



Parental Expectations for their Children at the Elementary Education for Open Learning, in the Midst of Covid19, in Central African Countries: Case Study of Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at investigating parental expectations for their children at the elementary level of education for open learning in the midst of Covid19 pandemic. Parental expectations had four independent variables; fear of the expected, confident of the expected, motivated of the expected and discouragement of the expected. The hypotheses that are set for the studies stated to find out the relationship between parental expectations and the academic performance of the students. The data collected through questionnaires were presented and analyzed through statistical tools such as frequency distribution tables, pie chart, variance, covariance, mean, median and chi-square to test significant levels. It was found out that; parents have low expectations of their children's academic performances at the elementary education in the midst of COVID19. A policy recommendation was proposed to help parents deal with their self-values and how they could set expectations for their children.

Keywords: Parental expectations, Elementary education, Covid19

INTRODUCTION

It has been almost two years since the corona virus pandemic hits the world. Very tragic cases have been recorded globally. Questions have been asked concerning the future of the children. In almost all continents and regions of the world, school activities and education activities were halted. Parents have complaint of the increasing stubbornness of their children especially in regions where online learning is a major difficulty.

Central Africa is one of the regions in Africa where little interest is shown on online education. Online education is a rare possibility in the central African countries. It is defined in the ministerial text that online education cannot be substituted for traditional system of education (Jones, 2011). But the Covid19 Pandemic has caused many governments to consider online learning for continuous education of their children. Parents became interested in securing the future of their children via quality online education.

The 1990 millennium development goals revealed that education for all includes every child irrespective of age, sex, and backgrounds (GESP, 2008). With enormous zeal, the government took radical measures to promote equality and quality education for her citizens irrespective of their backgrounds. Education will remain the dire needs of the population and the future for the state.

In the midst of Covid19, closures of schools cannot reduce the governmental effort towards achieving her goals. The question we ask ourselves, "are parents willing to send their children to the school environment for on-campus learning"? A question of that nature requires us to carry-out a survey on the expectations of parents about onsite learning for their children in the elementary level of education.

Parental expectations have been a very important concept in school governance. School leaders tend to know what parents are expecting for their children academic success. In most cases, parental expectations tend to be higher than the child commitment to studies. Many parents have high expectations but they are disappointed by the academic report of their children (Keen, 2005). Previous studies on children performances in school proves that parents that set up high expectations for their children performances at school, put in little efforts to assists them to meet up with their achievements.

In the midst of Covid19, such expectation of parents is aggravated by the psychology of health for onsite learning. According to the World health organization and UNESCO rules and regulations pertaining Covid19, social distancing and taking of two doses of Covid19 vaccines would be a bold step towards safety in work places and school environments (UNESCO, 2020). In Saudi Arabia, according to the ministry of health recent policy of health security, complete doses of the Covid19 vaccines is the only confidence in which onsite learning can be safer (MOH, 2021). Despite the latest estimates of vaccinated population in Saudi Arabia (about 61%), parental expectations of the outcomes of the onsite learning is mirrored with fear, discouragement and instability.

In central African countries like Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Congo, the cases of Covid19 keeps rising with many parents reflecting on the onsite learning of their children. According to the Covid19 reports from the ministry of health in Cameroon, Covid19 infected cases have increased to 95,399 in the past 5 months and the number of death increased to 1517 (delegation of publichealth, 2021). In the global statistics, about 219millions infected cases and 4.55millions death due to Covid19. With this high estimates of Covid19, parental expectations about onsite learning have a mixed feeling despite the presence of Covid19 vaccines.

Statement of Research Problem

Parental expectation about their children learning has been an important aspect in the interest of many school leaders and stakeholders. Parents want the best for their children. Setting up higher standard for children academic performances, is a clear indication that both the teachers and the parents takes the studies of the students important (Tambo, 2005). Good school climate provides a platform whereby school participants could cooperate and work as a team to build efforts and good results. Parental expectations have always been positive despite the socio-political issues in many economies. Despite the fall in income and the fluctuations in the prices of basic commodities in the market, parents have been able to maintain a positive perspective about their children learning outcomes (Mohammed, 2001).

In 2008, the global financial crisis that stormed Europe, America and including Africa, did not stop the quest for quality education. Parental expectations at this time in Europe, on the academic performances for their children pushed many schools to improve on their learning and teaching process. School results have increased tremendously since 2010 (Sait, 2013).

The coming of Ebola virus in many parts of Africa by 2015 did not close down education institutions. Despite the high death rate that was recorded from the Ebola virus, the economy of most of the African countries did not close. Rapid remedies were made by WHO and UNESCO to enhance security and safety for affected regions (Media News, 2015). Schools did not close.

However, the world at large including Central Africa, is challenged beyond her control of the breakout of Covid19. With the high number of infected cases and death cases, Covid19 remains a major rod towards the collapse of many economies. The recent cases in Central Africa, put parents at a confusion state. UNESCO alongside many governments encouraged online education for continuous education of their children. This affected the children in areas that lacked amenities for online learning. Almost 63% of children in central African countries do not have access to school facilities including electricity and internet. In the half of 2021, the governments of the countries in Central Africa, created a policy for onsite learning on the condition that every school participant takes at-least a dose of the Covid19 vaccine (The post News Paper, 2021). Parents are in dilemma of the decision for onsite education in the midst of high infected and death cases of Covid19. This trigger the investigation of parental expectations of their children's academic performances, at elementary education in the midst of Covid19.

Research Questions

The main research question; what are the expectations of parents about their children academic performance at the elementary education in the midst of Covid19?

The specific research questions are;

1. Are parents afraid of onsite learning of the children at the elementary education?
2. How does being confident about the expected
3. Does parental motivation to their children have positive impact on their academic performances?
4. What is the effect of discouragement on the academic performances of the students?

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study are;

1. To know the effects of **fear** on the academic performances of children at the lower grades education for open learning in the midst of Covid19.
2. To assess the impact of **motivation** on academic performances of children in the midst of covid19
3. To know the effects of being **uncertain** about the academic performances of children at lower grades education for open learning in the midst of Covid19
4. To evaluate the impacts of **discouragement** on children academic performances in the midst of covid19. c

Hypotheses of the study

Null hypotheses were stated for this study. It is stated that parental expectations (fear, discouragement, motivation and uncertain) have no significant effects on the academic performances of children at lower grades for openlearning in the midst of Covid19.

2.0 Literature Review

Conceptual, theoretical and contextual literatures are review for this study.

2.1. Conceptual Reviews.

Parental expectation has often been a vital topic driving education changes in the society. Many schools have sponsored research to investigate what parents expect about their children achievements in education (Benard, 2007). Recent years, Muambo (2011), finds out that performances of students do not match with what parents expected. The Education policy composed by the ministry of education in Uganda stated that school governance align with teachers working hard to satisfy parents and other stakeholders (Ugandan press, 2001). The psychological work of Tina, stated that the state

government is more fearful when the education of its citizens is at stake (Tina, 2013). Sometimes, conflict pushes the country to a point where schooling becomes very insecure to attend onsite.

Students exposures to pandemic put their education at a risk. As a result, strong measures are taken to remedy the situation. UNESCO policy of education in the midst of crisis recommends that if the conflict is very severe and the life of individuals are at risk, the academic year should be looked into. And in some cases it should be cancelled (UNESCO, 2011). In Central African countries the rate of school dropout during pandemic or conflict is higher due to risen infected and death cases. Similar cases hold true in Asia and West Africa. The 2015 Ebola virus in Sierra Leone led to about thirty-two thousand students dropping out of school (UNESCO, 2016). In Liberia, the civil war led to about twenty-nine thousand students dropping out of school (Media, 2012). Parental expectations for their children during these periods was characterized by fear and lack motivation. Kens (2013), recorded that 'despite the high percentages of students who return to the school for on campus learning, not up to 25% had excellent results'. Carrying out a survey in Cameroon, about 350 thousand students did not attend school onsite. Parents were very pessimistic about their children academic performances (MINESUP, 2020).

Parental expectations for their children academic performance is characterized by fear, discouragement and little hope that the children would succeed during conflict periods. Tina (2011), a Psychology student in Harvard university noted in her thesis that 'during periods of conflicts or pandemic, the psychology of learners is unstable for them to perform well in school'. In such cases, both parents and students are recommended for therapy as soon as possible (Tina, 2011). Most of education studies requires both cognitive and behavioral abilities to produce desired results. Parents should work harder alongside the teachers and school administrators to give the children the best results. To this, Tchombe noted 'that academic performance requires collective efforts of both teachers and students, teachers and parents, parents and their children and children and school leaders' (Tchombe, 2005).

2.2 Theoretical framework

We are going to review four theories that could be very helpful in this study.

1. Parental involvement theory. This theory holds that children whose parents are involved in their education will be more likely to develop a strong positive efficacy for successful achieving in school-related tasks than will children whose parents are not involved (Nina Guyon, 2015). Parents who are likely involved in school related activities, set up high level of expectations for their children. However, the theory fails to assess that during crisis situation parents and other individuals' involvement in the school might reduce which has an impact on the child performance.

2. Expectancy theory. This theory holds that members of the education community have a set of expectations on what and where they want the school to be. All stakeholders expect positive changes and results. Parents are the first category of stakeholders who strive for growth and good outcomes of their children (David-keans, 2005). However this theory did not take into consideration the availability of educational resources as vital components to produce results.

3. Academic performance theory. This theory was developed by Elger (2007). The theory emphasizes six foundational concepts to form a framework that can be used to explain performances as well as performance improvements. Elger, argued that to perform means three things; set goals, commitment and produce valued results. If parental expectations about the academic performances for their children at lower grades education is tight to goals, commitment, then desired results would be produced.

4. Abraham Maslow hierarchical theory of human needs. Maslow developed the hierarchical order of human needs. According to him, there are five types of human needs. Physical needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs. Each person has needs. But the first is physiological needs. In the midst of a crisis, the need of safety constitutes a major desire for everyone. Parents are more concern about the security and health of their children. Parental concern for their children is high during the crisis periods due to the vulnerability of the children. Setting up expectations for children in the midst of Covid19 is a good initiative but the results might not reflect what is expected (Tchombe, 2009).

2.3. Contextual Review

The education system of Cameroon is noted for its bilingual nature, and traditional learning. The ministerial text of 2001 made it clear that some degrees obtained online might be accepted by the state for the evaluation and recognition. The education law in 2004 fostered private sector education to operate either as independent entities or operate under the state owned institutions for the award of degrees (Tambo, 2005). This by pursuit, follow the traditional method of learning set by government schools. Online education is a rare possibility in Cameroon taking in to consideration the unavailability of sufficient education amenities for online education.

In the first quarter of 2019, covid19 stormed the country which led to school close down (UNESCO, 2020). The government on her part, motivated school leaders to carry out online learning in the respective government and private schools. This was due to rising increased in the number of infected cases to about 102499 and the number of death to about 3545. The figure keeps rising due to lack of proper control measures to remedy the problem (Cameroon news, 2021). Due to measures to ensure that students and teachers become vaccinated, the number of infected cases reduced by 3.4%. This prompted the start of the school year on campus. Parents are skeptical about the health and academic performances of their children in the primary school at this time of on-campus learning in the midst of covid19 pandemic.

Methodology of the Research

The purpose of the study is to know the effects of Covid19 on parental expectations on their children academic performance for open learning. The study area of the research is central African countries particularly in Cameroon. **The targeted population** of the study is estimated to about 21million. The school enrollment in basic education is about 55450. The sample size was estimated to about 15000 parents across the 10 regions with Littoral region having 30%, central region having 20%, southwest region 10%, northwest region taking 5%, South region taking 10%, far north taking 5%, East

region taking 5%, West region taking 15% of the respondent's rate. **Data was collected** from the field through **questionnaires** and **presented** using frequency distribution tables. The **data was analyzed** using correlation analysis and chi-square for test of significant levels.

Data Presentations

The questionnaires sent to the field were divided into two parts. Part A was the demographic information and part B was **the investigation of the hypotheses of the study**.

Part A: Demography of the respondents

Table 2: Ages distribution of the respondents

Age range	Number of respondents	percentage
25-35	1200	30%
35-40	1000	25%
40-45	800	20%
45-50	500	12.5%
55-60	500	12.5%

Table 3: Education level of the respondents

Education level	Number of respondents	percentages
Certificate	1000	25%
diploma	500	12.5%
Bachelor degree	1200	30%
Master degree	1300	32.5%

Part B: Investigating the variables of the study

Table 4:

Variables	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Uncertain	%	Total	%
fear	2300	57.5	1000	25	700	17.5	4000	100
discouraged	1300	32.5	1200	30	1500	37.5	4000	100
motivated	1500	30	2300	57.5	200	12.5	4000	100
Highly expected	1000	25	2300	57.5	700	17.5	4000	100

The data presentation above tells us that 57.5% of the respondents are afraid of the children studying on campus in the midst of Covid19. In the data presentation, about 37.5% of the respondents were uncertain when investigating the level of discouragement from the parents. Similarly, about 57.5% of the respondents disagreed that on campus learning for children in the midst of Covid19 act as motivation to them. Lastly, 57.5% of the respondents disagreed that they have high positive expectations about their children academic performances for on campus learning in the midst of Covid19.

Testing of the hypotheses

The decision rule set in the analysis above was considered.

Hypothesis 1. Parents are afraid of their children studying on-campus. The calculated value of 115.654 is greater than 6.123 critical value. According to the rule, we reject the null hypothesis. Since the contingency coefficient of 0.68 lies between 0.47 and 0.71, suggest that fear has high magnitude in parental expectation for their children studying on-campus.

Hypothesis 3. Parents are discouraged about their children studying on-campus. The calculated value is 3.674 greater than 4.15 critical value. The null hypothesis is accepted according to the decision rule. Since the coefficient of 0.89 is above 0.71, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 4. Parents are motivated about their children studying on-campus. The calculated value is 3.80 less than 4.35 critical value. According to the decision rule, we reject the alternate hypothesis. Since the coefficient of 0.83 is above 0.71, we reject the alternate hypothesis. Meaning that parents are demotivated about their children studying on-campus.

Summary of the findings

1. Parents are afraid about their children studying on campus in the midst of covid19.
2. Parents are discouraged about the sending their children on-campus for learning
3. The findings proves that parents have low expectations for the academic performances of their children studying on-campus in the midst of Covid19.

Policy Recommendations

The study was aimed to investigate the effects parental expectations on their children academic performances for on-campus learning in the midst of COVID-19 Pandemic. The study finds out that parental expectations for their children studying on-campus is hampered with fear of the expected outcomes and demotivation of the expected outcomes. The following strategies could help parents combat this psychological disorder even as their children studies on-campus. These strategies are coping strategies to remedy the low expectations melted by parents.

Figure 4: Graphical illustration on the remedies to parental low expectations on their children academic performances studying on-campus in the midst of COVID-19.

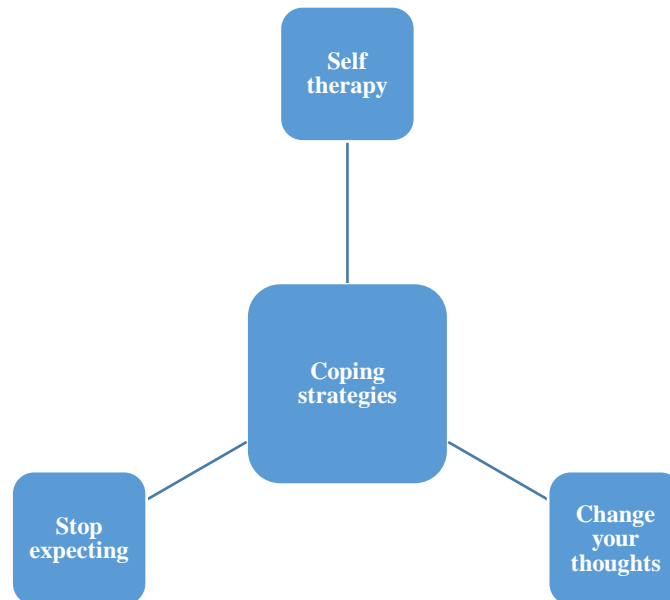


Figure 4. Coping strategies to low expectations

Parents could deal with this psychological issue concerning their children learning through the three mentioned coping strategies such as;

1. treating yourself kindly. You control yourself. Control how you see yourself and the fears that run through you. Others don't see what you see about yourself. Self-control and managing fears is what you can do always to stay positive.

2. changing your thoughts. Seeing loved ones being infected and died due to COVID-19 should obviously create fear in us. The thoughts of our minds at this time cannot be stable, pure and trustworthy. We can change the way we think by staying optimistic to ourselves and goals.

3. stop expecting. Expectations make us suffer and put on disguise traits just to be us. Many expectations never come true because of fear, lack of trust, lack of resources and many others. At this time of schools trying to GO ON-CAMPUS, parents need to support the children and teachers and stop expecting.

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