

Parental Socioeconomic Background as a Determinant of Student's Academic Performance in Selected Public Secondary Schools in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of parental socioeconomic background on the academic performance of students in selected public secondary schools in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River State. The stratified sampling technique was used to select 114 students from five public schools, while the simple random sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire. Also, data on student's academic performance was obtained from student's scores in four selected subjects. Data obtained was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Multiple regression result revealed that parental socioeconomic background significantly influenced students' academic performance ($p < 0.05$); as students whose parents had better jobs and higher levels of educational attainment and who were exposed to more educational and cultural resources at home tended to perform better than their counterparts without such opportunities. The study identified parental occupation as the main predictive variable influencing student's academic performance. However, increase in parental salaries in line with the current economic situation as well as the provision of adequate books and facilities in schools to breach the gap between the rich and the poor are recommended in order to improve the academic performance of students.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Socioeconomic Background, Calabar Municipality, Government, Public Schools

Introduction

Parental socioeconomic characteristics to a greater extent determine student's performance in school and their adjustment to life. The poor performance of students in examinations in recent times could be attributed to the changing life pattern in some families coupled with the present economic hardship which has made most families unable to meet up with their responsibilities of ensuring a healthy and literate family. The size of the family in which a child grows affects his intellectual development; this is because in a large-size family, a child may not be given the required attention especially in his/her academics as the family will have more persons to cater for. The issue of home works, payment of school fees, attending Parent Teachers Associations and many more may not be convenient for the parents as they have to cater for many children, while children are well catered for and perform better in small-size family. The socioeconomic background of a family impacts negatively on the gross performance of the child. Family financial resources, which are associated with parents' occupation and educational attainment, often imply increased learning opportunities both at home and in school. Better-educated parents can contribute to their children's learning through their day-to-day interactions with their children and involving themselves in their children's school work.

In Nigeria, most families are poor and cannot adequately afford 3-square meals not to talk of meeting the educational needs of their children. This indeed has serious implications on the learning and performance of less privileged students in school, as such; students from such families are forced to miss classes, unable to do their assignments and most seriously are driven from school due to non-payment of school fees. All these, have significant effects on the development of the child. Indeed, family background is the foundation for children's development, as such family background in terms of family type, size, socio-economic status and educational background play important role in children's educational attainment and social integration (Osunloye, 2008; Ushie et al., 2012). However, studies indicate that there is an awareness of the importance of the home environment or family on children academic performance. The home has a great influence on the child's psychological, emotional, social and economic state. In the view of Ajila and Olutola (2000), the state of the

home affects the individual since the parents are the first socializing agents in an individual's life. This is because the family background and context of a child affect his reaction to life situations and his level of performance. Although, the school is responsible for the experiences that make up the individual's life during school periods, yet parents and the individual's experiences at home play tremendous roles in building the personality of the child and making the child what he is. Students' learning and academic attainment is influenced by interplay of their individual, family and school characteristics.

According to Eweniyi (2005), different factors are capable of influencing the academic performance of a child. Such factors may be the child's internal state (intelligence, state of health, motivation, anxiety etc.) and their environment (availability of suitable learning environment, adequacy of educational infrastructure like textbooks and well-equipped laboratories). Investigation of these factors has produced several findings by researchers. For example, Clemens and Oelke (1967) and Emeke (1984) have attributed the cause of poor academic performance to a combination of personal and institutional factors. Personal factors relate to the individual's intelligence, knowledge and ability. While institutional factors are family or parental influences, societal influences, institutional influences and school related factors - student/lecturer rapport, teacher related factors, accommodation and living conditions. In the same vein, Sogbetan (1981) and Hassan (1983) among others have examined the causes of poor academic performance among secondary school students. Some of the factors identified are intellectual ability, poor study habit, achievement motivation, lack of vocational goals, low self-concept, low socio-economic status of the family, poor family structure and anxiety. The consequences of these include indiscipline in schools and low level of educational standard.

Literature review

Asikhia (2010) noted that family educational background and socio-economic status influence the academic performance of students; that these two are lumped together because they are related and one may rightly say that they are married and hence should not be 'divorced'. He opines that socio-class or status could be defined more objectively by using such indices as occupation, income and education. Wealth is strongly correlated with education and occupation and when socio-economic status is measured these other factors are usually included. Schulz (2005) contended that socio-economic status (SES) is an important explanatory factor in many different disciplines like health, child development and educational research. Research has shown that socioeconomic status is associated with health, cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes. In general, educational outcomes have been shown to be influenced by family background in many different and complex ways. For example, the socio-economic status of families has been consistently found to be an important variable in explaining variance in student achievement. Socio-economic background may affect learning outcomes in numerous ways: From the outset, parents with higher socio-economic status are able to provide their children with the (often necessary) financial support and home resources for individual learning. They are also more likely to provide a more stimulating home environment to promote cognitive development. At the level of educational providers, students from high-SES families are also more likely to attend better schools, in particular in countries with differentiated (or "tracked") educational systems, strong segregation in the school system according to neighbourhood factors and/or clear advantages of private over public schooling. Chen (2009) studied the effects of family background, ability and student achievement in rural China. Parental education is found to be key determinants of student achievement, but the roles of father's education and mother's education differ across child gender and levels of ability. For example, father's education has significantly positive effect on academic achievements for both boys and girls, while mother's education only matters for girls. The effect of father's education matters for lower ability children, while mother's education matters for higher ability children. OECD/UNESCO (2003) alleged that family characteristics are a major source of disparity in students' educational outcomes. More family financial resources, which are associated with parents' occupation and educational attainment, often imply increased learning opportunities both at home and in school. Better-educated parents can contribute to their children's learning through their day-to-day interactions with their children and involving themselves in their children's school work. Parents with higher occupational status and educational attainment may also have higher aspirations and expectations for their children's occupation and education, which in turn can influence their commitment to learning.

Freijo et al., (2006) submitted that various aspects of the family economic, social and cultural conditions have a consistent impact on the literacy performance of students in all countries. Students whose parents have better jobs and higher levels of educational attainment and who are exposed to more educational and cultural resources at home tend to have higher levels of literacy performance. Educational systems face the challenging task of compensating students from less advantaged backgrounds, for the deficit in economical, social and cultural capital they experience at home. Expanding students' knowledge of occupational choices and increasing their occupational aspirations may help them to become more motivated learners. Caro (2009) posited

that the relationship between family SES and academic achievement is referred to in the literature as a socioeconomic gradient because it is gradual and increases across the range of SES or as a socio - economic gap because it implies a gap in academic achievement between students of high and low SES families. Scholars according to Caro have shown that a socio - economic gap in the early school years has lasting consequences. Particularly, as low SES children get older their situation tends to worsen. Because of their relatively poor skills, they are prone to leave school early and are less likely to be assigned to the college preparatory track. In the longer term, they are less likely to enter the labour market successfully or pursue post - secondary education.

The review above shows that socio-economic status (SES) of parents is an important explanatory factor that influences students overall performance in school, as students who have low SES earn lower test scores and are more likely to drop out of school. Low SES negatively affects academic performance because it prevents access to vital resources and creates additional stress at home. It shows that that rigorous academic preparation, high educational aspirations, and family support are easier to come by if the family has economic resources.

Materials and methods

Data collection methods

This study made use of the survey design which enabled relevant information to be collected from the respondents through the use of a structured questionnaire and scores in four subjects. The study employed the stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The stratified sampling technique was used to select one hundred and twenty students both males and females from five existing public schools, twelve students were sampled in each class (SS2 and SS3) in each school. This meant that in each school, twenty four students (12 males and 12 females) in SS2 and SS3 were selected; after which, the simple random sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire. In each selected school and class, permission was taken from head/class teachers to randomly select the names of the students that would represent the population of study from the class register. In all, a total of 120 copies of questionnaire were administered to students in the five selected schools, out of which 114 of the questionnaires were properly filled and used for analysis. The scores of students were provided in line with students randomly selected to fill the questionnaire.

The study made use of both primary and secondary data. The primary data included data on family structure and parental socioeconomic status; whereas, secondary data included data on the academic performance of students. Data on family structure and parental socioeconomic status were obtained through the administration of copies of structured questionnaire to students in the five existing public schools in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River State. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A measured students demographic and parental socioeconomic background, while section B contained a number of questions designed to measure the influence of family structure and family socioeconomic status on students' performance using a 4 – point likert scale with responses ranging from Strongly Agree= SA; Agree = A; Disagree = D; and Strongly Disagree = SD. On the other hand, data on students' academic performance was obtained from their scores in four selected subjects of English, Mathematics, Economics and Biology examinations of first term for the 2010/2011 academic session. The scores in four subjects were then converted to Z-scores to ensure their reliability and validity since they were obtained from different secondary schools (Salami, 2008). Performance was therefore assessed using Z-score values where 0 represented an average performance; 1 represented good performance; 2 represented excellent performance; -1 represented a poor performance and -2 represented a very poor performance. The aforementioned subjects were selected because they represented compulsory subjects for all the classes (science, commercial, and art classes). The scores were collected from head teachers with the permission of the principals.

Method of data analysis

Data obtained from administered questionnaire as well as mean scores of students' performance was analysed using tables, simple percentages, cross tabulations, charts independent samples test and multiple regression analysis. In order to effectively carryout this test, items in the questionnaire coded for descriptive analysis were transformed or recoded into dummy variables (the independent variables). For instance, questions like the educational background of parents (father and mother) with seven (7) options were transformed or recoded into two dummy variables of no education as 0 and educated as 1; occupation of parents with four options was transformed into two dummy variables of skilled as 1 and unskilled as 0; students' academic performance with five (5) Z-score options was transformed into three categorical variables of poor performance as 0, average performance as 1 and good performance as 2 and so on.

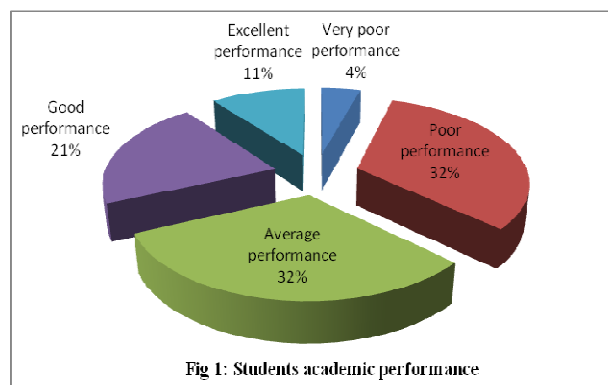
Results and discussion

Parental socioeconomic background

Information on the socioeconomic (SES) background of parents (both father and mother) in terms of level of education, occupation and income is displayed in table 1. The table shows that 4.4% of the fathers had no formal education, while 795.6% had formal education. Also, the educational levels of mothers indicated that 6.1% were illiterate, that is they had no formal education, while 93.9% were literates. This information implies that over 95% of both parents are literates. Information on the occupation of father and mother showed both parents were more of skilled workers. The result further revealed that mothers comprised a greater proportion of the unskilled workforce. The income distribution of parents' implied that 72% of both parents earned above N100, 000 monthly, which perhaps can be said was to be connected to their educational qualifications and nature of occupation.

Academic performance of students

The performance of students as depicted in the fig. 1 revealed that 4.4% of the respondents performed badly; 32.5% had poor performance; 31.6% had an average performance; 21.1% of the respondents across the five schools had good performance, while 10.5% performed excellently. In general, the information showed that respondents in the five schools performed above average with 63.2%.



Parental educational background and students' academic performance

The effect of parental education on the academic performance of students is shown in the Table 1. Information on the table shows that out of the 4.4% of respondents whose parents have no formal education, 60% performed poorly, while 20% performed averagely and excellently. The performance of students from families whose parents have primary education reveals that 55.6% of respondents from such homes performed poorly, 11.1% had average performance, while 33.3% performed excellently in their examinations. Also, the responses of respondents whose have post-primary education indicate that 68.8% did poorly, 12.5% and 18.8% did averagely and excellently in their examinations respectively. However, respondents whose parents have higher qualifications (B.Sc/B.Ed, M.Sc/M.Ed and Ph.D), that 46.8% of respondents from such homes performed woefully in their respectively examinations, 35% had average performance, while 18.3% performed above average. This indicates that parental education does not exert substantial influence on siblings' academic performance, but individual cognitive ability. This has been reported by earlier studies, for instance, Eweniyi (2005) observed that different factors are capable of influencing the academic performance of a child or student. Such factors may be the child's internal state (intelligence, state of health, motivation, anxiety etc.) and their environment (availability of suitable learning environment, adequacy of educational infrastructure like textbooks and well-equipped laboratories). Investigation of these factors has produced several findings by researchers. For example, Clemens and Oelke (1967) and Emeke (1984) have attributed the cause of poor academic performance to a combination of personal and institutional factors.

Table 1: effect of Parental education on students' academic performance

Parental education	Academic performance					Total
	Very poor performance	Poor performance	Average performance	Good performance	Excellent performance	
No education	0	3	1	1	0	5
		60.0%	20.0%	20.0%		100.0%
Primary education	0	5	1	2	1	9
		55.6%	11.1%	22.2%	11.1%	100.0%
Post-primary education	1	10	2	0	3	16
	6.3%	62.5%	12.5%		18.8%	100.0%
Tertiary education	2	16	18	10	3	49
	4.1%	32.7%	36.7%	20.4%	6.1%	100.0%
M.Sc.	1	7	5	1	1	15
	6.7%	46.7%	33.3%	6.7%	6.7%	100.0%
Ph.D.	1	9	7	2	1	20
	5.0%	45.0%	35.0%	10.0%	5.0%	100.0%
Total	5	50	34	16	9	114
%	4.4%	43.9%	29.8%	14.0%	7.9%	100.0%

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Academic performance of students between sexes

Table 2 gives information on the academic performance of students between sexes of respondents. It indicates that 73.7% perform poorly, out of this, 33.3% are males, while 40.4% are females. In addition, respondents with average performance makes up 63.1%, out of this, 36.8% are males, while 26.3% are females; also, siblings' with good performance constitute 42.1%, out of which 17.5% and 24.6% are males and females respectively. Respondents with excellent performance constitute 21.1%, out of which 12.3% and 8.8% are males and females respectively. This implies that males perform slightly better than their female counterpart with 66.6% and 59.6% of pass performance respectively.

Table 2: Academic performance by sex

Academic performance	Sex of respondents		Total
	Male	Female	
Poor performance	19	23	42
	33.3%	40.4%	73.7%
Average performance	21	15	36
	36.8%	26.3%	63.1%
Good performance	10	14	24
	17.5%	24.6%	42.1%
Excellent performance	7	5	12
	12.3%	8.8%	21.1%
Total	57	57	114
	100.0%	100.0%	200.0%

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Analysis of the effect of parental socioeconomic background on students' academic performance

In the course of this study, the researchers sought to find out if students' academic performance is significantly influenced by the socioeconomic background of their parents. In order to achieve this, the multiple regression model was employed. Results obtained are presented in Table 3. The result in table 3.0 shows there is a high association (0.63) between parental socioeconomic background (income of parents, father's education, father's occupation, mother's education and mother's occupation) and students' academic performance. The coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) indicates that 40 per cent of students' academic performance is accounted for by the combination of the above set of parental socioeconomic variables. The ANOVA result further reveals that students' academic performance is significantly influenced by the socioeconomic background of their parents ($F = 2.313$, $p < 0.05$). This shows that parental socioeconomic variables exerting substantial effect on the changes in students' performance. This result also implies that at least one of the socioeconomic variables (SES) significantly predicts high sibling's performance. Furthermore, the significance of the predictor variables in influencing students' academic performance indicates that among the five set of variables, only father's education happen to be significant ($t = 2.895$, $p < 0.05$), this means that father's occupation directly influences students' performance in school, as an increase in father's occupational level in term of position would have a corresponding effect on children academic outcome and attainment.

Similar result was reported by Chen (2009) that parental education is a key determinant of student achievement, but the roles of father's education and mother's education differ across child gender and levels of ability. Chen observed father's education to have a significant positive effect on academic achievements for both boys and girls, while mother's education only matters for girls. The remaining variables are individually insignificant in influencing the academic performance of students. The t-values for these set of variables are father's education ($t = 0.292$, $p > 0.05$), mother's education ($t = 0.255$, $p > 0.05$), mother's education ($t = 1.102$, $p > 0.05$) and income of parents ($t = 0.544$, $p > 0.05$). The strength of contribution of each selected factors are ranked using the product of unstandardized regression coefficients (b). From these results, father's occupation has the greatest contribution (0.344) to students' academic performance, followed by parents' income (0.035), mother's education (0.120), father's education (0.062) and mother's education (0.049). This implies that a unit increase in father's occupation holding father's education, mother's education, mother's occupation and parents' income constant, will result in 0.344 or 34.4 per cent unit increase in students' academic performance and so on.

Table 3: Summary of multiple regression result

Variables	Coefficients		
	b	β	t-value
Father's education	0.062	0.028	0.292
Mother's education	0.049	0.025	0.255
Father's occupation	0.344	0.282	2.895*
Mother's occupation	0.120	0.119	1.102
Income of parents	0.035	0.061	0.544
Test results			
F- value	2.313*		
R	0.632		
R^2	0.40		
Constant	0.872		3.095*
DF	5/108		

*Significant at 1% significance level

Source: SPSS Window Output Version 17.0

Discussion of results

The obtained results indicate that students' academic performance is significantly influenced by the socioeconomic background of their parents. This indeed is true as the socioeconomic status of parents in terms of income, education, nature of occupation and position in the society determine the type of attention and involvement they have with their children. The socio-economic status (SES) of parents is an important predictive factor associated with health, cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes of children. When parents are educated, they are poised to making sure their children equally follow same; these categories of parents are more aware of the educational requirement of their children and can make sacrifices for them. Parents that earn big salaries can effectively take responsibilities of their children's education compared to parents that earn meager salaries. This is indeed evident as the financial and moral support a child gets from his/her parents' influences him/her

psychologically, which is reflected in his/her performance in school. This agrees with the report of OECD/UNESCO (2003) that family characteristics are a major source of disparity in students' educational outcomes. More family financial resources, which are associated with parents' occupation and educational attainment, often imply increased learning opportunities both at home and in school. Perhaps, parents who are better-educated can contribute to their children's learning process.

However, the significance of the socioeconomic variables in predicting changes in students' performance identifies fathers' occupation as the most important and significant factor. Fathers' nature of occupation determines the take home income and time they would have with their children, this tells on children upbringing; as a father who takes home good salary and has little time to spend with his children, is able to interact with them and in the process help them in resolving their school needs. According to Bloom (1980), children's academic success is influenced by the interrelationships among high parental educational and occupational aspirations. Also, Freijo *et al.* (2006) submit that various aspects of the family economic, social and cultural conditions have a consistent impact on the literacy performance of students in all countries. Students whose parents have better jobs and higher levels of educational attainment and who are exposed to more educational and cultural resources at home tend to have higher levels of literacy performance.

Conclusion/recommendations

The study indicates that students/children academic performance is influenced by the socioeconomic background of their parents; as parents that earn high income can take absolute responsibilities of their children's education compared to parents that earn meager salaries. The financial and moral support a child receives from his/her parents' affects his psychology, which is reflected in his performance in school. Also, students whose parents have better jobs and higher levels of educational attainment and who are exposed to more educational and cultural resources at home tend to perform better than their counterparts without such opportunities. In order to solve the recurrent issue of poor academic performance in our secondary schools, government and corporate institutions should increase salaries of parents in line with economic situation of goods and educational materials to enable parents meet the educational needs of their children. Also, schools should be provided with adequate books and facilities to breach the gap between the rich and the poor in the society. This will give siblings from poor homes the opportunity to learn and improve on their performances.

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