



Influence and Consequences of Parental Neglect on the Academic Performance of Students in Public Technical Colleges in Yobe State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Academic readiness is deeply rooted in the security of the domestic environment, a reality that is increasingly challenged in regions experiencing socioeconomic and post-conflict distress. This study investigates the influence and consequences of parental neglect on the academic performance of students within Public Technical Colleges in Yobe State, Nigeria. Utilizing a descriptive survey design, the inquiry evaluated a stratified sample of students and teachers across multiple regional technical institutions. Data were gathered through validated, researcher-developed instruments designed to measure self-reported student experiences of neglect alongside structured teacher observations. The findings reveal that structural vulnerabilities predominantly household poverty, parental migration for informal labour, and domestic instability serve as the primary drivers of neglect in this educational sector. This lack of parental support manifests directly in the classroom as acute material deprivation, severe emotional distress, and a marked inability to concentrate. Inferential statistical analysis indicates a profound, statistically significant negative relationship between parental neglect and academic achievement, alongside a strong link to chronic student absenteeism. Notably, these debilitating academic consequences affect male and female students equally, showing no significant variance across gender lines. Based on these outcomes, the study underscores the need for systemic intervention. It recommends the urgent institutionalization of dedicated school counselling units, the implementation of community-level parental engagement initiatives, and the expansion of targeted state-sponsored social safety nets to safeguard the academic futures of vulnerable technical education students.

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INTRODUCTION

Every child who walks into a classroom carries what happens at home with them. For students in Yobe State's Public Technical Colleges, what many carry is not encouragement or a packed lunch, but the weight of being overlooked by parents too poor to provide, too absent to supervise, or too overwhelmed to care. This is the reality of parental neglect, and its consequences do not stop at the school gate.

Parental neglect broadly understood as the persistent failure of a parent or caregiver to meet a child's basic developmental needs, including nutrition, emotional support, education, and supervision is widely recognised as the most common form of child maltreatment (WHO, 2020; UNICEF, 2020). While its physical manifestations are visible, its academic consequences are equally damaging, though far less visible (Iheanacho, 2017).

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Yobe State sits in Nigeria's North-East, a region still recovering from the devastation of the Boko Haram insurgency. The conflict has killed and displaced thousands of families, separated children from parents, and pushed many households deeper into poverty (UNICEF, 2021). These conditions have created fertile ground for parental neglect. Technical colleges in Yobe State which enroll a student population of approximately 6000 across 9 state owned public institutions serve young people who are often among the most economically vulnerable in the state. Many come from homes where a father has migrated for informal trade, a mother is overburdened with domestic responsibilities, or both parents are simply absent (NPC, 2018; UNESCO, 2022).

Teachers and technical education administrators in Yobe State have long observed a pattern: students from neglectful homes perform poorly, miss school regularly, and disengage from learning. Yet despite this widespread observation, no systematic empirical study has examined parental neglect and its consequences specifically within the Public Technical Colleges of Yobe State. This study fills that gap. Its purpose is not merely to document a problem that educators already sense exists, but to provide the kind of evidence that can drive real policy and counselling responses.

The significance of this study cannot be overdone. Technical and Vocational education is positioned by the Nigerian government as a critical pathway for economic development and youth empowerment (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020). Yet if the students enrolled in these institutions are being undermined by conditions at home that their schools are not equipped to respond to, the potential of technical education to transform lives remains unrealised. Understanding the scale and nature of parental neglect in this sector is a prerequisite for designing the kind of counselling, welfare, and community support systems that can give technical college students a fair chance to learn.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to:

1. Identify the causes of parental neglect among students in Public Technical Colleges in Yobe State.
2. Examine the effects of parental neglect on the academic performance of students in Public Technical Colleges in Yobe State?
3. Determine the relationship between parental neglect and students' academic performance in these institutions.

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of parental neglect among students in Public Technical Colleges in Yobe State?
2. What are the effects of parental neglect on students' academic performance of students in Public Technical Colleges in Yobe State?
3. What is the relationship between parental neglect and students' academic performance?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between parental neglect and the academic performance of students in Public Technical Colleges in Yobe State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical frameworks anchor this study. Bowlby's (1969) Attachment Theory holds that a child's capacity for learning is rooted in whether they feel emotionally secure. When parental care is absent or inconsistent, children develop anxiety and an internal sense of worthlessness that makes focused, curious learning almost impossible. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory broadens the lens, reminding us that a neglected child is not simply the product of a failing parent, but of an entire ecology a community shaped by poverty,

culture, conflict, and inadequate government support. In Yobe State, these ecological pressures are exceptionally intense, and this theory helps explain why parental neglect here carries

consequences that go beyond what researchers observe in more stable environments.

Concept of Parental Neglect

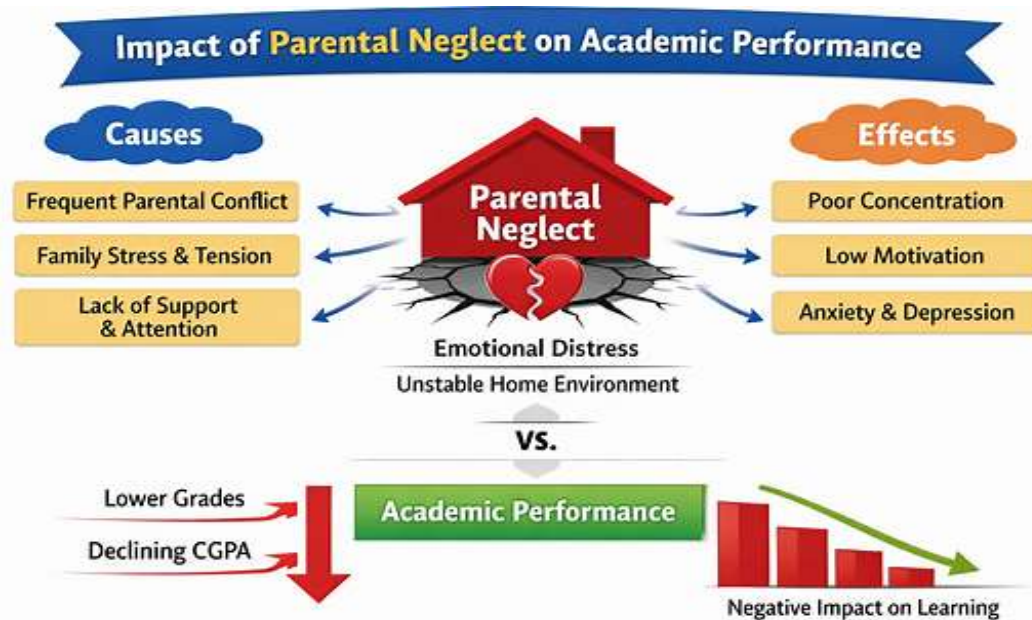


Figure 1: Parental Neglect

Parental neglect is the most common, and arguably the most damaging, form of child maltreatment (WHO, 2020). Unlike physical abuse, it rarely leaves visible marks, yet its harm runs deep. In educational settings, parental neglect shows up when children have no one to ensure they attend school, no materials to learn with, and no adult at home who asks about their day or checks their homework (Iheanacho, 2017). In northern Nigeria, the problem is woven into familiar patterns of life: the Almajiri tradition of sending boys away for Islamic education without adequate care, the normalisation of child labour during harvest or dry seasons, and polygamous household structures where children from junior wives receive little parental attention (Bello & Raji, 2019). Poverty, parental migration for petty trade, family breakdown, substance use, and mental health problems among parents are well-documented triggers across the literature (Pelton, 2015; Amato, 2010; Cicchetti & Toth, 2015).

Scholars have identified several distinct forms of parental neglect, each with its own consequences for learning. Physical neglect the failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare directly impairs a child's ability to concentrate, as a hungry or sickly child cannot engage productively with learning regardless of how good their teacher is (Crouch & Milner, 2013). Emotional neglect, characterised by parental coldness, indifference, and unavailability, erodes a child's self-worth and motivation over time, producing the kind of disengagement that teachers often misread as laziness or lack of ability (Cicchetti & Toth, 2015).

Educational neglect occurs when parents fail to ensure their children attend school, provide necessary materials, or take any interest in their academic progress. In Yobe State, where poverty and conservative cultural attitudes towards formal education coexist, this form of neglect is particularly prevalent among the parents

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of technical college students. Supervisory neglect the absence of adequate parental oversight of a child's activities and peer relationships is associated with increased risk of delinquency and school dropout (Barkley, 2013). Understanding these distinctions is important because effective intervention must be tailored to the specific form of neglect a student is experiencing.

Effects of Parental Neglect on Academic Performance

The classroom is where parental neglect makes itself felt most acutely. A child who arrives at school hungry cannot concentrate; a student with no exercise book cannot participate; a young person carrying the anxiety of a chaotic home cannot absorb what a teacher is saying. Hildyard and Wolfe (2002), reviewing over three decades of research, found that neglected children consistently underperformed not only academically but also in social and emotional development more so than children who experienced other forms of maltreatment. In Nigeria, Iheanacho (2017) documented a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.68$) between neglect and academic performance among secondary school students in Imo State. Bello and Raji (2019) found that neglect accounted for 31% of the variance in academic performance scores in Kwara State. Absenteeism remains a critical pathway: when no one at home ensures a child goes to school, irregular attendance becomes routine, and cumulative learning loss becomes inevitable (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Jonson-Reid, Kohl & Drake, 2012).

Empirical Review

A growing body of empirical evidence links parental neglect to poor academic outcomes across Nigeria. Iheanacho (2017) conducted a survey of 280 secondary school students in Imo State and found a significant negative correlation between neglect and academic performance ($r = -0.68$, $p < 0.05$), with the most neglected students recording the lowest grade point averages and the highest absenteeism rates. The study recommended stronger school counselling infrastructure as the first line of response. Bello

and Raji (2019), working with 350 Public Technical Colleges students in Kwara State, found that parental neglect alongside poverty and low parental educational attainment was among the strongest predictors of academic underperformance, accounting for 31% of the variance in students' scores. Garba and Umar (2021) arrived at similar conclusions through a qualitative study in northern Nigeria, where teachers and counsellors consistently identified neglect as the dominant home-based factor explaining the academic difficulties of their lowest-performing students.

International evidence reinforces these Nigerian findings. Hildyard and Wolfe (2002), in a landmark review of more than 30 studies, demonstrated that neglected children suffer greater academic impairment than children who experienced physical abuse, because neglect operates chronically and pervasively rather than episodically. Fantuzzo, Perlman, and Dobbins (2011), in a large-scale study of 3,000 children in the United States, found that those with documented neglect showed significantly lower cognitive readiness and school engagement even after controlling for socioeconomic status.

A finding that challenges the common assumption that poverty and neglect are the same thing. Onderi and Makori (2013) found in Kenya that parental non-involvement and neglect were directly associated with lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates in secondary schools, a pattern easily observable in Yobe State's technical college environment. Taken together, this body of research establishes a clear empirical foundation for the present study and justifies the urgency of investigating parental neglect in the Nigerian technical education context.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The target population comprised approximately 6000 students and 380 teachers in 9 state owned Public Technical Colleges across Yobe State (Yobe State Science and Technical Schools Board, 2022/2023). A multi-stage procedure was employed. Two researcher-



developed instruments were used for data collection. The Parental Neglect and Academic Performance Questionnaire (PNAPQ) is a 40-item student questionnaire organised into four sections: demographic information, perceived causes of parental neglect (15 items), perceived effects on academic performance (15 items), and academic self-rating (10 items).

The Teacher Observation Scale on Parental Neglect (TOSPN) is a 30-item instrument through which teachers rated their direct observations of neglect indicators and their academic and behavioural consequences. Both instruments adopted a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1), with a criterion mean of 2.50 used as the decision point. Content and face validity were established through review by three university specialists, whose corrections were incorporated before administration. A pilot study involving 30 students and 15 teachers outside the main sample yielded Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of 0.83 for the PNAPQ and 0.79 for the TOSPN, both exceeding the 0.70 threshold recommended by Nunnally (1978).

Descriptive statistics mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Items with a mean score of 2.50 or above were accepted as agreed upon by respondents. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the three null hypotheses, all at the 0.05 level of significance. All analyses were carried out using SPSS version 26.0.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Causes of Parental Neglect

All 15 items on the PNAPQ causes sub-scale and TOSPN exceeded the 2.50 criterion. The five most highly rated causes among student respondents were: poverty and economic hardship ($M=3.72$, $SD=0.41$), parental migration for informal trade or labour ($M=3.64$, $SD=0.49$), parental separation or divorce ($M=3.51$, $SD=0.55$), large family size ($M=3.44$, $SD=0.58$), and substance abuse ($M=3.39$, $SD=0.62$). Teacher responses mirrored these findings, with poverty

($M=3.81$) and migration ($M=3.67$) rated highest, followed by substance abuse ($M=3.52$), family disintegration ($M=3.47$), and low parental educational awareness ($M=3.41$). Cultural factors the devaluation of formal education ($M=3.22$), adolescent parenthood ($M=3.17$), and parental mental health difficulties ($M=3.09$) also featured prominently. These findings confirm that the neglect experienced by technical college students in Yobe State is driven primarily by structural and economic conditions, not simply individual parental character. This is consistent with Pelton (2015), Bello and Raji (2019), and the broader Nigerian literature on family poverty and child welfare.

These findings carry an important implication: blaming parents individually for neglect is both unfair and unhelpful. Most are themselves victims of circumstances an economy that offers no decent local employment, a conflict that has torn families apart, and cultural norms around child-rearing that have not kept pace with the demands of modern education. Any policy response that treats neglect purely as a parenting failure, without addressing structural conditions, is unlikely to produce lasting change consistent with Pelton's (2015) argument that poverty alleviation must anchor any serious child welfare response.

Effects of Parental Neglect on Academic Performance

Every one of the 15 effects items on the PNAPQ scored above the 2.50 criterion. Students most frequently reported being unable to concentrate in class due to hunger or emotional distress ($M=3.69$, $SD=0.44$), missing school because no one at home ensured their attendance ($M=3.63$, $SD=0.47$), lacking textbooks and writing materials ($M=3.58$, $SD=0.52$), being unable to complete assignments without anyone to help ($M=3.54$, $SD=0.53$), and feeling unmotivated and of little worth ($M=3.48$, $SD=0.57$). Teachers corroborated these observations, citing irregular attendance ($M=3.77$), emotional withdrawal from classroom activities ($M=3.71$), and consistently poor examination results ($M=3.65$) as the most visible consequences. These findings reinforce Hildyard and Wolfe (2002) and Iheanacho (2017),



confirming that academic failure among neglected students flows from a combination of material deprivation, emotional disturbance, and chronic absenteeism not from any deficit of ability.

The convergence between student self-report and independent teacher observation strengthens confidence in these findings considerably parental neglect is not invisible in Yobe State's technical colleges; it is visible to teachers every day. Hunger and emotional distress topping the effects list deserves particular attention: research consistently shows that both impair working memory, attention, and cognitive flexibility the exact capacities that technical and vocational learning demands most (Hildyard & Wolfe, 2002).

Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁ — Parental Neglect and Academic Performance

Pearson correlation between PNAPQ neglect scores and mean scores in technical subjects for the 2022/2023 session yielded $r = -0.74$ ($df = 373$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). H_{01} is therefore rejected. The strong negative correlation indicates that the higher a student's level of parental neglect, the lower their academic performance. A correlation of this magnitude ($r = -0.74$) is notably high and suggests that parental neglect is among the most powerful predictors of academic underachievement in Yobe State's technical colleges, consistent with Iheanacho (2017; $r = -0.68$) and Bello and Raji (2019).

H₀₂ — Gender Differences

An independent samples t-test comparing male students ($M=52.41$, $SD=7.83$) and female students ($M=54.17$, $SD=7.19$) on the perceived effects sub-scale yielded $t(373) = -1.89$, $p = 0.060$. Since $p > 0.05$, H_{02} is retained. Parental neglect does not discriminate by gender. Its academic consequences are equally felt by male and female students, which makes sense: the material conditions of neglect no food, no books, no one checking attendance do not depend on whether the child is a boy or a girl.

H₀₃ — Parental Neglect and Absenteeism

Pearson correlation between neglect scores and absenteeism rates (days absent recorded in attendance registers, 2022/2023 session) yielded $r = 0.68$ ($df = 373$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). H_{03} is rejected. Higher parental neglect is significantly associated with more frequent absenteeism. This finding is important because absenteeism is not merely a symptom of neglect it is a mechanism through which neglect accelerates academic failure. Every day a neglected student miss school is a day of instruction lost, rarely recovered.

Summary of Findings

The results of this study converge around three central conclusions. First, parental neglect in Yobe State's Public Technical Colleges is real, widespread, and driven primarily by structural conditions — poverty, economic migration, and family disintegration rather than individual parental character. Second, its academic consequences are severe and multidimensional, affecting students' concentration, attendance, material readiness, motivation, and ultimately their examination performance. Third, the relationship between neglect and poor academic performance is statistically strong ($r = -0.74$), gender-neutral, and operates significantly through the pathway of absenteeism ($r = 0.68$). These findings are consistent with the existing Nigerian and international literature on child neglect and academic outcomes, and they provide, for the first time, empirical evidence grounded specifically in the technical college context of Yobe State.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study make one point clearly: parental neglect in Yobe State is not a marginal problem affecting a few unfortunate students. It is a widespread condition, rooted in structural poverty, economic migration, and family disintegration, that is quietly undermining the academic futures of a significant proportion of students in Public Technical Colleges across the state. The correlation between neglect and academic performance ($r = -0.74$) is strong



enough to demand a serious institutional response not occasional concern, but sustained action from school administrators, counsellors, teachers, government, and communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study makes four specific recommendations. First, every Public Technical College in Yobe State should have a functioning, staffed counselling unit with a clear mandate to identify neglect early and respond with welfare support. Second, parental engagement programmes delivered through local government structures, mosques, and community leaders should be designed to reach the hardest-to-reach parents: those who have migrated, those consumed by poverty, and those who themselves grew up without adequate parenting. Third, the Yobe State government should expand social protection schemes, including school feeding, conditional cash transfers linked to student attendance, and vocational skills training for parents, so that economic desperation does not translate into child neglect. Fourth, teacher education and continuing professional development in Yobe State should equip every technical college teacher with the knowledge and skills to recognise signs of parental neglect and respond with empathy rather than punishment.

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