

INFLUENCE OF FAMILY BACKGROUND ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT'S ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of family background on students' academic achievement in senior secondary school in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was employed for this study. Two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study consists of all senior secondary students from 103 public secondary schools in Ebonyi State. Three public secondary schools were purposively selected and used for the study. In the three schools, all SSII students numbering three hundred seventy (370) were used as the subject of the study. A-18 item questionnaire titled (Family Background Influence Questionnair (FBIQ)), designed by the researchers was used as instrument for data collection. Three experts validated the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established using Crunbach alpha method which yielded a reliability coefficient was 0.83. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study revealed that students from educated parents achieve more than thier counterparts from uneducated parents. The finding also, revealed that students from small size families enjoy more parental attention and as a result achieve better academically than those from large size families. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended among others that parents should diversify their sources of income to be able to provide fund for their children's schooling irrespective of the family background.

Keywords: Academic achievement, Family size, Family background, Parents, Students.

Introduction

Education is an important instrument of change in modern societies. Education embraces all those experiences of the individual through which knowledge is acquired and intellect enlightened. Education is what goes on from one generation to another generation. Education is exclusively used for the development of human beings in the cognitive, affective, psychomotor and psycho-productive domains. It also involves a desirable approach in human behavior through the process of teaching and learning (Kingdom and Maekae, 2013). According to Onyeabor (2018) formal education is a consciously planned form of socialization in a formal setting such as school while non-formal education involve all those systematic programmes and processes of education and training that is done outside formal education setting. All these forms of education cannot be achieved without the influence of the family.

Family is the first social environment the child finds itself. Family is a primary social group of parents, offspring and possibly other members of the household. Family is a small kinship structural group with the key function of natural socialization of the new born (Akubue and Okolo, 2008). A family could also be categorized as extended or nuclear. According to Onyeabor (2018) extended families are the type of families prevalent in African countries, in which large group of related kin in addition to parents and children live together in the same household. Nuclear families are families where married couple resides together with their children. This type of family is common in Western countries (Onyeabor (2018). Other categories of families according to Anderson and Taylor (2000) include traditional families – where the father is the major breadwinner and mother at home rearing children; divorced families–families that have been reconstituted following the breaking of marriage; single parent families–likely headed by women; step families–with new siblings and new parents stemming from re-marriage. The families begin the process of education and provide physical and psychological needs of the child. This supports the views of Onyeabor, (2018); Victor, (2017); Ani, Obodo, Neboh and Tafi (2021) that the school location, gender, and family background have great influence in determining child’s intellectual ability.

Family background refers to all the conditions and circumstances in the family which influence the child physically, intellectually and emotionally Muola (2010). Children coming from different family backgrounds are affected different by such family conditions, that is why some children have good family background while some have poor background due to family size. Family size has to do with the total number of people in a single family which may include the father, mother, children and even the extended members – all living in one hamlet. Family (small or large size) remains the primary environment of every child. According to Onyeabor (2018) the size of the family determines to a great extent the relative amount of physical attention and time which each child gets from his parents. Large families are more common among the lower class of the society. Children in large families may suffer poverty and lack parental encouragement and stimulus which motivate their academic achievement (Eamon, 2005). Similarly, smaller family size has been linked with high academic achievement (Victor, 2017; Alio, 1995).

Moreover, students with fewer siblings are likely to receive more parental attention and have support that leads to better school performance. Onyeabor (2018) opined that the polygamous family sizes which were naturally large, reduces the chances of children going to school in the first instance. In addition, children from such backgrounds who are in schools have reduced chances of achieving their goals. According to Victor (2017) parents of such families are mostly illiterate and incapable of providing adequate motivation for their children in schools as compare with the literate nuclear families. The economic implication of large family size is better explained in Kanayo (2019) who observed that as families get larger, parents cannot give their children the same amount of individual attention. Parents could not afford to provide their children with so many of the things which will help them to make the best possible use of their years at school such as educational aids, and quiet comfortable rooms in which to do homework undisturbed by the television, outings to places of interest, leisure time pursuits, and opportunities for traveling.

Parental level of education is another family background variable. Parental educational level refers to the highest educational attainment of parents. It may range from the high school to professional. Parents' level of education is part of a larger constellation of psychological and sociological variables influencing children's school outcomes (Enyinna and Ezikel-Hart, 2021). Level of education influences parents' knowledge, beliefs, values, and goals regarding childrearing, so that a variety of parental behaviors are indirectly related to children's school performance. Students whose parents have higher levels of education may have an enhanced regard for learning, more positive ability beliefs, a stronger work orientation, and more effective learning strategies than the children of parents with lower levels of education. Parental educational level is the characteristic that may affect the parental involvement in an individual's academics, when a parent is not educated, it influences the ability or willingness for that parent to involve him or herself in child's learning. Parental educational level is known as a factor positively related to children's academic achievement (Grissmer, Kirby, Berends & Williamson, 1994). The family is the main factor influencing the lives and outcomes of students (Okantey, 2008). The educational level of parents is a powerful factor influencing children's academic success. It has been established that generally, the educational level of parents is greatly connected to the educational attainment of their children. Parents play an immense and significant role in the academic performance of their children. Educated parents would have increased emphasis on educational excellence. Educated parents are equipped by virtue of their education to take cognizance of the fact that parent-student-school-community relationship is important in order to promote educational attainment and academic achievement of their children and so they make the partnership a priority (Okantey, 2008). The importance of parental level of education to academic achievement of students cannot be over emphasized. Students from professional and to a lesser extent managerial occupational backgrounds exhibit higher academic performance (Gary, 2001). In support of this view, Onochie and Okpalla (1985) opined that educational level of parents which is an indicator of socio-economic status has direct influence on child's values and academic achievement in the school. They mentioned that children from illiterate families may learn little or nothing from home that can help them develop interest in academics. This is in contrast to what is obtainable from children from literature families where parents provide atmosphere conducive for the formation of good study habits (Ogbugo-Ololube, 2016; Mutodi & Ngirande, 2014; Qeca, 1980).

The structure of the family is another factor that determines the students academic achievement. Structurally, a family is either broken or intact. A broken family in this context is one that is not structurally intact for various reasons; such as death of a parent, divorce, separation, desertion and illegitimacy in which case, the family was never completed (Coukline 1996). Life in a single parent family can be stressful for both the child and the parent and such families are faced with the challenges of diminished financial resources, assumptions of new roles and responsibilities, establishment of new pattern in intrafamilial interactions and reorganization or routines and schedules, (Agulanna 1999). In single parent families, children may suffer some psychological and social problems which affect their academic performance. Danesy and Okedian (2002), noted that street hawking among secondary school students have psychologically imposed other problems, such as sex networking behaviour, juvenile delinquent behaviour, which take much of the student school time that necessitated the poor academic performance and drop out syndrome noticed among young school students. Okunniyi (2004) asserted that a child who suffers maternal and paternal deprivation may experience academic problems including truancy in the school. This is because the child may lack some necessities like school fees, books and uniforms. These conditions, according to the authors, are not conducive for effective parenting because when the single parents are overburdened by responsibilities and by the own, emotional, reaction to their situation, they often become irritable, impatient and insensitive to their children's needs.

Apart from the structural pattern of the family, another powerful variable in the family that determines the students academic achievement is the family socio-economic status (SES). According to (Jeynes 2002), the socio-economic status (SES) of a child is most commonly determined by combining parent's educational level, occupational status, and income level. Social class and economic status of the parents determine the type of school and the standard of training they desire for their children. The socio-

economic status of a family is capable of affecting the behaviour of the children and determines their aspiration. Families with high socio-economic status often have more success in preparing their children for school because they typically have access to wide range of providing their young children with high quality child-care, books and encourage children in various learning activities at home. They also have easy access to information regarding their children's health, as well as social, emotional and cognitive development (Ojo and Yilma 2010), Ojo and Yilma also noted that in all socio-economic groups, parents face major challenges when it comes to providing optimal care and education for their children and these challenges are more pronounced in poor families. This, according to them, is because sometimes, when the basic necessities are lacking, parents must place top priority on housing, food, clothing and health care, regarding education materials and books as luxuries. They added that poor families may also have inadequate or limited access to community resources that promote and support children's development and school readiness.

According to Francis (2007) the lower income families may be aware of the importance of education in the society, but at the same time, they are also aware of their limited resources to measure up with such educational demands. According to the author, a family that can scarcely provide for the basic needs of the family which include food, shelters and clothing will hardly motivate the academic excellence of their children, instead they will pressurize their children so seek for job opportunities with the little education they acquired so far to support the family. The implication of the agreement is that such families are likely to give their children poor academic background because of lack of financial support. Other family background variables that influence the academic achievement of students include parents' motivation, and parental occupation. The occupation of one's parents may determine to a large extent one's opportunity to attend secondary school or not. Ezeji (2001) noted that parents like their children to take to their occupation, like parents who are lawyers, doctors, musicians among others. Students from professional and to a lesser extent managerial occupational backgrounds exhibit higher academic performance (Gary, 2001). In Nigeria most children whose parents cannot afford to pay for high cost of formal education enroll into apprenticeship programmes such as carpentry, brick laying, petting trading and others.

Most students in Nigerian secondary schools are in greater risk of poor academic achievement in both internal and external examinations. Evidences of the poor performances are seen in both students' internal and external examination. For instance, the available records of WAEC result analysis from 2015- 2021 show a continuous decline in students overall performance in school certificate examinations.

Government, parents, teachers and students blame one another for students' poor performance in schools. Parents blame teachers for lack of dedication to duties. The teachers blame government for poor salaries hence they are poorly motivated, parents also accuse government for not equipping the schools with learning materials, government blame parents for not doing good home work and the students are blamed for lack of discipline and dedication to their studies. It is against this background that the researchers deemed it necessary to investigate the influence of family background on students academic achievement in Abakaliki education zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the influence of parental level of education on students' academic achievement?
2. What is the influence of family size on students' academic achievement?

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of parental level of education on students' academic achievement

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students and on the influence of family size on students' academic achievement

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used to examine the influence of family background on student's academic achievement in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi state. The population of the study consists of all the senior secondary (SS 2) students in 103 public secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The sample size for the study comprised three hundred and seventy (370) students from three public secondary schools in the study area. The schools for the study were purposively selected from each zone of the three education zones in Ebonyi State. A-18 item questionnaire titled (Family Background Influence Questionnaire (FBIQ)), designed by the researchers was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two clusters based on the variables of the study. The first cluster contains 12 items, the second cluster contains 6 items respectively, adding up a total of 18 items. The questionnaire has two parts. Part one provides demographic data of the respondents, part two provides information on students' family background. The questionnaire was structured in form of four –point likert scale coded as follows: Strongly agree (SA)--- 4, Agree (A)----3, Disagree (D)---2 and Strongly disagree (SD)----1

The instrument was face and content validated by three experts, one in Measurement and Evaluation, two in educational Administration and Planning, all from Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu alike Ikwo Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Their comments and suggestions were duly adhered to, for the final production of the instrument. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was used to obtain the internal reliability estimate of 0.83 which shows that the instrument is reliable and would measure what it is supposed to be measure. Two research assistants were used to administer the questionnaire to the respondents using direct delivery approach that enabled the collection of completed copies of the questionnaire immediately to avoid loss. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results are presented on table 1-4 according to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Research Question 1: What is the influence of parental level of education on students' academic achievement?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses of Male and Female Students on the Influence of Parental Level of Education on Students' Academic Achievement

S/ N	Item Description	Male Students			Female Students			Grand			Decision
		N ₁	Mean	SD	N ₂	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
1	Educated parents always want their children to be educated.	55	3.60	0.66	315	3.50	0.70	370	3.55	0.68	Agreed
2	In homes of educated parents, there are conducive environment for studies	55	3.00	0.00	315	3.01	0.08	370	3.00	0.04	Agreed
3	Educated parents arrange for supportive teachers for the subject/subjects which their words/children find difficult in the school.	55	3.62	0.62	315	3.62	0.61	370	3.62	0.62	Agreed
4	Parents who are	55	4.00	0.00	315	4.00	0.00	370	4.00	4.00	Agreed

	educated guide their children in school assignments and home work.										
5	Only educated parents who are on high-income status can train their children beyond secondary school level.	55	1.85	0.36	315	1.92	0.26	370	1.89	0.31	Disagreed
6	Educated parents always demand for progress reports of their children to know the children's academic and social progress.	55	3.16	0.37	315	3.20	0.40	370	3.18	0.81	Agreed
7	Educated parents on prestigious occupation want their children to take up the same type of occupation	55	1.13	0.34	315	1.08	0.27	370	1.11	0.31	Disagreed
8	Children from educated parents achieve better academically	55	4.00	0.00	315	3.99	0.08	370	4.00	0.04	Agreed
9	Some occupations do not give educated parents time to attend to their children's academic needs.	55	2.42	0.50	315	2.32	0.47	370	2.37	0.49	Disagreed
10	Parents who are educated provide most of the recommended textbooks and other learning aids for their children.	55	2.23	0.85	315	2.41	0.79	370	2.32	0.81	Disagreed
11	Educated parents who are not on high-income cannot afford to provide the basic necessities required for their children's education.	55	2.16	0.69	315	2.21	0.74	370	2.19	0.72	Disagreed
12	Parents who are educated encourage their children to study subjects which are pivotal for good university courses.	55	2.56	0.50	315	2.52	0.50	370	2.54	0.50	Agreed
Cluster Mean									2.81	0.45	Agreed

Key: Number of Respondents: N_1 = Number of Male Students, N_2 = Number of Female Students

Analysis of data as presented in Table 1 shows the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of parental level of education on students' academic achievement in Ebonyi State with their corresponding standard deviations. Data presented in Table 1 above revealed that the respondents agreed on items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 12 with total mean of 3.55, 3.00, 3.62, 4.00, 3.18, 4.00 and 2.54 while the respondents disagree with items 5, 7, 9, 10 and 11 with respective values of 1.89, 1.11, 2.37, 2.32 and 2.19.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of parental level of education on students' academic achievement.

Table 2: t-Test Analysis of the Male and Female Students on the Influence of Parental level of education on students' academic achievement

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	df	T	Sig. Value	Alpha Value	Decision
Male	35	36.37	1.47	0.19840	368	1.798	0.167	0.05	Not Significant
Female	315	35.99	1.34	0.07529					

Table 2 is a t-test analysis of the responses of male and female students on the influence of parental level of education on students' academic achievement. The table shows that $df = 368$, $t = 1.798$, sig. Value = 0.167 and alpha value = 0.05 level of significance. Since the sig. Value (0.167) is greater than the alpha value (0.05), the result is not significant, hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the perceptions of male and female students on the influence of parental level of education on senior secondary students' academic achievement in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of family-size on students' academic achievement?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses of Male and Female Students on the Influence of Family Size on Students' Academic Achievement

S/N	Item Description	Male Students			Female Students			Grand			Descion
		N ₁	Mean	SD	N ₂	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
1	Students from small size families enjoy more parental attention than those from large size families.	55	3.60	0.66	315	3.50	0.70	370	3.55	0.68	Agreed
2	Small size families motivate and discuss the students' academic career with their children.	55	3.85	0.36	315	3.89	0.32	370	3.87	0.34	Agreed
3	The size of the family determines to a great extent the relative amount of physical attention and time which each child gets from his parents.	55	4.00	0.00	315	4.00	0.00	370	4.00	0.00	Agreed
4	Students form large family sizes perform better academically when their parents provide basic	55	2.35	0.48	315	2.25	0.43	370	2.30	0.46	Disagreed

	educational aids and equipment for their studies.										
5	Students from small-size families achieve better academically than those from large size families.	55	3.56	0.50	315	3.54	0.49	370	3.55	0.50	Agreed
6	The polygamous family sizes which were naturally large, reduces the chances of children going to school.	55	3.04	0.77	315	3.01	0.82	370	3.02	0.80	Agreed
Cluster Mean									3.38	0.46	Agreed

Analysis of data as presented in Table 3 shows the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of family size on students' academic achievement in Ebonyi State with their corresponding standard deviations. Data presented in Table 3 above revealed that the respondents agreed on items 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 with total mean of

3.55, 3.8, 4.00, 3.62, 4.00, 3.55 and 3.70 while the respondents disagree with item 4 with total mean value of 2.30.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of family size on students' academic achievement.

Table 4: t-Test Analysis of the Male and Female Students on the Influence of Family Size on Students' Academic Achievement

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	df	T	Sig. Value	Alpha Value	Decision
Male	35	21.40	1.41	0.189984	368	1.921	0.47	0.05	Not Significant
Female	315	21.25	1.44	0.08063					

Table 4 is a t-test analysis of the responses of male and female students on the influence of family size on students' academic achievement. The table shows that $df = 368$, $t = 1.921$, sig. value = 0.477 and alpha value = 0.05 level of significance. Since the sig. value (0.47) is greater than the alpha value (0.05), the result is not significant, hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the perceptions of male and female students on the influence of family size on senior secondary students' academic achievement in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study are discussed and compared with empirical studies done previously by other researchers. These discussions are carried out based on the issues relevant with the research question and null hypotheses that guided the study. Influence of parental level of education on students' academic achievement. The focus of this research question was to establish the influence of parental level of education on students' academic achievement. The result of these findings as summarized in Table 1 showed that the respondents overwhelmingly agree that parental level of education is a contributory factor in students' academic achievement. This is so because the grand mean of the responses from both male and female students is 2.81 which is above the benchmark of 2.50. Also, from the test of hypothesis 1 as presented in table 2, it is obvious that male and female students do not significantly differ in their responses on the influence of parental level of education on academic achievement of students as they both agree that parental level of education influences students' academic achievement to a large extent. The findings of this study tend to agree with the opinions expressed by Qeca (1980) and

Enyinna and Ezikel-Hart, (2021). who asserted that children from literate families where parents provide atmosphere conducive for the formation of good study habit are in better chance of performing well in schools. Moreover, Gary (2001) find out that the importance of parental level of education to academic achievement of students cannot be over emphasized. Accordingly the scholar, students from professional and to a less extent managerial occupational backgrounds exhibit higher academic performance.

With reference to research question two, it is the view of respondents that family size is a contributory factor in students academic achievement as presented in Table 3. The respondents agreed that the size of family influence students academic achievement. Also, children from small size families do not necessarily perform better academically than those from large size families. Also, from the test of hypothesis 2 as presented in table 4, it is obvious that male and female students do not significantly differ in their responses on the influence of family size on academic achievement of students as they both agree that family size influences students academic achievement to a large extent. This finding corroborates those of Victor (2017); Kanayo, (2019) who also conducted a separate studies bordering on the influence of family size on students' performance. In line with the findings of this study, Durorsaro and Durosaro (1990) found out in their study that family size influence students' academic achievement. Their study revealed that children from small size families perform better at school than their counterparts from both average size and large size families. Onyeabor (2018) also observed that polygamous family sizes which were naturally large reduces the chances of children going to school in the first instance. In addition, children from such backgrounds who were in schools have reduced chances of achieving their goals.

Conclusion

This paper tries to find out how family background influence students' academic achievement. The paper employed descriptive survey research design in which self-administered questionnaire was administered to 370 respondents from three selected secondary schools within Ebonyi State, Nigeria. From the findings of the study, it was concluded that family background influence academic achievement of students in schools. Prominent among the family background factors include parental educational level, family size, parental income and parental motivation. Educational statuses of the parents and students' academic achievement have a close relationship between them. This is because parents themselves having being to school realized the importance of being educated. Parents stand better chance to support their children for better academic achievement. Moreover, a child from large family size, who has strong determination can compete favorably with another child from small family size. Moreover, most children from small families are over pampered and undetermined.

Recommendations

Based on this background, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. Parents and guardians are encouraged to utilize their high educational level by directly involving, participating and assisting in their children's homework, education and activities both at school and at home.
2. Parents of low educational status should as much as possible integrate their relatives, friends and neighbours (privileged to be educated) into the academic upbringing of their children at home.
3. Teachers and administrators should provide feedback to parents concerning the progress of their children.
4. Teachers should understand that teaching is a job of conscience as well handle the students as their own children; try by all means to meet the students' academic social and psychological needs.

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