

ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN KONTAGORA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NIGER STATE

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Abstract

The paper is titled “assessment of school, community engagement and parental involvement in primary education in Kontagora local government area, Niger state”. The study assessed the level and nature of community engagement and parental involvement in primary schools within Kontagora L.G.A., Niger state and how school-parent relationships contribute to the academic and social development of pupils in primary education. The study used a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consists of 2,820 teachers and parents. Using Research Advisor (2010), a sample size of 346 was selected. Data were gathered via a validated four-point Likert scale questionnaire ‘Assessment of School, Community Engagement and Parental Involvement in Primary Education’ (ASCEPIPE) with a reliability of 0.879. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data and answer the research questions with SPSS version 23. The findings indicates that community engagement and parental involvement in primary schools in Kontagora L.G.A. are generally low and irregular, with both teachers and PTA members reporting infrequent meeting attendance, inconsistent community forums, and limited structured collaboration. Parents are perceived to participate more financially than academically and both teachers and PTA members agreed that school-parent relationships positively support pupils’ academic and social development. Teachers consistently report stronger agreement, especially on attendance, communication, and social skills, while both groups highly value collaborative problem-solving to boost student motivation. The study recommended that schools should establish structured and regular community engagement programmes that actively encourage parental involvement beyond financial contributions, focusing on academic support and participation in school activities and among others.

Keywords: School, Community Engagement, Parental Involvement, Primary Education.

Introduction

Primary education serves as the foundation for lifelong learning and development, shaping children’s cognitive, social, and emotional capacities during their formative years. In the context of Nigeria, and particularly in Niger State, the quality of primary education is not determined by school inputs alone but significantly influenced by how well schools engage families and communities. Not that alone, a strong start in early education requires the active collaboration of all stakeholders involved in a child’s life. Therefore, the integration of

community engagement and parental involvement into primary education strategies is critical for improving student achievement and well-being (Banwo, Khalifa, & Seashore, 2022).

Community engagement refers to the active participation of local stakeholders such as community leaders, organizations, and residents in supporting school efforts (Bettencourt, Gross, Bower, Francis, Taylor, Singleton, & Han, 2020). When community members and schools work collaboratively, they pool resources, share responsibilities, and create an environment that fosters a sense of belonging and support for students. This collective approach is essential, especially in rural or underserved regions, where educational institutions may face challenges such as inadequate funding, limited infrastructure, or low teacher-to-student ratios. As Cummings and Olson (2020) note, strong school-community partnerships help schools navigate the pressures of high-stakes accountability and deliver more holistic and responsive education. These partnerships not only address systemic educational challenges but also promote equity by recognizing the unique needs and contributions of local communities.

Closely related to community engagement is parental involvement, which has consistently been identified as one of the most influential factors in a child's educational success. When parents are actively involved whether through attending meetings, monitoring homework, or participating in decision-making processes children demonstrate improved academic performance, better school attendance, and stronger social skills (Bhargavi & Shehab, 2024). In particular, Bryan and Henry (2012) argue that intentional efforts to build school-family-community partnerships are foundational to strengthening educational resilience, especially in marginalized or low-income settings. Active parental involvement ensures continuity between home and school environments, reinforcing learning expectations and behavioural norms. Furthermore, it empowers families to become advocates for their children's education.

The strength of the school-parent relationship lies in trust, communication, and mutual respect. This relationship forms the foundation for sustained parental engagement and determines whether families feel welcomed and valued within the school system. Banwo et al. (2022) emphasize that culturally responsive leadership, which respects family backgrounds and local values, plays a key role in building trust and collaborative partnerships. Positive interactions between school staff particularly counsellors and teachers and parents are crucial to fostering this environment of shared responsibility. According to Brown and Akkurt (2024), such interactions increase parental confidence, which in turn enhances both engagement and student performance. Schools that prioritize relationship-building are more likely to cultivate supportive networks that benefit all stakeholders.

This research is necessary because there remains a significant gap in empirical studies that focus on school-parent relationships in Nigerian primary education, particularly in rural contexts like Kontagora L.G.A. While national education policies encourage parental involvement, their practical implementation at the local level often lacks structure and sustainability. This study seeks to examine the current state of these relationships in Kontagora's primary schools, identifying factors that either strengthen or hinder effective collaboration. Understanding these dynamics will provide educators and policymakers with

evidence-based recommendations for designing inclusive, culturally aware, and context-specific engagement strategies (Feng, 2023).

Analysing school-parent relationships through the lens of community engagement and parental involvement offers critical insights into how educational outcomes can be improved in Nigerian primary schools. The findings from this study can inform teacher training, school leadership practices, and community outreach initiatives that collectively support student learning and well-being. Bates et al. (2019) suggest, when schools, families, and communities work together as equal partners, children are more likely to thrive both academically and socially. Therefore, strengthening these relationships in primary education is not only beneficial, it is essential for building a more equitable and effective educational system in Kontagora L.G.A. and beyond.

Not that alone, Primary education is widely recognized as the foundation of a nation's educational and human capital development. It plays a critical role in shaping learners' cognitive, emotional, and social competencies at an early stage. Bryan and Henry (2012) argue that the earliest educational experiences lay the groundwork for lifelong learning, making early educational interventions essential. Yet, achieving quality in primary education requires going beyond curriculum and pedagogy. Culturally responsive leadership, as highlighted by Banwo, Khalifa, and Seashore (2022), is central to promoting inclusive and effective learning environments that respect the diverse backgrounds of learners and their communities. The relevance of localized school leadership becomes even more urgent in rural and under-resourced contexts such as those found in parts of Nigeria, where disparities in access and quality persist.

Community engagement emerges as a powerful strategy for strengthening primary education by aligning schools with local resources, values, and expectations. Cummings and Olson (2020) emphasize that community partnerships are not only necessary in urban schools facing high-stakes accountability but are equally vital in supporting primary education in low-resource settings. These partnerships contribute to school improvement by fostering mutual accountability, enabling resource sharing, and reinforcing student learning beyond classroom walls. Bates et al. (2019) further emphasize the importance of inter-professional collaboration among educators, social workers, and community stakeholders, showing that such collaboration can lead to improvements in student well-being and academic performance. However, Greenhalgh-Spencer (2022) notes that meaningful community engagement requires intentional practices such as "deep listening," which involve understanding and valuing diverse community voices rather than imposing top-down school agendas.

Parental involvement, as a key subset of community engagement, directly supports children's educational experiences by promoting consistent learning expectations between school and home. Epstein (2011) provides a foundational model for school-family-community partnerships, arguing that parents' active participation in school life enhances student motivation, attendance, and academic behaviours. Similarly, Bettencourt et al. (2020) identify meaningful indicators of parental engagement such as two-way communication and parental empowerment as essential for improving early learning outcomes, particularly in low-income

families. In a global context, Feng (2023) demonstrates that structured platforms like parent councils in rural Chinese schools can significantly boost parental satisfaction and engagement. In the African context, Sesinyi and Gcelu (2023) show how collaborative strategies by school management teams are crucial in sustaining parental involvement in rural districts. Still, such strategies must be adaptive to the local cultural and socioeconomic realities to be effective.

The relationship between schools and parents plays a critical role in shaping students' academic and social development. Bhargavi and Shehab (2024) explain that when parents receive clear performance feedback and experience satisfaction with school processes, their involvement increases fostering a cycle of support that benefits learners. Brown and Akkurt (2024) underscore the role of school counsellors in facilitating effective parent-school interactions, suggesting that stronger counsellor-parent relationships encourage emotional and behavioral support systems for students. Additionally, Bryan, Williams, and Griffin (2020) argue that equity-focused school-family-community partnerships are essential in creating resilient educational environments, particularly in marginalized urban communities. These relationships enable schools to become not only sites of academic instruction but also hubs for social support and equity advocacy.

Furthermore, literature suggests that school-parent relationships are more effective when built on trust, shared goals, and mutual respect. Banwo et al. (2022) assert that culturally responsive leadership that listens to and includes parent voices helps create these conditions. Fountas and Pinnell (2020) reinforce this by emphasizing the importance of continuous professional development for teachers, especially in areas like communication and relationship-building with families. When educators are equipped with these relational skills, they are better positioned to engage parents as true partners in learning. Rose, Stith, and Geesa (2024) also stress the need for navigating divergent perspectives in school-community partnerships, especially in increasingly diverse educational landscapes. The active engagement of communities and families is essential to creating supportive, inclusive, and effective educational environments. When school-parent relationships are nurtured through mutual communication, culturally sensitive leadership, and sustained collaboration, students experience greater academic consistency, emotional stability, and social development. This review thus provides a strong foundation for examining how these dynamics manifest in the context of primary schools in Kontagora L.G.A., Niger state, where socioeconomic and cultural factors may shape the nature and success of school-parent-community partnerships.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized importance of parental involvement and community engagement in the success of primary education, many primary schools in Kontagora Local Government Area (L.G.A.) continue to face challenges that hinder effective collaboration between schools, parents, and the wider community. Reports of low parental participation in school activities, limited communication between teachers and parents, inadequate community support for educational initiatives, and poor awareness of the shared responsibility in children's learning outcomes persist. These gaps according to Feng (2023) often result in low pupil motivation, irregular attendance, poor academic performance, and weak school-community relationships.

Furthermore, while government policies emphasize community participation and parental support in basic education, there appears to be limited empirical evidence on the extent to which these policies translate into practical engagement at the local level in Kontagora L.G.A. It remains unclear how schools mobilize community resources, how parents perceive their roles in their children's education, and what barriers impede stronger partnerships among stakeholders.

Therefore, this study seeks to assess the current state of school–community engagement and parental involvement in primary education within Kontagora L.G.A., Niger state. It aims to identify existing practices, determine the challenges affecting active participation, and evaluate how these interactions influence the quality and effectiveness of primary education in the area.

Objectives of the Study

The study sets to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyse the level and nature of community engagement and parental involvement in primary schools within Kontagora L.G.A., Niger state.
2. To analyse how school-parent relationships contribute to the academic and social development of pupils in primary education in Kontagora LGA, Niger state.

Research Questions

1. What is the level and nature of community engagement and parental involvement in primary schools within Kontagora L.G.A., Niger state?
2. How do school-parent relationships contribute to the academic and social development of pupils in primary education in Kontagora LGA, Niger state?

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design, targeting all primary school teachers and members of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) in Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State with a population 2,820. According to Research Advisors sample table (2010), a minimum sample size of 346 is required for a population between 2500 and 3500. Cohen et al (2007) and Research advisors (2010) observed that the higher the sample size, the better for the study. From this population, a sample of 207 teachers and 75 parents was selected to represent the broader study area. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire tagged 'Assessment of School, Community Engagement and Parental Involvement in Primary Education (ASCEPIPE) was developed on a four-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument was validated by experts in the field of Primary Education and test and measurement, to ensure content accuracy and achieved a reliability coefficient of 0.879, indicating high internal consistency. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 23, with means and standard deviations computed for each item. A mean score above 2.5 was interpreted as agreement, while a score below 2.5 indicated disagreement. Both the mean and standard deviation were used to assess the level of consensus among respondents on each item.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level and nature of community engagement and parental involvement in primary schools within Kontagora L.G.A, Niger state?

Table 1: level and nature of community engagement and parental involvement in primary schools

Items		Mean	SD	N
Parental meeting attendance is regular	Teachers	1.86	1.12	168
	PTA	1.69	1.00	59
Few schools have structured community collaboration	Teachers	2.03	.83	168
	PTA	2.58	1.07	59
Community forums in schools are consistent and always active	Teachers	1.74	.96	168
	PTA	2.15	1.11	59
Parents engage more financially and academically	Teachers	1.69	.84	168
	PTA	2.15	1.11	59

Table 1 reveals low levels of community engagement and parental involvement in primary schools within Kontagora L.G.A., Niger state. Both teachers and PTA members disagree that parental meeting attendance is regular, with means below 2.5. Similarly, community forums are not consistently active, as indicated by low mean scores from both groups. While teachers generally disagree that schools have structured community collaborations, PTA members show a slightly higher but still moderate agreement. Notably, both teachers and PTA members disagree that parents engage equally in financial and academic aspects, with PTA members showing slightly more agreement but still below the midpoint. Overall, the data suggest limited and irregular community and parental participation in school activities.

Research Question 2: How do school-parent relationships contribute to the academic and social development of pupils in primary education in Kontagora LGA, Niger state?

Table 2: school-parent relationships, academic and social development of pupils in primary education

Items		Mean	SD	N
Positive school-parent relationships encourage better student attendance	Teachers	3.48	.93	168
	PTA	3.17	1.13	59
Regular communication between parents and teachers supports academic progress	Teachers	3.33	.79	168
	PTA	2.86	.96	59
Parental involvement helps improve students' social skills and behaviour	Teachers	3.33	.79	168
	PTA	2.86	.96	59
Collaborative problem-solving between parents and schools enhances student motivation	Teachers	3.51	.91	168
	PTA	3.53	.94	59

Table 2 presents the analysis of how school-parent relationships contribute to the academic and social development of pupils in primary education, based on responses from teachers and PTA

members. Both groups generally agree that positive school-parent relationships encourage better student attendance, with teachers rating this slightly higher (mean = 3.48) than PTA members (mean = 3.17). Regular communication between parents and teachers is also seen as supportive of academic progress, though teachers (mean = 3.33) express stronger agreement than PTA members (mean = 2.86). Similarly, parental involvement is viewed by teachers (mean = 3.33) as beneficial for improving students' social skills and behaviour, while PTA members show moderate agreement (mean = 2.86). Notably, both teachers (mean = 3.51) and PTA members (mean = 3.53) strongly agree that collaborative problem-solving between parents and schools enhances student motivation, indicating consensus on the importance of partnership in addressing student needs. The data suggest that school-parent relationships are perceived as vital for promoting both academic success and social development in pupils, with teachers generally expressing slightly stronger agreement across most items.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study indicates that community engagement and parental involvement in primary schools in Kontagora L.G.A. are generally low and irregular, with both teachers and PTA members reporting infrequent meeting attendance, inconsistent community forums, and limited structured collaboration. Parents are perceived to participate more financially than academically. This finding resonates with Feng's (2023) observations in rural schools where parent participation fluctuates due to various socio-economic and cultural factors. The limited structured collaboration found in this study echoes Bryan and Henry's (2012) assertion that successful school-family-community partnerships require deliberate models and processes, which seem lacking in the study context. Additionally, the tendency for parents to engage more financially than academically aligns with Bettencourt et al. (2020), who noted that low-income families often face barriers to academic involvement, despite financial contributions. This discrepancy suggests that while parents support schools monetarily, deeper engagement in academic activities remains a challenge, calling for culturally responsive leadership that fosters trust and inclusive participation (Banwo, Khalifa, & Seashore, 2022).

More so, school-parent relationships contribute to the academic and social development of pupils in primary education. The finding shows that both teachers and PTA members agreed that school-parent relationships positively support pupils' academic and social development. Teachers consistently report stronger agreement, especially on attendance, communication, and social skills, while both groups highly value collaborative problem-solving to boost student motivation. Overall, the findings highlight the crucial role of partnership between schools and parents in enhancing student outcomes. The emphasis on collaborative problem-solving as a means to enhance student motivation aligns with Bates et al. (2019), who argue that inter-professional teamwork and community partnerships create holistic support systems for learners. This finding supports Greenhalgh-Spencer's (2022) view on deep listening and partnership as foundational for building trust and resilience in educational settings. However, the slightly lower agreement from PTA members on communication and social skills suggests room for strengthening school-family interactions, particularly through equity-focused

strategies to ensure all parents feel empowered and involved (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Bhargavi & Shehab, 2024).

Conclusion

The study reveals that community engagement and parental involvement in primary schools within Kontagora L.G.A., Niger state, remain low and inconsistent, with parents more involved financially than academically. Despite this, both teachers and PTA members recognize that positive school-parent relationships play a vital role in supporting pupils' academic and social development, particularly through communication, attendance, and collaborative problem-solving. These findings underscore the need for deliberate strategies to foster sustained partnerships between schools, parents, and the wider community to enhance student outcomes effectively.

Recommendations

The study offered the following recommendations:

1. Schools should establish structured and regular community engagement programs that actively encourage parental involvement beyond financial contributions, focusing on academic support and participation in school activities.
2. Training and workshops should be provided for school leaders and teachers to develop culturally responsive leadership skills that build trust and strengthen school-parent relationships, ensuring inclusive and equitable collaboration

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