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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF PARENTS ON CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between the Socioeconomic Status (SES) of students and their academic achievement was examined in this study. The research was carried out on a randomly selected sample of 623 Junior Secondary School students from four secondary schools in Ado-Odo, Ota, Ogun State. The parental educational and occupational background was used as a measure of family social status. Student achievement is a score of the standardized Junior Secondary School Examination in English language organized by National Examination Council [NECO]. Parental Social Economic Status in particular has a significant and substantive independent effect on individual academic achievement.

INTRODUCTION

The family remains the most significant group in which the child belongs. Writers have focused much attention, in contemporary years on the differences between the life situations of family of low and middle social classes. This is because among other reasons, it has been said to have a very great influence on the children's academic performance. Musgrave (1979) asserts that the family does not only transmit material benefits to its off springs, but it also leaves behind some of the more undeniable and immaterial aspects of social class. The child goes through social experience of power and esteem upon which his ideas of class are built. He further said that high income enable parents to give their children advantages that money can buy. It is a great help for children to live in pleasant environments, be provided with high staffing ratio to receive stimulating experiences such as foreign travel in adolescence, and to have the right entry' into the 'right circle'. Ginsberg and Bronstein (1993) found that "children from more economically disadvantaged environments do poorer academically, are rated by teachers as less

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fundamentally motivated, and are more dependent on external support to direct and assess their academic performance.

Helplessness is a fundamental problem of the poor. The people with low socioeconomic status (i.e. the poor) have less influence over the society in which they live and are less likely than members of the middle class to be treated adequately and with appropriate concern by social organizations. The poor receive less health and public services, and their lack of influence, information, and educational and economic resources restrict the options available to them. The poor have little option of work or accommodation and little contact with other communal groups; they are susceptible to job loss, economic/financial stress, and poor health and subject to unfriendly bureaucratic decisions in the lawful system and in public institutions like welfare organizations.

Parke and Locke (2002) points out that children on poverty are twice likely to be retained in a grade and drop out of high school. This can be due to the fact that the children from poor homes often times can not afford recommended books, attend extra lessons outside the usual school hours because they cannot afford the lesson fees, etc. Conger and Elder (1994) described low socioeconomic status as "a high level of economic pressure (which) indicates spousal agreement that the family (a) cannot meet its material needs, (b) often falls behind in paying its debts, and (c) has had to cut back on everyday expenses in an attempt to live within available means". Often times, socioeconomic status is used interchangeably with social class.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Parenting Style

Prior research has shown that there is a connection between socioeconomic status and parenting style. Low socioeconomic status is related to harsher, authoritarian parenting style, probably intervened by other factors. It can also be said that parenting style helps to encourage or demoralize a child. McLoyd (1990) offered a variety of examples to support his conclusion that "economic loss and poverty affect children indirectly through their impact on the parent's behavior toward the child". He found out that: poor mothers are more likely to use aggressive reprimand and are generally less supportive of their children than their advantaged counterparts. Poor mothers also expect more obedience, use less reasoning, and use more physical punishment. Conger and Elder (1994) asserts that families at a variety of income levels who suffer economic stress of any kind are more likely than non stressed families to

experience depression, marital clashes and to be harsh with their children which indicates that, poverty and economic stress are linked with parent-child conflict which leads to lower grades and weakens emotional and social development. It has been put forward that parents of high socioeconomic status have more positive attitudes towards their children's schooling and have high expectations for the children since they have the economic empowerment to buy the advantages that money can buy.

2. The Effect of the Environment on Children's Academic Performances

The family environment as well as the schools that economically disadvantaged adolescents attend, are factors in their poor academic preparation, and may contribute to their high dropout rate. In fact, the difference in home learning environment of higher- and lower-income children accounts for nearly half of the effect income on the achievement scores of preschool children (Klebanor et al., 1998). Family distractions and diversity in dialect can make a student's transition into normal schooling a difficult one. Competing needs for early work experience, along with the heavy dating practices common to several minority adolescents, as well as criminal behavior, also increase the chances of dropping out (Pallas, 1984)). One of the major problems for minority students is the common cultural perception that school failure always follows family problems. When social issues such as drug and alcohol use, sexual misconduct and criminal behavior, violence are brought to school with the students, academic success does not seem to be a major concern.

Financial resources may encourage or discourage going to school. The emotional tone, including stress and disorganization, can increase vulnerability to sickness, leading to high absentee rates. Moreover, the children from comfortable homes eat balanced diet and thus have a good health. Again, the values he is exposed to at home are similar to the ones he finds in school and therefore he is able to adjust easily to school life. A feeling of belonging to a comfortable social school environment further helps him to show his best. "A study carried out in 1970 assessing the effects of background variables such as sex, academic ability, and socioeconomic status found that ability and social class contributed to school outcomes. A student's academic ability and the family's socioeconomic status are the key areas used to account for individual differences in academic success."

3. Home Environment and Its Effect on Cognitive Development

Boocock, (1992) said that the most powerful predictor of school performance is socioeconomic status: the higher the socioeconomic status of the student's family, the higher his academic achievement. According to him, this relationship has been documented in countless studies and seems to hold no matter what measure of status is used (occupation of bread-winner, family income, parent's education, or some combination of these). Although poverty tends to have a negative influence on adolescent development and behaviour, these effects have been found to be mediated by the organizational structure and cultural features of the neighborhood (Elliot et al., 1996).

Apart from schools financial debt in such an area, students in these concentrated poverty-stricken, public housing neighborhoods are deprived of such commodities as books, pencil, learning gadgets and scribbling paper in the home, even when the books are bought, it is often at the expense of some meals in the home. Even though they seem like minor necessities, they are motivation to learn at home, which invariably affect their learning in school. Savin-Williams and Berndt (1990) support the influence of the parent at that it "appears to be greater than that of the best friend on educational plans". The children display the unspoken and often unrecognized manners of their parents. The values that the children from comfortable backgrounds are exposed to are similar to the ones they find in school. Besides the unprepared students entering the classroom, these neighborhoods bring in unnecessary violence, drug problems, and unmotivated students. Kids come to school with overwhelming stresses of untimely adult tasks forced upon them, in the classroom. A child from a poor background may not pay adequate attention in school, as he/she may be preoccupied with fear of walking a long distance home from school by themselves, or wondering how they are going to eat tonight, or concerned that their father made enough money to buy some writing materials for them.

The children from comfortable homes often carry their problems to school every morning. And how can the parent(s) stimulate learning if they are also worried about more important things such as putting food on the table for the family or if they have a ride to work because their old car's battery has been dead for two weeks and they can not even fuel their old cars regularly? This is different from fortunate kids from comfortable homes who wonder about things like what amusements they are going to ride this weekend when their parents take them to the fair, or what Flavor

ice cream they want after school All of these concerns affect the way a child receives and perceives information to learn. This therefore contributes to the dropout rate greater than 50% in many large cities (Haberman, 1998). "Among children who come from lower-class socially impoverished circumstances, there is a high proportion of school failure, school dropouts, reading and learning disabilities, as well as life adjustment problems" (Deutsch, 1990,p.163). Inspiration on a personal level adapting to an individual's needs is necessary in the home for normative progress in the school environment.

4. The Effect of Undernourishment/Malnutrition on Children and Their Academic Performances

A child from a wealthy or comfortable home eats balanced diet and thus, have a good health to concentrate on his/her academics. Children need to eat nutritious food, sleep well, have safe and comfortable places to play, and receive standard medical care. These things help children get a good start in life and reduces the probability of health challenge later in life and also prevents learning problems. Nutrition plays a very big role in the development of a child. If a child is hungry in school he or she is less likely to concentrate. This idea dates back to early psychological findings that before one can be complete basic needs must be met. By the time children reach their sixth birthday, he adds, most of the brain's total development has taken place and the body tends to "prune" unused neural pathways. For this reason, positive mental stimulation early in children's lives will better equip them on afterward in life. A child may even be considered to have malnutrition even when they are getting food. There are many different types of classifications of nutritional disorders. These nutritional disorders were classified by Jean Mayer (1976) into the following four categories:"

- Over-nutrition - the condition that results from consuming too many calories.
- Dietary deficiency - the condition that results from consuming a diet that lacks adequate amount of a particular nutrient, such as a vitamin or mineral.
- Secondary nutrition - a condition that results from the inability to successfully utilize the food that is eaten due to some other factor, such as illness or diarrhea.
- Under-nutrition-the condition that results from not consuming an adequate amount of food.

The various causes of malnutrition could be:

- Insufficient food supply
- Inadequate purchasing power
- Reduced health conditions
- Incomplete knowledge about nutrition (Berg, 1987)

The most regular factor linking the causes of malnutrition mentioned above is poverty. Poverty creates an environment in which all these factors are a creator and a creation of each other. Undernourishment or Malnutrition is a problem that can affect almost every part of a person's life. The following list reviews the five main areas where malnutrition takes its charge:

1. Malnutrition stops children from growing to their full potential.
2. Malnutrition results in a reduced resistance to disease and a longer revival time from illness.
3. Malnutrition may weaken mental capacity by affecting cognitive ability, delaying the development of motor skills, increasing the number of days children are absent from school and making it more difficult for these children to be alert and interactive.
4. Malnutrition can result in a reduced physical capacity, agility and job ability for an adult workforce.
5. Malnutrition results in increased death rates.

There are many matters that can help children do well in school. There are also many reasons behind each child's reasoning, anything from environmental stressors, to eating disorders, to insufficient sleep. "Evidence has shown that the best thing to do when a child is uninvolved is to get the parent involved." Parents motivate children greatly when they show excitement concerning their education. In our research, however, we attempted to control the traits that individual students bring to their schools, to determine if the predominant characteristics related to the parental social economic status of those students still have a statistically measurable impact on achievement. We suggest that, given the recognized importance of parental social economic status in shaping adolescent behaviour, knowledge of this class can make a significant contribution to our ability to predict academic achievement that is independent of the location and type of the school of individuals.

HYPOTHESES

Based on these considerations, we formed the following hypotheses

- 1) There will be no significant difference between academic achievements of student from high SES parents and those from low SES parent.
- 2) There will be no significant difference between academic achievement of students whose parents are poor and single and those whose parent are poor but live together.
- 3) There will be no significant difference between academic achievements of students who are poor but attend private schools and those who are poor but attend public schools.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The respondents in this study were selected from population of students in Nigerian Junior Secondary Three who sat for NECO examination in 2003. 340 Junior Secondary School students from four secondary schools in Ado-Odo, Ota Ogun State were randomly selected. Stratified random sampling procedure was used to select four schools, Faith Academy, The Bells, Igonmode and Ansarudeen Secondary School [private and public] while in each of the schools; eighty-five students were randomly selected regardless of their sex. A total of 340 respondents consisting one hundred and sixty-three [173] males and one hundred and sixty-seven [167] females formed the sample of the study. Their age range was between 10 - 14 years with a mean of 12years.

Design

This survey study adopted ex-post factor research design. The data collected were existed data and they were not manipulated in any form.

Procedure

The study used the following individual-level sociodemographic variables as control measures, which each student self-reported on his or her test answer document.

Research Instrument

Standardized NECO results in English Language and Mathematics was used. The demographical data was obtained from school, each of the respondents described SES of their friend's parents in three sentences.

Results

Data were subjected to the t-test of independent means to determine the difference, in variables identified for the study.

RESULT

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant difference between academic achievement of student from high SES parents and those from low SES parent.

Table 1: Summary table of independent t-test showing the difference between academic achievement of student from high SES parents and those from low SES parents

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-observed	P-value
Respondents from high SES parents	59	42	3.19	310	3.84	<0.05
Respondents from low SES parents	253	17	3.52			

Result in table 1 confirms that there is a difference between academic achievement of student from high SES parents and those from low SES parent. The hypothesis is rejected of 3.84 > t-critical 1.65.

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showing the difference those parents are poor and together.

t-observed	P-value
4.85	<0.05

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Result in table 2 confirms that there is a significant difference in between academic achievement of students whose parents are poor and single and those whose parent are poor but live together.

The hypothesis is accepted at t-observed of 4.85 > t-critical 1.65, degree of freedom 211 and p<0.05.

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant difference between academic achievements of students who are poor but attend private schools and those who are poor but attend public schools.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-observed	P-value
Respondents from private schools	44	68	2.45	211	3.14	<0.05
Respondents from public schools	169	27	3.22			

Table 3: Summary table of independent t-test showing the difference between academic achievements of students whose parents are poor but attend private schools and those whose parents are poor but attend public schools.

Result in table 3 confirms that there is a difference between academic achievements of-students whose parents are poor but attend private schools and those whose parents are poor but attend public schools. The hypothesis is accepted at t-observed of 3.14 > t-critical 1.65, degree of freedom 211 and p<0.05

DISCUSSION

Social scientists have recognized the importance of an individual's family socioeconomic status (SES) as an influence on the academic achievement of children since at least the mid-1960s (Coleman et al., 1966). Current research in this area has demonstrated the enduring effect of SES on school achievement even while controlling a variety of other input factors (Caldas, 1993; Rumberger & Willms, 1992). In addition, research on other areas of child and adolescent behaviour such as substance abuse and delinquency have repeatedly shown that the peer environment is one of the most important influences on child and

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HYPOTHESES

Based on these considerations, we form

adolescent behavior (Bankston, 1995; Coleman, 1961; Hunter, Vitzelborg, & Berenson, 1991; Reitman, 1981; Waiter, Vaughn, & Cahall, 1993).

This lack of clarity about the extent to which the social capital acquired from schoolmates constitutes an input independent of family social capital has led Coleman to portray schools as places in which students bring inequalities generated outside the schools, rather than as places that create inequalities, regardless of the social assets and liabilities that students bring from their own families. Coleman (1990b) argued, "schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and social context". Following Coleman's own logic, however, as well as the research of those who have found peers in school to be major determinants of adolescent behavior and attitudes, we argue that schoolmates create their own social context, independent of any individual's own background, which has a strong influence on individual academic achievement.

A number of researchers have recently cast this issue of influences on academic achievement as a matter of process factors versus input factors. They have generally described process factors as those influences on academic achievement, over which schools exercise control (e.g., class size, school size, and per pupil's spending), and input factors as those influences that schools cannot control (e.g., student body SES and community environment of school) (Caldas, 1993; Caldas, Killebrew, Ducote, Franklin, & Crone, 1992; Mandeville, 1988; Rachal, Weitman, Garber, Brooks, & Oescher, 1990; Selden, 1990; Shavelson, McDonnell, Oakes, & Picus, 1987).

CONCLUSION

The findings support the importance of taking characteristics of school type and peer parental SES, as well as individual school characteristics, into consideration as significant influences on individual academic achievement. This finding highlights the need to look beyond a simple dichotomous poor/non-poor categorization to a student's family social status, and the social status of his or her schoolmates, for a more adequate explanation of the SES/school achievement connection.

The results suggest that if a young person is from a disadvantaged socioeconomic background, has parents with low social status, and belongs to a good school, then, 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. On

"The Influence of Socioeconomic Status of Parents on children..."

the other hand, our findings indicate that if a young person comes from a relatively privileged background but attend a bad school, then; diversity could be a disadvantage, at least in terms of academic achievement. The issue, in other words, may not be one so much of diversity versus homogeneity, but rather of the contributions of student backgrounds to a social environment that exists independently of any individual student background. (For the record, we do not believe that academic achievement is the sole important outcome-of public education.)

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