

## Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Students Academic Performance in Nigeria: Some Explanation from a Local Survey

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**Abstract:** Nigeria like any other developing nations has witnessed series of political instability, with obvious effects on educational policies at federal, state and local government levels. This gradually laid the foundation of fallen standard in education at the primary and secondary school levels, which caused differential academic performance of students. In the quest of finding survival feet, the nation has evolved series of socio-economic and educational measures but these have not improved the social-economic status of families in the country. It is within this milieu that this study examines socio-economic factors influencing students' academic performance in Nigeria, with some explanations from Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State. The time frame of the study covers the period of 2004-2007. A total of 120 copies of questionnaire were administered to respondents. The study revealed that insufficient parental income, family type and lack of funding by governments are factors influencing students' academic performance. Based on these findings, certain recommendations are made towards improving student academic performance. Prominent of these include: Proper funding of education by government, sensitization of parents towards their children education and the support of NGOs to eradicate poverty.

**Key words:** Socio-economic factors, academic performance, students, Nigeria

### INTRODUCTION

Education is the best legacy a nation can give to her citizens especially the youth. This is because the development of any nation or community depends largely on the quality of education of such a nation. It is generally believed that the basis for any true development must commence with the development of human resources. Much then is said that formal education remains the vehicle for social-economic development and social mobilization in any society.

Nigeria like any other developing nations has witnessed prolong military rule and aborted civilian administrations, which necessitated the promulgation of decrees, edicts and laws concerning educational practices at federal, state and local government levels. The inconsistent continuation of government, due to coup d'etat de-emphasized the continuity in the implementation of educational laws and policies since 1970's till the present time. This gradually laid the foundation of fallen standard in education at the primary and secondary school levels (Shittu, 2004).

Frequent changes of ministers and commissioners of education by successive governments coupled with the politicization of education by political parties that

emerged in the country's political scene since 1979 have also brought about disparity in educational practices, which caused differential academic performance and classroom functioning of both teachers and students, from state to state.

According to Olotu (1994), in the quest of finding survival feet, the nation has evolved series of socio-economic and educational measures and policies such as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), austerity measures, Universal Primary Education (UPE), Universal Basic Education (UBE) and devaluation of the Naira. These measures have not improved the social-economic and educational status of families in the country. They have rather increased their sufferings and widened the socio-economic gap between families. Johnson (1996) lamented that parents become poor due to these hard measures, such that they can no longer provide adequately for good education of their children. Also, they can no longer provide shelter, clothing and special need of their children in school (such as provision of text books, school uniforms and good medical care and so on).

High level of illiteracy, poverty and low socio-economic status coupled with high rate of paternal and maternal deprivation of student academic needs, which was necessitated by poor socio-economic situation of the

country has thrown many farmers and old rural dwellers into untold financial problems such as poverty, lack of money to purchase necessary textbooks and working materials for their kids. Also many rural and suburban dwellers can no longer pay the school fees of their wards. These ugly situations have promoted young school students to dropout of school to engage in subsistence farming and become housemaids or engage in other menial jobs to support their academic pursuit. Hence, many students have since taken schooling as a secondary assignment and school attendance on rotational basis. The resultant problem posed by this, is poor academic performance in school examination like National Examination Council (NECO) and West African Examination Council (WAEC).

This trend is posing huge problems to parents, governments, political parties and stakeholders in education. This study thus examines the socio-economic factors responsible for the poor academic performance of secondary school students in Ido Local Government area of Oyo State Nigeria.

#### **Basic issues**

**Home background:** Home background according to PISA influences academic and educational success of students and schoolwork, while socio-economic status reinforces the activities and functioning of the teachers and students.

From the above, it is revealed that the quality of parents and home background of a student goes a long way to predict the quality and regularity of the satisfaction and provision of a child's functional survival and academic needs. Poor parental care with gross deprivation of social and economic needs of a child, usually yield poor academic performance of the child. On the other hand, where a child suffers parental and material deprivation and care due to divorce or death, or absconding of one of the parents, the child's schooling may be affected as the mother alone may not be financially buoyant to pay school fee, purchase books and uniforms, such child may play truant, thus his performances in school may be adversely affected (Shittu, 2004).

Similarly, good parenting supported by strong economic home background could enhance strong academic performance of the child. This further predicts academic performance where the child is properly counseled in the choice of his/her courses and vocation that matches his mental ability, interest and capability whereas the children to the care of the illiterate mothers will find themselves roaming about the street labouring to make ends meet.

Danesy and Okediran (2002) lamented that street hawking among young school students have psychologically imposed other problems, like sex networking behaviour, juvenile delinquent behaviour, which takes much of the student school time that necessitated the poor academic performance and drop out syndrome noticed among young school students. Nevertheless, they also lamented that the maternal and paternal deprivation of the essential needs of the young students have prompted their poor performance in public examination, such as JSSCE, WASC and NECO.

**Learning environment:** The learning environment that is free of barriers, or obstacles or distractions such as noise, gas/smoke pollutions and so on can constitute health hazards, which in turn affects or reduces students concentration or perceptual or conceptual focus to learning (Sprinthall, 1987). Markets and garages located near school have always posed a threat to students. Noise and pollution from these sources have always endangered students' life and concentration. Therefore, for an effective learning and high academic performance, schools in both rural and sub-urban and urban areas should be located off zones, characterized with smoke/gas pollutions, market centers or garages. As conducive learning environments stimulate learning, understanding and high perception.

Other factors according to Danesty (2004), complimenting environmental and socio-economic factors to produce high academic achievements and performance include good teaching, counseling, good administration, good seating arrangement and good building. Dilapidating buildings, lacking mental stimulating facilities that are characterized with low or no seating arrangement will also be destructive. Danesty, however, lamented that the innovative environment do stimulate head start learning and mental perception, not only that, it is has also been proved that students that come from simulative environment with laboratory equipments or those that are taught with rich instructional aids, pictures and allowed to demonstrate using their functional peripheral nerves like, eyes, hands and sense of taste performed better than those trained under theoretical and canopy of abstraction. Thus, teaching and learning should be done under organized, planned and fortified environment with learning instructional aids to stimulate students' sense of conception, perception and concentration to facilitate systematic understanding and acquisition of knowledge in them. In sum, a combination of a healthy family background living in good environment plus the child being educated in a conducive environment with a fortified learning or instructional aids or motivational incentives will prompt academic performance and lack of it will retard academic performance.

**Poverty:** The United States Department of Education (2000) found in a study that the relationship between poverty and students performance is not simple and direct. It concluded that poverty is an important factor accounting for differences in performance and achievement across rural, sub-urban and urban districts. However, the study concluded that poverty alone does not account for all the differences in the performance of the students. Johnson (1996), opined that poverty of parents has elastic effects on their children academic works as they lack enough resources and funds to sponsor their education and good school, good housing facilities and medical care and social welfare services. Mba (1991) lamented that poverty of the parents has made education and learning impossible for children especially disabled children in the rural areas. He lamented that poverty has further caused other problems, such as disease, frustration, poor performance and psychological problems and so on.

Ipaye (1996) in the same vein reiterated the effects of poverty of the parents on the Nigerian child. According to him, poverty syndrome imposed by economic crunch, maladministration, corruption and emergency closure of firms has imposed hardship among parents/workers. They in turn have not been able to provide adequately for the basic functional, social and academic needs of the students. Many students have thus abandoned school to engage in commercial sex or child labour to make ends meet to support self and others. By this, they spend much time on these acts than schooling; this has terrible effects on their academic performance in their schoolwork and public examination.

**Government policies:** Inconsistent government policies in the past caused a fallen standard in academic performance of school students. For instance, the politization of education by some political parties in some states including political parties, like Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) in order to make people literate politized the educational system by giving automatic promotion to students in the primary and secondary schools. These bandwagon promotions produced unqualified students to final classes, like the certificate class in SSCE, JSSCE, NECO or GCE advanced level classes, hence recording thousands of students failing such examinations. Such students now constitute the group of nuisance roaming about our major streets as hawkers of goods in our major cities or housebreakers or robbers in urban centres.

Amoloye in 2003, the then Commissioner of Education gave new directive to school principals on the abolition of automatic promotions in junior and senior secondary school system with specific requirements for

promotion guidelines. The new educational policies of the People Democratic Party (PDP) government especially in Oyo State has to a large extent normalize the irregularities noticed and operated in the schools between 1979 till 2003. Jimoh also lamented lack of funds, materials and priority attention being paid to our schools and education of our students with disabilities in the past constituted reasons for their poor academic performance. According to Jimoh, the combination of poverty and disability in the life of secondary school students have imposed serious hardship and other devastating psychological affects on the students.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State. The target populations for the study were the secondary school students in three selected secondary schools in the area. They were made up of 60 male and 60 female students.

The major instrument used in collecting data for the study was the self-developed instrument tagged social-economic and academic performance rating scale of the students. The data collected were analysed using t-test at (0.05 alpha level).

## RESULTS

**Hypothesis one:** There is no difference in the level of parental income and the provision of the basic needs of male and female students to promote high academic performance Table 1.

The result revealed that the male score a mean of 21.68 while female out scored with 22.4 though not significant. The SD recorded from the male out numbered with 46.291 and the female had a lower score of 45.823 with an observe  $t = 0.974$  which was significant at  $p < 0.05$ . But in the academic performance the male had a lower mean of 49.52 and female had a higher mean of 54.58, the SD recorded the same trend male = 41.92 and female 62.41, Obs-t = 6.513 which was not significant at  $p > 0.05$ . The hypothesis was rejected.

This revealed that there was significant difference in the parental income and the provision of needs and academic performance of the students. This also implies that parental income is not sufficient for meeting the personal family and domestic needs not to talk of meeting the educational and academic needs of their children.

**Hypothesis two:** There is no significant relationship in the orientation of students from monogamous and polygamous family background and their academic performance (Table 2).

**Table 1: T-test analysis of comparison of parental income in the provision of students' needs and their academic performance**

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	Df	Obs-t	t-cal	Sign level
Parental	M	60	21.68	46.291		0.974	4.084	<0.05
Income	F	60	22.40	45.823	58			
Academic	M	60	49.52	41.92	58	6.513	4.084	>0.05
Performance	F	60	54.58	62.47				NS

**Table 2: T-test comparison of student from monogamous and polygamous family background and their academic performance**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	Obst	t-cal	Sign level
Monogamous family	60	12.31	29.124				
Polygamous family	60	17.66	32.576	58	1.033	4.084	<0.05
Academic	60	55.67	63.91				
Performance	60	60.79	82.37	58	7.911	4.084	<0.05

**Table 3: T-test comparison of government funding of school and the academic performance of male and female secondary school students**

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	Df	Obst	t-cal	Sign level
Management and government	M	60	21.48	45.26				
Funding/Teaching material	F	60	20.33	51.34	58	2.475	4.084	<0.05
Academic	M	60	49.52	41.92	58	6.513	4.084	>0.05
Performance	F	60	54.58	62.42				NS

From the result above, students from monogamous family recorded lower mean 12.31 while those from polygamous family recorded 17.60. While their SD score follows the same trend, students from the monogamous family recorded 29.124 while those from polygamous home recorded 32.576. The Obs-t = 1.033 which was significant at  $p < 0.5$ . This hypothesis was accepted.

On their academic performance, the students from monogamous family recorded a lower mean of 55.67 while those from polygamous family recorded a higher mean score of 60.79 with their SD. Male = 63.91 and female = 83.37. The Obs-t = 7.911 while the t-cal = 4.084. This was not significant at  $p > 0.05$ . The hypothesis was rejected.

This implies that there is no significant relationship in the level of orientation and academic performance of students from monogamous family background and those from the polygamous family background. This is in the sense that parents in the monogamous or nuclear family concentrate their income on their few children and their immediate family. This makes their income manageable for their few families and also for providing their special academic, social and personal needs of their children like books in school. Hence they have time to monitor them while in school and at home.

**Hypothesis three:** There is no significant relationship between government management and funding of schools and the academic performance of male and female secondary schools' students (Table 3).

The above result revealed that in the students' response to issue of government funding, method of teaching, the male scored a higher mean of 21.48 while the female scored 20.33. Their SD revealed that male scored 45.26 and female scored 51.34 while the Obs-t cal = 2.475 which was significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

While in their academic performance, the male students recorded 49.52 lower to that of the female 54.58, the male SD = 41.92 and female = 62.42 and Obs-t = 6.513 and the tab-t = 4.084 not significant at  $p > 0.5$ .

The above implies that management and provision of funds to run schools is increasingly corresponding with improved teachers supervision/inspection by the Ministry of Education and the Local Inspector of Education Office, with corresponding improvement in teaching methods and learning environment through decongestion but academic performance of students is not receiving improvements. This might be due to other extra variables such as poverty of both students and their parents, cultural environment, religious factors, peer influence, lack of private textbook or insufficient supply of books in the library. All these are working on the side to retard government efforts in improving the standard of education and academic performance of students in schools.

## DISCUSSION

From the score of the respondents, it is evident that the home/family contributed a lot to the academic performance of the students. According to Sprinthall (1987), parents provide home for the head start of children and the material for learning, when a child is deprived of the essential needs he may be found to perform poorly in his schoolwork.

Parental income was identified in this work to be a cogent factor upon which the academic/vocational success of secondary school students lies. This was found to be low in the sub-rural areas in Ido in which this study covers. Most parental income was found not to be sufficient to sustain the academic and personal social life of the students in school. This to a large extent affects the psychological balance or homeostatic balance in the

classroom, which causes low concentration, low perception frustration, sickness and emotional disability in academic performance of the students.

The study also revealed that government funding is not sufficient to motivate learning in secondary schools or sufficient enough to attract infrastructural development in schools, to facilitate students towards seeing education as a primary process in life, rather than taking menial jobs that will give them fast money as a priority. The problems of insufficient textbooks and other educational materials contributed to the problems of teaching and learning in Nigeria schools.

### CONCLUSION

The study was an attempt to find out the relationship between the indices of socio-economic factors and students academic performance in a local survey in Oyo State. The results of the study reveal the following:

That schools are poorly funded and managed by government to facilitate high academic performance by students.

Low income of parent is a major impediment to academic success and development on the part of the students.

Student academic performance is predicted by a chain of socio-economic factors resident in parents, family network and government inconsistent nature of implementation of its policies and funding of schools.

Based on the above, the following recommendations are hereby proffered. Firstly, government should increase allocation of funds to provide for more amenities to facilitate learning in the schools.

Secondly, parents should be sensitized on the need to make education of their children and wards a priority in the face of the present economic predicament by adequately providing for their school materials.

Finally, local and international Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders in education should be sensitized to weld support for the funding of secondary school projects in Nigeria.

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