

ABSTRACT

Socio-economic Determinants of Academic Achievement Among Upper Primary School Students: A Trinidad Study

This study seeks to examine critical variables such as parental involvement, diet quality and nutrition, and socio-economic status towards the prediction of academic achievement of Standard Four students in Trinidad. It also seeks to determine whether parental involvement predicts diet quality and nutrition. A quantitative research design was used with a sample of two hundred and nine primary school students from a total of ten schools within the St. George East Education District. National Test scores in English Language were used as the predominant measure of academic achievement. The main findings showed that all the main variables were associated with academic achievement, but to varying degrees. Additionally, diet quality and nutrition and socio-economic status were found to be statistically significant, with socio-economic status being the strongest predictor of academic achievement. Parental involvement was not a significant predictor of academic achievement. However, parental involvement was found to be a significant predictor of diet quality and nutrition, showing that through this variable, parents play an important role in the diet and eating behaviors of their children towards achieving high test scores. Apart from filling a gap in the existing body of knowledge on the relationship among these variables and academic achievement, this study provides a channel through which concepts within Epstein's theory of parental involvement can be applied towards improving the level of academic achievement. It also seeks to add new knowledge by incorporating diet quality and nutrition into the theory. Additionally, it is argued that as an important theoretical consideration, socio-economic status is highly germane in the relationship between diet quality, parental involvement and academic achievement. Possible reasons for the findings are discussed within the peculiarities of the local setting. In this light, recommendations for policy are proposed so that meaningful interventions can be made at this critical level of learning.

Keywords: Nafeesa Siddiqui; academic achievement; parental involvement; diet quality and nutrition; socio-economic status; primary school.