disabilities are more likely to experience exclusion from educational opportunities than their peers without disabilities (WHO, 2023). The organization further emphasized that barriers such as inaccessible school environments, inadequate support services, poverty, discrimination, and social stigma continue to limit educational participation among learners with disabilities. One of the most common childhood neurological disorders associated with physical disability is cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy refers to a group of permanent disorders affecting movement, posture, coordination, and motor functioning caused by non-progressive disturbances in the developing brain (Novak et al., 2020). The condition may also be associated with impairments in communication, cognition, perception, hearing, and learning depending on the severity of the neurological damage (Kendrick-Allwood et al., 2024). Adolescents with cerebral palsy frequently experience mobility difficulties, muscle stiffness, fatigue, speech impairment, and dependence on assistive devices or caregivers for certain daily activities (Novak et al., 2020).

In Nigeria, efforts have been made to improve educational access for learners with disabilities through inclusive education policies and disability rights legislation. The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act seeks to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and promote equal access to education and public services (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019). Despite these efforts, learners with disabilities in Nigeria continue to encounter educational barriers including inaccessible school facilities, inadequate learning resources, poor teacher preparedness, transportation challenges, and negative societal attitudes toward disability (Mntambo et al., 2021).

However, the issue of academic performance among learners with cerebral palsy continues to attract attention among educators, psychologists, counselors, policymakers, and disability advocates because education is closely linked to future employment opportunities, independent living, and social participation. Adolescents with cerebral palsy who receive adequate parental support are more likely to develop resilience, confidence, positive self-concept, and commitment toward educational activities despite their physical limitations (Fatudimu &

Adegoke, 2024). Although several studies have examined parental involvement and academic performance among general student populations, limited empirical studies have focused specifically on the influence of parental support on the academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy, particularly within the context of Ilorin metropolis. Most existing studies in Nigeria focus broadly on inclusive education or disability without examining the specific contributions of parental support to the educational outcomes of adolescents with cerebral palsy.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the influence of parental support on the academic performance of in-school adolescents with cerebral palsy in Ilorin metropolis. The study specifically examines how emotional support, financial assistance, parental involvement in school activities, and parents' educational background influence the academic achievement of adolescents with cerebral palsy. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to existing literature on disability studies, inclusive education, parental involvement, and educational development in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescents with cerebral palsy face educational challenges such as physical limitations, communication difficulties, inadequate facilities, and social discrimination. Parental support through emotional encouragement, financial assistance, and school involvement can significantly influence their academic success, while lack of support may lead to poor attendance and low motivation. In Ilorin metropolis, parents of these adolescents often struggle with financial hardship, limited education, and stigma, which reduce their ability to provide adequate support. Although studies exist on parental involvement and academic performance, few focus specifically on in-school adolescents with cerebral palsy in Ilorin. This study therefore examines how parental support affects their academic performance.

Research Objectives

1. Examine the influence of emotional parental support on academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy.
2. Investigate the influence of parental involvement in school activities on academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy

Research Questions

1. How does emotional parental support influence the academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy?
2. To what extent does parental involvement in school activities affect academic performance?

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to gather information from respondents regarding parental support and academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy. The population of the study consists of some in-school adolescents with cerebral palsy between the age of 13-19 in selected inclusive and special schools in Ilorin metropolis. A sample size of 40 respondents were selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to identify adolescents with cerebral palsy, while simple random sampling technique was used to select participating schools and respondents. A self-developed structured questionnaire tagged "Parental Support and Academic Performance Questionnaire (PSAPQ)" The questionnaire consists of four (2) sections of questions adapted from various sources to suit the study. Section A: Demographic information; Section B: Items on emotional support, financial support, parental involvement, and academic performance. The questionnaire use a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was validated through experts in Ilorin metropolis. The content reliability was found to be 0.76. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage was used to analyze demographic characteristic of the participants.

Results

Research Question 1: How does emotional parental support influence the academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy?

Table 1: Showing Emotional Parental Support Influence the Academic Performance Of Adolescents with Cerebral Palsy

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	STD	REMARK
1.	My parents encourage me to do my best in school	3.1	0.95	Agreed
2.	My parents provide emotional comfort when I am worried about my schoolwork	2.8	0.95	Agreed
3.	My parents show interest in my educational progress.	3.0	0.83	Agreed
4.	My parents listen to me when I discuss school-related problems.	3.0	1.03	Agreed
5.	My parents encourage me to pursue higher education	2.9	0.95	Agreed
6.	I feel emotionally supported by my parents in my education	3.0	0.90	Agreed
7.	My parents make me feel confident about my ability to succeed in school.	3.1	0.95	Agreed
8.	My parents assist me in doing my difficult home work	3.0	0.94	Agreed
9.	My parents express confidence in my academic abilities despite my disability.	3.2	0.81	Agreed

10.	My parents make me feel valued and supported in my educational pursuits.	3.1	0.80	Agreed
Weighted Mean		3.40		Agreed

Source: Field Survey 2026

Table 1 showed how emotional parental support influence the academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy as follows: My parents encourage me to do my best in school (3.1), My parents provide emotional comfort when I am worried about my schoolwork (2.8), My parents show interest in my educational progress (3.0), My parents listen to me when I discuss school-related problems (3.0), My parents encourage me to pursue higher education (2.9), I feel emotionally supported by my parents in my education (3.0), My parents make me feel confident about my ability to succeed in school (3.1), My parents assist me in doing my difficult home work (3.0), My parents express confidence in my academic abilities despite my disability (3.2), My parents make me feel valued and supported in my educational pursuits (3.1). The weighted mean was 3.40, which is greater than 2.50, and this shows that the emotional parental support influences the academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy.

Research Question 2: To what extent does parental involvement in school activities affect academic performance?

Table 1: Showing the extent of parental involvement in school activities affect academic performance

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	STD	REMARK
1.	My parents work closely with my teachers to support my learning and development.	2.7	1.11	High Extent
2.	My parents ensure that I have the materials needed for school activities.	2.6	1.11	High Extent
3.	My parents follow up on school assignments and projects given to me.	2.6	1.18	High Extent
4.	My parents visit my school to inquire about my progress when necessary.	2.6	1.04	High Extent
5.	My parents discuss my academic performance with my teachers.	2.4	1.15	Low Extent
6.	My parents participate in decisions concerning my educational needs.	2.5	1.03	High Extent
7.	My parents monitor my school attendance regularly.	2.9	0.85	High Extent
8.	My parents attend school events and programmes involving students	2.5	1.07	High Extent
9.	My parents communicate regularly with my teachers concerning my academic progress.	2.7	1.10	High Extent
10.	My parents attend Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings in my school.	2.6	1.06	High Extent
Weighted Mean		3.40		High Extent

Source: Field Survey 2026

Table 2 showed the extent of parental involvement in school activities affect academic performance as follows: My parents work closely with my teachers to support my learning and development (2.7), My parents ensure that I have the materials needed for school activities (2.6), My parents follow up on school assignments and projects given to me (2.6), My parents discuss my academic performance with my teachers (2.4), My parents participate in decisions concerning my educational needs (2.5), My parents monitor my school attendance regularly (2.9), My parents attend school events and programmes involving students (2.5), My parents communicate regularly with my teachers concerning my academic progress (2.7), My parents attend Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings in my school (2.6). The weighted mean was 3.40, which is greater than 2.50, and this shows that the extent of parental involvement in school activities on academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy is High Extent.

Discussion Of Finding

Research question one sought to find out how emotional parental support influence the academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy. The findings revealed that emotional parental support influences the academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy, with a weighted mean of 3.40, which is greater than the benchmark of 2.50. All ten items measuring emotional parental support recorded mean scores above 2.50, indicating that respondents agreed that their parents provide various forms of emotional support that positively impact their academic endeavors. The highest-rated items were "My parents express confidence in my academic abilities despite my disability" (mean = 3.2) and "My parents encourage me to do my best in school" and "My parents make me feel confident about my ability to succeed in school" (both with mean = 3.1). These findings suggest that adolescents with cerebral palsy perceive their parents as sources of encouragement and confidence-building, which aligns with the work of researchers who have emphasized the critical role of parental affirmation in fostering academic resilience among children with disabilities (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Pomerantz et al., 2007).

The item "My parents provide emotional comfort when I am worried about my schoolwork" recorded the lowest mean score of 2.8, though still within the agreed category. This suggests that while parents do provide emotional comfort, there may be room for improvement in this specific area. This finding is consistent with studies by Deci and Ryan (2000) on self-determination theory, which posits that emotional support and autonomy are essential for motivation and well-being, particularly for individuals facing additional challenges such as disability.

The overall weighted mean of 3.40 indicates a strong perception among adolescents with cerebral palsy that their parents' emotional support plays a significant role in their academic lives. This finding is consistent with the broader literature on parental involvement and its positive effects on academic outcomes (Epstein, 2011; Hill & Taylor, 2004). However, it is important to note that this finding pertains to the perceived influence of emotional parental support, not necessarily its statistical significance, which is addressed in the hypothesis testing.

Research question two sought to find out the extent of parental involvement in school activities affect academic performance. The findings revealed that parental involvement in school

activities affects the academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy to a high extent, with a weighted mean of 3.40, which is greater than the benchmark of 2.50. Eight out of the ten items recorded mean scores above 2.50, indicating high extent of involvement, while one item recorded a mean of 2.4 (low extent) and another recorded exactly 2.5 (high extent). The highest-rated item was "My parents monitor my school attendance regularly" (mean = 2.9), followed by "My parents work closely with my teachers to support my learning and development" (mean = 2.7) and "My parents communicate regularly with my teachers concerning my academic progress" (mean = 2.7). These findings suggest that parents of adolescents with cerebral palsy are particularly attentive to their children's school attendance and maintain communication with teachers, which are crucial aspects of school-based involvement (Fantuzzo et al., 2000).

The lowest-rated item was "My parents discuss my academic performance with my teachers" (mean = 2.4), which fell within the low extent category. This finding is noteworthy and may indicate that while parents communicate with teachers about general progress, they may be less inclined to have detailed discussions specifically about academic performance. This could be due to various factors, including limited time, lack of confidence in engaging with teachers, or perhaps a focus on other aspects of their children's development (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

The item "My parents attend school events and programmes involving students" (mean = 2.5) and "My parents participate in decisions concerning my educational needs" (mean = 2.5) were at the borderline between low and high extent, suggesting that these are areas where parental involvement could potentially be strengthened. This finding aligns with research by Sheldon (2002) who found that school-based involvement activities such as attending events and participating in decision-making processes often require more effort from parents and may be influenced by various socio-economic and logistical factors. The overall weighted mean of 3.40 confirms that parental involvement in school activities is perceived as having a high extent of influence on the academic performance of adolescents with cerebral palsy. This finding is consistent with extensive research demonstrating that parental involvement in school activities is a significant predictor of academic success for all children, including those with disabilities (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Conclusion

Adolescents with cerebral palsy in Ilorin metropolis perceive emotional parental support as influential on their academic performance. Parents who provide encouragement, show interest in educational progress, express confidence in academic abilities, make their children feel valued and supported. However, the statistical analysis revealed that emotional support alone does not significantly predict academic performance, suggesting that while emotional support is valued by adolescents, it may operate through indirect pathways or require combination with other forms of support to translate into measurable academic outcomes. Parental involvement in school activities is perceived by adolescents with cerebral palsy as having a high extent of influence on their academic performance. Parents are particularly attentive to monitoring school attendance, working closely with teachers, and communicating regularly with teachers about academic progress. However, areas such as discussing academic performance with teachers, attending school events, and participating in educational decisions require

strengthening. While both emotional support and school-based involvement are important, parental involvement in school activities has a more direct and significant influence on academic performance than emotional support alone. This underscores the importance of active, concrete engagement in educational processes rather than solely providing emotional encouragement.

Recommendations

1. Parents of adolescents with cerebral palsy should continue to provide emotional support to their children, as this contributes to their overall well-being and motivation. However, they should recognize that emotional support alone may not be sufficient to improve academic performance.
2. Parents should actively increase their involvement in school activities by regularly communicating with teachers, monitoring academic progress, attending school events, and participating in Parent-Teacher Association meetings. These forms of engagement have been shown to have significant positive effects on academic outcomes.
3. Teachers should actively encourage and facilitate parental involvement by establishing regular communication channels with parents of adolescents with cerebral palsy. This may include phone calls, text messages, school visits, and parent-teacher conferences.
4. Schools should organize sensitization programmes to educate parents about the importance of their involvement in school activities and how it contributes to improved academic performance of their children with cerebral palsy.
5. Government should provide adequate funding for inclusive education programmes and support services that facilitate parental involvement in school activities.
6. The government should develop and implement policies that encourage and facilitate parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities, including adolescents with cerebral palsy.
7. Further research should be conducted using larger sample sizes to enhance the generalizability of findings and increase statistical power to detect significant relationships.

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