

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS AND ACADEMIC
EFFORT OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LA DADE-KOTOPON
DISTRICT OF ACCRA**

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Abstract

This study establishes the relationship between social connectedness and academic effort of students and explores the predictive power of social connectedness over academic effort. The descriptive research design was used; data were collected by the use of questionnaires. The sample size was 364 students reached through the multi-stage sampling procedure. The data were analysed by using means, standard deviations, chi-square, Pearson correlation co-efficient and multiple regression. The findings from the study established that a large proportion of the students were academically ambitious. The results of the data analysis show that students were to a very large extent socially connected to their significant others in the family, in the school and among peers. It was revealed that the students' social connectedness in all dimensions is independent of gender. It was also established in the study that the students' academic ambition was strongly related to their academic effort and this is not independent of gender. However, the result of the regression analysis shows that the males tend to make more academic effort. Finally, the findings failed to reject the two null hypotheses; not all the dimensions of social connectedness will predict academic effort and social connectedness will not directly predict academic effort respectively.

Keywords: Social connectedness, Academic ambitions/Aspirations, Academic effort, Gender of students, Content of communication, Significant others

Introduction

In today's world, education is a necessity, and for that reason, it has assumed an increasingly important role in future plans, especially for young people. During the educational process people gain necessary skills and competencies to be able to function on different competitive markets. Higher levels of education are associated with higher income,

a more prestigious career, lower risk of unemployment and an improved well-being. In addition, education increases life chances.

Having this perfect understanding of the importance of education in our society, the question is, have the youth or adolescents in Ghanaian society positioned themselves academically ambitious enough to enjoy these benefits? Research on status attainment throws more light on the sources of aspirations to adolescents, and indicates that high educational aspirations of parents are associated with high aspirations in children and that this association accounts for a significant part of the association between father's and son's educational attainment (Astone and Mc Lanahan 1991).

Again, the educational aspirations and expectations of adolescent students in Ghana has also been linked with parents' level of education (Andoh, Antwi-Bosiako, & Afranne., 2012). They posited that the higher the level of education of the parent, the higher educational aspirations of the girl. This confirms a study conducted by Bishop (1989) at the University of Karachi in Pakistan, which showed that children of parents with University education were over-represented at the University, twenty-seven times compared to children of illiterate parents. Also, the level of aspiration of an adolescent is said to have positive correlation with the socio-economic status of parents, that the higher the income levels; the higher the aspirations (Pawel 2011). It is said that parents in particular have been seen as the most significant others in shaping aspirations because they provide the opportunities, encouragement and support for their children's learning (Grag, Kauppi, Lewko & Urajnik, 2002).

In expressing the impact of educational aspirations on adolescents, scholars emphasis gender differences such that many studies show that whilst girls have more positive aspirations than boys, the impact of gender on children's aspirations vary significantly with parental education level, parental attitudes to education, child's age and the indirect cost of education (Taylor & Rampino, 2013). They further revealed that boys are more responsive than girls to positive parental characteristics, while educational aspirations of boys deteriorate at a younger age than those of girls.

More so, according to Khoo and Ainley, 2005; Gunzelmann and Connell, 2006 girls report more positive attitudes to and higher aspirations for education than otherwise similar boys. These differences are large. They stated, further analysis shown that contrary to the predictions of gender role socialization and social control theories, the educational aspirations and attitudes of boys are more sensitive to the home learning environment than those of girls. However, girls display more stable educational attitudes and aspirations than boys as they age

and progress in the educational system, and they are more sensitive than boys to information on the business cycle.

There is a likelihood that the academically ambitious student will put in a lot of effort in his or her academic work and may do well in his or her final examinations, therefore, the probability of less academically ambitious student to put in less effort may also be high and therefore may not do well in his or her final examinations. According to Prof. Asabere-Ameyaw (Vice Chancellor of UEW,2015); ‘‘the 21st century schooling and education in Africa must prepare students to be able to learn on their own and tap knowledge from global sources to be used in developing solutions that are appropriate to specific local contexts’’ (Graphic-online Archives, July 23, 2015). The import of this statement from Prof. Asabere-Ameyaw is that education in Africa must prepare each student to become independent to learn on their own. He underscored the academic effort of the individual student in Africa. Over the years students’ performance in West Africa Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) has never met the expectations of all stakeholders of education in Ghana. On Monday 10th August, 2015, the results of 242,875 candidates on core subjects nationwide shown the following: Mathematics 25.29% had A1-C6, 29.63% had from D7-E8 and 37.17% had F9. Integrated Science records shown that 23.63% had A1-C6, 39.19% had D7-E8 and 37.17% had F9. The English Language and social Studies showed a little improvement above these figures; 50.29% had A1-C6, 30.68% had D7-E8 and 19.02% had F9; 51.84% had A1-C6, 25.20% had D7-E8 and 22.94% had F9 in English Language and Social Studies respectively. This means that 66.8% (had D7-F9) of the candidates did not pass in Mathematics and 76.36% (had D7-F9) in Integrated Science, therefore, they cannot gain admission into Public Universities in the Country. This failure of adolescents in examinations threatens the future leadership and resources of this society. The chief examiner’s report attributes the failure of students to poor preparation or less effort of the candidates for the examination (WAEC, 2012).

In the same vein, Pintrich (2004) also found effort to be the only direct predictor of learning outcomes amongst all general strategies. And Carbonaro (2013) comes into the picture to define effort as the amount of time and energy that students expend in meeting the formal academic requirements established by their teacher and/or school. This means that students’ academic performance primarily depends on their effort and their effort is likely to be dependent on their educational aspirations.

The adolescents who are social beings may be influenced by other factors apart from parents in their educational aspirations as noted above. For instance, Roser, Eccles & Sameroff (2002), posited that positive relationship between teachers and students, are linked to increase in academic achievement, motivation, feelings of connectedness and overall success in school. Again, according to Capanna, Stratta, Collazzoni, D'Ubaldo, Pacificio (2013), the need to belong is one of the most fundamental needs of human beings. The need for people to establish relationships, social bonds and participate in social activities has been found to be substantial. Because human beings are born with the need to be connected with others, when this need is not met, difficulties in maintaining relationships emerge and social activities are avoided because of the fear to be rejected. Social isolation, deficits in belongingness and lack of meaning or purpose in life, with a negative impact on health, adjustment and well-being can be the consequence. This means that a focal student's educational aspirations and academic efforts are likely to be influenced by their degree of connectedness to significant others. Therefore, a student's academic effort may have a relationship with the level of connectedness in the family, school and among peers.

Therefore, the communication between the focal student and significant others is very important. The quality of the content of communication between significant others such as parents, school authority and peers has a large influence on the student. If the communications focus on the student's education, especially how it can be enhanced and how it can determine the student's future that student's educational aspirations tend to rise.

The relevant literature reviewed show that most students do not do well in examinations such as the WASSCE, and the reason may be that they do not put in much effort. This may be due to the fact that they are not academically ambitious. If they are even ambitious, they do not know the right way to realise their dreams or ambitions. This presupposes that most of the students do not make much effort in their academics. Moreover, if they do not make much effort, what accounts for this apparent laxity? It is on this pivot that a study was conducted to seek the relationship between social connectedness and academic effort of Senior High School students.

It was envisaged that the findings of the study would reveal the correlations between social connectedness and educational aspirations and how these variables affect academic effort of students. This revelation would assist parents or guardians and teachers to develop measures to strengthen the social connectedness in the family, among peers and in the school to improve their students' total education. The reading public are also to be informed on how

social relations affect a student's educational aspirations. The findings will serve as a source of reference for Ghana Education Service (GES), Governmental Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations to formulate policies that seek to promote the growth and development of the adolescent students

Review of Literature

This study was supported by two theories; Attachment Theory by Bowlby (1951) and Expectancy Theory by Victor Vroom (1964). A conceptual framework was developed from social connectedness which was the dependent variable in the study.

Attachment theory

Bowlby's attachment theory posits that children, especially infants require a warm, caring and consistent relationship with the mother for positive-growth and development (Bowlby, 1951). He identified two forms of attachment; Healthy attachment and unhealthy attachments. He advanced that healthy attachment brings love, security, and joy. He explained healthy attachment as the one in which the mother is always there for the child and responds promptly to the needs of the child. The unhealthy attachment according to him brings anxiety, grief, and depression. He concludes that all humans form attachments to their primary caregivers in order to survive (Bowlby, 1958).

Ainsworth (1969) in addition to Bowlby's work also identified two forms of attachment; securely attached and insecurely attached. She identified the following as a securely attached features: acceptable emotional expression, peer relations, social skills, greater understanding of other's emotions, greater sharing, less aggressive and antisocial behaviour, Closer friends, well-liked by others and higher grades.

Ainsworth categorically stated that the healthiest form of attachment is the securely attached and that Children who are securely attached are comfortable with social interaction and actively seek it out. The child is able to function independently because the caregiver acts as a secure base. To put it another way, the child feels confident in going to nursery or school because they know their caregiver will return for them. A securely attached baby is free to concentrate on his environment (Mercer, 2006). Contrarily, the insecurely attached child entertains negative tendencies such as fear, depression and anxiety and insecure attachment patterns can compromise exploration and the achievement of self-confidence (Fraley & Spieker, 2003).

Application of the theory to the study

The attachment of a student to significant others is dependent on the kind of attachment established earlier. The student could be either securely attached or insecurely attached, therefore, emotional adjustment needed in schooling by a student is acquired through physical closeness to significant others at childhood. A focal student whose attachment was secured is not likely to face challenges with relationships with significant others, but the insecurely attached student is likely to have problems with relationships. The benefits such as role modelling, we-feeling and others associated with connectedness would be enjoyed differently by these two categories of students: the securely and the insecurely attached. The likelihood of the securely attached to be academically ambitious is high since significant others will influence him or her positively. Thus, if only the content of the communications between the focal student and significant others focus on the former's education. On the other hand, the insecurely attached student will be less academically ambitious since he or she has no influence from other relationships. Thus, there will be little communication focusing on education between the student and significant others.

It is very plausible that the securely attached students will put in a lot of effort while the insecurely attached students put in less effort in their academic work. This is because the securely attached student is likely to be academically ambitious due to the quality of information received on his or her education from significant others and the insecurely attached student is likely to be less academically ambitious since there will be little or no information will whet his or her educational ambitions. It is likely that attachment theory would explain the dimensions of social connectedness; family connectedness, school connectedness and peer connectedness.

Social connectedness is an internal sense of belonging that reflects the individual's subjective awareness of being in close relationship with the social world (Lee & Robbins, 1998). Social connectedness encompasses close and distal relationships with family, friends, peers, community and the wider society. This definition by Lee & Robbins, makes reference to internal attachment which traces its roots to the attachment theory by Bowlby.

Family connectedness: Brook and Brook (2009) define it as the enduring bond between parent and child, characterized by nurturance, little conflict, and the child's identification with the parent.. In the words of Lezin, Roller, Bean & Taylor (2004), when family connectedness is high, it brings what they termed "emotional climate" thus it brings

affection, warmth, satisfaction and minimal conflict, but when the family connectedness is low, it causes harsh emotional climate; hostility and anger and sometimes violence.

School connectedness: Blum, (2004); Wilson (2004) defines as the positive feelings of attachment and commitment students feel as a result of believing their school community cares about their learning and individual well-being. More so, Blum (2004) outlined seven qualities which “seem to influence students” positive attachment to school (connectedness): Having a sense of belonging and being part of a school; Liking school; Perceiving that teachers are supportive and caring; Having good friends within school; Being engaged in their own current and future academic progress; Believing that discipline is fair and effective; Participating in extracurricular activities.

Peer connectedness is a feeling of being positively connected with peers, encompassing being accepted by friends and possessing social competence to interact with others (Wilkenfeld, Lippman, & Moore, 2008). It signifies the quality of the social relationships or social bonds among peers, the extent to which they feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported among friends.

Expectancy theory is a cognitive process theory of motivation that is based on idea that people believe there are relationships between the effort they put forth at work, the performance they achieve from that effort and the rewards they receive from the effort and performance (Lunenburg, 2011).

Application to the study

Students will be motivated if they get to know that strong effort will lead to good performance and good performance will lead to desired rewards. Students learn from significant others that effort pays especially where a parent shares his or her experience at work places and stories about heroes of life, how their efforts were rewarded, it whips an individual student’s ambitions and increases their urge to put in a lot of effort in their academics. They will get to know that effort results in performance and performance is without rewards in education.

In sum it is plausible to assume that students engage in academic efforts not only for present successes but also for future desired outcomes which can be realizing of their aspirations or goals. A student is likely to put forth a lot of effort in academic work in other to receive

praises from significant others. For instance, a student is more likely to put forth a lot of effort in order to enhance his or her academic performance to receive reward of acceptance from friends, approval of school teachers and to make his or her parents proud of him or her.

Conceptual Framework

This study has this clearly defined framework establishing the relationships among the variables (social connectedness, educational aspirations and academic effort)

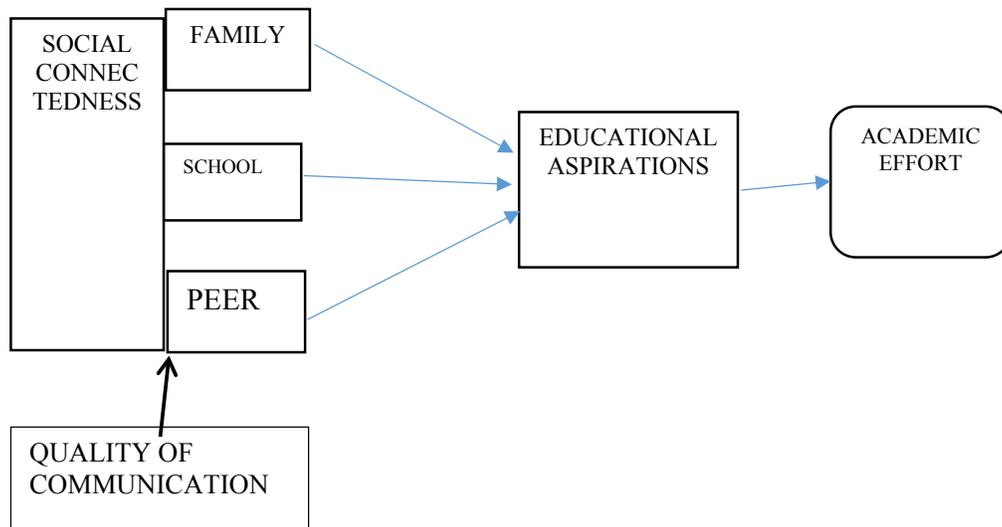


Figure 1: **Conceptual framework for this present study**

This simple model depicts that social connectedness is an influential factor of education and can be used to explain educational aspirations and academic effort (Bhandari, & Yasunobu, 2009). Social connectedness as a model in this study has three dimensions via family, school, and peer group. Social connectedness is the degree of interaction between the focal student and significant others. Between independent variable- social connectedness and dependent variable- academic effort lies an intervening variable educational aspirations. The relationship between the variables are expressed below.

Social connectedness points to explain the kind of aspiration that a student may enjoy in his or her education. In other words, educational aspiration is dependent on the kind of social connectedness of the student in the family, school and among peers. A student who enjoys high social connectedness is likely to have high educational aspirations. A student who enjoys a strong connectedness with family members is likely to develop high educational ambition. This is on the proviso that in their communication with family members the need for high education, the need for hard work, are frequently emphasized by the senior people and siblings. This situation will make the focal student aspire for higher education. It is

hypothesized that this aspiration will ginger the focal student to study hard in order to perform well. And on the contrary a student who suffers deficiency in social connectedness is likely to have low educational aspirations.

This reveals clearly that there will be either positive or negative relationship between social connectedness and educational aspirations. Thus High social connectedness is likely to lead to High educational Aspiration and Low social connectedness is also likely to lead to low educational aspirations. The relationship existing between educational aspiration and academic effort will also be either positive or negative such that a student who aspires high in education is likely to be identified by the kind of effort he or she puts into his or her academic work. Academically ambitious students are likely to put in a lot of effort while less academically ambitious students are less likely to put in a lot of effort in their academic work (Opore&Dramani, 2002). Thus High educational aspiration is likely to lead to High Academic Effort. Tentatively, if high social connectedness (HSC) leads to high educational aspiration and High educational aspiration leads to high academic effort then high social connectedness is also likely to indirectly lead to high academic effort.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed the descriptive sample survey design, which in spite of some weakness in it, was found most appropriate. The weakness include the possibility that some questions are not clearly answered because they are misleading, some respondents not answering questions truthfully and honestly, and not getting a sufficient number of questionnaires completed and returned so that meaningful analysis can be made (Freakel and Wallen, 2000). The relative strengths of this design include its versatile and practical especially to the researcher (Osuala, 2001), as well as its potential to provide a lot of information from quite a large sample of individuals (Freankel and Wallen, 2000). These tend to overshadow the weaknesses, hence its adoption for this study.

Population and sample

The target population for the study therefore was all Senior High School students in the District. There were four public schools in this District with a total population of seven thousand five hundred and two students (7,502) as at 12th February, 2016. The accessible population, however, was all SHS form two in the District. The sample size of 346

respondents were selected through multi-stage sampling procedure for the study. Thus, simple survey, purposive, stratified, quota sampling and systematic sampling procedures were used to select schools, form/class, gender and number of respondents for the study respectively.

Research instrument

The data collecting instrument was the questionnaire which was used to collect information from the respondents. The administration of the instrument was done through personal visits to the selected schools. All the respondents under the guidance of the researcher filled the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher.

Data analysis and Results

Research Question One

To what extent are the students educationally ambitious? This research question was to find out whether the respondents were educationally ambitious. To answer this question the frequency, the mean and the standard deviation of the students' level of education aspired for were used. This is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Respondents Educational Ambitions

| LEVEL OF EDUCATION | FREQ | PERCENT | MEAN | STD.D |
|----------------------------------|------|---------|------|-------|
| SHS level or equivalent | 9 | 2.5 | 4.18 | 1.42 |
| College or equivalent | 58 | 15.9 | 4.18 | 1.42 |
| HND level or equivalent | 44 | 12.5 | 4.18 | 1.42 |
| First Degree level or equivalent | 66 | 18.1 | 4.18 | 1.42 |
| Masters level or equivalent | 119 | 32.7 | 4.18 | 1.42 |
| Doctorial level or equivalent | 68 | 18.7 | 4.18 | 1.42 |
| Total | 364 | 100.0 | - | - |

The results of Table 1, the mean level of the students is 4.18, which indicates that a greater number of the respondents aspire for the First Degree or its equivalent. Again, a modal educational attainment aspired for by the students in this study is the Masters' Degree of 32.7%. In addition, summing up the frequencies and percentages from mean level, 253 respondents representing 69.5% aspire for higher levels of education as against 111

respondents representing 30.5% distributed among SHS level, College level and HND level. These findings indicate that to a very large extent the students are educationally ambitious.

Research question Two

To what extent are students’ educational aspirations dependent on or independent of gender? This question of the study was to find out whether the students gender relate to their educational aspirations. In answering this question, a Chi-Square test of independence was used to establish the association between gender and educational aspiration. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Educational Aspirations and Gender.

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 49.991 ^a | 2 | .000*** |
| Likelihood Ratio | 49.334 | 2 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 42.171 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 364 | | |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 35.82.

The data in Table 2, indicate that there is a significant association between gender and educational aspirations of students. $\chi^2(5) = 49.991$. This findings indicate that the academic ambitions of the students is dependent on gender and that gender plays a significant role in students’ educational aspirations.

Research Question 3

To what extent are the students socially connected in the family, the school and among peers? This research question was used to identify the degree of connectedness of the respondents to their family, school and among peers. Naturally, students have some sort of bond between them and their significant others; however, the degree of association and the extent of connectedness was necessary to establish the influence of their significant others on their education. In answering this question, mean, median, skewness and the standard deviation were used. This is presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3: Students Connectedness in the family

| No. | Statements | Mean | Skw | Med. | Std.D |
|--------------|--|-------------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| 1 | I frequently converse with my parents | 4.16 | -.520 | 4 | 1.28 |
| 2 | My parents frequently discuss the benefits of education with me | 4.59 | -.703 | 5 | 1.29 |
| 3 | In my conversations with my mother she frequently says things that challenge me to work hard and come on top of my class | 4.54 | -.564 | 5 | 1.22 |
| 4 | In my conversation with my father he frequently says things that challenge me to work hard and come on top of my class. | 4.48 | -.695 | 5 | 1.28 |
| 5 | I usually tell my parents about my school problems. | 4.24 | -.450 | 4 | 1.21 |
| 6 | In my family our parents often discuss our school progress with us. | 4.33 | -.449 | 4 | 1.25 |
| TOTAL | | 4.39 | -.649 | 5 | 1.00 |

According to the data in Table 3, the mean figures are above the average mean of 3.0, while the total median is 5, and the sum skewness value of -0.649. The mean and the median are not equal therefore the distribution is not normal but skewed. The value (-0.649) shows that the distribution is negatively skewed. If skewness is less than -1 then the distribution is highly skewed to the left. This implies that there are more high values than low values. That means the majority of the respondents expressed strong attachment to the family. Again, the narrow variations of the standard deviations also confirm that the students share common views on their family connectedness. This implies that significant proportions of the students are highly connected to their family. This also means that in this study, most of the respondents are highly connected in the family, therefore, to a very large extent the students enjoy a very strong bonding at home.

After establishing the students' family connectedness, their school connectedness was also ascertained. This is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Students' School connectedness

| No | Statements | Mean | Skw | Med | Std.D |
|--------------|---|-------------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| 1 | In my school the teachers show interest in the academic welfare of the student | 4.64 | -.761 | 5 | 1.26 |
| 2 | In my school the teachers usually discuss the benefits of education with us | 4.75 | -.920 | 5 | 1.20 |
| 3 | In my school the headmaster insists on high academic standards | 4.81 | -.930 | 5 | 1.23 |
| 4 | In my school the teachers usually discuss the requirements for higher education with us | 4.60 | -.623 | 5 | 1.16 |
| 5 | In my school the supervision of academic work by teachers is strong | 4.53 | -.672 | 5 | 1.22 |
| TOTAL | | 4.66 | -.909 | 5 | 1.00 |

The respondents' school connectedness as presented in Table 4 also shows that the mean figures are above the average mean of 3.0, while the total median is 5, and the sum skewness value of -.909. The mean and the median are not equal therefore the distribution is not normal but left skewed. The value (-.909) shows that the distribution is negatively skewed. The standard deviations also show a very narrow variations of views of the students on their school connectedness. This implies that significant proportions of the students are highly connected to significant others in their school. It can be concluded in this study that most of the respondents are strongly connected to the school. In other words, to a very large extent the students are highly connected to the schools' significant others such as teachers, and Headmasters. Notwithstanding, if the content of the communication between the student and significant others are not things that concern the students' education, then the strong ties will make no impact on the student.

The next dimension of social connectedness considered was peer connectedness. The need for friendship among adolescents is very crucial for them, as a result, the extent of social bond between the respondents and their peers was established using the mean, median, standard deviations and the skewness. This is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Students connectedness among Peers

| No | Statements | Mean | Skw | Med. | Std.D |
|--------------|--|-------------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| 1 | Many of my friends have strong academic ambitions | 4.38 | -.593 | 4 | 1.20 |
| 2 | Some of my friends have a lot of information about higher education. | 4.39 | -.518 | 4 | 1.17 |
| 3 | Sometimes I get useful educational information from friend's friend through my friend. | 4.19 | -.420 | 4 | 1.21 |
| 4 | My friends are concerned with my educational well-being. | 4.34 | -.663 | 4 | 1.28 |
| TOTAL | | 4.33 | -.796 | 4 | 1.00 |

According to the data in Table 5, there is a strong relationship among the peers in this study. The mean figures are above an average mean of 3.0, while the median is 4, and the sum skewness value of -0.796. The mean and the median are not equal therefore the distribution is not normal but skewed left. The value of -0.796 shows that the distribution is negatively skewed. The narrow standard deviations also confirm that the students share common views on their peer connectedness. This implies that a significant proportions of the respondents are strongly connected to their significant peers. This indicates that to a very large extent the students are highly connected to their peers.

Research Question 4

To what extent are the students' social connectedness in the family, the school, and in the peer group dependent on or independent of gender status? In answering this question a Chi-Square Test was used to establish the association between the gender of the student and their social connectedness in the family, the school and among peers.

Table 6: Students Gender and their Family Connectedness

| | Value | df | Asymp.Sig(2-tailed) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----|---------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.631 ^a | 1 | .202 |
| Continuity correction ^b | 1.230 | 1 | .267 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.584 | 1 | .208 |
| Linear-by-linear Association | 1.627 | 1 | .202 |
| N of Valid Cases | 364 | | |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.21.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table $p < .05^*$

Table 7: Students Gender and their School connectedness

| | Value | df | Asymp.Sig(2-tailed) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----|---------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.598 ^a | 1 | .206 |
| Continuity correction ^b | 1.129 | 1 | .288 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.693 | 1 | .193 |
| Linear-by-linear Association | 1.594 | 1 | .207 |
| N of Valid Cases | 364 | | |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.14.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 8: Students Gender and their Peer Connectedness

| | Value | df | Asymp.Sig(2-tailed) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----|---------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.300 ^a | 1 | .254 |
| Continuity correction ^b | 1.975 | 1 | .323 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.271 | 1 | .260 |
| Linear-by-linear Association | 1.296 | 1 | .255 |
| N of Valid Cases | 364 | | |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.26.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table $p < .05^*$

The results of the table 6, 7 & 8 shown that at all levels, there is no significant association between all the dimensions and the gender of the respondents. Using continuity correction, the chi-square values are as follows; family connectedness- $\chi^2(5) = 1.230$; school connectedness was $\chi^2(5) = 1.129$ and peer connectedness was $\chi^2(5) = 1.975$. This implies that both the females and the males' students relate well with their family, in the school and among peers significant others.

Research Question 5

How strongly does educational aspiration relate to academic effort? This research question was designed to find out how strongly the students educational aspirations will relate to their academic effort. Naturally, highly academically ambitious students put in a lot of effort in their academic work; however, the researcher intends finding out how strongly they relate. In answering this question, a Zero-Order correlation was used to establish the degree of relationship. The result is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Students Educational Aspirations and Academic Effort

| | | Academic Effort |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| | Pearson correlations | 0.708 |
| Educational Aspirations | Sig.(2-tailed) | 0.000*** |
| | N | 364 |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result shows the Zero-order correlation coefficient obtained between educational aspirations and academic effort is $r = 0.708$ with significance or p-value of 0.000 which is less than $\alpha = 0.01$. This implies that educational aspirations is strongly related to the academic effort and that the relationship between educational aspiration and academic effort is very strong. The finding gives a clear signal that students who are academically ambitious are more likely to put in a lot of effort in their academic work, and so therefore, academically ambitious students invariably put in a lot of effort in their studies in order to realize their strong aspirations.

Research Question 6

To what extent are students' academic efforts dependent on or independent of gender? This research question of the study was to find out the association between the gender of the students and their academic effort. In answering this question, a Chi-Square Test was again used to establish the association between the gender of the students and their academic effort. This is presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Gender and Academic Effort

| | Value | df | Asymp.Sig(2-tailed) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|---------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 33.697 ^a | 2 | .000*** |
| Likelihood Ratio | 33.569 | 2 | .000 |
| Linear-by-linear Association | 29.196 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 364 | | |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 26.70.

The Chi Square index shows a significant association between gender and academic effort of the students. $\chi^2(5) = 33.697$. This indicates that the academic effort of the students is dependent of gender. That is either males or females make strong effort to study.

Hypotheses

Attempts were made to test the hypotheses that guided the study. In view of this, multiple regression procedures were run to test the hypotheses.

1. H₀: Not all the dimensions of social connectedness will predict academic effort.
2. H₀: Social connectedness will not directly predict academic effort.

The results of the regression of the dependent variable on the predictors and intervening variable are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Result of the Multiple Regression of Academic Effort on family, school and peer

| Predictors | Academic Effort | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Model 1 β | Model 2 β |
| Gender of Students | .466(.118)** | .059(.430) |
| Father level of education | -.016(.200) | -.052(.182) |
| Mothers level of Education | -.017(.215) | -.025(.195) |
| Family connectedness | .346(.056)*** | .190(.053)** |
| School connectedness | .165(.069)** | .047(.064) |
| Peer connectedness | .237(.084)*** | .219(.076)*** |
| Academic Ambitions | | .425(.116)*** |
| Constant | .997 | .505 |
| R | .720 ^a | .778 ^b |
| R ² | .519 | .605 |
| AR ² | .511 | .598 |

*p < 0.05

H₀: Not all the dimensions of social connectedness will predict academic effort.

According to Table 11, in model 1, when academic effort was regressed on the predictor variables, all but father’s and mother’s education were found not to be significant predictors of academic effort.

In Model 2 however, when academic effort was regressed on the same independent variables the coefficients of gender, father’s education, mother’s education and school connectedness lost their significance. This ultimately discloses that family and peer connectedness were consistent predictors of academic effort even though both shrank in Model 2. In this order, family and peer connectedness were the major independent predictors of academic effort of students. Furthermore, the significance of gender in Model 1 also reveals that males put in more effort than females. This is because males were coded 2 while females were coded 1. We can therefore deduce that being a male is more predictive of effort.

It is however clear from the above discussion that the researcher failed to reject the hypothesis which state that “Not all the dimensions will predict academic effort”

H₀: Social connectedness will not directly predict academic effort

In model 1, all the dimensions of social connectedness predicted the dependent variable; family, school and peer connectedness, even though school connectedness predicted 95% of the academic effort. This implies that social connectedness is a predictor of academic effort. But, in model 2, when the intervening variable was introduced, not all the dimensions of social connectedness predicted academic effort. School connectedness lost its predictability (not significant at all), while family connectedness reduced its predictive value from 100% to 95%, with only peer connectedness maintaining its predictive value, but shrunk from 0.237(.084) to 0.219(.076).

One would have expected that the introduction of the intervening variable would cause the predictor variables to increase but they rather shrunk. For instance peer connectedness shrank by 92%, while family connectedness shrank by 55% and school connectedness by 28%. This implies that the predictability of the independent variables share their power with the intervening variable. This also means that the independent variables alone would not predict academic effort.

In essence, a mere association of the students to the significant others will not enhance their effort in academics unless the communication in their interaction induces academic ambition. A student may be highly connected to the significant others, but if the kind of communication between the student and significant others is not toward the improvement of education of the former, which may enhance his or her academic ambitions, the student’s academic effort will not be affected. This means that social connectedness indirectly predicts academic effort. In other words, the independent variables do better at the presence of the intervening variable-academic ambitions.

It is however clear from the above discussion that the researcher failed to reject the hypotheses which state that “Social connectedness will not directly predict academic effort”

Key Findings

1. The study showed that 253 of the respondents (representing 69.3%) aspire for higher education. The results of the data analysis indicated that their ultimate aim of education is

to get the post graduate degree. This suggests that to a large extent a large proportion of the respondents have high academic ambitions.

2. The study revealed that the academic ambitions of the respondents is dependent on gender.

3. The result of the study showed that a large number of the respondents enjoy high social connectedness in the family, the school and among peers. There is social connectedness when the content of communication in the relationship focus on educational matters. In other words the content of the communication between significant others and the focal student does matter.

4. The result of the study also indicated that social connectedness whether in the family, the school or among peers is independent of gender. Thus the dimensions of social connectedness are independent of gender.

5. The result of the data analysis revealed that there is a strong relationship between students' educational aspirations and their academic effort.

6. The study discovered that there is a significant association between students' academic effort and gender and that the male gender tends to make a greater effort.

7. It was found that not all the dimensions of social connectedness could predict students' academic effort. The relevant dimensions were peer and family connectedness. School connectedness could not predict the students' academic effort; therefore the null hypothesis to the effect that not all the dimensions of social connectedness will predict academic effort cannot be rejected.

8. It was found that the independent variables (dimensions of social connectedness) by themselves could not predict the students' academic effort. The intervening variable tends to share the power of the coefficients of the independent variables thereby reducing the value of those independent variables. It is therefore established that mere association of students to the significant others without educogenic communications will not enhance their academic ambitions and effort. Therefore the null hypothesis that social connectedness will not directly predict academic effort cannot be rejected.

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to find out whether the communications between the focal student and the relevant significant others has an influence on the students' academic effort. The study established that social connectedness really boosts educational aspirations of the students and gingers them to put in a lot of effort in their education. The academic effort of

the students will not be affected unless the subject of discussion of the communication between the focal students and significant others focus on the relevant educational issues of the students. That is the content of communication between the focal students' and significant others, within the family, the school and within the peer group focus on the importance of the education and conditions for academic success.

If the social context of education for the youth and children is to have strong influence on their education, then their environment must be educogenic. Social interactions between the student and significant others should focus on the benefits of education and the conditions necessary for educational success. It should also raise educational aspirations of students. And when educational aspirations are high, the students will work hard to realise this aspirations.

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