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THE PREDICTIVE INFLUENCE OF ACCESS FACTOR ON QUALITY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN REMOTE AREAS OF SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The dichotomy in the distribution of educational opportunities across African countries has become a recurring phenomenon between rural and urban communities. However, the remote and rural communities seem to be bearing the brunt of uneven access to quality education than cities. Thus, improving access to quality education in remote areas where educational advantages are scarce or not available remains a great challenge in Nigeria. This study, therefore, investigated the influence of access factor (AF: Physical Access-PA and Economic Access-EA) on Quality of Secondary Education (QSE) in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria (RASN). The study was located within a post-positivist paradigm that incorporated the convergent parallel design. The multi-level mixed methods sampling technique was adopted in selecting 467 secondary school graduates. Six participants for the Key Informant Interviews comprised three principals and three senior officials from the Teaching Service Commission and Ministry of Education from three selected states in Southwestern Nigeria. Secondary School Graduate Aptitude Test (SSGAT) and Secondary School Graduate Access Questionnaire (SSGAQ) instruments were used for data collection. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation, while qualitative data were analyzed with content analysis. The access factor with physical access (67.3percent) and economic access (61.3percent) influenced QSE. The study concluded that enhancing access to QSE should be improved in RASN.

Keywords: access, physical access, economic access, and quality of secondary education.

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1. Introduction

In recent times, a growing body of literature on the challenges of access to quality secondary education in developing countries has emerged. Secondary education is facing access issues to increase participation of youth to become students and to stay in school, ensuring that actual learning takes place, and enhancing relevance of what students learn, which should prepare them for adulthood to become productive workers and participants in society [1].

Meanwhile, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the literature on education, especially with regard to access, equity, and educational attainment in general, has largely focused on primary education in line with the Millennium Development Goals [2]. The poor access to secondary education in developing countries is attributed to the Education for All (EFA) movement, which catalyzed in high enrolment in primary schools, as a result of free primary education. However, the resultant effects of expanding the enrolment of primary school pupils on resources, needed for secondary education, are not being addressed as required [3]. This has necessitated a renewed focus on transitioning and retainment of students in secondary school and ensuring that they obtain quality secondary education that can guarantee their success after school [4, 5].

Therefore, access to secondary education in Africa remains worrisome, going by available statistics. For instance, in Uganda, of 88 % of children that enrolled for primary education in 2010, only 22 % enrolled for secondary education, and even if they enroll, few complete secondary schooling successfully [6]. In Nigeria, according to available statistical enrolment figures, posted on the

Federal Ministry of Education (FME)'s website, the gap between primary and secondary school national enrollments are too wide. The national primary school enrollments for the 2013/2014, 2014/2015, and 2015/2016 academic years were 25,801,197, 25,442,535, and 25,591,181, respectively, while the national enrolment figures for secondary schools for the same academic years stood at 4,292,489; 4,935,739; 4,475,309, respectively [7]. The primary-secondary school national enrolment disparity percentages are just alarming. The figures reveal that 16.6 % for 2013/2014, 19.4 % for 2014/2015, and 17.5 % for 2015/2016 as declared by the FME for each academic year, were able to secure placements in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria. The total sum of the three academic years, combined for national secondary school enrolment, stood at 13, 703, 537, which is less than the national primary school enrolment figure for any academic year. Although, there are other dominant issues inhibiting access, carrying capacity, quota system of admission (mostly in Federal secondary schools), unaffordable cost of schooling, gender inequality, cultures and armed conflict appear to be major factors affecting secondary education enrolment in Nigeria [8].

Meanwhile, bridging access gap seems to be challenging more in rural/remote communities than urban communities [9]. Obanya [10], in his seminar paper at the Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, identified five dimensions of access: economic access, physical access, sociological access, psychological access and cultural access. Obanya [10] further added that access is the opposite of exclusion and that meaningful access ought to bring about full and unfettered educational opportunity devoid of all manners of exclusion, the results of which are successful learning, improved life chances and improved skills that reduce socio-economic inequalities in society. However, this study focuses mainly on two indicators, namely, physical access and economic access dimensions in rural communities.

In this study, physical access (school location) is seen in terms of geographical distance/proximity or barriers between school and homes of students from various communities or adjoining villages. This may be evident in several forms, namely, lack of school within a neighborhood, hard terrain (swamps, forests, mountains), and sparsely populated environs [10]. Meanwhile, Garba [11] identified major problems bedeviling Nigerian secondary education and, among others, mentions access, quality, and funding. Several schools lack required facilities for learning, while others are greatly in need of renovation. Akinwumi [12] also found that location of schools is a serious factor that accounts for differences in educational achievements of students and affirmed in his study, through experimental and controlled groups, that location affects reading comprehension of urban students positively, when compared to their rural counterparts. In a study on school location and academic achievement in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria, [13] revealed the implication of uneven access to secondary education: students in some areas that have educational facilities have short distances to get to school, while others in places without such proximity advantage trek long distances before getting to school locations. The situation in remote areas was also validated by previous findings of [14, 15] which established that the geographical location of schools has an influence on the academic achievement of students. Thus, school location appears to have an influence on quality of secondary education either in urban or rural/remote communities.

The economic situation at the household level creates problems in generalizing access to education. Even though primary to secondary education is almost free in public schools in Nigeria, education has overt/covert or direct and indirect costs, which individual households bear in educating their wards [10]. As a result, some parents who cannot afford it may sometimes engage their children in economic activity, such as hawking, towards offsetting these costs and for general survival. As a result, these children lose hours that ought to be spent in the classroom for learning. Economic access is, therefore, a strong predictor of the quality of secondary education in rural communities. Raji [16], commenting on the socio-economic status and occupations of parents in rural communities, reveals that they are predominantly farmers and petty traders. Thus, these households' lack of wherewithal to procure quality education for their wards is a great challenge in this part of the nation. This also tends to have reinforced the notion that rural areas in Nigeria are less-economically viable and might be a determinant factor for predicting educational quality in secondary schools. Kamau [17] similarly affirmed that parental financial status had a positive relationship with academic performance of students. Lacour and Tissington [18] also concur that

poor academic achievement of students is closely correlated with low socioeconomic status of families where they come from. Thus, socioeconomic status seems to have an influence on academic achievement.

Two research questions were raised to investigate the predictive influence of access factor on quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria as follows:

1. How does the physical access factor (school location) influence the quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria?

2. How does the economic access factor (socio-economic status) influence the quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria?

1. 1. Literature Review

Access and Secondary Education

The word "access" is a widely used term in education. One of the insightful and comprehensive explanations about the term is provided by the [19] in its glossary of education reform, which states that the term access refers to ways, in which educational institutions and policies ensure that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education, in which factors, such as gender, location, race, and household income, do not deny them of having access to educational opportunities. Similarly, Obayan [10] describes "access" as full educational opportunity for all, in which learning and improved life are guaranteed for all classes of beneficiaries and which ultimately translates to reduction of socio-economic inequalities in the larger society. Lewin (2007), under the Consortium for Research on Educational Access Transitions and Equity (CREATE), developed a framework that, in Obanya's opinion, is possibly the most comprehensive and empirically researched to date on access [10]. This involves five classifications of access, namely:

- Full access is not secured unless enrolment is linked to high attendance rates and time on task
- Progression occurs with little or no repetition.
- Indicators of learning outcomes confirm that basic skills are being mastered.
- Most, if not all, have opportunities to enter and complete lower secondary schooling.
- In addition, some consideration must be given to equity.

Obayan [10] condemns the misconception of access through the reductionist perspective, which says: 'get the children to school' – implying just getting them enrolled without advocating for meaningful access, which involves 'taking them through the school and ensure that they actually learn'. Although access to education is pivotal, quality education, showing that skills and competencies are being mastered, is more important. This means that meaningful access goes beyond just getting into a school but graduating with evidence-based learning outcomes.

Moreover, access to education is seen as a core issue in development and its deficit has been linked to what poverty represents. Therefore, meaningful access to education is critical to overcoming inequality and intergenerational circles of poverty. Thus, expanding access to secondary schooling remains one of the major weapons of creating meaningful livelihoods for the youth [20–22]. Meanwhile, government efforts at improving education seems not yielding enough result. As a result, there have been claims that the current learning outcomes are not good enough, and there is urgent need to salvage the current situation [23]. A plethora of recent studies has shown the need to bridge access gap in quality education. Mena [24] investigated the influence of socio-economic factors on students' access to secondary education in the Rongo district of Kenya. The researcher employed a descriptive study design, while a population of 15 secondary schools, 245 teachers, 15 head teachers and 2,500 students were targeted. Data were collected through questionnaires and interview schedules. The study indicated that some of the socio-economic factors that had the highest effects on access of students to secondary school education include the size of the family, income of parents, child labour and tuition fees. It also found that socio-economic factors were major causes of low access to secondary education. The findings also revealed other home-based factors, such as HIV/AIDS status and parental level of education. Lewin [25] opines that, inequalities in access to secondary education must be disallowed through offering of support for children of the poor to be educated.

Physical Access and Quality of Secondary Education

Nnenna and Adukwu [26] employed an ex-post facto design to examine the influence of gender and school location on senior secondary school students' achievement in Biology in the Agbani Education Zone of Enugu State in Nigeria. A multistage sampling technique was employed in choosing 328 students from rural and urban schools. Research questions were analyzed using mean and simple percentage and the hypotheses were tested with z-test. The finding showed that urban students' mean scores were better than their rural counterparts.

Joseph [27] also investigated the effect of geographical location of public secondary schools on students' academic performance in the Muleba District of Nigeria. A descriptive cross-sectional survey was employed for the study. Data collection was achieved with questionnaires and in-depth interviews from 193 respondents. The findings revealed that long distances to school, covered by students daily, have an influence on their academic performance. The results also revealed the strategies that enhanced students' academic performance, such as school facilities, incentives to students, learning resources, policies, and parental and student attitudes towards remote schools. In a related study, [13] noted that in rural communities, lack of transportation debars the movement of both teachers and students to school locations, while [28] found that school location has been a major factor responsible for dropout and mass failure due to long walks to schools among students resulting in failure to attain educational goals.

In another study on physical access to schools in Nigeria, [29] investigated the influence of socio-economic status and school location on secondary school students' performance in Accounting in Kwara and Osun States. Data were collected through questionnaires, administered to 1186 respondents, drawn through random sampling from 53 schools. For data analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics [t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)] for research questions and hypotheses, respectively, were used. The findings revealed that occupation, education, school location and social status factors have a positive impact on students' academic performance in both states. Similarly, [13] examined the influence of school location on academic performance of students in the Ekiti state of Nigeria between 1990 and 1997. The performance of students between 1990 and 1997 in the West African School Certificate Examinations in 50 secondary schools, which covered both rural and urban communities, was used. The Student Location Questionnaire (SLQ) was employed to obtain data of independent variable. Data analysis was achieved through mean and T-test. The results revealed a significant difference in the academic achievement between students from rural and urban schools. The study confirmed that the performance of students from urban locations far outweigh that of rural counterparts.

However, the result of the findings by [30] who examined the influence of school type, gender and location on students' academic performance in Ekiti State secondary schools differs from other findings. The study sampled 40 secondary schools that had presented candidates for both the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO). Data collection was achieved through a questionnaire and academic performance inventory. Percentage scores and t- test statistics were used for data analysis. The results revealed that students' academic performance was low and all independent variables in the study did not significantly influence students' academic performance.

Economic Access and Quality of Secondary Education

The impact of economic factors on educational access is widely known. In a study in Nigeria, [31] investigated the extent, to which household factors predict secondary school students' academic achievement in Oyo and Ogun States. The descriptive survey design of the *ex-post facto* type was used. A sample size of 1800 students in Senior Secondary School (SS2) was selected from 60 secondary schools of the two states. Data were collected using a questionnaire and achievement test and analyzed with descriptive statistics and multiple regression. The findings showed that home factors, such as parents' education, income and household size, had a significant composite contribution on academic achievement of secondary school students in English Language and Mathematics. The finding of the study of [31] was corroborated by [32] who also found that parental

income is positively associated with virtually every dimension of child well-being. Many studies have also revealed that children who grow up in low income or poor household are less likely to compete academically in high school [33].

Similarly, [34] also examined the relationship between education and family income using a 2008–2009 survey of nearly 10,000 children in 15 cities and nine provinces throughout China. The study used school test scores in Mathematics and English language as well as parent-reported educational progress, out-of-pocket expenses, and self-reported quality of schooling. It was reported, that children from wealthier families perform better in their education. This gap becomes wider in several Chinese cities as children get older.

Machebe, Ezegbe and Ohuoha [35] examined the impact of parental level of income on students' academic performance in high schools in Japan. The sample for this study was 300 students, selected randomly from senior high schools in Osaka and Hyogo prefectures of Japan. The instrument for the data collection was a questionnaire. The findings showed that students from wealthy families attained better academic performance, while it was also revealed, that the financial status of parents was not as significant as involvement at improving their children's academic performance. Thus, poor finances due to family background can be overcome and surmounted through parental efforts in supporting their wards in their studies at home.

A study was conducted by [36], in which they used panel data from Vietnam over the 1993–1998 periods and investigated determinants of child school enrolment. The study showed that enrolment increased faster among households that experienced more increases in wealth. Another study by [37] in Kenya equally attested to the significance of household incomes on access to education. It was established, that household decisions by parents or guardians to enroll their wards in secondary schools are determined by household income level. In other words, the higher the household income level, the higher the tendency to enroll primary school leavers for secondary education. Household income is critical in taking care of education and other multiple needs. Thus, a family with a better household income will be able to better shoulder the education of its children, while, on the other hand, a family with a poor household income will find it hard to allocate adequate funds to cater for the education of its children, since other competing needs will probably take priority. In addition, [38] examined whether households' characteristics matter in schooling decisions in urban Kenya. Their study affirmed that a strong relationship exists between household wealth index and the probability of transitioning from primary to secondary education.

Similarly, [39] in a study on evolution of inequalities in access to secondary schooling in Uganda reported that completing primary education and moving to secondary schools are functions of the socio-economic status of individual households and location. Thus, children from rural areas with household income, which falls below the 25th top percentile, are largely excluded from secondary education due to affordability.

1. 2. Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by the general systems theory (GST) and adopts the theory [40] based on the observation that some schools improve in learning outcomes, while others do not. Systems theory has been applied over the years to interdisciplinary studies, and most importantly, research in education, too, has benefitted immensely from using systems theory for investigation. Chandan [41] considers Ludwig Von Bertalaffy to be the father of GST and states that in order to understand an organized whole, we must know both the parts as well as the relations between them. Fred and Allan (2008) provide an instructive explanation about system as a set of interrelated elements working together as a unit to achieve a particular purpose, which includes input, transformation process, output, feedback, and the environment. Mele, Pels and Polese [43] too further add that systems theory is a theory that focuses on the interactions of parts to understand a whole entity. Thus, GTS gives insight into dialogue between holism and reductionism. Fred and Allan [42] classify the system into two major types that comprise open and close systems. A close system involves interacting elements without dependence on the outside environment for its survival, while an open system is dependent on the outside environment for its survival. Chandan [41] corroborates it that every system is comprised of many sub-systems. A system cannot exist independently and must take inputs

from other systems, while its outputs become inputs to other systems. The school system falls into open systems, as it always depends on the outside environment for resources and feedback. The raw material for the running of the school is derived from the outside environment. Schools transform inputs from the environment into outputs [44]. Maselesele [45] as well adds that, principals in secondary schools as government representatives have a responsibility to promote the welfare of society and use the inputs to produce outputs in the form of learning achievements from students. Thus, the quality of inputs can influence the quality of outputs in the form of quality education at every given level of education, and secondary education, as in the context of this study. The school, which is an organization saddled with the responsibility of producing quality education, must take into consideration the dynamics and influence of its outside environment. Thus, this theory provides an insight into how inputs (access factor) influence the quality of secondary education.

In the context of this study, the access factor, which comes as an input, comes into play here. Physical and economic access can impact either negatively or positively on the quality of secondary education. The physical access manifests in terms of location when students have to trek long distances for several hours each day. Either boredom or exaction of energy can even reduce passion to learn or may impact negatively on assimilation. The economic access in this study relates to the socio-economic status of individual households. Nzuki [46] alludes to this as well that evidence has shown that the socioeconomic environment, into which a student is born or brought up, can determine the learning outcome of such individual. Yakaboski and Nolan [47] also echo it that socio-economic and cultural factors could hinder students from progressing and completing secondary education successfully. Therefore, access factor is a critical input tool to drive a quality education if quality access to secondary education is to be achieved.

Aim of Research. This study was conducted to investigate the influence of access factor on quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria.

2. Materials and Methods

2. 1. Study Design

A mixed methods research design involves integrating both qualitative and quantitative data into a single study. In such case, the quantitative data component tends to be close-ended, while the qualitative component tends to be open-ended [48]. In mixed methods research (MMR), research designs are driven by research problems with 'fitness for purpose', meaning that the nature of the research enquiry dictates or justifies the type of designs [49]. The enquiry strategy, used for data collection, was a convergent parallel design, which, as noted by [50], emphasizes the timing and sequence of the design to collect both qualitative and quantitative data independently and in parallel with each other, and which then converge, yielding triangulation of data and offering complementary data on the question. The two types of data can then be compared and contrasted by appraising it for similarity, difference and complementarity. The convergent parallel design, used in the collection of data to get useful information about the contributions of access factor to the quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria, helped in getting robust views of the participants in this study. Hence, data from several sources complemented each other and helped to eliminate biases or weaknesses that may be present in using singular data source.

2. 2. Sampling and sampling procedure

In mixed methods research(MMR), it is common to apply more than one type of sample (both probability and non-probability) and different sizes and scope [51]. The multi-level mixed methods sampling technique was used. At the first stage, the researcher used the purposive sampling technique to select three states with the most rural demography that make up 50 % of the six states in the region, namely, Oyo, Ekiti and Osun. At the second stage, a cluster-sampling method was used to select each local government area with the most rural demography across the three senatorial districts of each state from the zone. At the third stage, simple random sampling was used to select a secondary school from each local government area of the senatorial district. Lastly, the proportionate sampling technique was used to select 467 (90 %) of the secondary school graduates from each of the selected schools. The participants for qualitative data, which comprised principals and

senior officials from the Teaching Service Commission/Ministry of Education, were purposively selected due to their knowledge of the phenomena under investigation. Hence, six participants were engaged in Key Informants Interview (KII). Meanwhile, the study lasted up to three years starting from 2019 to 2021 due to closure of schools as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.

2. 3. Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The appropriateness of tools for data collection in research requires utmost diligence because it determines the research outcomes. The data collection instruments could therefore be standardized instruments or well-developed reliable instruments [52]. This current study employs a mixed methods approach in the collection of qualitative and quantitative data through questionnaires and key informant interviews (KII). These tools include Secondary School Graduates' Aptitude Test (SSGAT), Secondary School Graduate Access Questionnaire (SSGAQ) and Key Informant Interview guide.

2. 4. Ethical Consideration

The current study followed all the ethical requirements as contained in the Postgraduate Guide of the University of Fort Hare. Thus, the researcher sought ethical clearance from the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC). The ethical clearance certificate number HEN011SOKU01 was issued and signed on 13th November, 2019 for this study. The researcher further sought and obtained permission from the Teaching Service Commission and Ministry of Education of Ekiti, Oyo and Osun States in Nigeria. In addition, an informed consent was obtained from all the participants in the study.

3. Results

3. 1. Research Question 1

How does the physical access factor influence the quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria?

To answer this research question, **Table 1** presents the summary of data, collected on the influence of the physical access factor on the quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria.

Table 1

Influence of Physical Access (school location) on Quality of Secondary Education

Physical Access (School Location)	True	Not True
The long distances between home and school influences my learning in the school	369 (79.1 %)	98 (20.9 %)
The lack of schools in the immediate neighbourhood / villages affects my punctuality at school	336 (71.1 %)	131 (28.1 %)
Difficult and inpenetrable terrains like swamps, creeks, hills, forests, and mountains stop me from going to school sometimes	264 (56.5 %)	203 (43.5 %)
The location causes me to trek several kilometers each day.	363 (77.7 %)	104 (22.3 %)
Lack of transportation facility to school affects my concentration at school	308 (66 %)	159 (34 %)
I am sometimes tired after my arrival at school due to long distance.	347 (74.3 %)	120 (25.7 %)
I sleep in the class after trekking long distance to my school	245 (52.4 %)	222 (47.5 %)
Total	2133 (67.3 %)	1037 (32.7 %)

On the influence of physical access (school location) on the quality of secondary education in remote communities of Southwestern Nigeria, **Table 1** shows the influence of the physical access

factor on the quality of secondary education. **Table 1** reveals that 67.3 % of student respondents in rural communities of Southwestern Nigeria believed that physical access (school location) influences the quality of their secondary education, while 32.7 % of the respondents were of the opinion that it does not influence the quality of secondary education. This implies that physical access is a strong factor that influences the quality of secondary education.

Interviews, held with the Secondary School Principals **(SSP)** and Teaching Service Commission officials **(TCO),** also complement the quantitative data above. The participants provided information on the influence of physical access (school location) on the quality of secondary education in rural communities. Their responses are as follows:

SSP1 revealed:

About eight villages are coming here, it is a Community Grammar School. It is not only for Iluju. There are other adjoining communities whose children come here every day. Communities like Lasubu Alada, Kofeso, Ladanu Atoruko, Fapote, Sanmo and Ajeikose, no secondary school in those places. There is no transportation. Majority of the students trek even up to an hour. I called parents to organize transportation to be bringing their wards. They told me, how will they get the bus and who bears the cost? The parents cannot afford it. Very few are brought on Okada (motorcycle). Conservatively, 80 % cent of them, trek to schools. In essence, it affects their performance. They arrive at school around 9 to 10am. If you consider their location/distance, you will pity them.

SSP2 commented:

We have students from different villages. The means to school is through trekking. Some even come from communities in the neighboring Kwara State to school here in Ekiti State.

SSP3 said:

A good school location is beneficial because some students trek a long distance from their home to school; they find it difficult to cope in academic work. They trekked mainly to the school.

TCO3 corroborated:

This community in Osun State is remote and share boundary with Kwara State and to another side, with Ekiti State. Students trek and complain about distance whenever they come late to School. The parents do not bring them because of costs, attached to education. Students come from surrounding villages/towns of Kwara and Ekiti States. The means of coming to school is mainly by trekking.

TCO1 revealed:

I went to secondary school in a rural community (village). I trekked like 3km each day. For instance, look at Iluaje in the past; their wards went to Ilora until government gave them a school. Definitely, it will affect their quality*. It will be ideal that you recommend to government in your findings to establish more schools in the neighborhoods where enrolment is high like Ogbomoso to Okoo (15km – 30km) where only one, Olumoyin High School, Moyin was there. But government established another school at Okin, within a ward. The solution is establishing more schools to curb trekking and bicycle riding, which affect the* quality *of secondary education.*

TCO3 differs:

Physical access has no negative impact on school in this locality. Students may have no access to internet connection. The access to electricity is also limited. There are few functioning libraries, and with inadequate supply of books. Limited exposure of students to opportunities. Most of them trek to the school, while few ones go on commercial motorcycles.

It can, therefore, be summarized, that physical access is taking a negative toll on the quality of secondary graduates from these rural communities based on the comments of the respondents. Most of the respondents agreed that the means of transportation to school locations is through trekking and through popular *Okada* (motorcycle) by a few of them. Hence, this finding has revealed a common problem in rural communities, namely, the lack of schools in the immediate environment due to the sparse locations of these villages.

3. 2. Research Question 2

How does the economic access factor (socio-economic status) influence the quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria?

To answer this research question, **Table 2** present the summary of data, collected on the influence of the economic access factor on the quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria.

Table 2

Influence of Economic Access (Socio-economic status) on Quality of Secondary Education

Economic Access (Socio-economic status)	True	Not True
I cannot afford to buy required learning materials, such as textbooks, exercise books etc.	312 (66.8 %)	155 (33.2 %)
I cannot replace my uniform and sandals due to my parents' financial situation.	305 (65.3 %)	162 (34.7 %)
I cannot afford to eat what I like during school break time (lunch).	306 (65.5)	161 (34.5 %)
I do not go to school regularly during farming season.	271 (58 %)	196 (42 %)
I hardly come to school on market days.	257 (55 %)	210 (45 %)
My parents find it difficult to pay my school levies, such as PTA levy	268 (57.4 %)	199 (42.6 %)
Total	1719 (61.3 %)	1083 (38.7 %)

Table 2 above shows the influence of the socio-economic access factor (socio-economic status) on the quality of secondary education in remote communities of Southwestern Nigeria. **Table 2** above reveals that 61.3 % of student respondents in remote communities of Southwestern Nigeria believed that economic access (socio-economic status) influences the quality of secondary education they receive, while 38.7 % of the respondents were of the opinion that it does not influence the quality of secondary education. This implies that economic access is a strong factor that influences the quality of secondary education.

Interviews, held with the Secondary School Principals **(SSP)** and Teaching Service Commission officials **(TCO),** also provide complementary views for the quantitative data. The respondents provided information on the influence of economic access (socio-economic status) on the quality of secondary education in rural communities. Their responses are as follows:

SSP1 commented:

The majority of parents are farmers and traders. In the past, they would not come to school, they will rather go to market to push a wheelbarrow, but now that this government is no more collecting any fees, things are changing. They are in school now. Students cannot afford textbooks. They rely on teachers' notes; even it is the same experience in town. Out of 80 students about three may buy textbooks (English Language & Mathematics) but [these are] mostly teachers' children. Students cannot afford even the government's levy. During the rainy season, when they have what to sell in farm, you wouldn't see them in the school, they go to farm to plant tomatoes. Even in the town, they will follow bricklayers to get daily pay.

SSP3 agreed:

The parents are mainly peasant farmers. They cannot buy books on their own. Only few students can buy needed materials for learning. Just a few students were able to pay when fees were introduced. Most students do not come to school on market days. They give reasons – economic reasons. They sell farm products to take care of other needs.

SSP2 noted:

Meanwhile, in terms of buying things like textbooks and others, parents and guardians have lukewarm attitudes. Only a few responds appropriately to such call, mainly those from educated families. The schools are not charging any levy.

TCO1 remarked:

Most parents are farmers, perhaps only less than 2 % are not farming. Even in cities, some parents do not support buying books, talk less of village. Parents are not financially buoyant to afford it. Affordability is related to value for education, too; they can afford money for ''Owanbe'' (the name for a social function). Some parents could not pay one thousand naira during Governor Ajimobi's regime. It was never about ability to afford it, rather; value attached to education. Principals have reportedly told us that students shun schools in rural areas, and then go to market or farm.

TCO2 revealed:

The majority of students are from low socio-economic status homes – peasant farmers and petty traders. Majority of them cannot afford to buy the required textbooks. No, not all of them were able to pay levy. Very few were able to pay when development levies were being paid in the State. There were reported cases of students going to market, or farms as the reason for occasional absenteeism.

TCO3 commented:

Most parents are traders and farmers. Some students do not show up in the school, which is impacting on their learning. We always have a good number of them for the sessional examination. In essence, they don't value learning. They don't attach value to learning. Unless we send them back home, they wouldn't buy books. We use PTA forums to encourage parents, but parents want government to do all for them. They don't want to do anything unless they are coerced to do it. A levy was introduced, the Education Trust Levy. Despite we sent them home, some parents did not pay 500 naira. Some students will be absent and go to market/farm during school session.

The above qualitative data from respondents reveal that rural/remote communities in the Southwestern Nigeria are not catering adequately for the education of their wards. They are predominantly farmers and petty traders. This socio-economic status is impacting negatively on the quality of secondary education. The value, attached to education, is quite revealing too as parents prefer to commit their resources to social functions rather than paying for textbooks or other learning materials that could aid learning of their children.

4. Discussion

This study determined if access factor (physical and economic access) influences the quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria. The findings revealed that physical access (school location) and economic access (socio-economic status) affect the quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria. This implies that access is a strong factor that influences the quality of secondary education. The findings also established that trekking long distances to school daily contributed to student difficulty in coping with daily classwork, while most of the students are from low socio-economic status homes – peasant farmers and petty traders. The current study is similar to that of [53] on the effect of school availability and distance from school on children, in which it was established, that access to school has a strong impact on children's time in different ways. That is, the travel time and distance have negative effects on school attendance, which ultimately may affect student performance. The current study's findings are in line with that of [54] who examined the effect of expanding access of day secondary schools, which revealed that pupils' access to schools within their neighborhood reduces long distance. Similarly, the findings of the current study agree with the findings of [27] who investigated the effect of geographical location of public secondary schools on students' academic performance and revealed that long distance has an influence on academic performance. The result of the current study is equally consistent with that of [13] who revealed that transportation remains a major factor hindering movement of teachers and students to school locations across rural communities, while this study is also similar to that of [28] who found that school location resulted in dropout and mass failure due to long walks among students with the result that they fail to attain educational goals.

Moreover, this study is in consonance with that of [29] on the influence of socio-economic status and school location on secondary school students' performance in Accounting in Kwara and Osun States ,which revealed that occupation, education, school location and social status factors

have a positive impact on students' academic performance. The current study's findings also support that of [55] who assessed factors that influenced achievement of basic reading literacy outcomes in public primary schools in Nyeri County and revealed that socio-economic status and education of parents are home factors that strongly influence the achievement of basic reading literacy. Likewise, findings from [37] in Kenya also corroborate earlier findings that there is a significance relationship between household incomes and access to education. The study, conducted in Nigeria by [31], equally agrees with earlier affirmations that parental education, occupation, income, involvement, and household size had significant joint contribution on the academic achievement of secondary school students

However, the findings of this study negate that of [30] who examined the influence of school type, gender, and location on students' academic performance in Ekiti State secondary schools and revealed that all the three factors examined had no significant influence on students' academic performance.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research. This study had its limitations. However, measures were put in place to mitigate its adverse effects on the outcome of the study. The study was conducted in areas hard to reach by motorcar. Furthermore, they were far from the various state capitals of Southwestern Nigeria. Motorcycles were used to access these schools. The other limitations were time and funds for data collection during the fieldwork, considering the large geographical scope of the study. Also, engaging administrative bureaucracy to secure approval for the study from ministries of education of various states in the Southwest was a daunting challenge but due to the resilience of the researcher, it was resolved after persistent visits. After obtaining approval, some participants were not comfortable with the voice recording but later agreed, after much persuasion that the intendment of the interview was purely for academic purposes. Based on the research findings, the following areas are suggested for future research:

• This study could be carried out using other geographical locations other than Southwestern Nigeria to validate or negate the findings of the study.

• Other independent variables relating to the quality of secondary education could be examined.

• A comparative study between public and private secondary schools could be undertaken in the same geographical location of the study.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of access factor on the quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria. It concludes that both physical access (school location) and economic access (socio-economic status) greatly influenced the quality of secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria. It was also established, that trekking long distance to school daily contributed to student difficulty in coping with daily classwork, while most of the students are from low socio-economic status homes-peasant farmers and petty traders. In view of this, it is recommended, that policy makers take efforts to address factors inhibiting access to quality secondary education in remote areas of Southwestern Nigeria. This could be done through the establishment of more schools to bridge access gap in rural/remote areas. Government and civil society organizations could also embark on interventions that can ameliorate poor living standard of parents who are mainly farmers and petty traders, and such interventions would ultimately impact positively on the students.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in relation to this paper, as well as the published research results, including the financial aspects of conducting the research, obtaining and using its results, as well as any non-financial personal relationships.

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