

PROSOCIAL INVOLVEMENT AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL AS DETERMINANTS OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT IN A PERIOD OF SOCIO- ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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In a period of social, political, and economic uncertainty, it is critical for students to be part of a supportive community and maintain a positive outlook towards their educational environment in order to stay engaged and motivated in their studies. This study examined students' prosocial involvement and attitude towards school as determinants of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in Anambra State. The study was guided by two research questions, while two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study was carried out using a correlational survey research design. A sample of 1608 secondary school students was drawn from a population of 32,127 senior students in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Three research instruments titled "Prosocial Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ), Attitudes toward School Questionnaire (ATSQ) and Academic Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ) were used for data collection through the direct delivery method. The collected data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, while the null hypotheses were tested using the t-test of correlation. The results showed that student prosocial involvement was significantly associated with higher levels of academic engagement. Additionally, attitudes towards school had a significant positive contribution to students' academic engagement. The study concluded that prosocial involvement and attitude towards school are both moderate and significant contributors to students' academic engagement in secondary schools in Anambra State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the management of secondary schools should provide more meaningful opportunities for students to engage in prosocial activities at school, such as helping peers, assisting teachers, and participating in community service projects. This will help foster positive attitudes towards school and encourage greater academic engagement.

Keywords: *prosocial involvement, attitudes towards school, academic engagement, socio-economic uncertainties, determinants*

Introduction

Academic engagement is a crucial factor in determining the success of teaching and learning in academic institutions. It can provide insight into how educational practices are being conducted and can be used to inform the development of effective pedagogical techniques that enhance the learning experiences of students. So, understanding the behaviour of students in academic institutions is an invaluable tool for teachers. In times of socio-economic uncertainties, it becomes crucial for educators to adapt their teaching methods to ensure optimal learning outcomes for students. By studying students' engagement with teaching and learning, teachers gain valuable insights into which methods are most effective. This allows them to tailor their strategies accordingly, thus maximizing the learning potential of their students despite the challenges posed by socio-economic uncertainties.

Socio-economic uncertainties refer to the instability, unpredictability, or fluctuations in the social and economic conditions within a society or region. These uncertainties can manifest in various forms and impact different aspects of individuals' lives, including employment opportunities, income levels, access to resources, and overall quality of life (Sirin, 2005). Understanding how students engage with the learning process can help teachers identify what resonates most with their students and what may need adjustment. For instance, they may discover that interactive activities, such as group discussions or hands-on projects, foster deeper engagement and comprehension. Armed with this knowledge, teachers can prioritize these methods in their lesson plans. Moreover, studying student academic engagement can reveal individual preferences and learning styles, enabling teachers to personalize their approach. As Skinner, Kindermann and Furrer (2009). Some students may thrive with visual aids, while others may prefer auditory explanations or kinesthetic activities. By catering to diverse learning styles, teachers ensure that each student has the opportunity to excel.

Academic engagement is the process of actively participating in educational activities and striving for academic success. This includes participating in class discussions, attending lectures, completing and submitting assignments on time, and seeking help when needed (Ganzer, 2019). It is defined as meaningful involvement in the learning process, which encompasses the relationship between the student and the school, teachers, peers, instruction, and curriculum (Martin and Torres, 2020). This relationship is essential for academic engagement, as it creates an environment of trust and support that encourages students to actively participate in their learning. With proper engagement, students are more likely to be motivated to learn and achieve greater academic success. Thus, in the context of this study, academic engagement refers to the various ways in which students interact with their academic environment, including attending class, participating in class discussions, and completing assignments and tests.

Over the past few decades, the concept of academic engagement has been of increasing interest to researchers and educators as a means of improving disaffection, averting student boredom, motivating and involving students in school-related activities, and increasing successful student achievement levels (Gunuc, 2014; Groves, Sellars, Smith, & Barber, 2015). Academic engagement has been identified as an

important factor for students' success. This concept of academic engagement refers to both academic and non-academic activities and encompasses the student's motivation, effort, and self-regulation in their academics (Saris 2017; Obikeze, Obi, & Mmegbuanaeze 2018; Sara, Mohamad, & Hamid 2018). William (2018) noted that student academic engagement can have a significant impact on various educational outcomes such as academic achievement, attendance, behaviour, dropout from school, and completion. Therefore, by providing students with opportunities to engage in prosocial activities and develop positive attitude towards school, educators can help to prevent negative educational outcomes and promote positive ones for at-risk students.

Prosocial involvement and attitudes towards school are often linked to student engagement, making it an important factor in helping at-risk students avoid negative educational outcomes and instead promote positive ones. For instance, a study by Cheung et al. (2019) noted that students who are actively engaged in prosocial activities and have positive attitudes towards school are more likely to have higher academic achievement and better mental health outcomes. Prosocial involvement is the engagement in activities that bring benefit to others and involves altruism and cooperation (Fink, 2014). According to Spencer and Mark (2018), prosocial involvement is associated with positive effects on the individual, increasing self-esteem and wellbeing. It can lead to positive social change as it fosters connection and collaboration among people (Kroger, 2016). Prosocial behaviours such as helping, sharing, and cooperating are important and will most likely help in creating a positive, supportive learning environment that could be associated with improved academic outcomes, better mental health, and more positive peer relationships in secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Prosocial involvement can be an important factor in promoting students' academic engagement in secondary schools in Nigeria. Studies have found that prosocial behaviours can positively influence students' academic engagement (Akinwale, Omolola, & Akinyemi, 2017; Adesina, Eluyela, & Afolayan, 2020). These prosocial behaviours can help foster a sense of belonging and connectedness among students, which can encourage them to become more involved in their studies (Adesina et al., 2020). Prosocial involvement can also help to create a safe and supportive learning environment, which can improve student engagement and academic performance (Akinwale et al., 2017). For example, prosocial involvement can help reduce disruptive behaviour in the classroom, which can improve the overall learning environment. Additionally, it can lead to increased teacher-student relationships, which can further enhance student engagement and academic performance (Adesina et al., 2020).

A study by Ogunnaike, Adebayo, and Adekanye (2018) found that when students felt a sense of belonging in their school, they were more likely to display prosocial behaviours. This suggests that developing a sense of community in Nigerian schools may be beneficial for increasing prosocial behaviours among students. Additionally, studies have indicated that students who are more involved in prosocial activities and have a more positive attitude towards school are more likely to report higher levels of engagement in the classroom (Hastings, Schumacher & Gwinn, 2019). Attitude towards school, as Garcia and Reio (2013) noted can range from positive and supportive to negative and critical. Positive attitudes involve a belief that education is beneficial and important and manifest themselves in behaviours such as working hard, attending classes, and taking advantage of available resources. On the other hand,

negative attitudes involve the belief that school is a waste of time and manifest themselves in behaviours such as skipping classes and not doing homework, while indifferent attitudes involve a lack of interest or enthusiasm for learning and critical attitudes involve a belief that the education system is flawed and in need of improvement. Therefore, in the context of this study, attitude towards school can be defined as a person's feelings, beliefs, and opinions about school, schoolwork, and the education system which can have a significant impact on academic success, relationships, and overall wellbeing of the students.

Attitude towards school are often shaped by a variety of factors, such as family and cultural backgrounds, previous experiences, and relationships with peers and teachers (Lonnqvist, Halme, & Lönnqvist, 2019). Positive attitude towards school can lead to increased academic success, better relationships, and improved well-being. Conversely, negative attitudes towards school can lead to decreased academic achievement, lower self-esteem, and even truancy. Research such as Schultz (2015) suggests that students with positive attitudes towards school are more likely to achieve higher grades, attend school more regularly, and take a more active role in their education. Positive attitudes towards school can also be associated with stronger relationships with teachers as well as increased participation in extra-curricular activities (Risku, 2020). Furthermore, students with positive attitude towards school can experience greater overall well-being, including increased self-esteem and lower levels of stress (Lonnqvist et al., 2019). On the other hand, negative attitude towards school, as Risku (2020) noted, can lead to decreased academic performance, lower self-esteem, and even truancy. Furthermore, negative attitude towards school can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as decreased motivation and engagement in the classroom.

A meta-analytic review conducted by Oliver, Wood, and Willoughby (2016) has shown that low academic engagement is associated with lower academic performance, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of absenteeism. Although there are many reasons why students may not be academically engaged, some of the factors identified in Anambra State include: poverty, lack of parental support, overcrowded classrooms, lack of qualified teachers, and poor school infrastructure (Udeh, Eze, & Okeke, 2017). In addition, the authors further observed that many students in Anambra State are faced with limited access to educational resources, which can further contribute to their academic disengagement. The State, in recent time, has been experiencing a wave of socio-economic uncertainties, such as the economic recession, rising costs of living, and a lack of job opportunities for students after graduation from school. These factors seemed to have had a detrimental effect on student engagement and academic performance. Moreover, the limited resources available to schools in Anambra State may have hindered the ability of schools to provide an engaging and stimulating learning environment for students.

Developing a conducive learning environment that encourages active engagement and offering students the necessary support and resources are crucial steps for educators and schools to instill a positive attitude towards learning and ensure students achieve their full potential (Ogunnaike et al., 2018). However, it appears that secondary schools in Anambra State struggle to effectively establish such an environment and provide adequate support for their students. Despite numerous studies exploring academic engagement among students, both within and outside Nigeria, including in Anambra State, there remains limited understanding of the key factors contributing to

the creation of an engaging learning atmosphere and the most effective strategies for supporting students in their academic pursuits. Understanding the factors that determine students' academic engagement and how best to provide students with the resources they need to succeed can help bridge the gap in knowledge and provide teachers and schools with the tools they need to help ensure students' success, especially in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in Anambra State. Hence, this study examined prosocial involvement and attitudes towards school as determinants of students' academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State has been a growing concern in recent years. The state has been experiencing a wave of socio-economic uncertainties, such as the economic recession, rising costs of living, and a lack of educational opportunities for students. As a result, it has become an important education requirement to provide students with the necessary resources and programmes to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as access to the latest technology. It is also expected that the state government, along with other education stakeholders, instead of just being worried and blaming each other, will work together to create an environment that encourages dialogue and communication to foster a positive learning environment with resources to help students manage any stress or issues. By doing so, Anambra State can ensure that students remain academically engaged, even in the face of socio-economic uncertainties as being experienced today. Sadly, this does not seem to be the case, as there is seemingly a lack of understanding of the various factors that contribute to students' academic engagement, especially during such a time of serious socio-economic difficulties.

Despite the growing evidence of the effects of socio-economic factors on academic engagement within and outside Anambra State, there is a dearth of research known to these researchers that has been conducted to explore the unique contributions of prosocial involvement and attitudes towards school to students' academic engagement in Anambra State. This is a serious concern, as education is an important factor in the development of any society. A study that looks at how students' attitudes towards school and their involvement in community service affect their desire to do well in school during a time of economic uncertainty in the state is necessary to gain a better understanding of the issue. Therefore, in an attempt to fill the knowledge gap, these researchers are motivated to examine prosocial involvement and attitudes towards school as determinants of students' academic engagement in Anambra State in a period of socio-economic uncertainties.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined students' prosocial involvement and attitudes towards school as determinants of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study determined:

28. The contribution of students' prosocial involvement as a determinant of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State

29. The contribution of students' attitudes' towards school as determinants of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

34. What is the contribution of students' prosocial involvement as a determinant of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State?
35. What is the contribution of attitudes towards school as determinants of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

26. There is no significant correlation between students' prosocial involvement and their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State.
27. There is no significant correlation between students' attitudes towards school as determinants of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Method

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Anambra State, Nigeria. Anambra is a state located in south-eastern Nigeria. It is home to many secondary schools and is known for its rich cultural and ethnic diversity. Additionally, the state has experienced significant socio-economic uncertainties that have had an impact on all levels of education, particularly secondary schools. As such, studying students' prosocial involvement and attitudes towards school and academic engagement in the context of Anambra State's socio-economic uncertainties can provide valuable insights into how students can be better supported in times of economic hardship.

Research Design

The study was carried out using a correlational survey research design. This type of research design was used in line with Akuezuilo and Agu (2015) to identify potential causal relationships between the variables of interest and provide insight into how socio-economic uncertainties may be contributing to student academic engagement.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 1608 secondary school students was drawn from a population of 32,127 senior students in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The sampling process was done using a multi-stage sampling approach.

Instrument for Data Collection

Three research instruments titled “Prosocial Involvements Questionnaire (PIQ) and Attitudes towards School Questionnaire (ATSQ) were used for data collection through the direct delivery method.

The Prosocial Involvements Questionnaire (PIQ) is a psychological assessment tool developed by Arthur, Hawkins, Pollard, Catalano, and Baglioni (2002). It is a questionnaire designed to measure an individual's levels of pro-social involvement. It measures students' perception of the extent to which opportunities and rewards are available within the school setting. The PIQ consists of nine items rated on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The questions cover a range of topics, including attitudes towards helping others, donating to charity, and volunteering. It has an internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.73.

The Attitudes Towards School Questionnaire (ATSQ) was developed by the Institute of Behavioural Science (1990). It is a self-report measure of student attitudes and has 15 items that are rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The ATSQ is designed to measure attitudes towards school (e.g., homework, teachers' opinions). The ATSQ also provides subscales for each of these factors. Internal consistency $r = 0.82$.

The Academic Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ) is an 18-item self-report scale developed by Andrew J. Martin and Peter K. Smith in 2000. It measures the level of engagement of students in academic activities and their motivation and interest in educational tasks. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The AEQ is divided into three subscales that measure academic involvement, classroom engagement, and academic self-efficacy. Internal consistency $r = 0.76$.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through direct delivery method. Data collected data were analysed using simple regression analysis. Simple regression was used to explore the relationship between prosocial involvements, attitudes towards school (predictors) and students' academic engagement.

Results

The data collected from the field study are analysed and presented in table as follows:

Research Question 1

What is the contribution of students' prosocial involvement as determinant of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Students' prosocial involvement as determinant of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Beta	Remarks
1	0.537	0.288	0.288	0.537	Moderate contribution

Table 1 show that secondary school students' prosocial involvement had a beta of 0.537. This indicates that 53.7 percent of the variation in the students' academic engagement can be attributed to the students' prosocial involvement. Thus, the beta coefficient of 0.537 indicated that prosocial involvement is a moderate contributor to students' academic engagement in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 2

What is the contribution of students' attitudes towards school as determinants of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Students' attitudes towards school as determinant of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Beta	Remarks
1	0.325	0.106	0.105	0.325	Moderate contribution

Table 2 shows that secondary school students' attitudes towards school had a beta of 0.325. This indicates that 32.5 percent of the variation in the students' academic engagement can be attributed to the students' attitudes towards school. Thus, the beta coefficient of 0.325 indicates that students' attitude towards school is a moderate contributor to students' academic engagement in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Null Hypothesis 1

The contribution of students' prosocial involvement as determinant of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Beta	df	t-test	Pvalue	Remarks
1	0.537	0.288	0.288	0.537	1588	35.706	0.000	Significant

Anambra State is not significant.

Table 3: Students' prosocial involvement as determinant of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State

Table 3 shows that at the 1df numerator, 1558df denominator, and 0.05 level of significance, the calculated $t_{35.706}$ with a P value of 0.000, which is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, rejects the null hypothesis. Therefore, secondary school students' prosocial involvement contributed significantly to their academic engagement in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Null Hypothesis 2

The contribution of students' attitudes towards school as determinants of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Beta	df	t-test	Pvalue	Remarks
1	0.325	0.106	0.105	0.325	1588	13.698	0.000	Significant

schools in Anambra State is not significant.

Table 4: Students' attitudes towards school as determinant of their academic engagement in a period of socio-economic uncertainties in secondary schools in Anambra State

Table 4 shows that at the 1df numerator, 1558df denominator, and 0.05 level of significance, the calculated $t_{13.698}$ with a P value of 0.000, which is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, rejects the null hypothesis. Therefore, secondary school students' attitudes towards school contributed significantly to their academic engagement in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion

Findings of the study revealed that prosocial involvement is a moderate contributor to students' academic engagement in secondary schools in Anambra State. The findings further revealed that the contribution of prosocial involvement to students' academic engagement in secondary schools in Anambra State is significant. The study found that students' prosocial involvement is a moderate factor in their academic engagement in secondary schools in Anambra State, possibly because being prosocial is good for doing well in school. Prosocial behaviour includes helping others, behaving kindly, cooperating, and showing respect. These behaviours can have a positive impact on students' academic engagement because they foster a positive school environment where students feel supported and encouraged to strive for success. In addition, prosocial behaviour can also help students develop important skills and qualities such as empathy, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. These skills and qualities can help students become more motivated and engaged in their studies, which could explain why prosocial involvement is a moderate contributor to students' academic engagement.

The finding is in agreement with the findings of Adesina, Eluyela, and Afolayan (2020), Akinwale, Omolola, and Akinyemi (2017); Adesina, Eluyela, and Afolayan (2020) which revealed that prosocial behaviour was positively correlated with academic engagement among secondary school students. This suggests that when students engage in prosocial behaviour, such as helping and collaborating with their peers, they are more likely to have higher academic engagement rates. This could be due to the fact that prosocial behaviour helps to create a supportive and collaborative learning environment, which can be beneficial for academic performance. Fink (2014) also studied the power of prosocial involvement and found that prosocial involvement was positively correlated with well-being. The author suggested that when people are involved in prosocial activities, such as volunteering or donating to charity, they are more likely to experience higher levels of well-being. This could be due to the fact

that prosocial activities help to create a sense of purpose, connectedness, and meaning, which can lead to improved mental health and well-being.

Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed that students' attitude towards school also contributes to students' academic engagement in secondary schools in Anambra State. It further revealed a significant contribution of students' attitude towards school to students' academic engagement in secondary schools in Anambra State. This means that the attitude of students towards school, such as their motivation and interest in the school, can have an effect on their academic engagement. It is important to note that attitude towards school is only one factor that can influence academic engagement, and other factors such as family and environmental factors can also have an effect. It is possible that students with a positive attitude towards school are more likely to be engaged in their studies, as they have a sense of purpose and motivation to do well. This indicates that schools and parents should strive to create a positive environment for students to ensure that they are motivated and engaged in their studies.

The finding is consistent with the findings of Garcia and Reio (2013); Schultz (2015) whose studies show that having a positive attitude towards school is associated with higher academic performance and better outcomes. This is likely due to the fact that students with a positive attitude are more likely to be engaged in their studies and take their studies more seriously, which in turn could lead to better academic results.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study found that prosocial involvement and students' attitude towards school are moderate and significant contributors to students' academic engagement in secondary schools in Anambra State. The findings suggest that schools should create opportunities for students to engage in prosocial activities and foster positive attitudes towards school to improve student academic engagement.

Recommendations

32. The management of secondary schools should provide more meaningful opportunities for students to engage in prosocial activities at school, such as helping peers, assisting teachers, and participating in community service projects. This will help foster positive attitudes towards school and encourage greater academic engagement.
33. Classroom teachers should develop and implement initiatives that promote collaboration among students in the classroom, such as group work, team projects, and debate activities. This will enable students to learn from each other and develop social skills while engaging in meaningful academic activities.
34. The school management should work in collaboration with the school guidance counsellor to create an environment in which students can express their creativity and opinions in a safe and supportive manner. This will help students feel more connected to their school and more motivated to participate in academic activities.
35. The school guidance counsellors should design programmes that encourage student-teacher interaction outside of the classroom, such as extracurricular activities, field trips, and mentoring programmes. This will help to foster a

sense of community and build positive relationships between students and faculty.

36. The school management should establish initiatives that recognise and reward students for their academic achievements and prosocial involvement. This will encourage students to strive for excellence and be more engaged in their studies.

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