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# **IMPACT OF SCHOOL TYPE, SCHOOL POPULATION AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF STUDENT'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

By

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## **Abstract**

The study investigated the influence of school type, school population and socio-economic status of parents on secondary students' academic performance. Three hypotheses were postulated and tested at .05 level of significance. Survey research design was adopted to conduct the study. Participants included 680 students of public and private secondary schools in Akinyele L.G.A of Oyo State selected through a simple random technique. Their age range was between 14-18 yrs with a mean age of 15.7 yrs. The instruments used for data collection was a self-designed questionnaire that contain information on the independent

variables and WASCE 2003/2004 results of participants. Results of data analysis using zero – order correlation and t-test statistical procedure indicated that the parental SES, school type, school population and general school environment can make a significant contribution to students' academic performance. On the basis of these findings, suggestions and recommendations were articulated.

### **Introduction**

The relationship between parental socio-economic status (SES) and the academic achievement of children is well established in sociological, educational and psychological researches (Considine and Zappala, 2002). While there is disagreement over how best to measure SES, most studies indicated that children from low SES parents perform poorly in school compared to children from high SES families (Graetz, 1995). Most studies, however, compare students from across all SES backgrounds to arrive at the conclusion that low SES adversely affects a range of educational outcomes. Another important dimension, however, are the factors that may influence educational outcomes within particular SES bands. This paper presents data on the educational performance of children from financially disadvantaged backgrounds and examines its variation as affected by traditional measures of SES as well as school type and school population.

### **Factors that Influence Educational Performance Socioeconomic Status**

Socioeconomic status can be described as a person's overall social position to which attainments in both the social and economic domain contribute. (Ainley, John, Brian Graetz, Michael Long and Margaret Batten, 1995). It is determined by an individual's achievements in: education; employment and occupational status; income and wealth. Several comprehensive reviews of the relationship between SES and educational outcomes exist (Amao, 1987; Williams, Penelope, Connell and White, 1991; Mukherjee, 1995; Ainley, John, Graetz, Michal and Margaret Batten, 1995). These studies and reviews make it clear that children from low SES families are more likely to have lower levels of literacy, numeracy and comprehension; retention rates and exhibit higher levels of problematic school behaviour (for instance truancy).

These results remain the same irrespective of how SES is measured and whether the studies are based on individual or aggregate level data (Graetz, 1995). Similarly, studies of children's educational achievements over time have also demonstrated that. Social background remains one of the major sources of educational inequality (Graetz, 1995). In other words, educational success depends very strongly on the socio-economic status of one's parents. (Edgar, 1976, cited in Gretz, 1995). The effect of parental SES on children's educational outcomes may be neutralized, strengthened or mediated by a range of other contextual, family and individual characteristics. Parents may have a low income and a low-status occupation, for example, but nevertheless transmit high educational aspirations to their children. What family members have (material resources) can often be mediated by what family members do (for example parental support, family cohesion). The social and the economic components of socio-economic status, in other words, may have distinct and separate influences on educational outcomes. While both components are important, social factors (for instance, parents educational attainments) have been found to be the more significant than economic factors, such as a Family's capacity to purchase goods and services, in explaining different educational outcomes.

### **Type of School**

The issue of the extent to which the academic achievement of students is influenced by their own input resources versus the extent to which it is caused by the input resources of the peer population, has gone relatively unexplored. In other words, to what extent does the school environment in terms of ownership and students population compare to available resources in school exert an independent influence on student achievement, regardless of a student's own individual social status? Research has shown the importance of the type of school a child attends in influencing educational outcomes. Students from independent private schools are also more likely to achieve higher end of school scores (Buckingham, 2000). The school effect is also likely to operate through variation in the quality and attitudes of teachers (Sparkes, 1999). Teachers at disadvantaged schools, for instance, often hold low expectations of their students, which compound the low expectations students and their parents may also hold (Ruge, 1998). The dynamics of students'

interaction in school environment have found to have influence on academic achievement of students. Substance abuse within a peer group, for example, seems to be one of the strongest predictors of substance abuse on the part of an individual adolescent (Bankston, 1995; Hunter, Vitzelberg, and Berenson, 1991; Walter, Vaughn, and Cohall, 1993).

In this study, it is suggested that knowledge of the class behaviour and school environment can help in predicting individual achievement that is independent of the class and economic backgrounds of the individuals.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on these considerations, the following hypotheses were postulated:

- a) There will be no significant difference in the academic performance of students from low and high parental socio-economic status
- b) There will be no significant difference in the academic performance of students from private and public schools;
- c) There will be no significant difference in the academic performance of students from high populated and low populated schools

### **Methods**

#### **Design**

This is a survey research design. The variables were measured, as they were present in the respondents and none of them was manipulated. The dependent variable is academic performance and independent variables are socioeconomic status, school type and school population.

#### **Sample and Sampling Procedures**

All public and private high school students in Akinyele Local Government, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria formed the population for this study. The respondents in this study were randomly selected from the population defined above. The random sampling procedure was used to select eighth schools while in each of the schools;



eighty-five students were randomly selected regardless of their sex. A total of six hundred and eighty (680) respondents consisting three hundred and sixty-three (363) males and three hundred and seventeen (317) females formed the samples of the study. Their age range was between 14 to 18 years with a mean age of 15.7 years.

### **Instruments**

The dependent variable in this study was a measure of student academic performance in English language and mathematics in West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE) results of 2003/2004 academic session. This examination is standardized and, in reality, measures of a single underlying construct that we call academic achievement.

The independent variables, which include parental social economic status, school type, and school population, were measured with the aid of questionnaire. Because, parental education and occupation variables means correlated is high ( $r = .707$ ), the two variables were combined into an index called parental socio-economic status. We arrived at this variable by combining students' responses to the questionnaire items about both their mother and father's level of education and occupation. There were five hierarchically arranged categories for each parental education level, which ranged from lowest aren't education level (primary educational level) to the highest parent education level (graduated from university). There were three hierarchically arranged categories for each parental occupation level, which ranged from lowest occupation level (unskilled worker) through highest level (professional or manager/owner). Homemakers and deceased parent's levels of education and occupation were set to that of the working/living parent.

The school population is a function of the number of students in class and total population of students in school. The schools are described as overcrowded, crowded and appropriate. Base on the students-teacher ratio of one to twenty. The school type considered as a function of public and private owned. In addition to type of school,.

## Data Analysis

The zero-Order Correlation and t-test statistical procedures were used to test the hypotheses generated for this study.

**Table 1**

Zero-Order Correlations among all variables used; mathematics scores, school type, English scores; parental socio-economic status and school population.

	Moths Scores	School Type	Eng. Lang Scores	Parental SES	School Population
<b>Moths Scores</b>	1				
<b>School Type</b>	-0.56	1			
<b>Eng. Lang Scores</b>	0.63	-0.72	1		
<b>Parental SES</b>	0.38	0.48	0.72	1	
<b>School Population</b>	0.43	0.61	0.41	0.47	1

The highest correlation of  $r = 0.63$  is between English Language and Mathematics as a measure of academic achievement. The implication of this is that these two instruments are good enough to measure the dependent variables supported this assertion.

### Hypothesis One:

There will be no significant difference in the academic performance of students with parents of low and high social economic status.

**Table 2:**

Summary table of independent t-test showing the difference in the academic performance of students form low and high parental social economic status.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t
<b>Respondents from high SES</b>	374	65	5.82	670	4.68
<b>Respondents from low SES</b>	298	47	3.19		

$P < 0.05$

Table 2 confirms that there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students from low and high social economic status. The hypothesis is rejected at  $t$ -observed of  $4.68 > t$ -critical  $1.65$  degree of freedom  $670$  and  $p < 0.05$ .

### Hypothesis Two:

There will be no significant difference in the academic performance of students from private and public schools.

### Table 3:

Summary table of independent  $t$ -test showing the difference in the academic performance of students from private and public schools

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-ob
Respondents from Private School	214	58	3.45	670	3.81
Respondents from Public School	458	27	5.95		

$P d < 0.05$

Result in table 3 confirms that there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students from private and public schools. The hypothesis is rejected at  $t$ -observed of  $3.81 > t$ -critical  $1.65$ , degree of freedom  $670$  and  $p < 0.05$ .

### Hypothesis Three:

There will be no significant difference in the academic performance of students from high populated and low populated.

### Table 4

Summary table of independent  $t$ -test showing the difference in the academic performance of students from high populated and low populated schools.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t
Participants from High Populated Schools	448	29	3.45	670	3.11
Participants from Low Populated Schools	224	60	3.12		

$P d \leq 0.05$

Result in table 4 confirms that there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students from high populated and low populated schools. The hypothesis is rejected at  $t$ -observed of  $3.11 > t$ -critical  $1.65$ , degree of freedom  $670$  and  $p < 0.05$ .

### Discussion

The above results raise several implications for government policy with respect to education and human services more generally. A key finding is that where socio-economic status as reflected by the level of parental education, it was a key predictor of student academic achievement. This finding lends support to the notion advanced by some studies that the social and the economic components of the socio-economic status equation may have distinct and separate influences on educational outcomes. While both components are important, social factors, such as parents' educational attainments, have been found to be more significant than economic factors in explaining children's educational outcomes and among the most replicated results in child development studies (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). Higher status families, some researchers suggest, foster a higher level of achievement and provide higher levels of psychological support for their children (Williams, 1987; Williams et al., 1993). Our findings also corroborate this. According to (Graetz; 1995), most government approaches to addressing the effects of low SES in education are aimed at the economic redistribution of resources and direct financial assistance. (William et al.; 1993) The level of parental education, for instance, has been found to be strongly associated with factors such as the home literacy environment, parents teaching styles and investing in resources that promote learning such as quality child care, educational materials and visits to museums (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). While families with low income face greater hurdles in achieving effective

parenting which in turn often harms their children's development and educational achievement (Berk, 1997 : 547), These findings establish that low income alone is not the only factor but also academic status.

When we examined plausible reasons for the tiny, even positive, correlation between the school type and academic achievement, we found that this relationship is primarily due to the fact that public school environments tend to be poor in an average SES background concentration schools and then to the fact that it contains peers with relatively low family social status backgrounds. Minority concentration schools showed a negative influence on students' academic performance, even when we considered individual student SES.

### **Conclusion**

We concluded that there is some danger of recommending cures for socio-economic disadvantage when the malady is social rather than economic. While not withstanding to discount the importance of financial assistance (whether to schools or families), policies and programmes that also assist parent/s in providing appropriate psychological and educational support for their children should therefore be encouraged.

We suggest that in Nigeria the disadvantages of economic standing are associated so closely with the disadvantages of economic standing are associated so closely with the disadvantages of class and economic inequality. The findings of this study support the importance of taking characteristics of school populations, as well as individual school characteristics, into consideration as significant influences on individual academic achievement. Individual parental socio-economic status does have a small, independent negative effect on academic achievement. Thus, attending school with classmates who come from higher SES backgrounds does tend to positively raise one's own academic achievement, independent of one's own SES background, and other factors.

These findings highlight the need to look beyond a simple dichotomous poor/non-poor categorization to a student's family social status for a more adequate explanation of the SES and school achievement relationship. The findings of this study suggest that if a young person is from a disadvantaged socioeconomic background, has parents with low social status, then economic diversity would be

an advantage. The student would benefit from the resources that the more advantaged students would bring to the social context of the school. Our findings equally indicate that if a young person comes from a relatively privileged background, then economic diversity versus homogeneity, but rather of the contributions of student backgrounds to a social environment that exist independently of any individual student background. If this were the case, policy makers would be well advised to cap the proportion of socially disadvantaged students in any school at 30% to provide an advantageous social environment to those less advantaged, while not weakening the social environment of the more socially advantaged; however, achieving this goal could be quite a challenge.

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