IMPACT OF PARENTAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ECONOMICS IN ENUGU EDUCATION ZONE, NIGERIA

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of parental socio-economic status on the academic performance of secondary school students in Economics within the Enugu Education Zone, Nigeria. Despite governmental support for education through the provision of instructional materials and competent teachers, students' performance in Economics has remained suboptimal, as evidenced by consistently low scores in standardized examinations. This research addresses how parental factors - such as income, and educational background - contribute to these outcomes. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, with a sample size of 400 respondents comprising Economics teachers, parents, and senior secondary school students. Data collection was carried out using a validated questionnaire, and results were analysed using mean scores and standard deviations, with t-tests used to evaluate hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Findings indicate that parental socio-economic status significantly affects students' academic performance, highlighting disparities in access to educational resources, parental involvement, and the overall home environment. The implications of these findings underscore the need for targeted policies and interventions to support students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring equitable educational opportunities.

Keywords: Economics, socio-economic status, academic performance, income, parental level of education

Introduction

Education facilitates the transfer of societal values and knowledge, guiding children to adulthood and preparing them for future societal roles. However, in Nigeria's Enugu Education Zone, students' performance in subjects like Economics has consistently fallen short despite available educational resources and competent teaching staff. Academic success, as defined by test scores and achievement in educational pursuits, can be influenced by various factors, with parental socioeconomic status playing a significant role. Socioeconomic status—comprising income, education level, and occupational status—affects access to resources, parental involvement, and expectations, which in turn influence students' motivation, self-efficacy, and overall academic outcomes. This study investigates the extent to which parental socioeconomic status impacts the academic performance of secondary school students

in Economics within this educational context. The research aims to highlight the critical factors affecting educational outcomes, aiding stakeholders in addressing disparities and enhancing academic success.

Education is a vital human right, essential to sustained development, a tool for full involvement in society, and it promotes peace and stability (Ninomiya, 2013). Three contexts, including the home, the school, and the community, were noted by Posse and Melgosa (2012) as essential to the educational process. The goals of these three environments, according to the experts, must be synchronized for an educational process to be successful.

Education, a cornerstone of societal development, is influenced by a myriad of factors, including individual characteristics, family background, and societal structures. Among these factors, parental socioeconomic status, particularly parental income, and educational attainment, has been widely recognized as a significant predictor of student achievement. According to Coleman (2013), there is a significant link between a child's parental environment and his academic achievement, which explains why some kids perform differently in school. Drawing from Hanushek and Ettema (2016), socioeconomic status has the biggest impact on academic achievement of all the factors. Parental income and educational attainment are key factors this study looked at.

Parental income, a key socioeconomic status component, provides families access to essential resources that can support children's education. Higher-income families are more likely to afford quality education, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, tutoring, and educational materials. These resources can enhance students' cognitive development, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities, leading to better academic performance. According to Kaselema (2015), parents' financial status has an impact on children's academic success. Financially disciplined parents with sustainable income provide their children with the best shot at a successful future. Parents' behaviours toward their children attending school are influenced by their beliefs and goals for their children's education and success (Helen, 2012).

Parental educational attainment also plays a crucial role in shaping children's educational outcomes. Highly educated parents tend to have higher expectations for their children's academic success and are more likely to engage in educational activities at home, such as reading, writing, and discussing current events. Additionally, educated parents may possess the knowledge and skills to provide effective academic support and guidance to their children. In the study of Osiki (2011), children of illiterate parents perform poorly academically in school because they are unable to supervise their children's exercise books. There is evidence that parents' education can have a positive impact on student's academic performance since parents are in an excellent position to serve as their children's second teachers. Their support in this area encourages their kids' curiosity about learning, which improves their schoolwork.

This study aims to investigate the specific impact of parental income and educational attainment on students' academic performance in Economics within the Enugu Educational Zone, Enugu State. By examining these factors, we seek to understand the mechanisms through which socioeconomic status influences educational outcomes and to identify potential interventions to address disparities in student achievement.

Statement of the Problem

Despite governmental support for secondary education in Nigeria, student performance remains suboptimal, particularly in subjects like Economics. This raises questions about other influencing factors, including the

socioeconomic background of students. While numerous factors, such as teaching methods, peer influence, and school environment, have been extensively studied, the potential impact of parental factors on student achievement, particularly in subjects like Economics, remains under-explored.

It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the specific influence of parental factors, including parents' income level, and educational background on their children's academic performance in Economics. By delving into the socioeconomic context of students, this research seeks to identify potential barriers and opportunities that may contribute to disparities in academic outcomes.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses guided the study:

Research Questions

1.   To what extent does parental level of education influence the academic performance of students in Economics?

2.   To what extent does parental income level influence the academic performance of students in Economics?

Hypotheses

Ho_1 There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the influence of parental educational level on the academic performance of students in Economics.

Ho_4 There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the influence of parental income level on the academic performance of students in Economics.

Review of Related Literature

A review of empirical studies is a critical component of research that involves examining and synthesizing previous research findings related to the topic under investigation. The purpose of this review is to identify what is already known about the subject, highlight gaps in the current knowledge, and demonstrate how the present study contributes to the field. This review helps in refining research questions, hypotheses, and methodology by learning from the strengths and weaknesses of prior studies.

In this study, socioeconomic status is defined by parents' level of educational attainment and level of income, and it impacts access to resources necessary for the academic performance of students. Parents with higher SES can typically provide better academic support and resources, which positively influence student learning outcomes. Parental income for example has been linked to access to quality educational resources, such as tutoring and co-curricular and extracurricular activities, which in turn enhance academic performance. Studies indicate that children from higher-income families often have advantages, including better schooling and materials.

Osuafor (2013) carried out a study on the influence of family background on the academic performance of secondary school Economics students in Anambra State, Nigeria. A survey design was adopted for the study. Five hundred and forty – six (546) senior secondary two (SS2) were drawn by simple random sampling from 14 schools within Awka, Nnewi, and Onitsha Education Zones, in Anambra State. Three research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. Data were collected using a researcher-constructed questionnaire and students SS1

and SS2 school results. The results revealed that family structure, parents' occupation, and educational level of parents did not have a significant influence on students' performance. Both studies are similar in their purpose and research design. Both studies aim to find out the influence of family background which socio-economic status is among, on the academic performance of students.

In the same vein, Nwawulu (2016) carried out a study on the influence of home and school environments on the academic performance of secondary school students in the Ihiala local government area of Anambra State. Three research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The researcher used a total of 280 subjects as a sample for the study. The questionnaire was the instrument used for the study. The data collected were analyzed using tables and percentages. The study revealed among other things that the social class of parents determines the student's academic performance. The study is related to the present study as they both delve into the influence of the home environment/socio-economic status of parents on the academic performance of students. The present study shed more light on socio-economic factors as one of the home factors.

There is some evidence that the socioeconomic status of parents plays a role in the academic performance of their children in school. Even though there is a lot of research undertaken on socioeconomic status in general, more analysis needs to be explored specifically on socioeconomic status in the education sector in the Enugu education zone and how this relates to students' performance. Empirical studies have contributed to knowledge of how socioeconomic status affects students' academic performance.

Methodology

The study employs a descriptive survey research design. This approach was chosen to assess the impact of parental socioeconomic status on student academic performance. The study population includes all senior secondary school Economics students II, parents, and teachers of Economics in the Enugu Education Zone, Nigeria. A sample size of 400 participants was determined using Taro Yamane's sample size formula. Then, simple random sampling and stratified sampling techniques were employed to select the participants of the study. This ensured effective representation. Data were collected using the "Socio-Economic Status of Parents and Students' Academic Performance" (SESPSAP) questionnaire, which comprises demographic questions and items measuring parental educational attainment level, income, and students' performance in Economics. The instrument was validated by subject specialists, while reliability was confirmed through a test-retest method, yielding a Spearman's Rank order Correlation Coefficient of 0.97.

Data were collected over two weeks, with the researchers administering and retrieving questionnaires immediately after completion to ensure a high response rate. Data were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation for research questions and independent sample t-test for testing hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The benchmark for the level of acceptance for the mean responses of participants in the research questions is 2.5, while for the hypotheses, the general rule applies. That is, when the P-value is greater than 0.05 (Significant Level), it means that the result is not significant. When the P-value is less than 0.05, it is statistically significant (P>0.05 = Not Significant; P<0.05 = Significant).

Results

The findings are presented according to the two main socio-economic variables of the study, students' parental level of educational attainment, and students' parental level of income.

Parental Level of Educational Attainment and Students' Academic Performance in Economics

Table 1: *Mean Responses on Parental Level of Educational Attainment and Students' Academic Performance in Economics*

N=400

Key:

S/NO	ITEMS: The extent parental level of education attainment impacts the academic performance of students in Economics	Respondents								
		Parents (29)			Economics Teachers (19)			SS2 students (352)		
		($\overline{X}$)	S. D	Dec.	($\overline{X}$)	S. D	Dec	($\overline{X}$)	S. D	Dec
1	Highly educated parents choose the right schools for their children	2.38	0.75	Rej	2.85	0.35	Acc	3.24	0.84	**Acc**
2	Semi-educated parents may not understand the importance of providing recommended textbooks for children	2.64	0.75	Acc	3.33	1.11	Acc	3.27	0.50	**Acc**
3	Highly educated parents assist children in choosing relevant subjects for their studies	2.42	1.12	Rej	3.25	1.11	Acc	3.36	0.35	**Acc**
4	Semi-educated parents may not provide a conducive learning environment	2.67	1.11	Acc	2.93	1.20	Acc	2.94	0.36	**Acc**
5	Highly educated parents provide adequate learning aids for their children	2.76	1.78	Acc	2.79	1.25	ACC	2.76	0.45	**Acc**
6	Semi-educated parents may not be able to monitor the academic and social progress of their children	2.99	1.87	Acc	2.64	1.24	Acc	2.99	0.55	**Acc**
7	Highly educated parents assist children in school assignments	2.82	1.99	Acc	2.75	1.33	Acc	2.91	0.55	**Acc**
8	Semi-educated parents may not be able to arrange for supportive teachers for children outside the school	2.51	0.99	Acc	2.93	0.95	Acc	2.60	0.50	**Acc**
	Cluster mean	2.64	1.65	Acc	2.93	1.62	Acc	2.75	1.46	**Acc**

$\overline{X}$ − Mean

S.D – Standard Deviation

Dec. – Decision

Rej. – Rejected

Acc. - Accepted

The study found that parents' level of education significantly impacts students' academic performance in Economics. Parents agreed on six items, while teachers agreed on all items, reaching the benchmark of 2.50. SS2 students also agreed on all items, with all items having a mean average greater than 2.5. Both parents and teachers indicated that parents' level of education plays a reasonable role in students' academic performance. Overall, parents' education significantly impacts students' academic performance in Economics.

H_{O1}: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the impact of parents' educational attainment level on the academic performance of students in Economics

Table 2

t-test of significant difference between the mean responses of male and female respondents on the impact of parents' educational attainment level on the academic performance of students in Economics

espondents	n	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Level of Sig	Decision H_0
Female	284	2.69	1.11	398	1.98	1.96	0.05	Rejected
Male	116	2.50	0.91					

Interpretation: The given information indicates that t-cal = 1.98 and t-crit = 1.96. Since t- cal > t - crit, this suggests that the p-value is less than 0.05. A p-value less than the significance level (alpha = 0.05) means that the likelihood of observing the data, or something more extreme, is sufficiently low under the null hypothesis.

Decision: Because the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0). This implies that there is strong enough evidence to conclude that a significant difference exists between the mean scores of female and male respondents.

Conclusion: Since the p-value indicates statistical significance (p-value < 0.05), we conclude that the difference between the mean scores of female respondents (2.69) and male respondents (2.50) is significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis, affirming that the means are not equal. This suggests that there is a significant difference between the mean responses of male and female respondents on the impact of parents' educational attainment level on students' academic performance.

Parental Income Level and Students' Academic Performance in Economics

Table 3

Mean Responses on Parental Income Level and Students' Academic Performance in Economics

Key:

$\overline{X}$ − Mean

S/NO	ITEMS: The extent parents' income level influences the academic performance of students in Economics	Respondents Parents (29)			Economics Teachers (19)			SS2 students (352)		
		($\overline{X}$)	S. D	Dec.	($\overline{X}$)	S. D	Dec	($\overline{X}$)	S. D	Dec.
1	Parents with high-income levels can pay students' school fees regularly	3.15	1.88	Acc	2.67	1.11	Acc	2.82	1.78	**Acc**
2	Parents with low-income level may not provide necessities for students' education	2.88	1.99	Acc	3.03	1.99	Acc	2.64	1.67	**Acc**
3	Parents with high-income levels can always provide adequate medical care for their children	2.92	1.90	Acc	2.89	1.88	Acc	2.82	1.87	**Acc**
4	Parents with low-income level may be incapacitated to provide adequate feeding	2.94	1.88	Acc	2.89	1.82	Acc	3.07	0.99	**Acc**
5	Parents with high income levels can enroll their children in good schools with boarding facilities	2.76	1.78	Acc	2.93	1.12	Acc	2.76	1.78	**Acc**
6	Children of low-income parents are more aggressive with low self-esteem	2.99	1.87	Acc	2.79	1.35	Acc	2.99	1.87	**Acc**
7	Students of high-income parents enjoy better reinforcement for good academic performance	2.82	1.99	Acc	2.75	1.87	Acc	2.82	1.99	**Acc**
8	Children of low-income parents suffer deprivation and denial of some rights and opportunities	2.51	0.99	Acc	2.61	1.87	Acc	2.51	0.99	**Acc**
	Cluster mean	2.87	1.53	Acc	2.82	1.64	Acc	2.80	1.84	**Acc**

S.D – Standard Deviation

Dec. – Decision

Rej. – Rejected

Acc. - Accepted

The study found that parents and teachers agree that parents' income level significantly influences students' academic performance in Economics. Teachers also agree, with all items reaching the benchmark of 2.50. Overall, parents, teachers, and SS2 students agree that parents' income level significantly influences students' academic performance.

H$_{O2}$: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the impact of parents' income level on the academic performance of students in Economics.

Table 4

t-test of significant difference between the mean responses of male and female respondents on the impact of parents' income level on the academic performance of students in Economics

Respondents	n	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Level of Sig	Decision H$_0$
Female	284	2.56	1.01	398	0.15	1.96	0.05	Not Rejected
Male	116	2.58	1.11					

This hypothesis analysis table presents the results of a t-test comparing the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding the impact of parents' income level on the academic performance of students in Economics.

Interpretation: t-calculated (0.15) is much less than t-critical (1.96), indicating that the p-value is greater than 0.05. When the p-value is greater than the significance level (0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H$_0$).

Decision: The results suggest that male and female respondents have similar views on the topic, as the mean scores (2.56 for females and 2.58 for males) are close, and the difference is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Conclusion: Since the t-calculated value is lower than the t-critical value and the p-value is greater than 0.05, there is not enough evidence to claim a significant difference between the mean responses of male and female respondents. Therefore, we do not reject the null hypothesis, implying that there is no significant difference in how male and female respondents perceive the impact of parents' income level on the academic performance of students in Economics.

Discussion of the Findings

Parental Education and Academic Performance

The findings of this study indicate that parental education level is a significant predictor of student academic success. More educated parents are better equipped to create supportive home learning environments. They can actively assist with homework, emphasize the importance of education, and set higher academic expectations for their children. These findings align with the work of Hanushek and Rivkin (2016), who posit that educated parents possess greater resources and knowledge to invest in their children's education, ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes. Additionally, Onoche and Okpala (2015) contend that children from literate households are more likely to receive encouragement in their academic pursuits, thereby contributing to higher levels of

achievement. These insights underscore the crucial role of parental education in shaping a child's academic trajectory.

Parental Income and Academic Performance

The study further reveals a strong correlation between parental income level and student academic performance. Families with higher incomes are better positioned to provide the necessary resources and support for their children's education, including paying school fees, purchasing textbooks, and creating conducive home learning environments. Abubakar (2013) emphasizes that higher-income parents tend to place greater value on education and invest more in their children's academic success. Conversely, students from lower-income families may face challenges due to limited financial resources, potentially leading to poorer academic outcomes. Evans (2014) highlights that children from low-income families often experience cognitive limitations stemming from reduced stimulation and fewer learning opportunities at home, which can negatively impact their academic performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that parental education and income levels are significant factors influencing student academic performance in Economics. More educated parents are better equipped to support their children's learning, while higher-income families can provide essential resources and opportunities. These findings underscore the importance of socioeconomic factors in shaping educational outcomes.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1.   Targeted Interventions for Low-Income Families: The Government needs to implement programmes that provide low-income families with access to educational resources, such as tutoring, after-school programmes, and educational materials. In addition, offers financial assistance to help low-income families cover the costs of education, such as school fees and textbooks.

2.   Parental Education and Involvement Programmes: The Ministry of Education needs to develop programmes to educate parents about the importance of early childhood education and effective parenting strategies. They should also encourage parental involvement in schools through activities like parent-teacher conferences, volunteer opportunities, and workshops.

3.   School-Based Support Services: The school administration needs to provide comprehensive school-based support services, such as counselling, mentoring, and tutoring, to address the academic and social-emotional needs of students. Furthermore, the administrators need to create a positive school climate that promotes student engagement and motivation.

4.   Policy-Level Interventions: Parents and teachers need to advocate for policies that reduce educational inequality, such as increased funding for public schools in low-income areas and equitable distribution of resources. More so, they should persuade the Government to implement policies that support affordable housing and job creation to improve family economic stability.

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