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Exploring Parental Involvement in Public Secondary Schools in Imo State, Nigeria: The Role of Socioeconomic Status

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EXPLORING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA:

THE ROLE OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

BY

LONGINUS NWAKIRE UGWUEGBULEM

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Longinus Ugwuegbulem has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the Ph.D. during this Spring Semester 2018.

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ABSTRACT

Recent academic achievement gaps of public secondary students in Imo State, in WAEC, NECO, and JAMB examinations posed a threat to students’ aspiration to college education. The poor academic achievement level was denting previously achieved high academic record in Imo State. This trend was disturbing to parents and educators. However, this trend could be remedied if appropriate educational policy was enacted and implemented in secondary schools. One educational policy initiative that seemed to have worked in some countries is parents’ participation in their children’s education, otherwise, called “parental involvement.” Studies have shown that parental involvement in the education of their children help students to perform better both in their studies and in academic achievement. The aim of this study was, therefore, to explore parents’ involvement in the education of their children in public schools in Imo State, against the backdrop of their socioeconomic status. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 30 parent-participants of varying socioeconomic backgrounds; to examine their perception of parental involvement, their type of involvement, the expectation they held for their children’s education, their motivations to get involved, and the challenges they faced. The results of this study revealed that irrespective of their social and economic status, parents believed that secondary education was necessary for college education. Influenced by sociocultural norms, the parents perceived “parental involvement” not as a planned, structured effort directed solely toward the success of children, instead, they viewed participation in their children’s education as integral to their overall parental obligations. This opinion was true of the low-SES more than the middle and high SES parents. The middle- (n=6) and high-SES parents planned for their children’s education from childhood. All parents were knowledgeable about the importance
of education. The ultimate motivation parents had in sending their children to school was to achieve an upward social and economic mobility for their families’ overall well-being. This result challenged the common assumption that low-SES parents lacked understanding of the importance of education. The parents were involved with their children’s education at home than in schools. Lack of consistent scheduling of PTA meetings, and poor communication channel contributed to parents’ poor involvement in schools. Two factors: level of education and occupation, distinguished involvement capabilities of the middle- and high-SES, and low-SES parents, while income factor limited the low-income parents’ ability to provide school-related need for their children. Although, parents were eager to support their children to succeed in secondary school exit exams such as WAEC and NECO, and college entrance exam, JAMB; the inadequate carrying capacity of colleges, poverty, and high college-graduate employment opportunities challenged low-SES parents’ college funding decisions.

The results of this study could inform policy articulating the relevance of parents’ involvement in their children’s high school education. It could enlighten parents and school administrators on the need for collaboration and cooperation regarding finding parental involvement strategy that makes for student achievement.

Key words: Parental involvement, parents, socioeconomic status, secondary school, exam success, academic achievement, expectation, motivation, college aspiration, upward mobility
DEDICATION
This research work is dedicated to my dear loving mother
Ezinne Catherine Ugwuegbulem
My siblings
Cyriacus, Hyginus, Francisca, Cajetan, Josephine
Malachy, Carmelita and Callista

In memory of my father
Bernard Umunnawuike Ugwuegbulem
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Thank you the Archdiocese of Newark for granting me the opportunity to expand spiritual and academic horizons with your jurisdiction. I am grateful to my spiritual family of the Blessed Sacrament St. Charles Borromeo and the Igbo Catholic Community Church, Newark for allowing me to journey with them in the household of God. I hope that the outcome of this study will encourage us to continue to support our children in their quest for academic excellence. I offer my thanks to my brother- priests for providing me with a conducive environment, support, and encouragement. I am appreciative of your brotherly presence.
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Chapter 1

The advancement of education and student learning in schools is often preceded by the formulation and the application of sound educational policies. As education policy-makers purposely seek to improve academic practices, they pay attention to gaps in the educational systems that hinder student academic achievement. Policy makers tend to bridge these gaps through the formulation of better academic policies. Although different nations may adopt varying educational policies, one educational policy initiative that seems to have become prominent in many countries around the world and is found to enhance student academic achievement is parental participation in the education of their children, otherwise known as “parental involvement.” Many educational institutions are of the belief that involving parents in education serves to improve the education of students. For instance, the Montebello Unified School District California (2014-2015) maintains that:

Involving families in supporting their children’s education at home is not enough. To ensure the quality of schools as institutions serving the community, families must be involved at all levels in the schools. The extent of family involvement in a child’s education is more important to student success than family income or education. (para. 1)

The existing literature has consistently indicated that parental involvement plays a crucial role in students’ academic and behavioral development at all levels of education (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Spera, 2005). Borgonovi and Mott (2012) defined parental involvement as “parents’ active commitment to spend time to assist in the academic and general development of their children” (p. 13). Parental involvement in education has been positively associated with
academic performance such as grade point average GPAs (Gutman & Midley, 2000), proficiency in reading, writing (Epstein, Simon & Salinas, 1997; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002), and mathematics (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprov, & Fendrich, 1999).

The consistent positive outcomes of research studies on parental involvement in education appear to have gained international acceptance. For example, in the United States, increased parental participation formed part of the educational reform initiatives under the Clinton and Bush administrations (Borgonovi & Mott, 2012). President Clinton’s Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 emphasized parental involvement in school, with sub-section 10 of the Act directing school boards to help parents with “expenses associated with local parental involvement activities to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sections to enhance the involvement of parents.” (para.1) With studies affirming that children do better when parents are involved in their education (Lewis & Henderson, 1998), and that schools “can’t improve without the help of parents” (USA Today, 2002, p. A – 13), President Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act of (NCLB) Act of 2001 re-affirmed that parental involvement in children’s education is critical to the success of the NCLB education reform initiative (US Department of Education, 2002). Researcher like Eurydice (2005) noted that in 2011, Chile introduced education reform in which parents are committed to specific duties in their children’s learning, while some other countries created legal pathways for parental involvement in students’ education. These policy and reform initiatives point to the importance of parental involvement and the positive influence parents exert on students’ education and development.

Several countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have been involved in parental involvement initiatives where its positive effects are well documented particularly in the United States and Great Britain (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003;
Park’s 2008 study showed a positive relationship between parental involvement and student achievement in reading and mathematics among 13 PISA countries. Citing Parker’s (2008) study, Borgonovi and Mott (2012) suggested that parental involvement is essential for both primary and secondary school levels of education, stating that “students whose parents talk with more frequently are more expected to have higher levels of achievement compared with students who talk less frequently with their parents” (p.13), and “... they enjoy reading more when they are 15 years old” (p.18). Parental involvement begins as early as in primary education and provides a foundation for children through the college years (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007). Research on parental involvement conducted in Great Britain, for example, suggested that parental involvement plays a more prominent role in students’ academic achievement than school quality at the level of primary education (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Smreker and Cohen-Vogel (2001) study on the United States examined the perceptions and attitudes of low-income minority parents with the aim of understanding how these parents interact with schools. Their study focused on the factors influencing parental involvement in school and home-based activities. By studying the culture, community and institutionalized norms as well as the ideas parents hold about school, they found that contrary to the perceptions of many educators, low-income minority parents have an interest in their children’s schooling. Low-income parents experience some constraining factors which tend to hinder their efforts at becoming fully involved in their children’s education. Some of these factors include the inflexible scheduling that low-SES (social and economic status) parents experience in the work place, the tendency to work multiple jobs (Trevino, 2004), distance to school, and day care demands (Smreker & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). Smreker and Cohen-Vogel (2001) maintained that
relationships between parents and schools tend to be defined by school culture and values associated with high SES, which pose barriers to low-SES parents. Evans (2004) demonstrated that low-income parents are less involved in their children’s academic activities. Parents are less responsive to their children’s needs and they employ an authoritarian parenting style in dealing with their children. Parental involvement in children’s academic activities at home is also limited, as children read infrequently and spend more time watching TV.

Levels of parental involvement in education are highly influenced by socioeconomic background, which in turn impacts student achievement. Past studies show that parents’ SES influences the levels of parental involvement, which in turn influence academic achievement (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Ho, 2006, U.S. Department of Education, 2006). In OECD countries for instance, “on average among PISA-participating countries, students from advantaged backgrounds outperform their disadvantaged peers” (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012, p.43). In New Zealand and Hungary, students with low-SES parents perform 34 score points lower in reading and comprehension than their counterparts (OECD, 2010).

The effects of parental involvement and the impact of parental SES on involvement levels are not just limited to OECD countries. Other countries such as Ghana (Donkor, 2010) and Nigeria in West Africa, also share in the challenge of academic achievement and SES (Udeogu, 2014). In Ghana, research has shown that parental involvement is essential for the academic achievement of students. In his study, Donkor (2010) noted that Ghanaian parents held high expectation for their children’s education. They understood the benefits associated with education and were willing to send their children to school. However, despite their expectations for children’s schooling, most parents are unable to participate in their children’s education beyond sending them to school and paying tuition. Perhaps parents have not been fully exposed to the conceptual
meaning of parental involvement beyond the provision of students’ basic needs. Donkor (2010) also observed that attending parent-teachers association (PTA) meetings was perceived as a fulfillment of parental responsibility among parents.

Given that the Nigerian secondary education policy goal is aimed “at preparing an individual for useful living within the society and higher education” (Ige, 2013, p.2), the inconsistent and poor performances of students in national and regional exams, such as Nigeria’s National Examinations Council (NECO) and the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) (Adeyemi & Ige, 2002), among others, point to a fundamental gap in cooperation between schools and parents. Writing about secondary education in Nigeria, Oluwatelure and Oloruntegbe (2010) highlighted the importance of parental involvement especially in specific subject areas and concluded that parental involvement was necessary for student success. They did not observe differences in parental intention regarding the education of their children. According to the authors, high, middle, and low-income earners all desire to see their children succeed in school. They noted that parents’ good intentions regarding their children’s academic goals often do not lead these children to realize their academic aspirations. The researchers therefore, recommended more concrete parental involvement in the schooling of their children rather than expecting students to succeed without their involvement. Given that parental involvement in education is associated with positive student academic outcomes, such involvement in students’ secondary school education will enable them to attain the academic requirements for higher education, which potentially applies to most educational systems.

1.1. Overview of the Nigerian Education System

The Nigerian system of education is operated as a 6:3:3:4 model, which is an education continuum model of six years of primary education, followed by three years of junior secondary
education, three years of senior secondary education, and post-secondary (college) education (Ajidagba, 2014). To advance from one level of education to the next, students undertake examinations in order to determine their achievement levels and suitability for the next level of education. The senior school certificate examination results are used for admission into post-secondary institutions (Ajidagba, 2014). The acceptance and enrollment of a secondary school graduate into tertiary institutions in Nigeria are contingent on the results achieved in the senior secondary school final and external examinations. Certain academic standards must be met prior to university enrollment (Dibu-Ojerinde & Faleye, 2005). This benchmark includes crediting at least five subjects including English and mathematics in no more than two sittings in any of these ordinary level exams organized yearly by (WAEC), (NECO) or the General Council of Education Examination (GCE). Through their involvement, parents can help students achieve the required results (obtaining at least five credits including English and mathematics), which would qualify them to sit for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination for higher education, since no secondary school graduate can enroll in university without passing ordinary level exam (NECO, 2007; WAEC, 2008).

Despite the positive outcomes associated with parental involvement in education, it is unclear whether Nigerian secondary schools involve parents in the education of their children. The academic achievement outcomes reported in Nigeria suggested that parents might not adequately involved in their children’s academic and exam preparation. For instance, in 2007, the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB - the body which overseas college admission exams) noted that many students failed to gain admission into tertiary education in Nigeria because of lack of academic qualifications.

1.2 Statement of the Problem
For some years now, there have been serious gaps in the academic achievement of high school students in Imo State, Nigeria. School exam results show that students are not measuring up to academic expectations. The results of the standardized exams organized by WAEC and NECO raises serious concerns about the poor achievement levels of public secondary school students in Imo State. For instance, WAEC/NECO exam results indicate the percentage of students scoring five credits and above, including in English and mathematics, as follows: 2010-24.16% in 2010; 36.07% in 2011; 37.97% in 2012; and 29.17% in 2013 (Information Nigeria, 2013). The NECO ordinary level (O/L) results shows that in 2011, students scored 51.66% and in 2012 and 2013, they scored 15.84% and 69.57% respectively (NECO, 2013). A breakdown of the results, in percentages shows that some states, known for academic achievement in WAEC exams, are lagging behind others. For example, out of the 36 states in Nigeria, Imo State ranked ninth with 46.03% in the 2013 Senior WAEC Examinations (WAEC, 2013). This result shows that close to 64% of senior secondary school students in Imo State who took the WAEC failed to score the minimum five credits required for entry into tertiary institutions. The 2014 WAEC state-by-state statistical result showed that the first three states scored 65.92%, 58.52% and 57.82% respectively while Imo State fell between 26-45%” (WAEC, 2014). Based on the above results, Imo State’s supply of students to public universities in Nigeria will fell below 40% between 2013 and 2014, notwithstanding other factors that may have posed obstacles to the immediate enrollment of some qualified students into higher education institutions.

Imo State has been leading in the college application and enrollment rate in Nigeria (JAMB, 2007). The level of college application is based on past Senior School Certificate Exam scores. However, Imo State is losing its spot and risks lagging further behind other states in college
enrollment because of the lower performance of its students in WAEC exams (WAEC, 2013). This climate is not healthy for the academic, social and economic development of Imo State. Therefore, given that exit exam results for senior secondary school students are directly linked to university access and enrollment in Nigeria, parents’ involvement in their children’s secondary school education is crucial for improving academic outcomes.

Several quantitative and qualitative studies have noted both direct and indirect links between parental involvement and student achievement. Positive achievement outcomes associated with parental involvement have led the most advanced countries of the world to include parental involvement as part of their education improvement initiatives. Unfortunately, in Imo State, there is no known strategic plan or policy initiative regarding parental involvement in high school education.

Given the fact that Imo State is a developing state, there is also the SES challenge. Research has consistently revealed that socioeconomically disadvantaged students are less likely to be prepared for college than economically advantaged students (Butler, Beach, & Winfree, 2008). Parental involvement is essential to student academic success (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006), and parents’ SES has been found to play a significant role in mediating levels of parental involvement in children’s education (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Since this phenomenon is not well understood in the Nigerian educational context, there is a need to study the level at which parental involvement is being engaged in Imo State and the challenges therein.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore parental involvement in children’s secondary school education. More specifically, the study aims to understand how parents perceive “involvement”-what motivates them to be involved in school, and which involvement strategies they adopt. The
study assumes that a well-defined and structured parental involvement strategy will support student achievement, which is a pathway to college education.

Against the backdrop that parental involvement is influenced by many factors, such as parental background, the study intends to shed light on the SES background of parents in Imo State and to reveal the true nature of parents’ capacities, challenges, and prospects in relation to their involvement efforts. Existing research studies have maintained that students’ socioeconomic background does influence their readiness for transition to and success in college (NCES, 2007). Research findings (Callen, 2011; Tavernise, 2012) are consistent with reports of the differences in student academic achievement associated with parental SES. SES level can shape parents’ perspectives about and disposition toward education, which, in turn, condition their expectations and involvement in their children’s academic achievement (Fan, 2001).

Katsambi (1998) noted that parents have the capacity to be involved in the education of their children. While this capacity can take many forms encouragement and communication are especially poignant (Patrikakou, 2004). This study will thus identify involvement processes that are relevant to the promotion of the transition from secondary school to college.

1.4. Research Questions

What expectations do parents have regarding their children’s academic achievements in high school as well as their college aspiration?

How do parents perceive and become involved in their children’s high school education in Imo State?

What factors motivate parents to become engaged, or deter them from becoming involved in their children’s education?

1.5. Theoretical Framework (Brief Introduction)

The theoretical foundation guiding this study is the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) model of parental involvement. This conceptual model has roots in both psychology and
sociology and suggests that parental motivation to become involved in children’s education is contingent on three basic parental dispositional realities of attitude to beliefs, perception and perceived life context. These theoretical and conceptual frames will be elaborated in chapter two where the content of parental involvement according to Epstein (2007) will be examined. Epstein identified six involvement practices that parents should engage in for the success of their children’s education: parenting, communicating, volunteering, home-learning, involvement in decision-making, and school-community relationship. By articulating these constructs, Epstein identified two distinct, but related platforms for parental involvement: the home and school.

1.6. Significance of the Study

Parents, teachers, school administrators, tax payers, and governments expect students to succeed in formal education. This study attempts to identify parental factors that aid in the achievement levels of public high school students in Imo State. By examining the role of parents in education, the study provides insights for parents and school administrators towards charting a course that encourages parental involvement in high school education in Imo State. The results of the study may provide useful insight as to how parents of high-, middle-, and low-SES backgrounds can be encouraged to become more involved in their children’s schooling as well as the type of involvement that is most suitable for secondary school students in Imo State. Teachers, school administrators, and policy makers should seek ways of creating structures that encourage parental involvement, especially for those parents who might lack the initial push to be involved. With collaboration between parents, students, and teachers, schools in State will seek to help students prepare for tertiary education through high academic achievement at the level of secondary education.
The study will enable stakeholders to acquire a good understanding of the nature of involvement behaviors supporting student achievement. By articulating the role of parental involvement in the education of students, this study will contribute furnishing policymakers, researchers, and education practitioners with insight into creating structures that support meaningful parental involvement, which aligned to student achievement, will assure a wider spread of educational attainment in Imo State.

1.7. Definition of Terms

**Student achievement/success**

In this study, student achievement is measured by O’-level results obtained after sitting for the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) organized by the WAEC, NECO, or GCE examinations. Student eligibility to a four-year college (university) education hinges on external examination scores of at least five credits (in addition to English language and math) in no more than two sittings in relevant subject areas. Students are therefore deemed ready for college when they achieve this feat. Those who achieve a high GPA in high school exams are believed to be able to do well in WAEC, NECO and GCE exams. Parental involvement in children’s school can help children do well in these exams. Researchers believe that parental involvement in the education of children leads to better academic outcomes. One dominant factor that influences parental involvement in children’s school is parental SES (Jeter-Twilley, Legum, & Norton, 2007).

**Parental involvement**

Generally, parental involvement refers to the roles that parents play in their children’s education. This is measured by their direct and indirect activities within school, home and outside of home environments (Wimberly & Noeth, 2005). Parental involvement in high school students’
education assumes a style that is somewhat different from primary school involvement (Patrikakou, 2004).

**Middle class**

According to a study conducted by Renaissance Capital (2011), the average monthly middle-class income is between NGN75,000 and – 100,000 ($480 and – 645, or $6,000 and – 7,000 per annum. According to this report, the middle class make up about 23% of Nigerian’s population. The Nigerian middle class is well educated and according to the study, “92 percent have obtained post-secondary education or have studied in institutions of higher learning” (p. 3)

**Socioeconomic status**

This defines or estimates the social and economic status of individuals and families. It is measured on a social mobility scale based on parental education level, occupation, income and social standing in a community (Altschul, 2012).

**Parent**

In this study, the term “parent” applies to biological mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, or any legal guardian of a child/student.

**Interchangeable words:**

In this study, college and university are used to mean the same thing. Post-secondary and tertiary education are used synonymously, and secondary school and high school refer to the same level of education.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1. Parental Involvement

Parents are usually the initiators of the education of their children. In colonial American society, parents were expected to be involved in school governance, teacher selection, curriculum support, and the teaching of religion (Hiatt, 1994). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, expectations of parental involvement in these areas of school life began to change due to greater severance between home and school life (Hiatt, 1994). However, following the foray of the federal government into school affairs, parental involvement in school has been encouraged in federal laws like Title 1. The inclusion of parental participation in the schooling of their children has become an internationally accepted norm. Because of the importance attached to it, many researchers, educators, parents and national governments have accepted the involvement of parents as a positive ingredient in the education of their children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Cox (2005), Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), and Epstein and Voorhis (2001) noted that there are advantages associated with parental involvement in the education of students. The involvement of parents in children’s education, beginning from primary to high school, is associated with success in school and other areas of student development, including positive behavior, decreased truancy, and better disposition towards learning (Cole-Henderson, 2000;
Jeynes, 2005). Effective parental involvement in high school student education begins at early level of education and moves progressively upward (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012), changing only in pattern or method as a child enters adolescence (Patrikakou, 2004). Involvement in high school education is an effort that is planned and initiated, whether or not students understand the motive of early parental participation. It is in this light of this that Parents Alliance (2014) noted that:

> While many educational programs focus on improving high school graduation rates and enrolling students in college, we believe that intervention efforts must occur many years earlier to provide widespread success. Parents, particularly low income…, need the information and tools to help their children explore, plan, and transition successfully from pre-kindergarten to middle and high School. (p 3)

Parental involvement in student education has been conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct by many authors. For instance, Epstein (1995) conceived six different frameworks of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and community collaboration. Other authors have perceived parental involvement to include both school and home involvements. For instance, William and Sanchez (2012) noted that parental involvement is found to be exercised within and out-of-school environments. Examples of school parental involvement include parent-teacher interaction or communication, involvement in school events, and volunteering at school. Parental involvement at home includes overseeing students do their homework, encouraging and listening to them as they read, and the creation of an enabling home environment for studies (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The empirical research literature has given support to the effectiveness of parental involvement in advancing student education (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes 2005, 2007).
Involvements can be direct or indirect. It is direct when parents monitor students’ work and provide for their immediate school needs. It is indirect when parents participate at school functions, provide a literacy-enhancing home environment, and expect students to achieve (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). The level of involvement can be influenced by socio-economic background (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; U. S. Dept. of Education, 2006; Ho & Willms, 1996). Researchers believe that early involvement sets parents the stage for the development of early in a child’s academic life, and predicts reading performance in both primary and secondary school settings (Cheadle, 2008; Corsaro & Fingerson, 2006; Farkas, 2004). According to Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007), parental involvement in children’s education is more pronounced in their early years and tends to decline as they grow older, or it may assume a different form as students grow older (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Although parental involvement in high schools has been studied, numerous studies have been conducted on kindergarten, primary, and middle school (Williams & Sanchez, 2012), which form the foundation of involvement practices that are consistent with adolescents’ needs at the high school level.

2.2. Contexts of Parental involvement

The multi dimensionality of the concept of parental involvement informed Lawson’s (2003) study, which noted that parental involvement in children’s education is exercised in two contexts: the “school-centric” and “community-centric” contexts. According to the author, at the primary school level, school personnel conceive of parental involvement as school-centered. This conceptualization sees parents as collaborators in the achievement of goals set by schools through classroom volunteer work, attendance at school meetings, and facilitating the student in homework. The community-centered context, however, defines parents’ view of involvement as
including the role they play in the provision of essential facilities (like food and shelter) for their families and the safeguard of the well-being of their children from unwholesome and damaging influences after school hours.

Epstein (2007) articulated diverse ways in which parents could become involved in the education of their children. Epstein’s six typologies are practice-oriented:

**Parenting.** In parenting, Epstein outlined parenting behaviors that nurture and support the learning and cognitive development of students. Epstein recommended at least a high school education for parents. Parents promote literacy by reading to children: by reading, children are inspired to read. Parental reading behavior lends support to the development of a home environment that is conducive for children’s intellectual and cognitive development.

**Communication.** A two-way communication between the home and school allows parents to be aware of their children’s academic development. Parents are encouraged to attend parents-teacher conferences, and parents and teachers need to communicate with each other to share concerns and information by means of email, and telephone etc. Parents can then know and understand school practices, policies and decisions through these channels.

**Volunteering.** Parents are encouraged to volunteer in various school activities. Parents can chaperon school trips and field activities. They can also employ their individual competences to serve schools and help children in diverse ways. By being present in schools, children learn how to interact with adults.

**Home Learning.** A positive home environment enables children’s learning. Epstein (2007) noted that educators can help parents provide such an environment by training them to supervise their children’s homework and communicate parental expectation for education. By doing so,
students can develop a positive disposition about school work in general and improve on their test score.

**Involvement in decision making.** Epstein (2007) stated that school goals and plans would likely be achieved when parents are involved in school decisions and activities. For instance, schools and students benefit from fundraising organized by parent associations. When parent committees are involved in school improvement plans that are focused on students, they rejuvenate and reinvigorate the school and implicitly advocate for students’ well-being. When students observe their parents in this effort, they are encouraged to commit themselves more to their academic engagement.

**School-community collaboration.** Epstein (2007) considered school community collaboration as vital to the development of a very strong student body. This can be achieved through the provision of cultural, athletic, and recreational activities that are beneficial to students. With this relationship, schools might be able to convince parents of the relevance of these activities and to draw them into becoming involved. By supporting children’s participation, students are exposed to different opportunities and experiences that could help them in their future career and educational decisions.

The issue therefore is to understand when parents begin to get involved once their children start school. Parental involvement or non-involvement in high school education begins early in pre-school days. Earlier research conducted by Puph and De’Ath (1989) examined 130 beginner schools like nurseries and children centers and noted that parental involvement had varying dimensions: non-participation, support, participation, partnership, and control. In the “non-participation” dimension, parents are not involved in their children’s education. The non-participation concept is either active or passive. Active non-participants are parents who
intentionally decided not to be involved in their children’s education. The authors suggested that these parents are not actively involved because they are satisfied with what the school is offering; they may not have the time to be involved because of work schedule; or they may need time away from children. Conversely, passive non-involvement refers to those parents who desire to be involved but are lacking in confidence or do not like the involvement options available. In the “Support” category parents support a setting “from the outside”. Here, parental involvement is predicted on an invitation by the school. Involvement in this case could mean being present at school events or donating money for academic resources. In “participation” parents support a setting “from within”. In this case, parents become helpers and give assistance during outings, support children’s learning during the period, or may manage collections of minors. Also, parents may themselves become learners by attending workshops and education seminars organized for parents. In the “partnership” category parents are involved in a working relationship with practitioners. As partners, parents understand themselves as collaborators with teachers in the achievement of a set goal, thereby generating respect for each other. The climate of mutual respect and common purpose allow parents opportunities for equal access to information and records; for instance, parents may now offer their opinions and suggestions regarding the evaluation of their children, participate in choosing educational practitioners, and might be urged to become educators. In the “control” category parents determine and implement decisions. It is the responsibility of parents to provide an appropriate environment for the implementation of decisions or programs. Pumph and De’Ath’s (1989) study therefore creates the awareness of different nuances that may describe parental involvement in schools. Thus, being aware of the possible shades of meaning or dimensions of involvement could motivate parents to
avert or improve on situations that might challenge the benefits students gain from their involvement.

Barges and Loges’ (2003) study (as cited in Williams and Sanchez, 2012) noted that at the middle school level, there is slight variation in the understanding of the meaning of parental involvement between parents and teachers. Parental involvement in children’s education implies “monitoring student academic progress, cultivating personal relationships with teachers, involving their children in extracurricular school programs, and developing community support system…” (p. 628). On the contrary, teachers perceive the optimal level of parental involvement as including parental “communication with both the child and the school, participating in the child’s school activities and the child’s life in general….,” (p. 628).

These studies have shown that parental involvement is a multi-dimensional activity, which takes many forms and is exercised in different contexts (Lawson, 2003). Collaborating this position, Pomerantz et al, (2007) believe that becoming involved in a child’s education includes the time parents spend at home on activities related to school and in-school activities including conferencing with teachers about their children’s strengths and weaknesses, helping with homework, and participating in school organizations. Pomerantz et al, (2007) reasoned that parental involvement in the education of children should place emphasis on both home and school environments. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) conceived three dimensions of involvement: behavioral involvement, personal involvement, and cognitive involvement. Behavioral involvement is the participation of parents in children’s activities. Personal involvement refers to parents’ interest in their children’s education, the provision of extracurricular instruction and academic resources. Cognitive involvement includes becoming involved in intellectually enriching activities with students ultimately benefitting their
academic growth. Parental involvement, therefore, encompasses an investment of every available resource toward the education of a child and could, thus, be defined and measured by the investment of material and personal resources within and beyond school environments.

2.2. Parental Involvement Benefits Students

From an early stage in life, what parents do for or with their children has a profound influence on children’s success as they develop into adolescence (Butler, et al., 2008). Borgonovi and Montt (2012) believe that early involvement of parents in student academic life is related to student performance in high school. They noted that “students whose parents were involved early in their school career generally perform better and enjoy reading more when they are 15 years old” (p.18). Unfortunately, not every child is fortunate to have parental involvement early in their cognitive development. According to Hoff (2003) children of more educated parents receive more reading and language competences at home compared to their counterparts from less educated parents. An earlier empirical research study Hart & Risley (1995) noted that the levels at which children are exposed to vocabulary and language are connected to the SES of the parents. According to the researchers, ranked in the highest order of exposure to language by social class, children born of professional parents are most exposed to words on an hourly basis followed by children of working class families and, lastly, children of low-SES parents. The study further reported that larger vocabularies could later lead to increased intellectual success.

This study is consistent with the result of past studies on the effects of SES on the academic development of students. Desimone’s (1999) study had previously examined the relationship between students’ socioeconomic background and parental involvement and discovered that high SES had a positive influence on parental involvement and student academic achievement. This
suggests that SES has mediating effects on parents’ capacity to influence students’ education through their involvement.

Although parental SES mediates parental involvement in education, the quality or type of involvement also affects student achievement. For example, in studying parental involvement practices that are most relevant as well as those that are of least importance to academic success from the perspectives of students, Barge and Loges (2003) noted that encouraging students, helping with homework and communicating with schools are more helpful to students. Students observed that the least helpful parental involvement practices included poor parent-student’ communication, being overly critical, inappropriate punishment, and withering remarks about education to students. The authors noted that when the opinions of students, teachers, and parents are factored in, two involvement practices are considered to be of utmost relevance: developing a positive relationship with teachers and schools, and monitoring students’ academic development.

Other studies have alluded to the relationship between parental involvement and students’ higher test scores (Altschul, 2011; Dumka, Gonzales, Bonds & Milsap, 2009). Altschul (2001) further noted that parental provision of academic resources, involvement in enriching activities, and availing children of auxiliary instructions are associated with superior test scores. In their research report, Plunkett et al, (2008) stated that the extent parents are capable of helping their children in their academic work/homework correlates with students’ motivation to study and earn good grades.

Although academic achievement differs among students, some factors associated with better academic outcomes of middle- and high-income background students are related to parental SES (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Studies have shown that students from middle- and high-income parents achieve greater and better academic outcomes and are better prepared for college than
students from low-income parents (Yeung, et al., 2002). One of the reasons behind this inequality in academic outcomes is rooted in parenting style, which differs between low-income or poor parents and middle- and high-incomes parents. According to Lareau (2003), middle-and high-income parents adopt a concerted cultivation principle in their parenting style. This approach assures them of their involvement in the educational continuation of their children. Their concerted involvement demands that parents invest relevant resources in their children within and out of school, which puts them on the path of academic achievement (Altschul, 2012; Roscigno, 2000).

In their study on identifying parental variables that predict better academic outcomes for 105 average-achieving students and 205 below-average achieving students in the context of parental involvement in school, Casanova, Garcia- Linares, Torre, and Carpio (2005) employed two parental characteristics: “family and socio-demographic-” variables. The authors identified family variables as encompassing: “involvement, control, expectation and acceptance,” while socio-demographic variables as incorporating “family structure, socioeconomic status, number of children in the family, and birth order of the children.” Using Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) three dimensions = “behavioral involvement” (which relates to parents’ participation in at-school activities), “cognitive-intellectual involvement” (in which parents expose children to intellectually-enhancing activities like conversing with them about current events and going to libraries), and “personal-involvement” (by which parents know and are well-informed about the general well-being of the children at school), the study discovered that among average-achieving students, socio-demographic variables predicted better academic achievement, while for below-average-achieving students, family variables predicted better academic achievement. The authors
confirmed “the importance of family variables in relation to students’ academic achievement” (p. 433).

The roles that family and socio-demographic variables play becomes evident as children develop intellectually. For instance, the development of children’s cognitive potentials is dominant among middle- and higher-SES families, pointing to the advantage enjoyed by children who belong to these socioeconomic categories (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005). Children from economically advantaged background are said to be highly motivated at home which in turn enhances their academic achievement (Oluwatelure & Oloruntegbe, 2010). However, despite the level of latent abilities, inspiration, and resources available to these students, researchers agree that parental encouragement and aspiration do more to benefit students’ cognitive development (Machen et al., 2005; Stelios & Jourva 2007; Zhao & Akiba, 2009). Some parents feel incapacitated in the face of continued involvement in high school students’ (now adolescents) education as teenagers are more inclined towards their peers than their parents. This encouragement is not to be suspended when students enter high school as adolescents as they need stability and care to navigate the challenging world of the secondary education structure and course content (Patrikakou (2004).

2.3. Importance of Parental Involvement in High School.

Parental involvement is a dynamic behavior that is adjusted according to the ages of students. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) noted that at a younger age, more direct involvement was aimed at building appropriate foundations for students, which are needed from parents, as opposed to such behaviors that promote autonomy and independence, which might be good for older students. According to the researchers, at the high school level, parental involvement at
home is significantly more effective than school involvement. However, the study also noted that “the effect of ... the basic level of in-school parental involvement might be an essential lubricant for at-home involvement” (pp. 35-36).

There is a reason for this change in approach regarding parental involvement. According to Patrikakou (2004), adolescence is a life stage that opens up an array of rapid physical, cognitive, social and emotional developments. Patrikakou also noted that this is also a period in which students are challenged by increased academic demands exacerbated by complexities associated with high school structures, coupled with adolescents’ dominant desire to gain autonomy and independence (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Researchers have found that in order to be successful, students need caring and trusting relationships as they begin to carve their own identities, “engage in autonomous self-expression, and take part in challenging experiences that will develop their competence and self-esteem” (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000).

Parents’ involvement in high school students’ education is influenced by their attitude and values (Ajzen, & Fishbein, 1980). In the analysis of these attitudes and values, the Harvard Family Research Project (2007) established a two-fold category of involvement: parenting and the home-school relationship.

In terms of parenting, some authors (Lareau, 2003, Mandara, et al 2006) identified that parenting style, the quality of the relationship between teens and parents, and the manner in which parents monitor their children for quality behavior constitute the basis for high school students’ overall academic success and social and emotional development. According to Simpson (2001), high school students who have supportive parents have better reliance, positive identity formation, better academic outcomes, are well disposed for career outlook, and have less depression and delinquency. Researchers have maintained that in as much as a warm, responsive, and firm but
democratic parenting style creates more positive academic outcomes than a strict authoritarian style (Steinberg et al., 1992), parenting approaches are a function of culture (Jeynes, 2003; Spera, 2005) and environment (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The authors implied therefore that the normative practice of a given cultural milieu mediates parental involvement in high school education.

In discussing parents’ role in the success of high school students, some studies have identified parental monitoring as another practice that supports students’ engagement toward academic success. Parental monitoring of high school students is aimed at knowing about students’ lifestyles and engagements. Through monitoring, parents are able to know and direct adolescents’ activities, which can promote focused academic and social competences (Rodriguez, 2002). Numerous scholars have found that when parents monitor high school students’ social and academic life, they tend to engage more in their studies (Catsambi, 2001; Sartor & Youniss, 2002). A study conducted by Sepra (2006) supported this report by stating that students are motivated to study and they achieve better academic outcomes when they perceive parental monitoring, support, and encouragement. The research study of Fox, Kiser, and Couch (2006), in which juniors and seniors responded to questions regarding their attitude towards education, noted that students who claimed to have little or no support from home “were more than 6 times” likely to downplay the role of education in having “job choices, earning more money, and getting a job than those with parental support at home. In their study of inner-city schools, Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, and Liddell (2006) noted that parental monitoring leads to a high level of school engagement among at-risk students. Parental monitoring of high school students is, therefore essential for students’ motivation, engagement, and academic success.
A longitudinal study by Englund, Egeland, and Collins (2008) tracked a cohort of 96 men and 83 female first-born children of low-SES mothers from birth to the age of 23. The study reinforced that students who experienced higher levels of parental involvement and had better relationships with their parents had a greater chance of graduating than those who unexpectedly dropped out of high school. The authors concluded that parental behavior is a major influencing factor in whether students remained on track for academic attainment and success. This research outcome showed that successful students were heavily dependent on parental support, whereas others who failed (irrespective of their ability to succeed) did so for lack of parental support.

Other studies have also shown that the parent-student relationship that engenders trust is a product of concerted open communication, which helps students obtain higher GPA (Pong, Hao & Gardner, 2005). In their research on determining predictors of sustained academic pursuit and engagement, Tenebaum, Porch, Snow, Tabors, and Ross (2007) asserted that parental emotional support and encouragement directed to a child’s autonomy affected academic achievement. According to the authors, parents’ (mothers) involvement in the form of emotionally enabling and encouraging autonomous decision-making when children are eleven years old constituted a factor in predicting whether children would drop-out of high school.

Some authors have observed that although adolescents seek to be autonomous and independent and are peer-oriented, they still depend on adults, especially parents, for guidance (Eccles, 1999; Zarrett, & Eccles, 2006), because family involvement in education remains a powerful predictor of various adolescence outcomes (Xu, 2002). Apart from better academic outcomes, studies have shown that parental involvement is related to higher rate of college enrollment, required for upward social mobility (Zarrett, & Eccles, 2006). Wang and Sheikl-Khalil (2014) in their research on the effects of parental involvement types on 10th and 11th
grade children achievement outcomes, noted that parents who engage in positive appraisals of adolescents as autonomous learners who are competent to succeed in their relationships with others, and are able to fulfill individual goals, influence their engagement in diverse educational activities throughout their future development.

Using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS: 88), which examined the effect of parental involvement in high school, Catsambis (1998) measured Epstein’s parental involvement type that more positively influenced student achievement by test score. The author discovered that different types of parental involvement have both positive and negative effects, depending on the student’s grade. According to the author, parental involvement by means of expectations and encouragement are the most relevant type of involvement for 12th graders’ academic achievement and enrollment into college. Furthermore, she observed that parenting style that enhances learning at home has positive but small effects on student achievement. The author found that supervising a 12th grade student’s behavior has negative effects on achievement outcomes; instead, parental involvement in the form of advising and guiding educational decisions have positive effects. The research noted that when students from the 8th grade, with parental expectations regarding high academic achievement and entering college, this has the strongest positive effects on test scores in every subject at 12th grade level. Catsambis (2001) reiterated that parental expectation is the most potent and effective means of achieving consistent encouragement of high school students in their secondary education and college attainment. Lending support to the findings of other researchers, Patrikakou (2004) used data from NELS’ 1998 (resurveyed in 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000) to test factors affecting academic achievement among high school students, as measured by test scores and college attainment. First, the author found that parental involvement declined as children advanced through higher
levels of education. The author attributed this decline to the intricate composition of secondary education and the challenging curricula, which could be intimidating for parents. However, the research discovered that many parental involvement factors identified and measured in 8th grade had positive, enduring effects on students’ educational achievement later in their high school education and college attainment. According to Patrikakou (2004), parental expectation fosters other academic behaviors in high school students. The higher the level of academic attainment that parents expect of their adolescent children, the higher these students tend to perceive themselves in attaining higher educational goal. This perception enables students to develop positive expectations, and they are influenced to spend quality time on their homework, which leads to higher academic achievement.

Student performance is also encouraged by the relationship between parents and schools. The parents – school relationship known as the school-home relationship, is one of the important connections that parents, teachers, and other school personnel share. Parental connection with schools helps students perform better. This relationship is established in various ways to include communication between parents and teachers (school personnel), volunteering at school, involvement in PTA, and attending school events. According to a study conducted by the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) (2007), the extent to which parents attend and volunteer at school functions has a consistent positive impact on adolescent academic achievement. This affirmation was corroborated by Jeynes (2005), who noted that parent-school involvement fosters positive educational outcomes. This assertion is also valid for students of diverse backgrounds. For instance, Marshall (2006) associated an increase in the number of Hispanic students who met academic standards with a larger representation of Hispanic parents in a local school council.
In addition to the academic progress of students whose parents are involved in school affairs, the parents-school relationship has other beneficial elements for secondary school students. Being involved in school affairs enables parents to observe their children’s social and educational development. This involvement affords them the knowledge for the future academic decisions they make about their children and promotes cordial and valuable relationships with school personnel (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Through their involvements, both students and teachers become aware of parents’ beliefs and commitments to education. This awareness helps students to achieve and teachers to exhibit academic behaviors consistent with their profession (Steinberg et al., 1996).

Further examining the positive elements of the parent-school relationship, Falbo, Lenin, and Amardor (2001) noted that this relationship helps students to develop positively beyond academic achievement. By this connection, students become well adjusted for higher education and prepare themselves to achieve educational and professional goals. Adding voice to this positive impact of the parent-school relationship, Anguiano (2004) stated that parental involvement in school-wide activities, which affords them frequent contact with teachers and school administrators, has a positive correlation with students finishing and graduating from high school. Furthermore, parents who participate in school programs, for instance, in parent-teacher organizations, are well placed to be involved in school-organized tertiary education outreach programs, which enable them to influence students’ post-high school graduation plans, especially for low-income students (HFRP, 2007).

Through their school involvement, parents can receive relevant information regarding tertiary education admission processes, standardized examination preparation, the costs of attending higher education institutions, etc. Through their participation in school activities, parents are
exposed to the school culture, thereby increasing their confidence level in the academic environment, which in turn enables them to collaborate with other parents who are also preparing their children for higher education (Aurebach, 2004; Gandara & Merono, 2002). Nevertheless, parental involvement in school activities is not done in isolation. School activities have to be complemented with other forms of involvements to enable students’ engagement in education such as doing homework.

Managing homework at the high school level may be challenging. The secondary school curriculum content is more advanced than in primary schools. It is, therefore, less likely for parents to be directly involved in homework content for high school students than they do in primary schools (HFRP, 2007). Nevertheless, parents can help high school students in their homework by encouraging them and by providing every concrete help for students to accurately complete their homework. Students will learn how to manage homework time on their own once they have mastered how to do so from parental encouragement and support. Researchers have maintained that parental support enables students to reduce anxiety over homework and that students are able to score better grades as a result (Toney, Kelly & Lanclos, 2003; Zhan, 2006). This finding corroborates that of Xu (2004), who noted that parental involvement in homework management is beneficial for students of diverse backgrounds. Parents can increase their level of involvement to help students, especially when their school children are faced with behavior and academic challenges (Jeynes, 2005). These research studies established a positive and persuasive relationship between parental involvement and its benefit to students, especially in terms of improved academic achievement. According to Tenebaum et al., (2007), this relationship holds true for students of all ages and SES backgrounds.
The aggregate of parental acts towards high school students implies that parents expect their children to do well in school. Scholars agree that parental educational expectations serve more as a springboard for student academic improvement than every other involvement activity (Catsambi, 2001; Jeynes, 2003). A Harvard Family Research Project (2007) noted that “parental expectations for student success and high expectations for achievement stand out as the most significant influences on the high school senior’s achievement growth, high school credits completed” (p. 11). Specifically, it is believed that mother’s expectations of their children’s academic achievement are associated with higher scores in mathematics and reading (Zhan, 2006). Research studies have further revealed that when students perceive that parents have high expectations of them to succeed in school, they tend to develop a greater interest in learning, concentrate more on their studies, and aim for greater goals (Spera, 2006). Within this expectation, there is transference of values from parents to children. This is “why parents’ aspirations and expectations affect student aspirations and expectations of themselves and this in turn, affects students’ achievement” (HFRP, 2007, p.13). This research position is supported by others who have noted that parental support is so invaluable to students that it supersedes the influence of peers (Sands & Plunkett, 2005).

In communicating their expectations to students, parents discuss school-related issues, and the more they do this, high school students are more positively impacted in their academic achievement (Jeynes, 2005). “High mathematical expectations along with general discussions in the home about school progress, future plans for college, homework, and school problems in grades 9, 10, and 11 are the strongest predictors of adolescent participation in advanced mathematics courses in high school” (HFRP, 2007, p.13).
Parental expectation also mitigates negative factors that militate against the academic achievement of students from poor background (Ceballo, 2004). Ceballo maintained that academic expectations from parents are both verbal, in that it places emphasis on the value of education and involves frequent enquiries about students’ academic projects, and non-verbal, through the provision of academically-enhancing environments and support. Examples of parental support include stopping or preventing students from working or taking over the payment of tuition fees from the student (Alfaró, Umana-Taylor & Hamaca, 2006). Studies have also noted that parental encouragement is directly associated with student academic engagement, which motivates students to engage and complete their homework, subsequently reflected in increase GPAs (Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004).

Researchers have noted the influence that consistent parental encouragement and discussions regarding academics works and higher education have on students’ decision to go to college (Catsmabi, 2001). In their study, McCarron and Inkelas (2006) associated a greater likelihood of college enrollment for students who have regular discussions about educational issues. This was reiterated by some researchers, who noted that when parents encourage enrollment, youths sign up for academic tracks in high school associated with college access, participation in out-of-school time programs that may prepare students for college environments and develop aspirations to attend college (Swail, Cabrera & Lee, 2004).

2.4. Socio-economic Status and Parental Involvement

Researchers believe that a person’s level of education is highly correlated to his or her income. In fact, according to Ashenfelter and Rouse (2000), the relationship between these two variables is “one of the best-documented relationships in economics” (p. 89). This research position is supported by the fact that education increases a person’s job skill and productivity,
which is likely to increase one’s income. In this case therefore, one’s educational level becomes
the determinant of one’s social position (Ashenfelter & Rouse, 2000). Some researchers, in
referencing the 2006 dropout rate of students from low-income families, which was 4.5 times
higher than for students from the highest income families (Laird, Cataldi, KewlRamani, &
Chapman, 2008), showed how socio-economic levels affect students. Researchers have also
noted that different family structures and educational levels have direct implications on student
abilities. For instance, Sirin (2005) observed that “parents’ location in the socioeconomic
structure has a strong impact on students’ academic achievement” (p. 418). This is important as
income is factored into the definition of SES, which consequently determines the environment of
the school, the resources at home, the school-home relationship, and communication. An
uneducated parent’s earning potential is generally less than that of the educated one, is generally
less involved because he or she is constrained by time, possesses less opportunity for
employment, and is forced to establish residence in poorer communities with disadvantaged
schools, which also impact parental involvement in schools.

Types of parental involvement and their effects on student academic outcomes and behavior
have been investigated (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein, 1987; Lareau, 2003). Researchers share
the consensus that SES (measured by parental education, income and occupation) influences
learning outcomes (Yan & Lin, 2002). In other words, parents’ social, economic and educational
standing influences their involvement ability.

As a concept with observable effects (Bollen, Glanville, & Stecklov, 2001), SES is evident in
daily dealings that involves academic knowledge, available resources, and sources of income
(Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Conger and Donnellan, 2007). Granted that the component parts of
SES are correlated, Sirin’s 2005 study on the relationship between SES and educational outcomes indicated that the SES components do, in fact, influence educational outcomes.

The study conducted by Morales and Saenz (2007) showed that student’s learning outcomes are often predicted by family SES, which also influences student GPAs (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). It is interesting to note that these studies used a single component to arrive at conclusions. In assessing the relationship between SES and academic achievement, however, Roscigno (2000) used the three SES components (parental income, education and occupation) and concluded that parental education has a larger positive influence on student academic outcomes than parental income. Altschul (2012) noted that the individual SES components manifest different relationships with learning outcomes and “that when analyses of SES components included variables for parental education and family income, the parental education variable had a stronger impact on youth academic outcomes.” (p.14).

Presenting a different point of view, Mayer (1997) noted that the “parent-investment model” influences parental investment in children’s education. According to the author, the level of socioeconomic resources available determines the extent to which parents can commit financial, human, and social resources to the child’s education. Mayer (1997) went further to note that family income, which indicates the level of available economic capital, is foundational in investing in education. When the economic condition is added, parental occupation and education (which creates social and human capitals) influence the level of parental involvement in children’s education. For Mayer (1997), therefore, financial resources play a greater role in parental involvement decisions.

Earlier research by Conger, Reuter and Conger (2000) introduced the family “stress model” to explain why parents fail to engage in their children’s education. According to them, financial
poverty causes parental stress, and stress results in bitter struggles and depression in families. The ensuing parental conflict and depression lead to a decline in optimism and helpful parenting behaviors, which are necessary for the well-being of a child. According to these authors, this family situation may negatively impact parental involvement in education, which demands parents’ time and dedication at schools, the homes, museums, and libraries. The authors then concluded that the stress model is economically based and that it is more connected to parental income than to parental education and occupation level. On this position, Altschul (2012) believes that higher educated parents consider availing their children with intellectually motivating activities that are beyond the reach of parents with little or no formal education. Nonetheless, parental ability to provide these activities like extracurricular instruction, individual-based tutoring, and college preparation courses may be hampered by lack of financial resources.

In addition to the exclusive effects of the family-stress and family investment models, these two models have synchronized processes in their operation (Altschul, 2012). The models have showed how parental SES is connected to parenting style and the effects that the style has on children’s academic outcomes (Altschul, 2012). Some researchers (Gershoff, Raver, Aber, & Lennon, 2007; Guo & Harris, 2000) have noted that although the two models combined to influence students’ acquisition of behavior and knowledge, parental stress relates to the development of student behavior, whereas family investment is associated with student knowledge (cognitive) development. Children from depressed family homes stand the risk of developing early behavioral problems, which will likely affect academic achievement prior to enrolling in high school (Hill et al., 2004).
The consequence of poor education, income and occupation negatively impact low-status parents’ capacity to engage in the education of their children (Yeung et al., 2002). The analysis of each of these components in relation to parental involvement does reveal a plethora of barriers faced by low-status parents in getting involved. Referencing Ho and Willm’s (1996) study, Vellmalay (2013) noted that there is a weak but positively significant correlation between parental SES and the level of involvement in the education of children. In his study, McNeal (2001) found that higher-SES parents are more involved in students’ schooling and that this involvement has better academic effects on their children. Testing the influence of parental involvement on student achievement in math and English, Shaver and Walls (1998) noted that higher-status parents have greater impact because they are more involved in their children’s education. In their study of the effects of parent-student interaction, Stylianides and Stylianides (2011) concluded that student academic achievement is enhanced when parents and students interact about school work.

In their longitudinal study involving 463 youths in grades 7 – 11, Hill et al, (2004) showed that the involvement of highly educated parents in the education of their children resulted in the children behaving better in school. This behavioral disposition led to better academic achievement and the setting of higher academic goals. However, while children from parents with power, were able to set higher academic goals for themselves, sometimes they lacked good behavior and academic achievement. The research noted that highly educated parents exposed their children to extracurricular activities like music lessons and summer camps, which are not readily available to low-income families.

In fact, taken as a factor, SES poses a problem in measuring likely influences on parental involvement. However, when the SES components (income, level of education and occupation)
are individually applied to measure parental involvement in student education, a clearer case is made about its impact. Callen’s (2011) study discovered that low-SES parents were more concerned with providing the necessities for their children than being involved in their academic pursuits. The author noted that low-SES often do not have prescribed work hours and are driven to make money whenever the opportunity arises. Since many poor parents often do not benefit from structured traditional work hours, they are unable to develop a schedule that allows for meetings with students and teachers. Callen (2011) went further to note that higher-SES parents tend to become more involved because not only do they have control of their time to be present at their children’s schools, they also provide students with educational help beyond the school environment. These parents’ motivation and drive to engage in student education is generated by the confidence they have in their capacity to deal with and help with their children’s school work. Conversely, Callen (2011) found that parents who lacked higher education qualification depended on teachers for their children’s academic work, as they did not trust their abilities to help with school work.

Eccles (2005) noted that the choice of situating a family home in a good neighborhood with good schools is contingent on family income. High family income is also dependent on good education, which in turn influences parents to be involved in their children’s education. The combination of parental income, educational level, and parental involvement in a school in a good school district exert positive influence on a child’s academic success. In the examination of how parental education indirectly affects student’s achievement and success, Hauser-Cram (2009) noted that the level of parental education was not the main issue. According to the author, many situations facing parents, all of which form a cycle, contribute towards the cognitive condition that children face. The researcher observed that low educational levels cause many
stressors in parents’ lives, which feed the cycle, and this is a much larger issue than family processes. Also, Duncan and Magnuson (2005), in their discussion about the effects of parental SES on student achievement, noted that the greater availability of money does not automatically increase student achievement. Instead, the authors noted that higher parental income creates opportunities for children to be nurtured through the provision of better health care, better nourishment achieved through a balanced diet, better home learning environments, living in better neighborhoods and communities, and better schools.

Analyzing the level of parental involvement in the education of 80 high- and low-achieving students in India, Kumar (2012) observed that irrespective of their SES, parents became involved in diverse plans to ensure the success of their children in education. However, the author noted that parental educational level, income, and employment status posed a serious obstacle to parents of lower economic status in their ability to fully grasp and the relevant resources required for effective involvement in their children’s academic goals, whereas high-SES parents possessed better understanding and knowledge of this. This “knowledge” advantage influences high-SES parents to get more involved in their children’s education. In this research, Kumar (2012) observed that “parents with higher education tend to utilize various strategies of involvement at home and at school to foster academic excellence in their children” (p. 47). Perhaps, therefore, the involvement strategy is what distinguishes higher-SES from low-SES parents. For instance, Barton and Coley (2008) noted that compared to children of professional parents, children from poor parents learn and acquire fewer vocabularies by age three. This is because professional parents are more concerted in child rearing (Lareau, 2003), and so, they bring this practice into their children’s education. This assertion is collaborated by the empirical research investigating high school students’ perception of parental involvement in Egypt, in
which Sabry (2006) noted that students perceived at-school parental involvement as the key factor influencing their achievement. This is followed by the level of parental education. According to the study, the combination of at-school parental involvement and parental education have an indirect positive effect on student academic achievement. SES is, therefore, an indicator of parental resource capacity. Since “education and occupation are indicators of parental human and social capital, it is likely that a parent’s individual access to these resources will influence his or her involvement in children’s education” (Altschul, 2012, p. 15). Income, occupation, and educational levels equip and enable parents to be less or more fully involved in their children’s education. Parental involvement is, therefore, dependent on the human and social capital capacity available (Parra-Cardona et al, 2008).

Some other researchers (Lanthier, Wright-Cunningham & Edmonds, 2003) have identified other factors that inspire parents to get involved in students’ education. In their earlier research, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) categorized three critical issues that influence the involvement of parents: (a) “parents’ role construct,” (b) “parents’ sense of efficacy,” and (c) “school invitations.”

Parents’ role construct refers to parents’ convictions about the relevance and essence of their involvement in their children’s education. In the parental sense of “self-efficacy,” parents weigh whether they possess the requisite skills and competences to be involved. Other authors have supported this view. For instance, Drummond and Stipek (2004) noted that role construction encouraged parents to be involved in the education of their children. They maintained that when parents know the expected roles that aid in the advancement of their children’s education, they get involved. They observed parents’ beliefs about the relevance of increased parental help in areas of recommended by teachers. At the end of the study of urban and suburban parents,
Sheldon (2002) noted that parental involvement, both at school and home, was contingent upon parental role construction. This position is synonymous with the research position of Kohl, Lengua, and McMahon (2009), who argued that the extent to which parents are confident about communicating with teachers and the level at which parents perceive themselves as teachers to their children were direct expressions of parents’ perception of their own education and academic experience. According to these authors, uneducated parents lack academic experience which explains why many lacked the confidence, vision and competence necessary for the support of their children’s education. According to Kohl et al. (2000), the ability of parents to establish and maintain contact with teachers is positively related to parents’ education. The authors noted that, comparatively, more educated parents engaged more in their children’s education, while parents of little or no education did not possess the requisite competences and were unable to grasp the meaning of playing the role of the teachers to their own children (Kohl et al., 2000).

Finally, regarding “school invitation,” parents tended to wait until they were invited by the school to be involved in the academic life of their children.

The factors identified above challenge parents of low- or uneducated parents. In research conducted to determine the relationship between Latino parents’ level of education and involvement of Latino, Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2004) discovered that having requisite knowledge and conviction motivates parents to be involved in their children’s education. The authors observed that parental role construction was the strongest predictor of involvement in the primary and secondary education of their children. Chrispeels and Rivero’s (2001) study showed that the ideas parents hold about the suitable roles they should play influence their thoughts about how they should be involved, how much they should be involved, and how they should
interpret school invitations to involvement. To arrive at their position, the authors conducted pre- and post-treatment research on parents’ response levels about their involvement in school. Prior to their enrollment in a nine-week educational program, these parents had little or no interest in getting involved in their children’s primary or secondary education. However, after their nine-week participation in the educational program organized by Parents Institutes for Quality Education (PIQE), they reported a change in their parenting behavior in two ways: (1) they developed parenting behavior for their primary school students, such as creating rules and limits to television viewing, setting more time for academic activities, giving more praise than scolding, and less application of physical punishment for minor infractions. (2) Based on their “new found” knowledge, parental self-efficacy and role-construct increased; they became aware of parenting behavior that is helpful to their high school children, including developing high expectations for college, a focus on planning early for students’ college transition, and a disposition to plan with teachers and counselors for college preparation meetings. Chrispeels and Rivero’s (2001) research outcome was consistent with the results of the study by the California Partnership for Achieving Student Success (Cal-PASS) (2011, p.3), which was aimed at tracking “educational outcomes for students of the parents PIQE served.” In its report, Cal-PASS noted that:

Of the PIQE students expected to graduate high school by 2009-10, 80% graduated with a standard high school diploma compared to 72% of students in the matched comparison group; also, for college enrollment and success of participants, 63% enrolled in postsecondary institutions after 12th grade, compared to 47% of students in the comparison group.
Founded in 1987, PIQE “provides parent engagement workshops to encourage and teach parents to support the educational attainment for their children.” Similar to PIQE program, the Parents Alliance organizes eight weeks PACT educational program for low-income Hispanic parents aimed at equipping them intellectually to help them involve more in their children’s education while they advance their own education. This program is convened on the premise that “… family educational involvement is vital for promoting the life chances of low-income children and provides exceptional benefits for the very same low-income children who face exceptional challenges” (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss. 2007). They also believe that when parents are empowered through education, they tend to take a proactive role in the education of their children, who will later perform better in school. According to the organizers, at the end of the program, parents receive a diploma; moreover, those who have received training have been positively impacting their children. For instance, in the 2012-2013 school year, 735 parents registered for the program; 80% completed the studies; 74% noted that they could effectively help their children with homework; 48% communicated with their children’s teachers not less than once a month; and 25% received a promotion at their jobs or secured new ones. Since their knowledge acquisition, Parents Alliance (2014) reported that parents’ self-worth and self-esteem increased tremendously and that, they began to access their children’s report cards online and communicate with teachers through the internet.

Although Chrispeel and Rivero’s (2001) study showed that parental SES influenced parental involvement, with Parents Alliance (2014) reporting the positive effects of parental educational empowerment on children, Bridgeland and Dilulio (2008) observed no difference in involvement for all classes of parents. According to the authors, irrespective of SES, parents do have a clear understanding about the value of education and the significance of parental involvement in
education. Examining parents’ attitude about being involved in their children’s education, Bridgeland and Dilulio study marked a major departure from a commonly held view. Their research which was conducted between June and July 2007, involved three racial groups: 12% African American, 13% Hispanic, and 70% whites, of low-, middle-, and high-income parents. Half of the parents had children in high school during the research, while the half had children in high school in the past five years. The results of the survey research showed that despite the variations in the socioeconomic levels of the parents, every one of them showed understanding of the relevance of good education and the necessity of parental involvement in the education of their children.

The research findings were surprising. For instance, the study showed that African American and Hispanic parents who occupied the lowest SES rung in America “were more likely to consider going to college very important, compared to White parents.” The research report went further to note that in terms of percentage, 90% of Hispanic, 92% of African American, and 70% of white parents considered college attainment important. The same study noted that of 85% of parents low-performing schools believed that it is important for parents to be involved in their children’s high school education since it will afford them the chance to advocate for their children. However, only 78% of parents whose children attended high-performing schools thought it important for parents to be involved in school. Nevertheless, the authors noted that high-performing high schools do well in communicating with parents about their children’s academic outcomes than poor performing ones (Bridgeland & Dilulio, 2008). However, in what seemed like an agreement with past research studies, Bridgeland and Dilulio (2008) stated that there is a distinction between parental attitude and disposition toward involvement and actual involvement. The study noted that although parents showed interest in getting involved, almost
two out of three parents could not. It is, therefore, paradoxical for parents to avow the usefulness of parental involvement and yet fail to be involved. Bridgeland and Dilulio noted that two-thirds of the respondents who accepted involvement as a necessity lacked time to get involved: 38% of them alluded to work or a full-time job as a major obstacle, while 26% said other demands on their time and scheduling conflicts interfered with their involvement. Of another one-third of parents who were not constrained by time, 12% noted a lack of information, communication, and knowledge of the activities as the reasons for their lack of involvement; 6% had the desire to have a better relationship with the school, while 5% cited their lack of academic competence vis-a-vis curricula content.

Beyond these barriers, the authors noted that parents would love to be involved but what parents need is an access point, a way into the schools so, that they can become partners in helping students learn and achieve (Bridgeland & Dilulio, 2008). Bridgeland and Dilulio’s study appeared to have some measure of support from Henderson and Mapp (2002), who synthesized 51 studies and found that irrespective of the fact that middle-class white students tended to have parents who were most involved in their education, relative to other ethnic groups, students of all backgrounds, whose parents were involved in their education remained consistently engaged in their studies, chose higher-level classes, showed better social skills, obtained higher test scores, graduated, and enrolled in college (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Catsambi (2001) and Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) could not arrive at a definite conclusion that higher-SES parents were more involved more low-SES parents in the education of their children.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundations for this study draw upon previous research by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (2005) conceptualization of motivators of parental involvement, and Ajzen and
Fishbein’s (1980) theory of “planned behavior”. According to Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1980) theory of “planned behavior” individuals are motivated or retrained to act in a certain way. They posit that human behavior can be deliberate and planned. According to Ajzen and Fishbein, human actions are directed by three factors: (i) behavioral beliefs – beliefs about the likely outcomes or effects of a behavior, (ii) normative beliefs – beliefs about what values people hold about their behavior, and (iii) perceived control beliefs – beliefs about the conditions or factors that may enable or hinder the performance of behavior. Perceived behavioral control is specifically concerned with people’s perception of their ability to perform a given behavior.

Bracke and Corts (2012), in their study of parental involvement, adopted Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1980) three aspects of planned behavior theory: attitude and beliefs, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These dimensions of the theory operate in a binary fashion.

**Attitude and behavioral belief.** Regarding attitudes and behavioral beliefs concerning their role in the education of children, Bracke and Corts (2012) noted that some parents hold and believe that children’s education is the responsibility of schools. Here, parents contend that they lack the qualifications to be involved in schooling, or that they have not given thought to being involved. However, other parents might be emboldened by their belief in their ability to positively influence students and help them achieve better outcomes. Attitudes and beliefs, therefore, influence parents in deciding whether to play a role in the education of their children.

**Subjective norms.** Regarding subjective norms about their involvement, parents may avoid being involved in the education of their children because such involvement may run contrary to community practice and values. “They may come from a culture in which parents were never expected to be involved or may not have had role models that provided examples of parental involvement” (p. 194). Conversely, parents may get involved in their children’s education when
they observe others getting involved or when they remember their own parents’ involvement in education and how such participation helped in their own academic experiences.

**Perceived behavioral control.** Under perceived behavioral control, parents consider the degree of their involvement. According to Bracke and Corts (2012) “parents within higher incomes might be more likely to have flexible work hours and access to other resources, such as childcare; whereas in low income families, it is possible that parents have more restrictive jobs” (p.194). Low-income parents may be faced with other obstacles such as in relation to transportation and childcare.

In summary, parents are more likely to participate in their children’s education when their attitudes and beliefs about participation are positive and when they think that such involvement will receive support from friends, neighbors, and the community (Bracke & Corts, 2012). However, parental participation is likely to be hampered when parents, through their attitudes and beliefs consider involvement as something negative and if their subjective appraisal of friends found them not to be interested in participating in school activities.

Another framework in this study is the parental involvement model of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005).
Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) described parents’ motivation to get involved in the education of their children. The authors identified three levels of parental motivation or lack thereof: parents’ motivational beliefs, parents’ perceptions of invitations from others, and parents’ perceived life context.
Parents’ motivational beliefs. Parents’ motivational beliefs involve: parental role construction and parental self-efficacy.

Parental role construction. Parental role construction is defined as “parents’ beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children’s education and pattern of parental behavior that follow those beliefs” (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005, p. 107). Parental involvement role construction is influenced by the beliefs parents have regarding how a child develops, the effective way to raise a child, and actions parents should implement at home to assure student success. Expectations from persons and stakeholders in the education of children do also influence parents’ sense of responsibility toward their children. Since parents’ role construction is influenced by individual and society’s expectations and beliefs, it is, therefore, socially constructed (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Parents construct this role on many experiences over time in relation to schooling, past experiences with being involved, and present experiences with teachers and other parents in dealing with children’s education. Parental role construction is always evolving, as society and conditions change or because of personal decisions to alter it (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Role construction thus motivates parents to engage in their children’s schooling, especially at the primary and secondary levels of education.

Parental sense of efficacy. Self-efficacy is the acceptance of or a belief in one’s capacities or abilities to behave in a way to produce expected and desired results (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is a crucial factor when deciding on goals and the amount of effort and level of engagement required in meeting these goals. Bandura (1989) went further to assert that parents’ behavior toward a goal is a product of their conviction about their capacity to accomplish such goals. In self-efficacy, parents reflect on the likely outcomes of their actions. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005), citing Hoover-Dempsey (1997), believe that:
“parents with high self-efficacy will tend to make positive decisions about active engagement in the child’s education; … are likely to persist in the face of challenges and obstacles and work their way through difficulties to successful outcomes” (p. 109). The authors went further to assert that comparatively, parents who have weak self-efficacy towards involvement tend to have lower expectations about “outcomes of efforts to help children succeed in school and relatively low persistence in the face of challenges” (p. 109).

**Parents’ Perception of invitations from others.** The second motivator of parental involvement is the perception that parents have of invitations from others. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) noted that an essential factor in parents’ motivation toward school involvement has to do with the invitations they receive from important stakeholders in education. When the school community extends involvement invitations to parents, they tend to see such invitations as indicators of value and appreciation attached to their participation in education by the school community. These invitations become sources of encouragement for parents of low role construction and weak self-efficacy to become involved. Invitations from important people in the school system may positively affect parents’ beliefs about their personal role and may improve their thinking about the positive effects of their actions. Parents’ perception have of invitations from others involves three aspects: perception of general school invitations, perceptions of specific child invitations, and perceptions of specific teacher invitations.

**Perceptions of general school invitations.** Researchers have noted the effect of the school environment on parents’ desire to be involved. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), school climate plays a role in influencing parents’ ideas about involvement in school. They further noted that school structure and management behaviors, among other things, contribute toward parents-school relationship, which include aspects such as parents’ awareness
acceptance and appreciation by the school, that they possess adequate information about students’ education and progress, and that the school personnel esteem them, their concerns, and suggestions (Christenson, 2004).

**Invitations from the child.** Studies have suggested that when students invite their parents, their parents, in turn, become involved quite quickly. This type of invitation stimulates parental receptive yearning towards their children’s development and school success (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1995). Children’s invitations are of two kinds: implicit invitations and explicit invitations. *Implicit invitations* occur out of parental observations of a child’s learning experience. In implicit invitations, parents take the initiative to intervene, for instance, upon observing that their child is having difficulty with learning, parents may be prompted to become frequently available for the child’s homework and offer assistance to the child (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). It is also implicit when parents notice shortcomings in relation to their child’s learning and respond without invitation from the child, to schedule times for the child’s homework so as to eliminate the child’s frustrations (Xu & Corno, 2003). A child’s invitation can be explicit in many ways, such as asking parents for help with learning, an invitation to intervene in situations at school, or an invitation to participate in school events (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1995). Parents appear to be attracted to these invitations because of their general good disposition in responding to their children’s needs and the value they ascribe to their children’s academic success (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1995).

**Invitations from teachers.** Teachers’ practice of inviting parents influences parental decisions to participate in children’s education. Scholars have suggested that “teacher attitudes about parents and teacher invitations …play a significant role in parents’ decisions to become involved” (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005, p. 111). Teachers’ invitations are found to be a
dominant explanation parents desire to be acquainted with how to support their children’s learning (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). These invitations enhance parental sense of being welcome in being involved in school activities, comprehension of their children’s learning, and confidence that all their involvement efforts are relevant and valued (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000). They also contribute to the development of trust in the parent-teacher relationship, a condition that is necessary for effective parent-school relationship (Adam & Christenson, 2000).

*Parents’ life contexts.* The component of parents’ life context includes: self-perceived time and energy, and perceived skills and knowledge.

*Parents’ perceived time and energy.* In their recent studies, Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005) noted that “parents’ perceptions of demands on their time and energy … particularly as related to work and other family responsibilities, are often related to their thinking about involvement in their children’s education” (p. 115). Parents whose employment variables include inflexible work hours, multiple jobs, jobs insecurity or tight schedules tend to be less involved, especially at school, than parents with better employment conditions (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Family-related situations like the care of many children and the elderly, as well as other responsibilities, may force parents to engage less, especially in school. The authors further observed that parental involvement is greatly enhanced in areas of activity and demand they experience often.

*Parents’ perceived knowledge and skills.* According to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1995), the way parents think about the types of involvement activities they could engage in with reasonable success is influenced by their opinions of their personal skills. When confronted with the need to help their children with their homework, for instance, parents would first reflect on their level of knowledge and competences prior to engaging in such activity. They would engage in an activity
if they are convinced that they are adequately capable of doing so. Parents also tend to solicit help from others like family members when they perceive their competence level as inadequate.

These theoretical and conceptual frameworks are relevant for investigating parental involvement of parents in schools in Imo State. The theory of planned behavior provides insight into conditions that shapes human actions and explains the reasons behind the inevitability of dispositions to act. Parental involvement as human actions and as dependent on beliefs and attitudes, could be explored within the context of this theoretical paradigm. The framework thus reveals that parental involvement is contingent on many intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The examination of parental participation in Imo State’s public secondary school context in light of these and other factors will aid our understanding of involvement motivations and realities in State.

**Table 1: Complementarity of the Conceptual Frameworks**

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<td>Attitude and belief towards a behavior</td>
<td>Parental personal motivators, role construction, and self-efficacy</td>
<td>Belief informs action and a person’s action, inaction reveals the belief one holds about performing a certain action (behavior) and the possible outcome of such engagement (behavior).</td>
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Ajzen explains that human behavior is not a random act; instead, it is deliberate and planned. Human acts (like parental involvement) are initiated or avoided when the actor comes to believe in the possible positive or negative outcome of such behavior. In parental role construction, parents reflect on whether they have any role to play in the education of their children. Their belief or the outcome of this reflection motivates their involvement or lack thereof. In self-efficacy, parents consider the possible outcome of their involvement in the education of their children. Parents’ involvement therefore depends on the assessment of the positive or negative outcome of their involvement.

**Subjective norm**

Parents’ perceptions of invitations, including school, teacher and student invitations to parents.

Cultures, traditions, individual experiences, and school practices may encourage or deter parental involvement. When parental involvement is highly or less valued, and schools and teachers are more or less welcoming of parents, parental involvement may follow accordingly.

Another factor that influences human behavior are the normative expectations from others. What other people or the community consider appropriate and expect may encourage parents to be involved.

Parents’ feelings, perceptions, and understanding of school invitations, teacher invitations or advice, and the child’s invitation (sometimes not explicitly stated) may encourage or discourage parents to be involved.

How does your community view parental involvement in students’ education?

Do you communicate with your child’s teacher/s?

How do you communicate with them and when?

How often do you communicate with the school/teacher about your child?

Do you attend PTA meetings/conferences?

How relevant is the PTA to students’ academic achievement?

How do you monitor your child’s education?

**Perceived behavioral control**

Parents’ life context variables: Parents’ evaluation of their personal skills and knowledge.

Studies have shown that parental plays a vital role in parental involvement. The more educated parents are the more they secure...
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<th>Parents’ view or opinion concerning time and energy. Family culture (this is related to subjective norms).</th>
<th>better jobs and income. They may afford to have the requisite skills, knowledge, resources, time, and energy to be involved in the education of their children.</th>
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<td>Individual beliefs about the presence of obstacles may encourage or hinder a person’s application of a behavior to a task.</td>
<td>What is your completed level of education? What is your occupation? What is your annual income? What challenges do you have regarding being involved in your child’s education? How do you know whether or not your child is doing well in school? How do you support your child’s education? How do you support your child for the WAEC and NECO Exams? What are your immediate and long-term plans for your child's education?</td>
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<td>In evaluating their skills and abilities, parents are more likely to get involved when they believe that they possess adequate skills and capabilities for the task at hand and are less likely to act if they perceive that they are deficient in suitable skills and abilities. Factors like time and energy may facilitate or hinder parental decisions regarding involvement. Long work hours, multiple family commitments, and schedules that are convenient for schools may pose a challenge to involvement parents. Family culture may influence parental ideas on how to be, or not, involved in the education of children. For instance, families whose culture encourages limited parental involvement may likely be less involved than families that traditionally encourage more and regular participation in education.</td>
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Chapter 3
Methodology

Recent rates in the academic achievement of public secondary school students in Imo State in standardized examinations that qualify them for college education has been dismal. The extent to which they fail in these exams has been a growing concern among parents and other stakeholders in education. Of the many reasons for these poor academic outcomes in the WAEC, NECO, and JAMB exams, a lack of parental involvement has been left out of the discussion (Adeyemi, 2011).

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to seek to understand how parents understand their involvement in their children’s academic achievement in secondary education because success or failure at this level of education determines students’ chances of gaining admissions into the university. Moreover, the study seeks to understand what involvement practices they participate in and how their socio-economic backgrounds moderate their involvement. Many studies have shown that lack of parental involvement in education might negatively influence the extent to which secondary school students are prepared for post-secondary education (Jeynes, 2005; Spera, 2005). Research has also indicated that children from middle- and higher-SES families do better than those of low-SES and poor backgrounds due to parental involvement (Sirin, 2005). Given the importance of parental involvement in children’s schooling in the socio-cultural context of Imo State, the present study seeks to add new insight into theoretical and empirical research specific to Nigerian higher education.

The study is guided by the following questions:

What expectations do parents have for their children’s academic achievements in high school as well as for their college aspirations?

How do parents perceive and become involved in their children’s high school education in Imo State?
What factors motivate parents to become engaged, or deter them from becoming involved in their children’s education?

This study used a qualitative research approach. A qualitative research methodology aims to understand dimensions of social life through the generation of words as data for analysis (Bricki & Green, 2007). Qualitative research inquiry is relevant in exploring little-known conditions by interviews, focus groups, and observation, etc. (Green & Thorogood 2009). As a research methodology that seeks to understand experiences, beliefs attitudes, and circumstances that affect people or the way they behave, qualitative research approaches seek to answer questions about the “what”, “how” and “why” of facts, experiences, trends, and happenings. It is distinguished from a quantitative methodology, which aims to answer: “how many” and “how much” questions (Bricki & Green, 2007).

The choice of a qualitative study method is consistent with my research purpose, which aims to look at the phenomenon of parental involvement among parents of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in Imo State. Understanding how these parents perceive, get involved, and strategize in their children’s secondary education may generate insights into understanding what roles parents play in supporting their children’s academic achievement as a foundation for post-secondary education. This information is necessary because of the challenges that students face in excelling in the WAEC, NECO and JAMB exams, which are required for post-secondary education.

To arrive at the answer to this inquiry, a qualitative research design was chosen because qualitative research asks, “how questions,” a form of questioning that allowed me to identify information (data) from the parents of high school students in Imo State.

The integration of the theoretical framework on the motivations of human action developed by Ajzen (1980) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (2005) model of parental involvement is
relevant in the analysis and interpretation of the data in this study. The framework explains beliefs that influence human behavior and the conditions that motivate or deter the exercise of these beliefs. In the analysis and interpretation of the data, I explored the beliefs’ (world-view) of Imo State parents about being involved in the secondary education of their children, as it relates to their future access to post-secondary education, what inspired them to get involved, and the obstacles that challenged their involvement in their children’s quest for academic achievement.

3.1. Appropriateness of Qualitative Research

There are advantages associated with the use of the qualitative method in research. Yin (2003) observed that: “you would use … the method because you deliberately wanted to cover … conditions – believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study” (p. 13). Through a study of a situation, a vivid description of the phenomenon under study is created (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Qualitative research is highly advantageous in the study of applied courses of study like education and sociology, through which research findings “can affect and perhaps even improve practice (Merriam, 2009, p. 51). Qualitative research can generate understandings of situations and conditions from which individuals are able to adjust, manipulate, and direct knowledge to the individual’s personal use and application (Stake, 2005).

3.2. Reasons for the Parental Involvement Paradigm

To explore the process of parental involvement in this study, I sought to understand the influence that parents’ different socioeconomic backgrounds have on their views. Bakare (2012) observed that a percent increase in the literacy rate increases the Gini coefficient by three percent, meaning that there is greater disparity in income distribution in Nigeria with increases in the literacy rate. Using Bakare’s (2012) “Measure of SES in Nigeria,” which identified socio-economic standing from an occupational perspective, I identified each parent’s educational and
income levels by asking them (through the Owerri Assembly) to fill out a demographic questionnaire. I then selected participants who met the criteria (see Appendix C). To determine the income level that aligns with each socio-economic level, I followed Robertson, Ndebele, and Mhago’s (2011) identification of wealth distribution:

The average monthly income (in Nigeria) is in the range of NGN75, 000-100,000 ($480-645, or roughly $6,000-7,000 pa). According to African Development Bank (AFDB) data, the middle-class make up about 23% of the Nigerian population. They are well educated – 92% completed post-secondary education or have studied at an institution of higher learning. (p.3).

The Nigerian Labor Congress review of monthly salaries (2012) observed that the minimum (low) wage for workers in Nigeria is NGN 18,000.00 ($91.00), compared with the highest income earners NGN 626, 700.00 – 2, 506, 000 (between $ 3,200 to $13.000.00). This categorization of the dimensions of SES is relevant in identifying participants’ socioeconomic position, and it allowed me to select research participants from various SES levels to obtain a comprehensive view of school involvement from different strata of parents in Imo State.

Parental involvement in high school helps students develop qualities that support academic achievement. Examining the influence of parenting style and involvement on achievement among high school students, Deslandes, Royer, Turcotte, and Bertrand (1997) noted that: “parental support, infrequent communication with teachers, parental supervision, and psychological autonomy-granting proved to be the best combination for maximizing performance among students….,” (p. 191).

Parents in Imo State exercised their involvement roles both at home and in schools. Research has found that parental involvement takes place in two main contexts: school and home.
According to Hickman, Greenwood, and Miller (1995), home-based involvement produces more positive academic outcomes for high school students than the school-based involvement. They also observed that average- and low-achieving students suffer from poor parental involvement. Keith, Quirk, Santillo, and Killings’ (1998) study on the “longitudinal effects of parent involvement on high school grades”- revealed that parents’ participation in their children’s schooling “has continuing and powerful effects on high school learning, as measured by grades…and it is valuable to all students and has stronger effects … on students” (p. 363). Evidence from these research studies provide support for the selected problem in this thesis because it links parental involvement to student achievement. The level of parental participation and involvement types might play a critical role in shaping high school students’ academic outcomes.

3.3. Recruitment and Sampling Selection

To identify participants for this study, I solicited the support of parents who are members of the Owerri Town Union in Imo State, commonly known as the Owerri Assembly. My identification of SES levels included educational level and occupation. The table below identifies who was considered as belonging to low, middle and high socioeconomic levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Determinant</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bakare (2012)</td>
<td>Occupation/Education</td>
<td>Artisans</td>
<td>Bankers/Teachers</td>
<td>Professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson et al (2011)</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Earnings/salary below the lowest middle-class earnings</td>
<td>Monthly earnings between NGN 75,000.00 – 100,000.00</td>
<td>Monthly salary/earning above the middle highest earning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian Labor</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Minimum Wage</td>
<td>Income below NGN 626, 700.00</td>
<td>Income from NGN 626, 700.00 – 2,506,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (2012)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median annual household income (Gallup, 2013)</td>
<td>$43,585</td>
<td>$2,667.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median per-capita income (Gallup, 2013)</td>
<td>$15,181.00</td>
<td>$493.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To contact potential participants, I solicited the help of a colleague, who is a prominent member of the Owerri Assembly, who had earlier indicated his willingness to support my research. With his assistance, I sought permission from the assembly’s leadership for an opportunity to introduce my research to members during one of their gatherings. I informed the audience about the research and its purpose. During my introduction to the assembly, I indicated the criteria for participation. After my brief introduction, I distributed the demographic questionnaire, which I later collected. This questionnaire included the contact information of potential participants, including telephone numbers, addresses and emails. I reviewed the completed questionnaires and selected individuals who met the selection criteria: residence in Imo State, child/children was/were attending or attended public secondary schools; participants were fathers or mothers or one directly responsible for making decisions on the student’s overall well-being; occupation and income information had to be reported. From this list, I selected qualified candidates and contacted them to schedule interviews. I was able to achieve this through the help of a friend, a teacher, who arranged with the town union. “A town union is an association formed by members of a particular community for the socio-economic development of that community. Accordingly, a town union collaborates with traditional administration, government at all levels and sometimes non-governmental agencies to achieve its aim” (Iwuala, 2013, p. 1). According to Osaghae (1994), “the social organization develops in the form of an extended family to a kind of village government. Included in these groups are men and women
of varying socio-economic backgrounds and philosophical leanings” (p. 53). Consistent with their mission and goals, these organizations and unions have been pioneers in the establishment of community secondary schools, town halls, the award of academic scholarships, and in building of post offices (Osaghae, 1994).

I used the criteria listed in the demographic questionnaire to select appropriate participants. In qualitative research, the subject of study determines the method of study and the study participants (Thomas, 2009). According to Sargeant (2002), “one of the most important tasks in the study design phase was to identify appropriate participants; decisions regarding selection were based on research questions, theoretical perspectives, and evidence informing the study” (p.2). To identify appropriate participants and to answer the research question posed in this study, I utilized a purposeful sampling method (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), the “logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich… from which one can learn a great deal about issues of vital importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (p. 230).

The demographic questionnaire guided me through the sample selection. With the use of this sampling approach, I was able to select only those individuals who could provide in-depth information based on their experience of dealing with and been involving in secondary education and college planning for their children (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To ensure the credibility of the purposive sampling, I employed maximum variation sampling. The criteria for selecting participants included income level, education, and occupation. Also included in these criteria were those who had direct care of high school students. Specifically, the high, middle, and low-income parents constituted the target population. Imo State has a diverse workforce in the upper, middle and lower levels. Workers in Imo State include government officials, engineers, doctors,
lawyers, teachers, professors, street cleaners, mechanics, small-scale farmers, hawkers of goods, store owners, the unemployed etc. (Ohajianya, 2012).

In terms of sample size, there is no consensus among qualitative researchers regarding definite numbers. However, Charmaz (2006, p.114) suggested that “25 participants are adequate for smaller projects.” Ritchie, Lewis, and Elam (2003, p. 84) noted that sample populations often “lie under 50.” Creswell (1998) suggested a range of 20 and 30 participants, while Green and Thorogood (2009) noted that "the experience of most qualitative researchers is that in interview studies little that is 'new' comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people." (p. 120). Bertaux (1981, p. 35) noted that 15 is the smallest sample size acceptable in qualitative research. From the above positions, therefore, I selected 30 participants for the interview stage. To give equal representation, I interviewed 10 participants from each of the three socioeconomic levels.

3.4. Sampling Procedure

In order to select potential participants living in Owerri, the capital city of Imo State, I made prior arrangement with the assistance of some elders and a friend who worked as a university lecturer and was a member of the community. I was introduced to the town’s people at Town Assembly meeting in December 2016. I was permitted to talk about my study to the people. There were over 150 people in attendance. I thanked them for their love for education, and I explained that I would like to know how they supported their children in helping them succeed in high school and in attending university. I used the word “university” intentionally because for these people, college connotes mono-technic institutions like colleges of agriculture or education, which are perceived as being of lower quality than universities. After my presentation, a few individuals enquired about how they could contact me. I distributed the solicitation letters
and the demographic questionnaire, and many of them left their phone numbers with me. I informed them that I would call them, and that they could also call me or my friend. I distributed all 250 copies I had brought along with me because some of the town’s people collected more than one form to distribute to others who were not present at the meeting. About two days later, many potential participants had returned their completed demographic questionnaires to my friend, whom they knew very well and who lived among the people. My friend was very supportive in helping me get to the homes of other participants who had returned my call or who had called me to pick up the questionnaire.

I received a total of 135 questionnaires. The questionnaire contained two items consistent with Bakare’s (2012) socioeconomic identification: level of education and occupation which helped me in selecting potential participants. I examined each returned questionnaire to get 10 for each category of SES category that matched the measure of my selection. Those with a college and post graduate education and who were working in areas identified by Bakare (2012) as high SES were put together. Also, those who had college degrees and whose occupation was consistent with Bakare’s (2012) measure for middle SES were placed together. I repeated the procedure to select those of low SES. Finally, at the end of the selection, all the participants preferred their homes for the interviews, except two who chose to be interviewed in their offices (work-places). The people offered me the traditional hospitality of kola nuts and drinks; those who had nothing to offer apologized. Although each selected participant understood English, five of them preferred to speak in the Igbo language. At the end of the interview, more than half (n=16) of them accepted tokens of appreciation from me, while some others declined. Sixteen participants received #50.00 (fifty Naira – Nigerian currency. Exchanged in US$, it would amount to about 7.1 cents) each. It was much easier for me to get in touch with the low- and
middle-SES parents than with the high-SES ones because they were busy with one meeting or another. Few (n=3) travelled out of the state. However, I was able to get their responses through the concerted efforts of my friend who knew them personally and visited their homes when they failed to answer their phones.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of the 30 Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Socioeconomic status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Victoria</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Petty Trader</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Chinna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Hair dresser</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Philip</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Chikeziri</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Taxi Driver</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Uche</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Zobam</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Seamstress</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Carolyn</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Hair Dresser</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Nnazi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Typist</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Tobias</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Bricklayer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Yobachi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Michael</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Govt. worker</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Doochi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Offorka</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Mezue</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Nicky</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Banker</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Patrick</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Nnenna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>College tutor</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Opara</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Nneka</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>College tutor</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Phina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Fed. Worker</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Abaji</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Doris</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Achina</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Widower</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Dibechi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Ada</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Sch. Inspect.</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Beatrice</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Oliver</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Oil worker</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Uba</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Magistrate</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Buchi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Uche</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Investor</td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5. Data Collection and Research Site

This research was conducted in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. To grant all participants privacy and the opportunity to answer questions freely, face–to–face interviews were conducted. Each participant chose the interview location and time. I accepted interview settings with the least number of distractions, as recommended by the interviewees, and every decision was mutually agreed.

This study explored the involvement and participation of parents in student achievement in high school. The study used participant interviews as the main method of data collection. According to Merriam (2009), “data collection techniques used, as well as, the specific information considered to be ‘data’ in a study, are determined by the researcher’s orientation, by the problem and purpose of the study, and by the sample selected” (p. 86).

3.6. Interviews

Interviews are a structured purposeful conversation aimed at gaining and understanding facts or knowledge (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) as well as experiences, feelings and perceptions. Merriam (2009) described interview as a means of understanding the lived experiences of others, thus, providing contexts for people’s behavior. Patton (1990), likewise, noted that “the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind…. We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe” (p. 278). Since this research is aimed at understanding peoples’ perceptions and experience, I utilized one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for the organization of interview themes and topics prior to the interview (Thomas, 2009). The method allowed me to combine the “list of issues to be covered together with the freedom to follow up points as necessary” (Thomas, 2009,
During the interview, I adopted an open-ended question format, while the questions were linked to the literature review, the theoretical framework, and the research questions. The open-ended method allowed for specific and focused attention to the issue under discussion. The interview protocol consisted of points and issues that led to follow-up questions and probes. Probing questions are aimed at鼓励ing the interviewee to proceed with more information, which may provide new or better insight (Thomas, 2009). (see Appendix A, for interview protocol).

Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Since note taking while interviewing participants may adversely affect the quality of the notes and may stall the rapport and effectiveness of the discourse, which are essential in semi-structured interviews (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006), I concentrated on interviewing and recorded the data. As this formed part of the consent signed by the participants, the interview was recorded using a digital recorder. No follow-up interviews were held. At the end, the recorded Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Also, I translated transcripts from the interviews conducted in Igbo to English. However, the translations and the original Igbo interview transcripts were reviewed by both Igbo and English college lecturers.

3.7. Data Analysis

In analyzing the interview data, I utilized theme-based data analysis, which Boyatzis (1998) described as a method of “encoding qualitative information” (p. vii). According to Boyatzis (1998) theme-based analysis “… may be a list of themes, a complex model with themes,
indicators, and qualifications that are causally related, or something in between these two forms” (p. vii).

At the end of the transcription, I read through the whole document multiple times to familiarize myself with and get a general idea of the content. I made notes (analytic memos) in the margins of the document about the impression I was getting from the transcribed data. Afterwards, I analyzed and reviewed the transcribed data for textual correctness. Being familiar with the data, it became easier to find evidence confirming or opposing individual participants’ points of view.

3.8. Coding

Bryman (2008) described a code “… as a concept that is given a name that most exactly describes what is being said” (p. 35). Coding is a research method by which data are sorted and organized (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). It is “the process of combining the data for themes, ideas and categories and then marking similar passages of text with code labels so that they can easily be retrieved at a later stage for further comparison and analysis” (Gibbs & Taylor, 2010, p.13). To begin to identify the emerging themes from the data, I first I reviewed the transcripts, during which I highlighted words, phrases, and sentences that defined and explained an idea or meaning. After highlighting a text, I assigned it a name or code that aptly described the words spoken by the participants. In this study, I was able to observe the participants’ and attitudes, and listened to them voice their motivations, the obstacles they faced, their opinions, activities, and other relevant information, which were all coded. I also coded recurrent concepts or words, interesting but surprising information, words that the interviewees explicitly determined as important, important words and concepts that I found in the reviewed literature, or words that
pointed to the theory and framework used in this study. Only relevant words, phrases and statements were coded in accord with the participants’ description or words.

3.9. Grouping codes

In deciding which codes were more relevant to the study, I went through them again. After identifying and coding the data, I put the codes into categories. This was done by combining two or more similar codes to form a category and assigning a common code to each category (Bricki& Green, 2015). At this point, I omitted codes that were not relevant to answering the research questions. To determine codes that belonged to a family, I reviewed the codes I had created earlier, combined two or more relevant comparable codes, and ascribed to each a common code name that was similar to the participants’ language. Using a Word document, I noted emergent codes and considered each for its relevance.

These grouped codes later became categories that dealt with many dimensions of the study, as gathered from the data. I paid attention to the relationship between those codes that would shape the logical outcome of the study. For instance, individual codes describing feeling, opinions, obstacles, motivations, attitudes and activities were categorized together according to their meanings. As I combine the codes into categories and the categories into additional themes, I generated abstract names that made the categories more inclusive (Bryman, 2008). Following this, I used abstract words that were not only close to the language of the participants but also were meaningful to them. As I coded and categorized the data, I looked for interrelationships between the categories (Bryman, 2008). These categories formed the basis for the interpretation and results of this study.

3.10. Validity and Reliability of the Study
Validity and reliability are used to determine the correctness of research findings. There are two dimensions of validity: internal and external validity. Internal validity is achieved in research when data corresponds or are in harmony with the research findings (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Internal validity seeks to establish, from participants’ perspective, that the results are credible and believable (Charmaz, 2011; Trochim, 2006). Qualitative research scholars have identified different research approaches by which internal validity is achieved: “triangulation,” “member check,” “rich, thick description,” “saturation,” “reflexivity and peer review” (Merriam, 2009).

Triangulation is the use of multiple sources and methods in the collection of data (Creswell, 1998; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Merriam, 1998). This study made use of triangulation. As a technique, triangulation helps to overcome bias that could emerge in a single source. It exposes common themes from different participants, thereby strengthening the validity of a study (Merriam, 1998).

Member check involves sharing the data interpretation with the participants from whom the data were gathered so as to determine the credibility of the interpretation or results (Creswell, 1998; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Merriam, 1998). At the end of the study, participants who are interested in reading the output will receive copies of the published findings. This will allow them to give their opinions on the findings in order to verify consistency with their shared opinions and views during data collection.

Rich, thick description involves the presentation of a detailed description of the participants and the context under which the study is being conducted (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998). The purpose of thick description is to allow readers to determine whether the results of the study can be transferred to other situations or contexts. The assembled field notes formed part of the analyzed data. To ensure the external validity of this study, I utilized thick description, which
“detailed account of field experiences in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context” (Holloway, 1997, p. 37). Lincoln and Cuba (1985, p. 168) noted in relation to thick description that “by describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail one can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people.” I used thick description for the setting, the participants, information from field notes and the logic or basis for their inclusion in the study.

Reliability in qualitative research is aimed at establishing a consistent relationship between the research findings with the data collected (Merriam, 2009). This is distinct from reliability in quantitative research, which seeks to establish whether the research is replicable, that is, whether the study can be repeated if a role similar to that of the previous researcher can be adopted. Research strategies used in determining internal validity (i.e. triangulation, reflexivity and participants’ check) are applicable in the determination of research reliability.

External validity seeks to establish the extent to which the results of the study can be generalized. Because of the contextual nature of this qualitative study, a smaller sample size (than in quantitative study) was used, which did not allow for the generalization of the results. However, to ascertain whether the results were applicable to other situations, I provided sufficient information on the background, circumstance or milieu of the study (Merriam, 2009).

3.11. Limitations of the Study

This study does have limitations, in that its findings cannot be generalized. Although individuals may find some elements of the results similar to their own study context, the study was not meant to answer questions beyond the boundaries of Owerri, Imo State. Secondly, the sampling strategy was limited to parents. The study did not involve students, teachers, and
school administrators’ points of view on parental involvement. The absence of these may reveal only a partial picture relating to parental involvement. The study did not consider family structure as a factor in influencing parental involvement and participation.

3.12. Researcher’s Role

Reflexivity is highly encouraged in qualitative research. It involves the researcher’s critical assessment in determining how personal biases and perceptions may affect the collection and interpretation of data (Lincoln & Cuba, 2000; Maxwell, 2005). Although I received training in both philosophy and theology, which prepared me for clerical ministry, since 1997, I have been involved in the education of students from kindergarten to the 8th grade (7th and 8th grades in the US are equivalent to Nigeria’s junior secondary school 1 & 2). I taught different grade levels in both Jamaica, the West Indies, and the US. I hold a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Theology from Urban University, Rome, and a Master of Education in Education Administration from Seton Hall University. I am a certified school principal in the State of New Jersey. Through these educational experiences, I have had many opportunities to engage in educational research studies.

During my doctoral program, I took courses in qualitative research and administration, survey research, data analysis, statistical methods and intermediate statistics. These courses have equipped me with the ability to engage in the rigor of academic research. Conscious of the requirements for academic research, I was able to follow the rigors that accompany features of scientific research and the ethical issues involved.

While I am not currently teaching in a school, my previous teaching experiences in various schools convinced me of the important roles parents play in the education of their children. As a teacher, therefore, those students whose parents were involved and interested in their education
were able to proceed to college. At the same time, I have observed students who were struggling with many issues, both academic and personal issues relating to family situations and backgrounds. Although I have had this experience, I do not presume that my experience is common everywhere. It is a subjective experience, which will not guide or dictate the data generation and its interpretation, since I see myself as a researcher who must employ an objective research methodology to arrive at a valid and reliable result.

Greenbank (2003) noted the importance of the self-description of a qualitative researcher in exposing relevant areas of his or her life, which qualify him or her as a researcher, enabling him or her to put in check presumptions that may affect the study. It is important to note that despite the training I received in the conduct of research, I was conscious of possible biases I might have, especially given the fact that I am an indigene of Imo State, and in qualitative research, the researcher is considered an instrument of data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), through whom the flow of information from participants is recorded. To avoid giving in-to bias, I considered my personal beliefs and thoughts so as to avoid injecting them into the study.

Being aware of my professional role, which involves religious counseling and spiritual direction, and the sense of a professional-client atmosphere that pervades such an encounter, I took steps to prevent the influence of this disposition in my dealings with participants and in my data collection. Specifically, to avoid selection bias towards the participants, I decided that individuals of different religious and socioeconomic spectrum would be invited to participate in the research.

Imo State, a state with cities and rural areas, constitute the context. My interview-based data generation eliminated bias in my articulation of the participants’ words. To avoid bias in the interview, the questions were open-ended. This approach allowed the interviewees to think and
answer freely without being steered towards a response or made to understand a question in a particular way. Also, to avoid sampling bias, all participants of different socio-economic backgrounds were asked the same questions. I noted every possible fact or idea relating to the research. Importantly, I did not omit any fact, idea or concept that might have contradicted common viewpoints.

Also, being cognizant of bias, I used a broad definition and understanding of “parental involvement” during the data generation and collection phase. The reason was to avoid eliminating any type of parental support system that was unfamiliar to or might not have been identified in major research journals and studies. I wrote memos throughout the process which were useful in my reflection on the process involved in the data collection. The memos involved things I considered interesting and relevant to the study.

3.13. Ethical Standards

Research often connects individuals who collaborate with researchers in a bid to achieve some research purposes. The relationship between researchers and the participants is guided by ethical principles. Being aware of this standard, I strove to provide an environment that created rapport with the participants and which encouraged them to contribute fully during the interview process. I ensured the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. Aware of the ethical considerations in research studies, the participants’ opinions and privacy were respected, and to ensure that information and knowledge gathered from the participants were consistent with the research findings, the participants will have the opportunity to read the final document. Other ethical considerations guiding the study include informed consent and data entry and storage.

Informed Consent
The expectation of those who participate in research is that they are informed of the nature of the research so as to decide whether or not to participate. The participants in this study were reasonably informed about the purpose and nature of the research. I presented two consent letters to them for their signature, I documented one copy while each of them retained the other copy.

**Data entry and storage**

Following the collection and transcription of the data from the interviews and memos, the data were stored on a USB flash drive storage system, of which I have exclusive access. By securing the data, the information contained therein remains private and secured.
Chapter 4

Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore parents' understanding of involvement in their children's high school education, the forms of involvement they adopt, and the role of socioeconomic background in their children’s access to post-secondary education. In this exploratory study, I sought to understand how parents’ views on education influence their participation in their children's secondary education and the process by which they become involved, paying attention to parents’ understanding of secondary education in Imo State, Nigeria. I also examined how they help their children improve on the WAEC and NECO, the standardized regional and national college entrance exams, respectively. The overarching questions guiding my enquiry were as follows:

What expectations do parents have for their children’s academic achievements in high school as well as for their college aspiration?

How do parents perceive and become involved in their children’s high school education in Imo State?

What factors motivate parents to become engaged or deter them from becoming involved in their children’s college educational attainment?

This chapter presents findings based on the analysis of the data collected from semi-structured interviews with 30 parents whose children attended public secondary school in Imo State, Nigeria, with a special focus on understanding parents’ psychological, emotional, and financial investments in their children’s education and how their investments vary according to their SES background. In this chapter, I begin by describing the importance that parents placed on secondary education and how their views influence their involvement in secondary education and beyond. Thereafter, I examine the parent-teacher relationship in terms of the level of communications and the conferences (in the form of the PTA) that take place between them. I
also examine parents’ expectations of their children’s academic achievement in secondary schools. Finally, I investigate which factors are important in motivating parents to become involved in, or disengaged from, their children’s college decisions.

I identified four themes and several sub-themes that revealed how the participants were involved in their children’s education: (a) parents’ perception of roles and involvement; (b) context and forms of parental involvement – home and school; (c) parental expectations; and (d) factors that motivate and challenge parents. The findings are summarized in response to the research questions, other research works, the conceptual framework and the related literature.

4.1. Parental Role Perception and Involvement

In this section, I describe how parents’ perception of involvement is influenced by both personal and historical factors. The parents understood that specific functions (e.g. monitoring of children’s study habits) and responsibilities (providing learning and supportive environment) are relevant in the education of students. The study participants shared historical practices and beliefs regarding their involvement in the secondary education of their children. There was a two-pronged influence on parental involvement practices: (a) beliefs about the role of parents toward their children’s education and (b) the historical development of secondary education in Imo State.

The role of parents towards their children. All participants stated that it was normal for parents to support their children’s education. The participants believed that all parent should be sufficiently mature to understand their parental responsibility toward their children’s education. They stated that it was a common endeavor for parents to take responsibility for their children’s overall well-being, including their education. Parental involvement in children’s secondary schooling, is therefore integral to parenting. The participants remarked that parents who
supported their children’s education were highly cherished in Imo State. Mr. Abaji recalled people’s ill-disposition toward irresponsible parents: "we believe that parents who neglect their families should not be accorded any respect. In fact, in the old days, they would not be allowed to speak in a gathering of community members.” Parents are involved in the secondary education of their children because culturally, until a child is gainfully employed, and irrespective of ones’ age, it was the parents’ responsibility to continue to feed, clothe, and provide a roof over the family’s head. If individuals are not financially independent, parents are expected to care for them. This cultural practice extends to their involvement in their children’s education. The participants, therefore, were aware of their supportive roles in the education of their children. For them, their involvement in their children's education was part of their parental responsibilities. All participants believed that their involvement depended on what they could do.

Influence of educational history. Another cultural factor that encouraged parental involvement decisions stemmed from the participants’ parents in relation to the importance of schools. For instance, Mr. Achina stated that:

When the colonialist and missionaries brought formal education, most parents preferred sending their children to the farm; they considered education a waste of time. But those parents who had no land and were considered poor sent their children to school. Some years after, those who went to school became clerks, headmasters, lawyers, judges, administrators, county chiefs, traditional rulers, etc. They occupied important positions of influence. Their standard of living was comparable to that of the colonialists. The authority of those who went to school was unmatched by that of the uneducated locals. They were the first to build houses with zinc (corrugated iron sheets) and drove cars. Then people realized the mistake they had made by not sending their
children to school earlier. After this experience, school applications exploded because everybody wanted to be and live like the educated locals. This is one of the reasons our people embraced education. Today, parents are determined to send their children to school. It has become a way of life.

The participants recalled the efforts that their parents made to ensure their placement in secondary schools. According to them: “parents organized themselves, contributed money and funded the building of secondary schools which they handed over to the state government. Today, every community has one or two secondary schools.”

While Mr. Achina gave a historical insight into the origin of the high demand for schooling in Imo State, with Mrs. Doris also suggesting that the local people, whom the colonialists and missionaries employed, were able to send their children to school, and they became educated; their distinct and attractive lifestyle prompted people to embrace education. According to her:

One could notice the differences between the educated and the uneducated in their manners, attire and overall well-being. The educated often exude a demeanor of satisfaction and confidence, more so than those without formal education. Also, the opportunities available to those who went to school are innumerable, and this view of the educated stimulate others to embrace education. So, going to school has become a sociocultural practice for our people.

The awareness of this transformative power of education left an indelible mark on the people and parents as the only enduring gift they could give to their children. Both rich and poor parents had a positive perception of secondary education as a path to upward social mobility. Mr. Achina remarked that: "since secondary education is a means of achieving higher education, parents decided to get involved in establishing and funding the building of secondary schools for their
children in almost every community." This parental involvement in the establishment and funding of school buildings nullified excuses people might have given for failing to send their children to school. The participants were aware of their roles in encouraging and providing a supportive home environment, the societal expectation for them to send their children to school, and to engage in other duties like monitoring their studies and maintaining a balance between school work and home chores.

4.2. Contexts and Forms of Parental Involvement: Home and School Involvements

Parental involvement in education refers to parents’ allocation of human and material resources toward the education of their children. When parents are involved, they apply their time, competences/skills, and finance in support of their children’s academic pursuit. These parents spent time monitoring their children’s study habit, monitoring the behavior of peers their children associate with, discussing academic issues with children, attending parent-teacher meetings and conferences, and encouraging and advising their children. They also used their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways to participate in their children’s education. They (n=24) were knowledgeable about assessing their children’s’ report cards and about evaluating their children’s academic potential. They taught their children, directed their academic interest, and helped in their children’s choice of studies, especially for college. In fact, these parents used parenting practices that supported their children’s study at home, such as limiting home chores and enabling home environment that facilitates home study. In their application of financial resources, the parents provided for the overall financial needs of their children. They used their finances to fund after-school lectures to aid students (especially struggling students) to improve educational outcomes. Their provision of financial support has been important in Imo State, where there is no formal policy on student financial aid.
Parental home Involvement. Parental home involvement in a child’s education involves after-school activities at home or in other locations aimed at improving students’ academic achievement. Some of these activities include funding extramural lessons, facilitating students' homework, discussing school and class issues, and communicating with teachers through a variety of communication means such as phone, email, notes, or in person. These are different forms of home involvements, and the participants differed in the degree to which they engaged in all these aspects. For instance, while the middle- and high-SES parents had the skills and knowledge to get involved in activities like reading and analyzing their children’s report cards, monitoring their children’s study habits, discovering the type of peers their children kept, discussing academic issues with children, and providing every needed academic material, the low-SES parents (n=6) lacked such knowledge and skills. Furthermore, whereas the middle- (n=8) and high- (n=7) SES parents created other avenues for reaching out to teachers and schools when one method of communication failed, low-SES parents (n=7) did not seek further avenues if they failed to succeed in one area. For instance, Mrs. Chinna mentioned an unpleasant experience that led her decision not to initiate further communication with teachers: "in the last term, I called to set a meeting with my son's teacher; she neither answered nor replied to the message I left for her." It is hard to understand why this one call could lead to her drastic decision. Although the middle-SES parents (n=3) had stopped communicating with teachers who displayed disrespect toward them, they also said that through additional efforts, they succeeded in meeting with some headmasters. Perhaps, those who complained about teachers’ unprofessional behavior toward them had a prejudicial disposition toward the teacher. Also, the low (n=6) and middle-SES parents (n=10) believed that the attitude of some school personnel did not encourage communication between them and the school. They (low n=8; middle n=2) even
blamed teachers for being biased in favor of rich parents. Mr. Philip spoke of this alleged preferential treatment of the rich: “some teachers were ready to do anything to satisfy the rich, and those they know personally, but would ignore others, especially when parents initiate a conversation, unless it is a matter the school administration is aware of.” For parents and teachers to work together, the channel of communication should be open. The low-SES parents believed that the relationship with teachers would be effective if school administrators and teachers were committed to responding to parental concerns and questions adequately and in a timely manner.

Teacher attitude was not the only challenge faced by low-SES parents (n=5), these parents found it difficult to monitor their children’s engagement, both within and after school. Mr. Chikeziri, with only an elementary level of schooling, expressed this concern in the Igbo language: “a nam aju umu m oge obula ha si sukul lota ka ha siri mee. Ihe ha ga-agwa m bu "o di nma. Mana kedu ka o si di nma, amaghi m, nihina enweghi m ike I gu akwokwo ha ma obu ghota ihe a kaziri ha”. (“Each day my children returned home from school, I always ask my children when they return from school how they did academically, all I hear is "it is fine”; but how excellent, I don't know! I cannot read their school work or understand what they teach them). Mr. Chikeziri, who barely made it through primary school, said that he was talented in sports but frequently failed exams. Out of shame, and with the permission of his parent, he decided not to proceed further to high school. Instead, he enrolled in an apprenticeship and learned a trade.

Generally, for low-SES parents, some home involvement strategies that were academically-oriented posed additional challenges because their poor academic background would not allow them to deal with academic issues. The middle- and high-SES parents exercised greater home
involvements than the low-SES parents, and they spoke of the positive relationships they had established with teachers. Mrs. Doris’ account exemplified that of the high-SES parent:

Teachers answer my calls, and they have my telephone number. I like what they do by informing me when my child did well in school, and they do better than those teachers who call only when children are in trouble.

The middle- and high-SES parents’ advantage extends beyond communicating with teachers. They were also knowledgeable about schooling. For instance, the parents said that they frequently discussed homework and other school issues with their children. They helped their children with their homework and offered them academic advice whenever needed. These participants identified other home involvement strategies that support their children’s education, including a literacy-enhancing home environment, and reference to models.

**Literacy-enhancing environment.** As the participants described the actions they took to ensure the academic success of their children, they described the home environment that could improve their children’s home study. For the low-SES parents, the challenges they faced at home included unreliable power supply, which often affected children’s home study, and a lack of study room, reading tables, and chairs. Mr. Chikeziri related how his family of seven children dealt with such situations:

It is true we are poor, but we use what we have to get what we need. My children are smart. During the day, some of them use the daylight to study. Some study in the corridor of the house; others may decide to study in the sitting room; while some of them study under the shade of a tree. They also study at night when there is electric light, but this is rare. When there is no power supply, the children use lantern when we have kerosene. We cannot afford to buy an electric generator.
Due to poor living conditions, most of the low-SES parents were unable to create better home environments for their children. The parents blamed the collapse of the nation’s economy, which has led to the loss of job opportunities. Faced with this unfavorable situation, the parents spoke about the measures they take to mitigate its negative effects on students.

We encourage them (children) to be strong and we would make sure that nobody disturbs them when they are reading. In fact, some of them wake up early in the morning to study. We have decided to reduce the amount of home chores they do, especially for those in final exam classes.

It is worth noting that neither their poor social and economic background nor the incapacitating home environment could stop these parents and their children from believing in and pursuing education. The resilience shown by these parents was informed by the conviction and perception they had about the advantages of being educated. They had seen the differences between the lifestyles of the educated and uneducated, and they were determined to enjoy the same lifestyle as the educated. They believed that their efforts would yield positive results in the future.

**Reference to models.** The middle- and high-SES parents often referred to their own academic achievements to encourage their children. In doing this, they recalled similar experiences they had as students to those of their children. This approach was illustrated by Mrs. Ada, a middle-SES parent: “… I told my children about my poor economic background and how I utilized my study time very well. I studied very hard, and now I am proud of my many accomplishments, thanks to education.” Mrs. Ada’s statement revealed that she did not use her poor background as an excuse to waste her time as a student. Second, she showed that poor people can succeed academically if they are determined and ready to make use of every opportunity they have. The parents explained that they were not shy about soliciting help from teachers and from other
students who knew any subject better than they did. They believed that they would succeed if they worked hard, and they trusted in the power of education to overcome poverty. The parents wanted their children to develop this kind of attitude and disposition towards education.

The high-SES parents (n=7) from affluent homes revealed how their family backgrounds provided them with means to pursue academic and professional goals. Mr. Achina recalled: “I was fortunate enough to have wealthy parents who insisted that I follow in their footsteps. I did not want to disappoint them by failing in my studies. I have told my children to likewise learn from my story and experience.” Through words of encouragement, the middle- and high-SES parents supported their children in their academic endeavors. Almost all parents gave their children one reason or the other as to why they should not give up on their academic pursuits.

Mr. Nnazi, a low-SES parent, reflected on his approach in seeking to motivate his children: “I do tell my children stories about people from poor families who became successful because they studied hard and went to college; … did good jobs … are in government, and now are successful.” The Low-SES parents understood the importance of secondary and college education and, therefore, told these stories to inspire their children to concentrate on their secondary education to get into college. Also, the low-SES parents often referenced their children’s peers who were doing well at school and urged their children to emulate them. Although, students do not like being compared, the parents stated that they used this strategy to show their children that they, too could accomplish what other students have accomplished. Mrs. Phina remarked: “if I notice a slack in my children’s proper attitude towards their studies, I would remind them how excellent their age mates are doing. This tactic was useful in motivating them to start studying harder.” Referencing the good study habits of others, especially of peers was one of the consistently used parental strategies aimed at encouraging children to engage in
studies. Mr. Abaji added a cultural slant to this strategy: “this approach is effective because, traditionally, it is considered shameful for people to fall behind their peers in achieving a common goal like education.” By referencing successful, educated people who, through education, have succeeded in their social and economic standings, the parents were reinforcing the argument that education is a necessary vehicle toward upward social and economic mobility. Mrs. Ada remarked that this method positively reinforced students’ psyche:

A success story about education is one of the most effective psychological boosts to students’ motivation to succeed. When parents mention individuals, who are doing great academically, despite their background, and told stories of the rich, successful, or prominent individuals who came from very poor backgrounds, who beat poverty because of education, students are encouraged to do the same or even better.

From the references that the parents made of other people, it is evident that there are individuals whose childhood began in poverty but have become positive points of references when they tell success stories about how they utilized education to their advantage. Referencing successful individuals, was a strategy incorporated by the participants especially low-SES parents (10). It was a common cultural practice among the participants to refer to someone or something that captivates people’s interest so as to give more relevance to their advice.

**School Involvement.** Some participants (n=18) stated that they had limited participation in secondary schools. However, they identified some activities that usually brought some of them to school: PTA meetings, and parents-teacher communications usually occurred because of issues involving students’ academic performances and discipline.

**Parents-teachers association.** The participants explained that PTAs were formed to facilitate meetings and promote dialogues between parents and teachers on matters related to students and
the general well-being of the schools, to find solutions together, and to advance the common goals of educating students and supporting school efforts. For instance, Mrs. Mezuo spoke about the motivation to participate in meetings: "I attend because meetings give me opportunities to talk about my concerns…like the library in my children’s school that is almost full of old unusable books; the children need good and currently updated books.” More than a third of the participants (n=13), however, reported their frustrations with these meetings. Mr. Patrick described them as “a waste of time and energy because prior decisions reached at meetings were never implemented. Our views are not taken seriously; otherwise many things going wrong would have been corrected.” The participants believed that: “sometimes, school principals do little to implement resolutions reached at PTA meetings because of the many bureaucratic hurdles from the State education board.” According to Mr. Patrick, these obstacles are often posed by people charged with school welfare. This exchange with Mr. Patrick revealed the bureaucratic corruption that threatened the effective functioning of schools:

**Interviewer:** So why wouldn’t the principal get permission and implement resolutions you’ve reached?

**Patrick:** It is not easy. Unless the principal has connections at the Ministry of Education, he will not get it easily.

**Interviewer:** Why not?

**Patrick:** The reason is corruption, corruption. Those in charge would demand bribes before they grant such personal requests.

**Interviewer:** Do you mean that they will sabotage a hard-working school administrator with good plans for his school?
**Patrick:** Well, he can do few things like supervisory work, but when it comes to projects that cost money or a request for quality teachers for his school, he would have to “grease some palms” (give bribe).

The parents agreed that there was an urgent need for checks and balances in the school system. Unbridled corrupted practices are detrimental to the welfare of students and the state. Mrs. Achina, a teacher, believed that: “standardization of practice would eliminate opportunities for exploitation of others.” This belief was also shared by most parents, especially those in the teaching profession.

Although the high (n=6) and low- (n=4) SES parents did attend meetings whenever they could, the middle-SES parents (n=8) were more inclined to participate in meetings because some were employed by government, and some were business owners and had more flexible work schedules. Despite their efforts, they believed that many schools were not careful about scheduling meetings. Lack of consistent scheduling of conferences and invitations, to parents led many to ignore PTA meetings. Reflecting on her first experiences, Mrs. Mezuo remarked: “I can count on my fingers the times I attended PTA meetings. I like to attend when they are scheduled, but the conferences are rare.” The importance of PTA meetings differed between schools, and sometimes, it depended on the relationship between the parties involved. This opinion was shared by many, and Mrs. Opara maintained that: "attending PTA meetings depends on the nature of the relationship between principals, teachers, and parents. If the school staff are committed and send information about meetings, many parents would attend.” Although the parents held mixed views about PTA meetings, the low-SES parents were more disadvantaged in attending such meetings. For instance, Mr. Chikeziri complained that: “I don’t have the time to attend meetings. I leave home early in the morning and return at night.” Another low-SES parent,
Mrs. Chinna, relied on her neighbor for information on the outcome of PTA meetings. She said: "my neighbor's son attends the same school with my son, and my neighbor tries to attend, and he relays to me whatever that was discussed, but sometimes, we don't know when meetings were called."

According to the participants, secondary education managers in the state have not taken time to ask parents about their views on PTA meetings, but the participants believed that if the state’s Ministry of Education had paid attention to the needs and views expressed by parents and teachers at conferences, more substantial parental participation would have materialized. Mrs. Mezuo did not fault teachers for possible inefficiencies; instead, she blamed the state government for its failure to respond to the needs of schools. She said: "teachers are doing their best, given the conditions under which they work. They need government support, but nobody is listening."

It is evident that the participants were ready to work with teachers and schools if there was a coordinated plan to involve them. The parents asserted that a consistent outreach approach initiated by any school administration toward parental support would improve communication between teachers and parents.

**Parents-teacher communication.** The participants discussed their interaction with teachers and schools, which they described as poor. All parents expressed their desire to be able to know teachers individually and communicate with them effectively, especially about issues that would help improve their children’s schooling. Although the participants had an interest in communicating with teachers, this was a rare occurrence. According to Mrs. Nnazi: "the channel of communication is limited to hand-delivered mails or through teachers’ mobile phones, but the numbers are not readily available to everybody." Half of the parents complained that many teachers showed partiality in distributing their phone numbers and that the rich had the advantage
of accessing these phone numbers. The uneven access to teachers and teachers’ selective
distribution of phone information to a certain group of parents will continue to obstruct parental
attempts at communicating with them, especially those from poor backgrounds. Mr. Uba
expressed dismay at the level of poor communication from schools, which has increased
frustration among parents: “I cannot believe that in the 21st century, it is hard to find a school in
Imo State with a website, telephone number, email address or Facebook.”

In the discussion about the number of times they got involved in school events, the
participants noted that the circumstances that would bring parents and schools together were
extremely limited. Some parents rarely visited their children’s schools, while some others were
compelled to visit frequently because of their children’s academic and disciplinary issues. For
instance, Mr. Uba stated: “Throughout the six years of my child's secondary education, I did not
go to his school because there was no need for it. He was a brilliant boy, and he stayed out of
trouble.” Conversely, Mrs. Carolyn had to visit her child’s school because of poor academic
performance and indiscipline: "Apart from academic underperformance and discipline issues, I
have no business visiting schools." While parental visits have influenced students’ positive
outlook about schooling, the participants’ intention to visit was anchored only in the children’s
academic performance.

The participants stated that students’ academic troubles often motivate parents to initiate
meetings with teachers to find solutions, while teachers-initiated meetings with parents when
students were faced with disciplinary issues or when they were involved in competitive sporting
events. A low-SES parent, Mrs. Victoria, noted: “I was at my child's school only once to
negotiate the payment of his school fees when the school suspended him because of overdue
tuition.” The low-SES parents felt ashamed about their child being sent home for tuition arrears:
“O bu ihe na-eme ihere I hu nwa gi n’ulo ebe umuaka ndi ozo no na sukul n’ihia na Okwugh uguo akwu kwo." (It is embarrassing and shameful to have your child sent home from school for not paying school tuition while other students are studying). To avoid expelling students, indebted parents would go to the school, before their children are sent home, to negotiate a payment plan. Parents were concerned about the inability of the State to offer financial help to struggling parents as a dereliction of duty, especially given that the country pledged to provide universal basic education for all. In fact, the involvement level of parents in school is poor; however, their willingness to initiate contacts with the schools and teachers over academic matters were indicative of their openness to improve their relationship with their children’s schools.

4.3. Parental Expectations

In this section, I describe parents’ expectations for their children’s education. Parental involvement aims to foster students’ abilities and capacities. All parents concurred that their involvement would encourage children to achieve higher academic outcomes. The participants firmly believed that how their children fared in secondary school had a direct implication for a college education. A parent, Mrs. Nnenna discussed students’ need to learn: "we want our children to be able to read and write very well, pass WAEC and NECO exams, and pass JAMB. If they listen to us and study hard, they will succeed.” JAMB admits qualified high school graduates into post-secondary education. In their view, the completion of secondary education without having qualified for the required certification or without having the ability to further one’s education was tantamount to failure. Parental involvement serves to forestall the loss of opportunity for higher education, and thus, parents were committed to the higher education attainment goal of their children.
All participants believed that involvement in their children’s education through their advice, suggestions, and encouragement sent a positive signal to their children. However, they also believed that their efforts at encouraging their children to do well would not be effective unless children reciprocated their parents’ support by studying arduously. The participants were all aware of the negative implications of truancy and non-commitment to schooling. Mrs. Nicky’s statement about her dedication to her children’s education presents the common view of participants: “I do everything I can to support my children, but I hope they are listening to my advice because, without a commitment to learning, it will be hard for them to achieve anything.” The parents’ expectation was that their children would appreciate their effort by committing their time to academic activities.

The participants’ desire was for their children to develop two main characteristics: a strong positive belief in themselves that they would succeed in their education as well as and an ability to focus on their studies without distraction. Thus, their intentions to get involved in education was outcome-oriented. Mrs. Beatrice echoed the participants' beliefs about the necessary disposition for education: “when children believe that they can learn, they are inspired to work harder.” She further commented on why it was essential for children to develop a firm belief in themselves: “I have seen it in my children, some who are very eager to go to school and believe that they would do well - turned out that they were exceptional in their learning, while other who were reluctant to study, or go to school and were lazy to do their homework and had every reason not to go to school, performed poorly in their assessments.”

Some participants (n = 9) shared stories indicating how a lack of self-efficacy to excel in their academic works led them to drop out of school. For instance, some low-SES parents (n=5) explained why they could not have continued beyond primary education. For Mrs. Victoria: “újo
I used to dread going to school because I was finding it difficult to understand the subjects that were taught). Another low-SES parent, Mr. Chikeziri, noted: “I stopped going to school because I was failing, and I was ashamed to take my report card home to my parents. I decided to learn a trade instead, so I quit school). The participants understood that low self-confidence was detrimental to fulfilling academic potential, which could subsequently could lead students to drop out. Parental encouragement was, therefore, a catalyst to reducing children’s negative self-evaluation.

Some participants (n=9) felt the burden of reconciling their expectations with some of their children’s lack of commitment to education. According to them, such attitudes among students were demoralizing; however, they believed that students who exhibit high and positive self-efficacy were an encouragement. They felt energized in their commitment to do more for their children when these children demonstrated seriousness toward their studies. As some parents’ commitment to their children could decreased if their children were less committed to their studies, Mrs. Doris was resolute: "nothing would stop me from supporting them because I know that money spent on them is valuable.” Despite the participants' expectations, they believed that schooling was a challenging enterprise. They (n=20) went through the same process, having experienced the demands for education. While describing her own educational experience, Mrs. Doris stated that: "at every level of learning, education requires effort, handwork, and a commitment to stay-the-course, despite the stress it brings." The participants believed that lack of student’ commitment to studies, and parents’ lack of support were two crucial factors that could derail students’ quest for academic achievement. The parents expected their children to be
committed to realizing their educational purposes. Thus, their expectations parents of their children were short and long-term in nature.

**Short-term academic expectation.** In answering the question of what parents hope for at the end of their children's secondary education, the participants shared a similar vision, except in one area. For example, all the participants wanted their children to pass the WAEC and NECO national exams with at least five credits, to pass the JAMB exam for post-secondary education, and to be proficient in reading and writing. However, in their responses regarding the need for their children to possess vocational skills at a high school level, they differed on the basis of socioeconomic backgrounds; one high-SES parent, three middle-SES parents, and nine low-SES parents accepted vocational skills as necessary. Also, for those who wanted their children to enter the civil service jobs market after secondary school, the high-SES parents showed no interest, but two middle-SES and six low-SES parents were interested in their children entering the workforce after attaining only a high school education. The participants who accepted the necessity of acquiring vocational competence did so only as a cautionary measure in case their children failed to advance to post-secondary education. Otherwise, they commented that they did not need such competences at the secondary level. Mrs. Beatrice, a high-SES parent affirmed:

Possessing a vocational certificate at the secondary education level can only guarantee the recipient a manual skill without full theoretical knowledge made possible at a post-secondary education. You know, no one wants to remain poor, but manual knowledge could only take you so - far in earning potentials. Parents urge their children to go to college because it is a more guaranteed means of having better income and creation of wealth.
The participants’ interest in their children’s success in the WAEC, NECO, and JAMB exams showed that they were not be satisfied if their children were only able to acquire a secondary level of education. They hoped that their children would succeed at the WAEC, NECO, and JAMB exams and possess the capacity for verbal and written communication. However, this achievement was not sought-after as an end in itself, but one that would open a path for a better future. For instance, Mr. Abaji stated that: “parents want their children to pass WAEC and NECO … because it gives them the opportunity to go to college. By passing these exams, they would have succeeded in overcoming the first set of academic hurdles required for college education”. Mr. Abaji further noted that: "also parents hope that their children will pass the JAMB examination, which grants those who have passed the WAEC or NECO access opportunities to college." In other words, the parental expectation regarding children's secondary education was to qualify for post-secondary education; and this was true for all parents regardless of SES backgrounds.

Some participants (n = 9), especially the low-SES parents, identified the ability to earn a living after secondary education as another reason they sent their children to school. This goal could be attained through vocational or technical training. Mrs. Chinna’s statement is emblematic of the standpoint of low-SES parents: "I want my children to learn how to do other things like bricklaying and carpentry at school so that if I am not able to send them to college, they can thrive with what they have learned." This educational objective expressed by Mrs. Chinna stood in contrast with the opinions of the other SES segments (the middle- and high-SES participants). For instance, only one high-SES and three middle-SES parents concurred with this view compared to nine low-SES who regarded the vocational dimension of secondary education as necessary. The reason for the divergent interest in educational goals stemmed from the belief
of each group regarding the outlook they held for their children and their families. For example, the low-SES parents expected their children to obtain a vocational or technical education to enable them to be self-employed after secondary school. They thought that while university education was highly desirable, the cost also was very high, and they were not sure whether they would be able to fund their children's future study. Mrs. Nnazi explained this further: "with vocational skills, children could work and support themselves and their siblings' post-secondary education if they desire it." Conversely, the high- and middle-SES parents had no objection to vocational education; they preferred their children to proceed to post-secondary education immediately after secondary school. They stated that vocational school was useful but not sufficient for their children's future career. For instance, Mrs. Nneka said: "my children will not work only with a secondary school diploma, otherwise they will remain poor and marginalized."

As the working-class parents might not be able to fund their children's education beyond secondary school; they were, therefore, receptive to vocational training.

**Long-term academic expectation.** As in the case of short-term academic expectations, the parents had long-term educational expectations for their children, which would culminate in a career opportunity. The parents had a preference for their children to enroll in post-secondary education and then graduate and earn career-oriented qualifications. Obviously, they were ready to support their children through college, which they believed creates a path for a steady socio-economic growth. Ultimately, there is a link between parents' higher education expectations for their children and their post-college plans. The participants believed that successful completion of higher education was crucial for future progress in academics, jobs, higher SES, and self-determination. For example, Mrs. Nneka stated that: "secondary education is the foundation on which post-secondary education rests. However, success in higher education opens many doors
for future earning opportunities and progress, therefore, we embrace it.” The parents were aware of the many social and economic distinctions that exist in Nigeria because of differences in educational attainment. Often, people of low academic accomplishments face barriers to social and economic upward mobility. Thus, the parent participants intended to facilitate their children’s social and economic mobility. They suggested that they could achieve this goal through higher education. Irrespective of their SES backgrounds, the participants had high regard for post-secondary education. Mrs. Nicky affirmed:

It is my university degree in business administration and accounting that gave me, a woman, the opportunity to occupy the coveted position in my job. I remember the opposition my father encountered when he insisted on my university education against my grandfather’s wish, who preferred my male siblings to go to school. As a woman, nothing else empowers us than education.

Although the low-, middle-, and high-SES parents had a desire for their children to attend college, their plans to accomplish this goal varied on the basis of their SES. While the high-SES parents planned to send their children to college either within the country or abroad, the middle-SES parents planned to accomplish this goal within the country, and the low-SES parents’ plans were contingent on the availability of funds. The low-SES parents were concerned about financial obstacles to their children’s higher education opportunities. Every participant hoped that his or her children’s success in college would ultimately set them on a path toward a higher socio-economic pedestal. Mr. Chikeziri who thought that his poverty was a consequence of lack of education, noted that: "abu m ogheny e n’ihi na agaghi m sukul, mana agaghi m ekwe umu m hu ihe m huru. Ha ga-agu akwukwo ruo ngwucha ya” (I am
poor because I did not go to school. I will not allow my children to have the same experience I had. They will study to the end).

It is worth noting that in their assessment of the importance of education, the parents did not reference some intangible benefits accruable from being educated; instead, they acknowledged such benefits only when they were specifically asked. The high-, middle-, and low-SES parents acknowledged that the accumulation of cultural capital would come with the individual attainment of a higher social status. To buttress this point, Mrs. Mezue maintained:

I know that there are other benefits we get from education, like self-determination, socialization with people previously unknown to you, forming new friendships with individuals from other tribes, and eating their meals, but no one goes to college solely because of these benefits, they begin to show from the years in college through graduation and beyond.

When specifically asked, the middle-SES parents linked higher educational attainment with good morals. While six parents of the high-SES category and nine middle-SES participants associated the level of educational attainment with sound character, four low-SES parents also believed that education enables people to embrace moral uprightness. However, other low-SES parents (n = 6) did not consider moral character building in their decision to send their children to school. The low-SES parents (n=8) could not reconcile the higher level of education of many leading politicians in Imo State with their corrupt practices. The low-SES parents questioned the assumption that education helps persons develop moral values because educated politicians who run for office are massively corrupt in the country. Mrs. Chinna candidly said: "the focus of poor parents is on education that is good enough to secure their children good-paying jobs for upward mobility in social and economic scales and a better living standard." All parents believed that
academic achievement for their children was synonymous with secure positions for social and economic empowerment.

4.4. Parents’ Motivating and Challenging Factors

In this section, I will discuss factors that facilitated parental involvement in education and the challenges that some parents faced in their effort to realize their educational objectives. The parents recognized the diverse values that come from various levels of education.

Parents’ value-driven motivation. The motivating factor driving parental involvement in higher education was rooted in their idea of education. The participants were motivated by their observation of the effects education had on the educated. They were aware of the social and economic gains made by college-educated individuals and their families. They noted that the positive outcomes of college education were self-evident.

The participants’ strong orientation toward the higher education of their children was based on the premise that their children would embody a future family image. They held that when a person graduates from college, the prestige associated with the achievement extends to the family as well. For them: “a person’s reputation and achievement are extended to the family.” Thus, the parents viewed the success or failure of their children’s academic pursuits as identical to the success or failure of the family. Mr. Achinna noted: "individuals are identified by their family names, and they are accorded respect and honor consistent with the perception about the family.” How a family is perceived is often connected with the level of individual members’ achievement in education. Therefore, the parents were inclined to pursue educational value, which every family sought in order to enhance, protect, or guide family honor and respect. The parents believed that the support they gave their children would bring positive outcomes such as
stable social and economic growth after college education. To every parent, secondary education was a passage to a more prestigious post-secondary education. According to Mrs. Carolyn:

People often evaluate families’ pedigrees by their ability to generate or utilize commodities and items considered valuable in the society, like decent houses, vehicles, land, and other modern household equipment. Even the poorest family believed that they would get all these esteemed valuables in the future, and they perceived college education as the assured way of owning these valuables.

A desire for the actualization of substantial social and economic growth of the family drives the enthusiastic support that these parents put into their children's higher education aspirations because the success of the children in college education ultimately means the success of the family.

Although parents from all three SES backgrounds aimed to achieve a common goal through higher education, they were motivated to seek college education for specific purposes. The low-SES parents were compelled by the need factor; the middle-SES parents were inspired by the higher reward vision of higher education; while the high-SES parents desired the expansion and consolidation of wealth and power. Each group’s social and economic perspective pointed towards a higher purpose than the family’s original status.

**Low SES parents’ and the “need” motivating factor:** The parents of low SES background decried their inability to contribute, possess, and use many modern goods and services that were already available in society. They considered their inability to massively invest in and take from the society a serious handicap. They believed that this deficit could be overcome through the higher education of their children, who have the responsibility for future progress and the development of their families. For instance, Mr. Yobachi said:
My children’s college education is necessary for them because this is the only way that is open for my family to grow and live a decent and fulfilling life. Without a college education, they have no hope of getting away from poverty.

The low-SES parents asserted that college education was not only a lifeline, which could enable their children to escape poverty and suffering, it was also the opportunity they have to project a respectful image onto the family. Mrs. Carolyn agreed:

There are many things you don’t have because of poverty; like decent houses, eating a balanced diet, decent clothing, private transport and many others. It is possible to get these things when you earn a salary as a college graduate.

The low-SES parents perceived the power of higher education as transcending immediate needs like reading and writing. They were determined to support their children until they graduated and began a career with high earnings potential. Mr. Chikeziri insisted: "O burugodu na o-ga ewe m ire ala nna nna m, umu ga-aburiri ndi gutara akwukwo university maka odimma ezi na ulo m." (Even if it involves selling my ancestral land, I will do so if my children will become college graduates for the good of my family). It is pertinent to note that while some low-SES parents (n=4) had expressed no doubt about their ability to support their children’s higher education, some others were anxious about their children's prospect of uninhibited progress in their learning and of avoiding delays and repeat exams; a situation that could add to their financial burden. The low-SES parents’ understanding of the positive outcomes of attaining a college degree compelled them to work even more to fund and support their children’s college education. They believed that doing this would ultimately shift their socio-economic standing.

**Middle SES parents’ higher reward motive.** Although there were no clear distinctions between parents in their decisions to support their children’s college education, each SES level
had a vision of college education that would serve their respective interest. The middle-SES participants were inclined to support their children’s college education for their personal growth and career development. They recalled the successes they had attained in life because of the college degree. Mr. Oliver spoke about his background and how it propelled him to his career:

> Being the son of a pharmacist and a nurse practitioner, I had no choice but to be like my parents or better than they were in academics. I am proud of my accomplishments and my job; and I am self-sufficient.

For Mrs. Doris: “it was college education that made it possible for my parents to believe that as a young lady, I could travel and live alone in London.” Mrs. Doris further related how:

> I competed with men to secure a good-paying job when women were struggling to escape gender-related restrictions. My education was possible then because my father was a university graduate, who understood the positive effects of university education in people's lives.

The middle-SES participants spoke about some intangible values of education. They recognized the power of higher education in liberating people from ignorance, fear, and timidity. They intended to support their children to have the same advantages or better ones. All the middle-SES participants noted that their children had a better platform to expand and project their family names onto a greater limelight. The sentiment echoed by Mrs. Opara summarized the middle-SES parents' thoughts:

> I have given my children enough support for better socio-economic success. I paid their college tuition and provided everything they needed for their education. They have received an excellent foundation contrary to what I received from my parents. The debt
they owe the family is to do well in college. In the future, my children will have no reason not to surpass my own accomplishments.

The middle-SES parents anticipated a constant progressive social and economic growth from one generation to the next. They were convinced that advancement to a higher social and economic level would ensure that their families would continue along an upward trajectory if subsequent generations could utilize all the family-provided resources and attain a college education.

**High SES parents’ consolidation and expansion.** Similar beliefs about the positive effects of attaining higher education also motivated the high-SES parents to become involved in their children’s college education. These parents’ major motivation was their desire to retain their social and economic position by expanding their power and dominating both the financial and political spheres. They occupied enviable positions in Imo State and expected their children to maintain the SES they had attained and expand it further. They trusted that only college education could help them accomplish this goal. Mr. Uba noted: “by the grace of God, I have enough wealth … for my family to last my third generation, but without a college education, it will be dissipated, and people will laugh at me even when I am gone.” These high SES parents, therefore, believed that by educating their children, the future management of their wealth would be assured and would be insulated against waste and mismanagement. Mr. Uba demonstrated how he had managed to put his educational goal into action:

Two of my children are college graduates, and they are already involved in the management of my businesses. Others are studying management courses or other programs that will enable them to become financially independent in the future. My children can never be morons; they should be able to compete with my competitors.
The high-SES parents were concerned that unless their children were educated, they would lack the necessary academic competence required for the sustenance of their parents’ social and economic positions. The participants believed in the power of higher education to positively mold character and management skills. These participants were concerned about the wealth they had created and the future of that wealth, especially when their children became managers. They believed that the one possible pathway to maintaining and expanding their wealth would come through quality higher education for their children. They supported their children’s higher education because, according to Mrs. Beatrice: “it is proper and appropriate to link my children’s college education to the future of my family.” Higher education is, therefore, crucial in steering academic activity towards those expectations parents set for their children, which makes parental involvement necessary. Irrespective of their visions for their children and families, the participants agreed that college education was the unquestionable means to attaining and arriving at these purposes.

4.5. Moderating Factors

Although the participants in the study were involved in their children's education, the levels of participation differed between the low-SES parents and the others. These differences were explained by the degrees of parental capacities enabled by the differences in ability and skills. Beyond the participants’ demographic characteristics, they were also faced with other factors that could inhibit their commitment to their children's education. More than half of the participants (n=19) identified some issues related to parental frustrations, which indicated how parents respond to other external issues that dampen their interest in supporting their children's education.
Low SES parental challenges. Their involvement in their children’s education meant that, low-SES parents were convinced about their commitment to be supporting their children, but they acknowledged factors that challenged their commitment, both in high school and college. Some of them (n=4) had only attained a primary school level of education, thus, they were not equipped to engage in intellectual discussions with their children, especially in dealing with issues that involved subject matter. For instance, in answering the question about what they knew of their children’s academic ability, while Mr. Yobachi depended on others for help: “I depend on teachers and other educated relatives to tell me how my children are doing because I don’t always understand what their report cards say,” Mr. Chikeziri resigned to fate: "Amam na umu m na-eje sukul, ma amaghi ihe ha na-agu ma obu ka ha si eme n'akwukwo." (I know that my children go to school, but I don't know what they are studying or how they are doing academically). Lack of education was frustrating for most low-SES parents because they had to depend on others to evaluate their children’s school work. Parents do well in intervening in their children’s schooling if they know how they are doing and can independently verify their children’s strengths and weaknesses, but this was not the case with the low-SES parents. Some low-SES participants (n=7) had irregular menial jobs and businesses that demanded their presence, or they would lose wages from already poor remunerations. Thus, when parents lack the time to engage in monitoring student’s work, some aspects of their involvements will suffer.

Despite the low-SES parents' desire to support their children, their involvement was limited to the provision of material support and emotional encouragement. They were aware of the positive impact of education on the social and economic transformation of individuals and families, but their low intellectual capacity and poor income level constrained their ability to delve beyond the mere material and moral support of their children.
In assessing their constraints, the low-SES parents considered their lack of education as a significant handicap in their involvement efforts, followed by income level, which stifled their ability to buy all schooling materials that their children needed. Although poor, some low-SES parents (n=5) were confident that they would send their children to college. This was Mrs. Carolyn’s mindset: “my children will go to college even if it makes me work every time (the entire day) or sell everything I have.” Indeed, the parents' proposal in seeing their children through was a tough decision, given the state of the national economy and the level of unemployment and inflation in the country. Mr. Chikeziri echoed this commitment: “I do not care if I lease out my land in exchange for money for my children’s college education. I believe that they will get it back when they graduate and start work.” The low-SES participants, therefore, expressed their innate desire for the education of their children and were willing to work hard to send their children to college. The parents were not dissuaded by the enormity of the tasks required to support their children's education. The high- and middle-SES parents, likewise, were interested in their children's education, but they were equipped with the knowledge and resources to make proactive decisions for the good of their children.

**Parental frustrations.** The parents wanted to get involved in their children’s academic life until they earned their college degree. This desire, however, was replete with challenges. The low- and middle-SES participants believed that their children were gradually losing interest in college because of the rising cost of tuition, uncertainty about college admissions, and a high college-graduate unemployment rate in Imo state.

**Cost and remuneration:** The middle- and low-SES participants (n=20) were unanimous in expressing anxiety over the recent hike in college tuition as well as the high inflation rate that has diminished their purchasing power and reduced job remuneration. The parents were already
struggling to fend for their families when the burden of the higher education cost was added. They complained that since the introduction of an increase in college tuition exceeding 70%, many low-SES families who were previously sending their children to higher education institutions were now finding it extremely difficult to do so. The participants (n=4) remarked that some highly-qualified high school students were wasting away at home for lack of sponsorship to college education due to abject poverty. Despite this challenge, other parents (n=6) were able to send their children to colleges. However, Mr. Yobachi stated: “nothing will stop me from sending my children to college, not even the cost.” In some cases, some parents had neither money nor property to sell to generate fund for post-secondary education; that was the case with Mrs. Victoria:

My husband and I planned to use our income to support our children's college education, but with the inflation and the cost of tuition, our combined income will not be enough to support our two children’s college education this year. The younger one will wait until we are able to send him. Unfortunately, we don’t have another source of income.

Poverty thus challenges participation in college education in Imo State because a high school graduate’s opportunity to attend this level of education is contingent on his or her parents’ ability to provide funding. In Imo State, there is no student tuition aid or voucher program.

**University access.** Poor access and enrollment opportunities caused by low institutional carrying capacity and poverty are detrimental to the realization of the participants’ commonly held educational expectations, especially among the middle- and low-SES participants. The parents shared the same intention to have their children complete secondary education and proceed to university or post-secondary education, but the realization of this plan is skewed against the low-SES parents and some middle-SES parents. The parents were concerned that
their children were being demoralized by the hurdles in their path to college admission in Imo State. Mrs. Nneka identified corruption and college carrying capacity as the problems: “corruption and college carrying capacity are restricting college admission opportunities for high school graduates in Imo State.” The middle- and low-SES parents alleged that there were many competing interest groups that tended to get the larger share of admission openings, after which the public would be left with little or nothing. For instance, Mrs. Nneka alleged that:

Political office holders like the state governor, members of the state House of Assembly, commissioners, other politically connected, the powerfully rich, professors and lecturers etc., automatically earn admission slots, which they distribute to their relatives or those connected to them.

The participants did not believe that admission into college was a fair process, it was not gained by merit alone. For example, Mrs. Nnazi blamed her child's loss of admission into the state-owned university on corrupt practices: "my son had A's in six subjects and B+s in the remaining three. He had one of the highest scores in the JAMB exam, yet he was not admitted; instead, he was offered a program he did not apply for.” She went further to state that: "it does not matter how high your child's score is, if you do not know somebody in a position of authority or connection, your children's access to the state university is jeopardized."

One may suggest that based on this allegation, unqualified candidates were given priority because of their connection to those in authority; "no" Mrs. Opara objected. She said that: "the candidates who are offered admissions through their relationship with those in power are usually qualified. However, there are other more-qualified candidates who are left out. Let merit lead the way. It is justice.” The participants' contention was not about the academic standings of the candidates admitted to college; rather, they were calling for equal opportunity for everyone based
on merit. A standard that already exists, but is being ignored, should be the measure of admission even if the carrying capacity of the universities is limited. Parents and students would not object to anyone's admission if a standard procedure guaranteed the person's placement. The consequence of not using standards could be enormous. Mrs. Nnenna saw a problem in this kind of climate and said: "when qualified students are denied admission, they are sent a wrong signal that they are not needed. It is very frustrating. Some students have stopped applying. We should encourage our children and not be deterring them from post-secondary education.” It is surprising that not everyone who is qualified is admitted, but the problem is not far-fetched.

The problem of admitting every qualified candidate into college is traceable to what the participants termed "carrying capacity" and "admission quotas." According to Mrs. Opara: "the National University Commission assigns every university the number of students to be admitted in every academic year based on certain calculations; colleges are not permitted to exceed those numbers." Mrs. Opara added:

If the government is serious about university education, it would have expanded the university or built new ones. In fact, government has no plans to create easy access to university education for our children in this state otherwise, why should children study hard to pass WAEC, NECO, and JAMB exams only to be denied university admission?

The parents were worried that times that should be occasions of joy for them were now moments of anxiety and pain. The danger posed by the difficulty in gaining admission into a university may likely discourage students from attempting to apply for admission.

**University graduate unemployment.** Another factor that challenged parental involvement decisions was college-graduate unemployment. The participants in the study decried the pressure parents were experiencing over unemployment opportunities for
university graduates. A situation like this is dismal, prompting Mr. Oliver, a middle-SES parent to exclaim: "sometimes, I wonder whether it is worth sending my children to college, since no job is available for them after graduation." More than half of the participants (n=16) were anxious about the paradox inherent in their decision to sacrifice everything to send their children to college and the thought that they might be jobless after graduation. According to the parents, the poor economic climate in the country and the level of unemployment of college graduates were affecting high school students' commitment to proceed to higher education. Mrs. Nnenna lamented: "since the past two years, I have never seen that level of truancy recorded in our school before…." She continued: "some students were questioning the relevance of studying hard to gain admission into college when they were not sure of getting jobs after graduation." With no job in sight after graduation, the low- (n=9) and middle- (n=7) SES participants seemed to be re-evaluating the importance of investing a fortune without any assurances. Mrs. Mezuo re-echoed this concern:

  It is sad to see university graduates who depend on their aged parents for their daily upkeep many years after their graduation because they have no jobs. This experience is painful for the parents and the graduates. It makes some secondary education students question the importance of going to university. Some are becoming careless with their education.

This might be one of the reasons students are no longer doing very well in the WAEC, NECO, and JAMB exams.

  Although every participant was concerned with the unemployment level of college graduates, the low-SES parents appeared to be the most affected by it. This anxiety was expressed by Mrs. Victoria, a low-SES parent: "some of us borrowed money or leased our lands to sponsor our
children's college education, believing that they would get jobs immediately after their graduation and National Youth Service, and so, help us offset college debts, but there is no job for them." Despite the parents' reaction to this unemployment trend however, their disposition and commitment to being involved in their children's education has not changed much. Even though they felt disappointed, a substantial majority (n=24) were still willing to support their children's education if: "they exercise a positive attitude and aptitude toward their studies" says Mr. Michael, a middle-SES parent. The desire for academic excellence and success among parents thus sustains the demand for college education in Imo State.

4.6. Conclusion

Education is highly priced and admired in Imo State. The parent participants expressed their desire to support their children’s academic achievement. Irrespective of their backgrounds, all the parents were interested in their children's education. Nevertheless, their level of education and income play important roles in determining the level and type of their involvement. Despite the current challenges, the participants were not deterred from their commitment to their children's academic pursuits regarding college education if their children devote themselves to their studies.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

The study was aimed at exploring how parents, whose children attend public secondary school in Imo State, Nigeria, get involved in their children’s education and how their socioeconomic backgrounds impact their involvements. This chapter presents a summary of the results of this study, discusses the findings in relation to the research problem and research questions, and draws conclusions about the narrated story against the backdrop of the theoretical framework and the broad literature. The thrust of this chapter is to provide recommendations for policy and practice and future research suggestions.

From the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with 30 parents of diverse social and economic backgrounds, as well as the review of documents, including students’ report cards and parent-teacher correspondences, this study offered insights into the participants’ dispositions to engage in the education of their children in secondary schools and beyond. During the interview process, I considered divergent ideas and a convergence of views regarding the different forms of parental involvement as well as parents’ levels of involvement, their expectations, motivations, and challenges. The focus of the study was on answering the following questions:

What expectations do parents have for their children’s academic achievements in high school as well as for their college aspirations?

How do parents perceive and become involved in their children’s high school education in Imo State?

What factors motivate parents to become engaged, or deter them from becoming involved in their children’s education?

Based on the analysis of the data, the following major themes and sub-themes represent the perceptions and experiences shared by the parent participants. Taken together, these thematic patterns of data analysis helped answer the research questions. The themes and sub-themes
include: (a) perceptions about secondary education, and parental involvements (sub-themes: involvement at home; – home and school involvement); (b) parental expectations of their children’s education (sub-theme: short-term and long-term expectations), (c) parental motivations to get involved in education, and challenges faced (sub-theme: parents’ intellectual and economic challenges, finance and access issues, and the influence of graduate unemployment) in the context of realizing the goal of education. The results of the narrated story are presented by tying them back to the questions, the literature, and the theoretical framework.

5.1. Overview of the Study

Current WAEC and NECO exam results show that public secondary school students in Imo State have been falling behind in academic achievement compared with other such as Anambra. Many factors can lead to poor performance, but as a remedy, parental involvement has been recognized as an effective means of helping students improve their academic achievement levels (Hill & Craft, 2003; Kohl et al., 2000).

This study explored how parents in Imo State get involved in the education of their high school children and the process by which they help them get ready for college education. The study examined the influence of parents’ SES on their level of their involvement in their children’s education. In this study, parental involvement means all parental behaviors and forms of engagements with students and teachers, both at home and in schools, purposefully directed toward the support of children’s high school education.

5.2. Parents’ Perception of Secondary Education.

Parental involvement refers to parents’ deliberate and intentional actions devoted toward the academic achievement of their children. These actions include the use of parental time, skills, and wealth. The deployment of these resources toward students’ education was derived from
parents’ understanding of secondary and post-secondary education as necessary for economic and personal growth, such as in terms of lifetime earnings and self-actualization. In this study, the participants were cognizant of the necessity of secondary education for the post-secondary education and professional advancement of their children. They reflected on their responsibilities regarding the education of their children, and they considered their involvement in education to be synonymous with other parenting responsibilities like feeding, clothing, and sheltering their children. The parents’ perception of education aligned with the commonly held view that education equips individuals with the necessary tools for personal and national development (UNESCO, 2014). Although the nature and levels of parental participation in children’s education differed across the three parental SES levels, the parents’ involvement decisions were informed by differences in their educational attainment levels and income (Khan, Iqbal & Tasneem, 2015). The middle- and high-SES parents tended to have advantages in dealing with direct academic issues with their children than the low-SES parents. For instance, the high- and middle-SES participants were college educated. They narrated how they helped their children set their post-secondary school education goals. With their children, they went through their children’s report cards and other class assessment results and were able to lead them toward a realistic choice of programs they could pursue in college. Conversely, the low-SES parents lacked the capacity to make judgments about their children’s academic abilities and, could not offer relevant advice about college programs that align with their academic abilities.

Some low-SES parents (n=6) relied on close family for academic advice. For instance, those parents who had attended secondary schools knew the differences in subject matter, that is, between science and arts, whereas elementary educated parents did not, and they depended on educated relatives to give proper advice to their children. These differences, while pointing to a
paucity of academic attainment, did not deter low-SES parents from engaging in involvement acts in which they are competent. For example, low-SES parents encouraged their children not to waste their study time, and warned against socializing with peers who had no regard for education. They also encouraged their children to always attend school on time.

Some of families and individuals who were early champions of formal education served as models to the participants because of the significant impression they left on them. For instance, some parents identified how those families became famous leaders in the society. This knowledge propelled them to view education positively and helped them recognize the value of education and that almost all parents had the desire to send their children to secondary school. Consistent with other research findings, the parents believed that secondary education affords students the opportunity to learn, attend colleges, seek and secure jobs (Greenstone & Looney, 2012; Kulid, 2014), and reduce poverty (Niles, 2011). The study participants identified two settings through which they engaged in the education of their children, the home and school contexts. Several research studies have identified these two contexts (Epstein (1995; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Lawson, 2003; William and Sanchez (2012) as two basic areas of parental involvement in education.

The Parents’ understanding of involvement as integral to their parental duties was the force that propelled the participants’ participation in the education of their children. Limited parental involvement could be traced to factors beyond their control such as their educational and income levels. Although these parents perceived involvement as part of parental duties, this idea holds both positive and negative implications. Positively, it encourages parents to continue doing what they can in support of their children’s education. However, it could lead parents to limit their efforts to only what they can or cannot do. In other words, low-SES parents might excuse
themselves from participating in involvement programs if they considered them unattainable. Alternatively, if parents understand involvement as activity that transcends basic provision for children, they can go further to learn how to accomplish those aspects of involvement that seem insurmountable.

Furthermore, even though the participants’ conception of secondary education was that of a path to college, the Nigerian national policy on secondary education identified the importance of secondary education to include preparing students for college as well as for vocational skills acquisition and entrepreneurship (National Policy on Education, 2004). Unquestionably, the low-SES parents’ support for the acquisition of vocational skills in high school aligned with the national education policy.

**Involvement at home.** Home is one of the places where the parents applied some education involvement strategies to support their children’s academic pursuits. Students study both at school and at home. In order to enhance their children’s learning, the parents engaged in different types of involvement strategies. They identified the approaches they have applied to aid in their children’s learning including the provision of a better study environment at home, allusion to models, and encouragement. Research suggests that homes that promote effective learning are necessary for student achievement (Stipek & Ryan, 1997). Some middle- (n=9), high- (n=7), and low SES (n=6) parents spoke about actions they took to facilitate effective studying at home. They indicated that they reduced home chores, controlled the time allowed for television viewing, created study rooms and discussed school and academic issues with their children. Some middle- (n=6) and high- (n=9) SES parents bought computers, books and other ancillary academic items for their children’s use. This approach was consistent with Epstein’s (2001) discussion of basic parental involvement strategies. The high- and middle-SES parents
had more means to support their children’s academic aspirations than the low-SES parents. The low-SES parents supported their children emotionally, that is, by bonding with their children (Doyle & Moretti, 2000; Moretti & Holland, 2003), however, their low-income levels and lack of educational attainment posed additional barriers to their involvement in areas that were beyond their competences. For instance, the low-SES parents rarely paid attention by sitting around with their children as they did homework. They also lacked the time and the skill level to monitor their children’s academic progress at school and were not in regular communication with teachers about their children’s academic progress. Thompson’s (2002) study identified how some home environmental characteristics such as poverty, posed challenges and created a distinction between the academic outcomes of the rich and poor. One basic advantage the middle- and high-SES parents had over their low-SES counterparts was the level of education. While the low-SES parents waited until their children reached primary school age to start school, the majority of middle- (n=8) and all high-SES parents enrolled their children in pre-school programs. Moreover, prior to their start of primary school, these children were already outperforming others in reading and comprehension. The middle- and high-SES parents were a constant in their children’s education and, therefore, had many academic advantages over the low-SES parents (Tavernise, 2012). Studies show that regardless of social and economic background, students whose parents are involved in their education are more likely to attend school regularly, score higher grades, pass their exams, develop social skills, graduate, and enroll in post-secondary education (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010; Jeynes, 2003; Khan, Iqbal & Tasneem, 2015).

As the participants ranged from low- to high-SES, so too were the differences found in their homes. While the participants’ social and economic abilities differed, in Imo State, people of
diverse SES live and mingle in the same town. They live in the same environment, but their homes make the differences. The absence of reliable electricity supply remains a challenge for families, especially those of low- and middle- (n=4) SES background, as many participants (n=14) indicated that they could not afford to generate light for their children’s night-time study.

**Parents’ allusion to role models.** One housing or living advantage that parents enjoyed in Imo State is non-classification of districts or towns according to income levels. Rich, middle-class, and poor people are found to be living in the same neighborhoods. The participants, therefore knew one another, and they related with each other irrespective of differences in wealth and income. Growing up, most of the rich and middle-class individuals came from poor families, and people could tell when they went to school, secure jobs, and gradually became rich or attained middle-class status; they became models that could be emulated.

Having seen the transformation of people from poor backgrounds to high and middle statuses, the low-SES participants understood and appreciated the importance of education for their children, and they would not surrender in their efforts to help their children succeed in their schooling. In the absence of the ideal home environment, these parents encouraged their children to emulate other people from similar poor social and economic backgrounds but who had excelled academically and professionally. This common strategy was a major source of inspiration to students who followed the models referenced by their parents. Research has documented the effectiveness of using models to inspire others to become high academic achievers (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). Modeling offers a learner the opportunity to learn from the expertise of the expert (Schunk, 2001; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007; Zimmerman, & Kitsantas, 2002). Regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds, all participants used this method to encourage their children, but it was utilized most extensively by the low-SES parents. They did
this because the evidence evoked more emotion in their children and tied their future socio-economic growth to following the steps taken by the models. Following the participants’ cultural practice of the “age grade” social grouping of individuals born in a certain year, a member of the group who had attained a certain level of achievement would be referenced when that academic achievement was in discussion; the referencing usually had a positive thought-provoking effect on members of the same group who were determined to emulate the role model.

It is not clear whether referring to a model behavior of others on its own changes the academic behavior of students. If it does, one might wonder why some of the participants spoke about the truancy rate at some of the school which had been on the increase. Also, the rate of failures in the standardized regional WAEC and national the NECO exams could be attributed to the presence of negative factors, which the referencing models could not outperform.

Nevertheless, in almost every “compound” that is, a collection of families or kith and kin who built their homes within a given circumscribed space, there are people who students look up to who could be regarded as models.

**Parents’ encouragement of children.** The availability of social media and electronic gadgets is affecting people’s worldviews and mindset. High school students are not immune to this effect. Some young people have their priorities mixed-up because of many competing values presented before them through social media. Some students were struggling to focus on education, while some others were careless about it or had even dropped out. Many parents were struggling to combat the negative effects of social media on their children’s academic pursuits. In this study, the parents attempted to improve their children’s academic performance by encouraging them to prioritize studies over other gratifications. The parents stated that they encouraged their children to make the right choices by spending more time on their studies than
on other dispensable activities like spending hours on Facebook, texting, and chatting with friends during lectures and study time, and watching and listening to music videos streamed from their electronic gadgets. The participants encouraged their children to defer the use of these social media instruments. Although the parents complained that social media takes a lot of study time away from students, these parents should know that their children’s access to social media also means that they have internet access by which they can conduct research on their areas of study.

Moreover, the parents spoke of study time organized for their children, especially for those who were academically challenged. They organized these lessons in two ways, either as private lessons in a home or as a group lesson gathering students from diverse schools. The former, commonly called “home lesson,” was typically organized by the high-SES and six middle-SES (n=6) families. The latter was general is called “extramural lessons or classes.” In the former case, when parents discovered weaknesses in their children’s academic courses or through their assessment of the report cards identified some gaps in their studies, they may recognize the need for tutoring. However, the low-SES parents reported that their children were the ones who asked for funds to enroll in extramural lessons. The low-SES parents reported that they did not initiate enrollment in lectures or extramural classes and that, most times, their children assessed their own academic capabilities and agreed with their peers on the need to attend extra lectures; this is done especially by the grade preparing for exit exams and for college entrance exams. The low- and some middle-SES parents would often support their children by paying the required fees, even though they were financially constrained.

5.3. Parental School Involvement: PTA Meetings and Parent-Teacher Communications
Parents get involved in their children’s secondary education by participating in PTA meetings and one-on-one conferences with teachers and school administrators. PTA meetings provide opportunities for parent-teacher dialogue aimed at helping students achieve better academic results. Although the parents said that they tried their best to attend meetings, attendance was sporadic. Generally, the middle-SES parents attended more often than the high-SES parents, while the low-SES parents recorded the lowest attendance rate. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (2005) study noted that “parental context”, parents’ overall life’s situation, plays a significant role in parental involvement decisions. However, the participants were more active in “at home” activities than at-school activities. The participants had challenging issues ranging from the lack of an organized system of scheduling meetings, a lack of flexibility in job schedules, especially for the low-SES parents, the absence of coordination between themselves and school officials, and parents’ loss of faith in the ability of school officials to implement decisions reached at meetings. The parents interacted with teachers and schools through one-on-one communication, which was largely dependent on parents’ desire to resolve conflicts with their children or inquires about academic matters. These contacts were very rare for low-SES parents, with whom the relationship with teachers was almost non-existent; much of this depended on the organizational leadership of the principal and the willingness of the Ministry of Education to cooperate with effective school administrators.

The participants’ account of the state of parent-teacher or parent-school relationships painted a grim picture of missed opportunities to engage many stakeholders to improve students’ academic achievement. Research identified that parents-teacher and parent-school communication, and cooperation, and collaboration are essential to students’ academic
achievement (Epstein (2001). From their historical background, the participants recalled how their educational expectations led to parental involvement in establishing, funding and building new secondary schools attributable to the collaboration between their local people, colonialists, and missionaries in the building and administration of schools at the start of formal education. Research studies have found that when parents, families, and communities work together in support of students’ education, the result has been better achievement, and a reduction in truancy (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Family Engagement in Education Act, 2011). Parents-school partnerships are, therefore, essential for a synergy of parental and school energies toward a holistic and sustained approach to overcoming the diminishing performance of students in Imo State.

The PTA is one body found in schools in Imo State, according to participants. Among other things, this association could foster a closer relationship with parents. Given that one or two secondary schools are situated in every community in Imo State, the bonding between teachers and parents through the PTA could create a synergy of ideas about best practices that would encourage student learning and achievement. Unfortunately, the operation of this association appears to be dependent on the administrative style of school administrators. The participants’ account illustrated that parental attendance at meetings was generally dependent on parents’ interest and goodwill. However, in some schools where school administrators were working hard, attendance appeared to be better. Thus, leadership is needed to shore up attendance, which would give both teachers and parents’ opportunities to interact, exchange ideas, and be able to deal with students’ issues and concerns. With a common purpose and a united front, parents and teachers can influence the dismantling of the bureaucratic obstacles such as the infestation of
corruption at the Ministry of Education, which prevents school administrators from effecting measurable change in their schools.

Although significant, only one low-SES parent (with only elementary education) spoke against the language used at PTA meetings. He stopped attending the meetings when he could not contribute to the discussion because the meeting was held in the English language. This complaint challenged the dominant culture of schools, even those in local areas. Organizers of meetings should be sensitive to the needs of others and understand that not everybody is well educated in the English language. For communication to be effective, the language everyone understands should be used during PTA meetings. The parent stated that while he understood English, he could not speak it well. This led him to feel intimidated, so, he decided to quit. Perhaps, the language used at meetings could be the reason, more so than job issues why many low-SES parents fail to attend meetings.

Furthermore, issues concerning parent-teacher communication could be dealt with at PTA meetings. Seven parents complained that they were being sidelined in their efforts to communicate with teachers, an issue that can be settled through interactions at meetings. A reliable official means of communication such as telephone and email contacts need to be established in high schools in Imo State to afford every parent the chance to contact schools whenever they need to. Doing this could enable parents whose jobs do not allow them to visit schools to call schools from their work places and enquire about their children and their academic activities. Many participants stated that they did not even know one of the many teachers teaching their children at school. This should not be the case.

5.4. Parental Expectation of Children’s Education
The participants acknowledged that their interest in sending their children to secondary school and college were based on two expected outcomes. They identified short-term outcome goals for their children’s secondary education as the ability to read and write, learn and understand subject matter, and to be able to pass the WAEC, NECO, and JAMB exams. The parents were not interested in merely sending their children to secondary school for fun. The involvement of participants at this level of education was aimed at helping students develop a strong self-concept about their ability to succeed in secondary education. They were not interested in just “finishing” or “graduating” from high school; instead, the parental expectation was that children would graduate from high school with high achievements in their exit exams. Also, the immediate parental expectation was that children would transition to college immediately after high school. However, the participants knew that this goal was only attainable when students succeed at the WAEC, NECO, and JAMB exams. This expectation was consistent with high school improvement plans. For instance, research has found that past and present education improvement policies and studies primarily focused on students’ achievement measured by test scores results, high school grades, passing class tests, good behavior, etc. (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

The parents’ desire for their children to do well was wide-spread among parents of different socio-economic backgrounds. Although, the parents hoped their children could succeed in these exams, the low-SES parents also wanted their children to have success in both high school exit exams, which would offer them an opportunity for college, and the high school vocational certification in carpentry, masonry, electrical works, or plumbing, which could foster self-employment when parents were unable to pay for their college. Although the low-SES wanted their children to succeed, they were not naïve about the enrollment and funding challenges facing
their children after high school. The low-SES parents needed a cushion or a guarantee for their children’s future in case the children failed to proceed to college due to family poverty or difficulty securing admission into college. Almost all the middle- (n=8) and high- (n=9) SES parents considered vocational and technical certification from high school to be insufficient for their children’s future. They believed that high school certificates alone would not lead to high wages and fulfill their future potentials both in terms of wealth and social status.

The parents also had long-term expectations for their children. Research has found that parents’ expectations are key to students’ academic and future success (Davis-Kean, 2005; Vartanian et al, 2007). The participants expected their children to transition from secondary education to college because they valued the positive outcomes associated with college attainment, such as greater job opportunities and self-actualization. The parents expected their children to attend college, to do well in college with a good GPA, and to secure good-paying jobs. They tied the education of their children to the capacity to find a job after graduation.

Although parental expectations for their children’s college education were common among the participants, the middle- and high-SES parents expressed a more positive expectation than the low-SES parents. The low-SES (n=9) parents’ positive expectations were tinged with uncertainty. They were not sure their children would proceed to college after high school because of college access challenges and tuition costs. In fact, some of the critical issues in higher education concern access and cost. Recently, the cost of college tuition has become a major issue in Nigeria. Parents who were once able to send more than one child to college are now finding it difficult to send even one to college. The problem of funding college education is a challenge for many Nigerians, a problem that limits access to college. If college access is still an issue in a developed country like the USA, one could then consider how challenging it must
be for a developing country like Nigeria. For instance, research has indicated that although the problem of college access for low-income families has improved in developed countries (US Department of Education, 2002), a significant percentage of low-income families in the United States face access challenges (Dwyer, 2017), despite the many financial and educational programs devoted to the less privileged. Research has shown the dire situation facing low-income families in developing countries, as in the case of Nigeria. The Global Citizen report showed that many issues, including funding, were major obstacles facing education access and enrollment in developing countries (Rueckert, 2018). A report from the Brookings Institute revealed that 80% of students from the OECD have had a chance to receive post-secondary education compared to only 6% from Sub-Saharan African nations (Watkins, 2013).

The participants’ expectations for their children’s college education and the obstacles that challenge their realization, especially among low-SES families, were not specific to them, instead, it was an issue that the poor faced in some countries around the world.

5.5. Parents’ Motivation to Become Involved and the Challenges

Regardless of their social and economic background, all participants were keenly interested in supporting their children’s education. The parents’ motivation to be involved in their children’s educational opportunities stemmed from their belief that education serves as a critical means of improving family’s SES. The participants believed that the one and only consistent means by which they could achieve their purpose was through education. They identified the education of a member of a family as synonymous with a positive positioning of the family for the greater good.

Human motivation to action is often driven by need and desire. The low-SES parents’ plans were to move from a sustenance level of living to a secure and stable one, the middle-SES
parents’ intentions were aimed at attaining esteemed socio-economic position, while the high-SES families anticipated retaining and expanding economic control and social dominance. The participants firmly asserted that the only one guaranteed vehicle that transits from one level of need to a more satisfactory one was college education. It is reasonable then to understand why even the poorly educated parents understood the importance of education; education obliterates or diminishes the trans-generational poverty (Kulid, 2015). Since education is a sure and certified means of arriving at each needed target, college education is, therefore, an investment into the future social and economic well-being of the participants’ children and families.

5.6. Challenging Factors.

Despite the overwhelming interest participants showed in the education of their children, some obstacles challenged their commitment to full engagement in it. Some of these challenges stemmed from the parents’ background, finances, and college access issues and the negative impact of college-graduate unemployment.

Parents’ intellectual and economic challenges. A major difference between the low-SES parents and their counterparts was the level of education attained, which also accounted for income disparity as well as that in engaging in specific areas of parental involvement. For instance, being highly disadvantaged by academic attainment, the low-SES parents could not deal with or engage in discussing specific academic issues with their children. They could not identify specific subjects required for certain courses in college. It is difficult for such parents to offer specific academic advice because they lacked the intellectual competence to do so; instead, they spoke in generalities, like parents who advised their children to be engineers and doctors but had no idea the type of high school subjects they needed in order to become engineers, lawyers and doctors. Nevertheless, they would ask relatives to find out how their children were doing
academically. The low-SES parents were not only disadvantaged by their academic level, but also in their occupation, which most times did not afford them the time and opportunity to become fully involved in the education of their children. Again, many of the low-SES parents wished they had the ability to participate in every required involvement in their children’s studies and regretted their inability to do so. For instance, some parents failed to attend PTA meetings, conferences, monitoring etc. because their jobs would not allow them. In fact, research has found that low educational attainment and occupation influence parents’ ability to be fully involved in the child’s education (Egalite, 2016; Ermisch & Pronzato, 2010). Parental inadequacy in this regard is neither a product of insensitivity nor of poor judgment on the value of education.

**Finance and college access issues.** The participants (n=23) complained that the hike in college tuition in Imo State, Nigeria, and access challenges were putting pressure on their positive appraisal of college education. The effects of tuition hikes were hurting many, especially the middle- and low-SES parents’ interest in higher education. Research has showed that financing college education is one of the obstacles to college (Wolla, 2014).

Besides the financial problems parents faced, they were also frustrated with practices that narrowed their children’s college access opportunities. In Imo State, there is the practice of nepotism in granting access to college education. Since the available college spaces in Imo State were not sufficiently plentiful to accommodate all qualified students, there are scrambles for available spaces. Political leaders are forcefully grabbing a substantial number of admission slots, and the rich, and connected resort to paying hefty prices to secure places for their children. Of course, those without connections were left out. Unfortunately, Imo State has only one state university. The few other colleges in the state, which are specialized, or research institutions, are limited to special programs. There is a need to expand the admission capacity of the state
university or to erect news ones in order to create more opportunities for college admission seekers. The parents were not hopeful that the current political administrators would embark on building new colleges, given the level of corruption, and the neglect in dealing with peoples’ educational needs. If the state government sensitive to people’s needs and could work with the people toward solving problems, the parents would respond positively to such an initiative. In the past, parents worked with state government to build high schools, which opened access opportunities for every child in Imo State and marked the end of long queues for high school, which sometimes lasted two years. Furthermore, the parents noted that they did not depend on government for support in many aspects of their lives, but, that they expected government to provide them with an enabling environment that promotes private entrepreneurship to generate their own revenue to fund their children’s education. The parents believed that they were hardworking and were ready to engage more in productive ventures if they could have reliable electric supply and security of life and property.

**Impact of graduate unemployment.** Securing a good paying job is a major driving force for college education. Unfortunately, the national economy collapsed so badly that, for some time now, college-graduate employment has fallen drastically in Nigeria. Although, interest in college education is still good, many parents, especially the poor, have continued to question the value of college education in the face of college-graduate unemployment. The parents (n=12) were scared to borrow money to fund their children’s college education because they were not sure their children would get a good-paying job to offset the debt. Those parents (n=5) who had property such as land engaged in leasing or selling them to support their children’ college education. In fact, college-graduate unemployment is a major factor in parents’ future college-funding. Some parents were resorting to encouraging their children to go into business and private
apprenticeship schemes that support the apprentice after a number of years of service. The parents’ morale regarding involvement in the college education of their children will be boosted anew when college graduates begin to secure good jobs without delay.

5.7. Recommendation for Policy and Practice

Several topics that would make for policy and practice recommendations have emerged from this study. These are as follows: first, the parents participated in the building of secondary schools in their communities; they should reconnect with these schools by attending PTA meetings to cooperate with teachers for the good of their children’s education. Second, school administrators, teachers and PTA officials should use a common language spoken by all in their deliberations during meetings so as to encourage the active participation of all, irrespective of SES. School administrators should also develop parent outreach programs in the communities they work so as to encourage community participation in meetings. Third, teachers should inform parents about the good qualities and skills they discover in their students. Parents are discouraged from being involved in their children’s schooling when they only hear negative reports about them. Fourth, schools should articulate the meaning of school involvement beyond the basic parental obligation towards their children. It is imperative to educate parents on the need to set aside time, skill, money, and other resources in order to become as involved as possible in their children’s education. Moreover, since parents are more involved with their children at home, administrators should devise means to create school programs that would attract parents’ interest such as the sports activities that engaged their children engage in. The majority of parents (n=26) spoke about their deep involvement in their children’s primary school education and reduced or even stopped this involvement when children entered high school. Fifth, therefore, parents need to continue their involvement in fostering the college aspirations of
their children. Parents may not understand this very well, so, school staff and other stakeholders should inform them of the need to remain close to their children’s academic engagements. Sixth, to encourage effective communication between parents, teachers, and administrators, communication channels like telephones and emails need to be set up in schools. A good rapport between teachers and parents would be beneficial to students, and it would help them share information on students’ academic dispositions at school and at home.

5.8. Suggestions for future research

The study participants revealed that they were involved in their children’s education. Future research could, therefore, determine how these forms of involvement are translated into concrete educational opportunities for children who aspire to go to college. Future research should also collect data from students, teachers and school administrators on their perspectives about the importance of parental involvement. Furthermore, future research should consider how parents are involved in schools in those states that have edged out Imo State’s in high achievement position.
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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Procedure: The selected participants will participate in a semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interview for approximately an hour. The study uses pseudonyms in place of participants’ personal name or identity therefore, conversations will remain confidential. Subjects are free not to answer questions they feel uncomfortable with, and information shared will remain concealed from anyone except the researcher. Interview questions are pre-determined, and probes will be used in order to obtain specific information that will elucidate interview subject matter.

As I stated in the consent form you voluntarily signed, the interview questions will revolve around your understanding of parental involvement, actual involvement practices, expectations, motivations and challenges regarding the education of your children. In order to accurately document your responses, the interview will be recorded in a digital voice recorder. At any moment during the interview, you are free to request certain information not to be recorded.

Guiding Research Question: How do parents’ understanding of involving in the secondary education help in their children’s post-secondary education aspiration, and what forms of involvement do they employ to help their children succeed?

Interview Guide:
Participant SES________________                        Pseudonym_________________________
Gender: _____________________                        Interview Date: ______________________
Start Time: ___________________                       Location: _________________________

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<th>Research Question Two</th>
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<td>What expectations do parents have regarding their children’s academic achievements in high school as well as their college aspiration?</td>
<td>How do parents perceive and become involved in their children’s high school education in Imo State?</td>
<td>What factors motivate parents to become engaged, or deter them from becoming involved in their children’s education?</td>
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<td>• What do you expect your child to do after secondary education?</td>
<td>• What reasons do you have for sending your child to secondary school?</td>
<td>• What subjects is your child interested in?</td>
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<td>• What are the immediate and long-term plans for your child’s education?</td>
<td>• Do you think that secondary education is necessary for your child?</td>
<td>• What do you communicate your child about school success?</td>
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<td>• What do you expect from your child’s secondary education?</td>
<td>• How do you know how your child behave at school?</td>
<td>• What have you been doing to help your child succeed in secondary school and also aspire for college education?</td>
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<td>• How do you monitor your child’s academic progress?</td>
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<td>How do you communicate this expectation?</td>
<td>- How do you initiate contact with your child’s teachers and school to learn about his/her academic progress?</td>
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<td>How do you help your children actualize their college aspiration?</td>
<td>- Are you able to provide everything your child needs for school?</td>
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<td>What role do you play in helping your child pass WAEC, NECO, and JAMB exams?</td>
<td>- What type of encouragement do you give to your child to do well at school?</td>
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<td>- How do you help your child resolve school issues?</td>
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<td>- How often do you meet with your child to discuss school matters?</td>
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<td>- To what extent do you support your child to study vocational subjects in high school?</td>
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<td>- Is high school level of education sufficient for your child? If yes or no, why?</td>
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<td>- What academic program will your child enroll in post-secondary education?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- What role do you play in your child’s choice of post-secondary education program?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What obstacles do you face in involving in your child’s education?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Consent Form

Topic

Exploring Parental Involvement in Public Secondary Education of Students in Imo State, Nigeria

(The role of Socioeconomic Status)

Longinus Ugwuegbulem

Seton Hall University

(Faculty of Higher Education Leadership, Management and Policy)

You are invited to be in a research study of exploring parents’ involvement in the education of their secondary school children. You were selected as a participant because your children had graduated from secondary school or they are still in secondary school.

Background Information

Secondary education is the foundation on which tertiary education is rooted. Students who are academically successful in their secondary education most likely proceed to enroll in post-secondary education. Parents can help them achieve this goal. The purpose of this study is therefore to study to find out how parents involve in the education of their children in public secondary school, what motivations their involvement and the constraints they experience.

Procedures

This study is designed to gather data through interview. The interview will take approximately an hour. You will choose the venue and time suitable for you.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

There are no risks associated with this study. The interview will be conversational. This is the only role you will play. The benefits of participating in this study include helping to identify the roles parents do or don’t do in the education of their children in secondary school. The information may contribute towards helping school policy makers and administrators formulating policies that may involve parents in education of their secondary school students.

Confidentiality

This interview will be recorded, and the record of the interview will be kept private and will be used for the sake of this study only. Your identity will not be revealed. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Anything audio taped will be transcribed and saved; the original audio will be saved under date only. All records will be stored in one master file on a secured flash drive. The data will be destroyed when the study is completed and published.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will be respected. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question and you may withdraw at any time if you change your mind.

For further information:

Contact: Longinus.ugwuegbulem@shu.edu or ogwo14@yahoo.com

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. If I had any questions, I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: ______________________________________ Date: __________________

Signature of Investigator: ____________________________ Date: ____________

Longinus Ugwuegbulem 12/01/16
APPENDIX B

Participants Demographic Questionnaire

1. Name: _______________________________ (Pseudo will be assigned by the researcher)

2. Level of education completed – check one:
   a) Post graduate/professional_______
   b) College Graduate____________
   c) Secondary____________________
   d) Primary______________________
   e) No education__________________

3. Occupation: ______________________

4. Annual income: ____________________

5. Income Grade Level: ______________

      Female: ____ Mother: _____ Female Guardian: _____

7. Marital Status: Single: ______
      Married: ____
      Widowed: ____

8. Residence: _______________

9. How many children do you have in secondary school? _________

10. How many have graduated and when? ___________

11. Did they earn the required five relevant credits for university education? ___________

12. If graduated, are they enrolled in post-secondary education? ___________
Author’s Biography

Longinus N. Ugwuegubulem was born and raised in Imo State, Nigeria. He entered college and studied philosophy from 1985 to 1989 and graduated with a bachelor’s in philosophy (B.Phil.). From 1989 to 1993, he studied Theology and earned a master’s degree in Theology (Master’s in Divinity). He has been involved both in Church administration and teaching in grade schools in Nigeria, West Indies, and USA.

His exposure to students’ needs in these schools, attracted his love for education. In 2005, he enrolled and studied education administration at Seton Hall University, South Orange New Jersey, and earned a master’s degree in education administration (K – 12). He interned in public and private/parochial schools, in the urban and sub-urban settings. He is a certified principal for the State of New Jersey. Longinus is a Ph. D. graduate of Higher Education Leadership, Management and Policy at Seton Hall University. His hobbies include: reading, sightseeing, swimming, travelling, and hiking.
REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION OR RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

All material must be typed.

PROJECT TITLE: EXPLORING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IMO STATE NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:

In making this application, I (we) certify that I (we) have read and understand the University’s policies and procedures governing research, development, and related activities involving human subjects. I (we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I (we) further acknowledge my (our) obligation to (1) obtain written approval of significant deviations from the originally-approved protocol BEFORE making those deviations, and (2) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Director of the Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079.

RESEARCHER: LONGINUS UGWUAGBULEM DATE: March, 09, 2016

**Please print or type out names of all researchers below signature. Use separate sheet of paper, if necessary.**

My signature indicates that I have reviewed the attached materials of my student advisee and consider them to meet IRB standards.

RESEARCHER'S FACULTY ADVISOR: Dr. EUNYOUNG KIM DATE: 3-10-2016

**Please print or type out name below signature**

The request for approval submitted by the above researcher(s) was considered by the IRB for Research Involving Human Subjects Research at the April, 2016 meeting.

The application was approved not approved by the Committee. Special conditions were not set by the IRB (Any special conditions are described on the reverse side.)

DIRECTOR, SETON HALL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH DATE: 5/24/16