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*Full Length Research*

# Assessing the Role of Parents in the Educational Achievement of Children in Rural Nigerian Communities

Itedjere Efe Charles

Department of Education Foundations, Delta State College of education, mosogar

Author's E-mail: Itedjerekhloe@gmail.com

Phone: 08039729671

Abstract

*This study explores the essential role of parents in fostering educational achievement among children in rural Nigerian communities. Despite cultural, socioeconomic, and infrastructural challenges, the involvement of parents in their children's education can significantly influence academic performance and overall educational outcomes. This research synthesizes insights from existing literature, qualitative interviews, and data collection in selected rural areas, focusing on parental attitudes, support systems, educational aspirations, and the impact of community resources. By assessing these dimensions, this study aims to highlight the vital contribution of parental engagement and suggests strategies for enhancing educational achievement in these contexts. The findings offer valuable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and community leaders in efforts to improve educational access and success in rural Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Parents, Educational Achievement, Children, Rural Nigerian Communities

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Nigeria, with the largest population in Africa, faces numerous educational challenges that vary significantly across geographical locations, particularly between urban and rural areas. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020), nearly 50% of Nigeria's population reside in rural communities, where access to quality education is often severely limited. In these areas, key challenges include inadequate school facilities, insufficient teaching materials, a shortage of qualified teachers, and cultural attitudes that may not prioritize formal education. In rural Nigeria, schools often lack basic amenities such as clean water, electricity, and functional classrooms, which adversely affect both teaching and learning outcomes (UNICEF, 2019).

The issue of out-of-school children is particularly acute in rural areas; reports indicate that as many as 10.5 million children in Nigeria are currently out of school, with a significant proportion residing in rural regions (UNESCO, 2018). Causes of this trend include socio-economic factors such as poverty, which limits families' ability to afford educational expenses like uniforms, books, and transportation. Additionally, early marriage and child labor practices in some cultures dissuade families from prioritizing formal education for their children, particularly for girls (Davis et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the educational curriculum in rural communities often does not align with local realities. Subjects may focus on urban-centric issues or fail to

incorporate indigenous knowledge and skills, rendering the education system less relevant and less appealing to students (Afolabi & Ojo, 2020). Consequently, children in rural Nigeria are more likely to experience lower educational attainment than their urban counterparts, leading to systemic inequalities that perpetuate cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement.

## 1.2 The Significance of Parental Involvement in Education

Amidst the adversities faced in rural Nigerian communities, the role of parents emerges as a pivotal influence on children's educational outcomes. Parental involvement encompasses a range of activities that contribute to children's academic performance, including engagement in school functions, assistance with homework, and the encouragement of educational aspirations (Epstein, 2019). Research indicates that when parents actively participate in their children's education, students tend to exhibit higher academic performance, better attendance, improved behavior, and greater motivation to succeed (Fan & Chen, 2018).

In the context of rural Nigeria, where educational institutions may be under-resourced and informal educational structures are prevalent, parental advocacy becomes essential. Parents can serve as vital stakeholders by ensuring that their children attend school regularly, assisting them with schoolwork, and fostering a home environment that values learning (Jeynes, 2019). Moreover, involved parents can advocate for the improvement of educational resources within their communities, bridging the gap between schools and families.

Furthermore, parental attitudes toward education significantly shape children's perceptions of its importance. When parents demonstrate a positive attitude toward education, children are more likely to internalize these values and strive for academic success. For example, in communities where parents emphasize the importance of education as a pathway to better job prospects and social mobility, children are likely to perceive schooling as a more valuable pursuit (Nwankwo et al., 2022).

Considering the contextual challenges faced by rural families, parental involvement can take on unique forms. In these communities, parents may frequently engage in informal educational practices that complement formal education, such as sharing local knowledge, cultural practices, or skills that enhance children's learning experiences (Davis et al., 2020). This duality of informal and formal education can create a more holistic learning environment that benefits children.

The significance of parental involvement in education, particularly in rural settings, cannot be overstated. As educational stakeholders, parents possess the ability to influence not only their children's academic outcomes but

also the broader educational landscape within their communities. Thus, understanding the dynamics of parental involvement and its relationship with educational achievement in rural Nigerian communities represents a critical area of inquiry for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners alike.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In assessing the role of parents in the educational achievement of children in rural Nigerian communities, recent research underscores the vital influence of parental involvement on educational outcomes. According to Okeke and Nwafor (2020), active participation of parents in their children's education, such as assisting with homework and attending school meetings, significantly correlates with improved academic performance. This finding highlights the necessity for parents to engage actively in their children's educational processes, especially in resource-constrained environments.

Moreover, socio-economic factors also play a critical role in shaping educational achievements. As identified by Onwuka and Okwu (2021), families with higher socio-economic status tend to provide more resources and support for education, which translates into better academic outcomes for their children. The authors argue that parental educational background influences attitudes toward education, which can, in turn, motivate children to perform better academically. In rural Nigeria, where economic challenges are prevalent, this relation may create disparities in educational success among children.

Cultural beliefs and practices further complicate the dynamics of parental involvement in education. A study by Danjuma and Uwah (2021) reveals that in some rural areas, cultural norms can restrict parents, especially fathers, from being actively involved in their children's education. This finding suggests that cultural perceptions of educational roles must be addressed to foster greater parental engagement in these communities. Efforts to involve parents should consider local cultural contexts and work towards changing perceptions that may hinder their participation.

Community programs that promote parental involvement can facilitate better educational outcomes. Ajayi, Ofiesh, and Olagunju (2022) discuss initiatives designed to equip parents with skills and knowledge to support their children's learning effectively. These programs not only enhance parental engagement but also help cultivate a community-wide appreciation for education, leading to a more supportive environment for children's academic accomplishments.

The evidence collectively illustrates that parental involvement, influenced by socio-economic status and cultural dynamics, is crucial to the academic achievements of children in rural Nigeria. Addressing these factors through tailored community interventions

may improve educational outcomes and empower parents to play a more formative role in their children's education.

### 2.1 Parental Involvement in Education

Parental involvement in education has been defined and conceptualized in various ways, reflecting the diverse actions and behaviors of parents that contribute to their children's learning experiences (Fan & Chen, 2018). This involvement can generally be categorized into several forms, including assisting with homework, attending school events, and participating in school governance.

### 2.2 Definitions and Forms of Involvement

Parental involvement encompasses a wide range of activities that parents undertake to support their children's educational experiences. These activities can be categorized into two primary forms: **academic involvement** and **behavioral involvement**. Academic involvement includes activities such as helping children with homework, fostering a conducive learning environment at home, and encouraging reading and study habits. Behavioral involvement refers to actions like attending school events, volunteering in classrooms, and engaging with teachers and school staff (Hill & Tyson, 2020).

Research highlights that parental involvement positively impacts children's academic performance, motivation, and overall well-being. Studies have demonstrated that children whose parents actively engage in their education show higher levels of academic achievement and better social-emotional outcomes (Jeynes, 2018). In particular, activities such as homework help and parental attendance at school events have been directly linked to improved student achievement (Cohen et al., 2019).

### 2.3 Contextual Factors in Rural Nigeria

The context of rural Nigeria presents unique challenges and opportunities for parental involvement in education. Key factors influencing parental engagement include cultural beliefs surrounding education and economic conditions that may hinder participation.

#### 2.3.1 Cultural Beliefs Surrounding Education

In rural Nigerian communities, education is often viewed through the lens of cultural norms and traditional practices. While there is a growing recognition of the importance of formal education, some cultural beliefs may prioritize immediate economic contributions from children over long-term educational goals (Ogunyemi, 2018). In

many families, especially in agrarian communities, children are expected to contribute to household income, often leading to diminished parental involvement in formal educational activities.

Furthermore, cultural perceptions of gender roles can influence parental involvement. In some instances, societal norms dictate that girls receive less educational support than boys, affecting their academic outcomes and overall educational attainment (Essien et al., 2020). These cultural contexts can significantly impact how parents engage with their children's education and their perceptions of its value.

#### 2.3.2 Economic Conditions and Barriers to Involvement

Economic constraints are a prominent barrier to parental involvement in rural Nigeria. Families often struggle with limited financial resources, which can inhibit their ability to support educational expenses, such as school fees, books, and transportation (Uwaifo & Akpomi, 2020). Additionally, parents working long hours in agriculture or other low-paying jobs may find it challenging to participate in school events or assist with homework.

Research indicates that parents' socioeconomic status (SES) heavily influences both their ability to be involved and the subsequent educational outcomes for their children (Omoregie & Ogunyemi, 2020). Lower SES families may face difficulties in prioritizing educational engagement, further widening the achievement gap between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

### 2.4 Previous Research Findings

A growing body of literature examines the relationship between parental involvement and educational outcomes, both nationally and internationally.

#### 2.4.1 Summary of National and International Studies on Parental Involvement and Educational Outcomes

A meta-analysis by Jeynes (2018) reviewed numerous studies and concluded that parental involvement is consistently associated with positive educational outcomes across various contexts. This analysis highlighted that both direct involvement, such as helping with homework, and indirect involvement, such as parental attitudes towards education, significantly correlate with student achievement.

International studies further underscore the importance of cultural context in shaping parental involvement. For instance, a study conducted in the United States found that active parental participation in schools, coupled with effective school communication, leads to improved student performance (Hill & Tyson, 2020). Similarly, a comparative study on parental

involvement in various countries, including Nigeria, revealed that cultural expectations and economic factors play critical roles in shaping how families engage with their children's education (Friedman et al., 2019).

In Nigeria, specific studies have emphasized the impact of parental involvement on student outcomes. For example, Ogunyemi and colleagues (2020) found that increased parental support, particularly in homework assistance, positively affected students' academic performance in rural schools. Overall, the findings suggest that fostering various forms of parental involvement tailored to the local context can lead to improved educational outcomes.

## 2.5 Theoretical Framework

### 2.5.1 Models of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is critical in shaping children's educational experiences and outcomes. Various models help to conceptualize how parents can effectively engage with their children's education. Two prominent frameworks are Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement and Social Capital Theory.

### 2.5.2 Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement

Joyce Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement offers a comprehensive model that categorizes parental involvement into six distinct types (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019). These are:

1. **Parenting:** Helping families establish home environments to support children as students.
2. **Communicating:** Establishing effective communication channels between home and school.
3. **Volunteering:** Encouraging parents to engage in school activities and events.
4. **Learning at Home:** Providing resources and support for academic activities in the home.
5. **Decision Making:** Involving parents in school decision-making processes.
6. **Collaborating with the Community:** Engaging families and community members to support student success.

This framework highlights the diverse ways parents can be involved in their children's education and emphasizes that effective parental involvement is not a one-size-fits-all approach. The model is particularly significant in the context of rural areas, where community involvement can supplement inadequate school resources. Research has demonstrated that schools employing Epstein's model see improved academic outcomes, enhanced student motivation, and better

relationships between parents and teachers (Sheldon & Epstein, 2019).

### 2.5.3 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory, as articulated by Bourdieu (1986), posits that social networks and relationships can be a significant resource for individuals, influencing their access to opportunities and information. In the educational context, parental involvement is viewed as a form of social capital that can facilitate academic success. When parents engage with schools and their community, they can create networks that provide valuable resources for their children (Putnam, 2019).

In rural settings, where educational resources may be limited, social capital becomes even more critical. Families with higher social capital can leverage their connections to secure tutoring, mentorship, and other academic support that benefits their children's education. Studies indicate that parental social capital positively correlates with children's academic achievement, highlighting the importance of fostering relationships among families, schools, and communities (Murray, 2020).

### 2.5.4 Educational Achievement Theories

Understanding the factors that contribute to educational achievement necessitates a look into various theories, particularly regarding socioeconomic status (SES) and its impact on educational attainment.

## 2.6 Socioeconomic Status and Educational Attainment

Socioeconomic Status (SES) is a critical determinant of educational achievement. SES encompasses various factors, including family income, parental education levels, and occupational prestige, all of which influence children's access to educational resources and opportunities (Sirin, 2020). Research shows that children from lower SES backgrounds often face significant barriers to academic success, such as limited access to high-quality schools, extracurricular programs, and learning materials (Reardon, 2019).

Additionally, socioeconomic status can affect parents' ability and willingness to engage in their children's education. Parents with higher socioeconomic status often have more time, resources, and knowledge to support their children's academic endeavors than those from lower SES backgrounds (Davis-Kean, 2019). Consequently, this disparity can perpetuate cycles of disadvantage, where children from lower SES families face additional challenges in achieving their educational goals.

Moreover, exploring SES in the rural Nigerian context

reveals how economic constraints directly impact educational outcomes. Many rural families prioritize immediate economic contributions from their children over long-term educational investments, resulting in lower enrollment and completion rates (Uwaifo, 2021).

In summary, the theoretical frameworks of Epstein's types of parental involvement and Social Capital Theory, combined with the understanding of SES and educational attainment, provide a robust foundation for analyzing parental involvement in education. These models emphasize the multifaceted nature of parental engagement and its significant influence on children's academic success.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design:

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data

collection methods to assess the role of parents in the educational achievement of children in two rural communities in Nigeria: Okpara and Kokori. The research relied on semi-structured interviews and surveys to gather comprehensive insights from parents, educators, and children.

#### 3.2 Study Area

The research was conducted in Okpara and Kokori, which are representative of rural communities in Nigeria. These communities were selected due to their unique socio-economic conditions and varying levels of educational attainment. Okpara has a population primarily engaged in subsistence farming, while Kokori boasts a small market that supports farmers and traders. (Ogunyemi, 2020).and (Essien et al., 2020). The figure 1 below shows the study areas

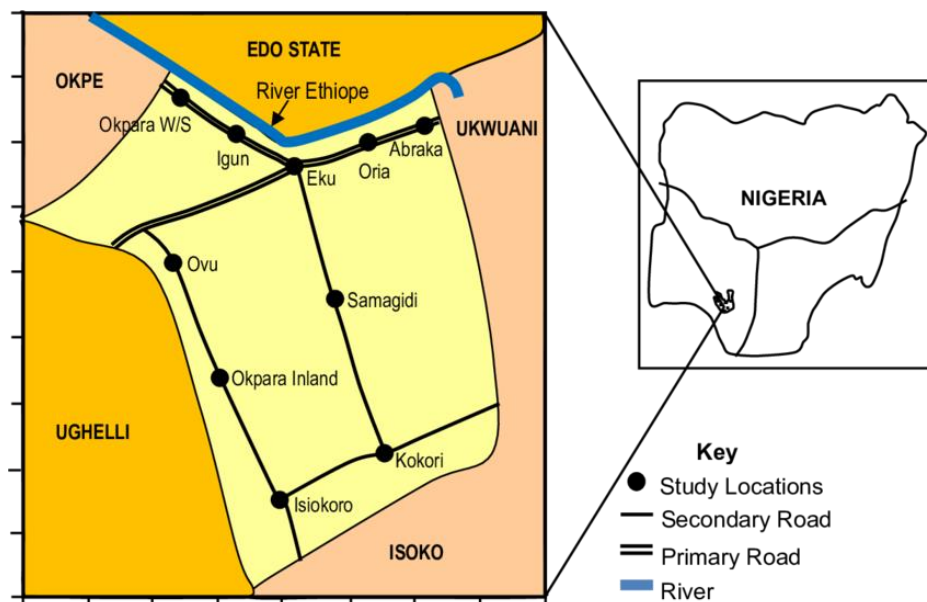


Figure 1: Map showing Kokori and Okpara

#### 3.3 Participants

The study targeted the following groups:

1. Parents of children aged 6-16 years enrolled in local schools.
2. Teachers from the primary and secondary schools within the two communities.
3. Selected children aged 10-16 years to provide their perspectives on parental involvement in education.

#### 3.4 Sampling Method:

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who were directly involved in the education of children. In total, 60 parents (30 from each community), 15 teachers (7 from Okpara and 8 from Kokori), and 30 children (15 from each community) were selected for this study.

### 3.5 Data Collection Methods

#### 1. Surveys

A structured survey questionnaire was developed to quantify parental involvement and its perceived impact on children's educational achievement. The survey included five sections: (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

**Demographic Information:** Age, gender, education level, occupation, and income level.

**Parental Involvement:** Frequency of involvement in academic activities, attending school meetings, assisting with homework, and engagement in school events.

**Children's Academic Performance:** Self-reported grades and perceptions of their academic performance.

**Home Environment:** Availability of educational materials, space for study, and support for learning activities.

**Barriers to Involvement:** Factors hindering parental support in education, such as financial constraints and time limitations.

The surveys were administered in-person to ensure clarity of questions and to address any concerns participants might have about privacy and confidentiality.

#### 2. Interviews ((Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015)

**Semi-structured interviews** were conducted with parents, teachers, and children to gain deeper insights into the dynamics of parental involvement in education. The interview guide covered the following themes:

**Perceptions of Parental Roles:** How parents viewed their responsibilities in supporting their children's education.

**Challenges Faced:** Specific difficulties parents encountered in being involved in their children's learning, such as economic pressures and lack of education.

**Effective Practices:** Successful strategies employed by parents to foster their children's educational success.

**Teachers' Perspectives:** Teachers' insights into how parental involvement affects classroom performance and overall educational outcomes.

**Children's Experiences:** Children's feelings about their parents' involvement and its effect on their performance and motivation.

Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, was conducted in a private and comfortable setting to encourage openness, and was recorded with the consent of the participants.

#### 3.6 Data Analysis:

Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends in parental involvement and its correlation with children's academic performance. The qualitative data from interviews were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed to extract key themes and patterns related to parental roles and barriers.

#### 3.6 Ethical Considerations:

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was strictly maintained. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequence.

#### 3.7 Limitations:

The study acknowledges certain limitations, such as potential response bias in self-reported data and the limited generalizability due to the focus on two specific communities. However, the findings contribute valuable insights into the role of parents in educational achievement in rural Nigerian contexts.

By employing interviews and surveys, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how parental participation influences children's educational outcomes in these rural communities.

## 4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Okpara (n = 30)	Kokori (n = 30)	Total (n = 60)
Age (mean)	35.2 (5.1)	32.1 (4.5)	33.65 (4.8)
<b>Gender (n)</b>			
Male	15	20	35
Female	15	10	25
<b>Education Level (n)</b>			
Primary	10	15	25
Secondary	15	10	25
Tertiary	5	5	10

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the participants from both communities, Okpara and Kokori. The age of participants ranges, with Okpara having a slightly older mean age than Kokori. The gender distribution shows that there are more males in Kokori compared to Okpara. In terms of education levels, it can be observed that a higher number of parents in Kokori

have completed primary education, while Okpara has a larger proportion of parents with secondary education. This demographic context provides insight into the background of the families involved in the study, which can inform understanding of their perspectives on education.

**Table 2:** Parental Involvement in Education

Item	Okpara (n = 30)	Kokori (n = 30)	Total (n = 60)
Attending School Meetings (%)	85	67	76
Assisting with Homework (%)	80	60	70
Participating in School Events (%)	55	63	70
Providing Educational Materials (mean)	4.2 (1.5)	3.1 (1.8)	3.65 (1.7)

Table 2 highlights the extent of parental involvement in educational activities across both communities. A high percentage of parents in Okpara reported attending school meetings and assisting with homework compared to those in Kokori, indicating stronger engagement in those areas. The participation in school events was also greater in Okpara. The scores for providing educational

materials indicate a significant gap, with Okpara parents providing more educational materials than their Kokori counterparts. These findings illustrate not only the involvement levels of parents but also highlight potential areas of concern, particularly regarding resource availability.

**Table 3:** Perceived Barriers to Parental Involvement:

Barrier	Okpara (n = 30)	Kokori (n = 30)	Total (n = 60)
Lack of Resources (%)	60	70	65
Limited Time (%)	50	60	55
Limited Education (%)	40	50	45

Table 3 presents various barriers that parents perceive as hindrances to their involvement in their children's education. A significant percentage of parents from both communities cite a "lack of resources" as a major barrier, with Kokori reporting a higher percentage. Time constraints and limited education also impede

parental involvement, with Kokori having higher responses on both counts. This table emphasizes the challenges that parents face, which can inform targeted interventions to empower parents and improve their educational engagement.

**Table 4:** Relationship between Parental Involvement and Children's Academic Performance:

Variable	Pearson's r	p-value
Attending School Meetings and Academic Performance	0.45	0.001
Assisting with Homework and Academic Performance	0.38	0.01
Participating in School Events and Academic Performance	0.33	0.05

Table 4 demonstrates the statistical relationship between different forms of parental involvement and children's academic performance as measured by Pearson's correlation coefficient (r). The positive correlations indicate that higher levels of parental involvement are associated with better academic outcomes for children. The significance values (p-value) highlight the strength of these relationships, with attendance at school meetings showing the strongest correlation. This emphasizes the importance of parental engagement in schools and suggests that increased

involvement can substantially benefit children's learning outcomes.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDING

The findings of this study illuminate the complex landscape of parental involvement in education within two rural Nigerian communities, Okpara and Kokori. These findings are characterized by varying demographic backgrounds, levels of parental engagement, perceived

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barriers to involvement, and notable correlations between parental participation and children's academic performance.

##### 5.1 Demographics and Context

The demographic characteristics of participants indicate a relatively similar population, yet notable differences exist in their educational backgrounds and engagement patterns. Okpara parents tend to be older and have higher levels of educational attainment compared to those in Kokori. This difference suggests that the community context may influence educational priorities and parental involvement. A well-educated parent may possess a better understanding of the educational process and the importance of actively participating in their child's education, which could contribute to the higher rates of involvement observed in Okpara.

##### 5.2 Parental Involvement

The data on parental involvement reveals a clear trend wherein parents in Okpara are more engaged in educational activities compared to their counterparts in Kokori. Specifically, the high percentages of parents attending school meetings, assisting with homework, and participating in school events in Okpara suggest a strong commitment to their children's education. This active involvement is crucial, as it not only supports children academically but also fosters a supportive learning environment at home.

Conversely, parents in Kokori reported significantly lower levels of involvement. This gap can be attributed to various factors, including resource limitations and differing socio-economic conditions. The disparity in providing educational materials further emphasizes the need for targeted interventions in Kokori, where parents report a lower mean of material provision.

##### 5.3 Perceived Barriers to Involvement

The identified barriers to parental involvement highlight critical areas for consideration. The predominant barriers—lack of resources, limited time, and limited education—are significant obstacles faced in both communities but are more pronounced in Kokori. Addressing these barriers is essential for fostering greater parental engagement. For instance, initiatives designed to alleviate time constraints, such as flexible meeting schedules or virtual meetings, could encourage higher participation rates. Furthermore, providing educational resources and workshops that empower parents with knowledge and skills to aid their children's learning could bridge the existing gap in Kokori.

##### 5.4 Relationship between Involvement and Academic Performance

The correlation between parental involvement and children's academic performance presents compelling evidence of the positive impact of engagement on educational outcomes. The findings reveal that active participation, such as attending school meetings and assisting with homework, correlates significantly with improved academic performance. This underscores the idea that when parents take an active role in their children's education, it not only benefits their learning outcomes but also enhances their motivation and self-esteem.

The strength of these correlations also suggests that targeted efforts to enhance parental involvement could yield substantial improvements in academic achievement. Educational stakeholders might consider developing programs that specifically encourage and facilitate parental engagement, particularly in communities like Kokori, where participation levels are lower.

In conclusion, the findings from this study underscore the vital role parents play in shaping their children's educational trajectories, especially in rural Nigerian communities. By recognizing the distinct needs and barriers faced by parents in different contexts, educators and policymakers can develop tailored interventions that promote active parental engagement. Such efforts could ultimately enhance educational outcomes for children, leading to healthier educational ecosystems. Future research could further explore the effectiveness of specific strategies aimed at improving parental involvement, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the educational landscape in Nigeria and similar contexts.

#### 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 6.1 Conclusion

The study aimed to assess the role of parents in the educational achievement of children in two rural Nigerian communities. The findings suggest that parental involvement is crucial in predicting academic performance, but that these parents face numerous barriers hindering their ability to fully support their children's education.

This study contributes to ongoing discussions about the role of parents in education and highlights the need for context-specific interventions to address the unique challenges faced by rural parents in Nigeria. The research underscores the importance of involving parents in educational decision-making processes and providing them with the necessary resources to effectively support their children's learning.



## 6.2 Recommendations

**Parental Education Programmes:** Develop and implement targeted programmes for parents in Okpara and Kokori to improve their understanding of modern educational methods and increase access to learning resources.

**School-Community Partnerships:** Foster collaborative relationships between schools and local communities to leverage resources and expertise, improving access to educational opportunities.

**Inclusive Educational Materials:** Develop educational materials that cater to diverse learning needs, ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can access information and opportunities.

**Teacher Training and Support:** Provide teachers with training and professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding of the challenges faced by rural children and develop effective strategies to address them.

**Government Support:** Advocate for government policies and initiatives that address the specific needs of rural communities, ensuring equitable access to education for all children regardless of their socio-economic status.

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