INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL BACKGROUND ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at investigating the family background factors that can influence students' academic achievement in Senior Secondary School in Umuahia Education Zone in Abia State. Four research purpose and four research questions were formulated. The design adopted for this study was Ex-post Facto design. The population of the study consists of all senior Secondary students in the three local government areas in Umuahia Education Zone. From the findings of the study, it was concluded that family background factor influence academic achievement of students in schools. Prominent among the family background factors include parental educational level, 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. They stand better chance to support their children for better academic achievement.

Keywords*: Family background, Students, Education, Parents*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education is the best legacy a nation can give to her citizens especially the youths. This is because education is very important in the development of any nation or community. Every parent wants his or her child to do well in school. Parents expect their children to imbibe acceptable norms, value and attitude of the society. No parent is happy to see his or her child live contrary to the norms of the society.

Education is the process of transmitting what is worthwhile to members of the society. Education embraces all those experiences of the individual through which knowledge is acquired and intellect enlightened. For Nwabachili and Egbue (1993) education is what goes on from one generation to another generation. In this context, education is the process of socializing the child to grow up as a fulfilled member of the society through informal, formal and non-formal process.

Informal education is the process of acquiring knowledge about the environment and beyond through living with one another.

Many informed Nigerians, government, educationist and the public alike are deeply worried over the problem of poor performance in schools as reported in the 1995 Joint Admission and Matriculation Board Examination results (Jamb 1995). They argue that if the issue of poor performance in Nigerian schools is left unchecked in our school system that the aims and objectives of education as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2006) would perpetually remain an illusion.

However, the blame of this poor performance is place only on the school. For example the poor performance in the West African Examination Council researched by Albert (2015) university of Nsukka, Nigeria. It is necessary to realize that the school is not the only agency for the education of the child. Family of the child equally plays significant role and there is a family-school relationship as stipulated in the family school relationship model, Ryan and Adams (2000). It is within the family that the child acquires and organizes his first experience and then move to the school for his or her secondary experience, Ryan (2000). It is also a proven fact in psychology that intelligence and most types of ability are not necessarily innate but that they are usually modified by environmental factors such as learning motivation, nutrition and encouragement of both parents, schools and the alike Spencer and Aber (2004).

Family is the first social environment the child finds itself. According to Clifford (1981) family remains the primary environment of the child. The author emphasized that family environment has more chances of increasing or decreasing the intellectual achievement of the child. Akubue and Okolo (2008), defined family as a small kinship structural group with the key function of natural socialization of the new born. Similarly, in Okunniyi (2004), family is defined as a primary social group of parents, offspring and possibly other members of the household.

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 are why some children have good family background while some have poor background. Citing fleege, Eke (1999) noted that with some families, the background way vary from time to time for the same individuals.

A family could also be categorized as extended or nuclear. Extended families are those in which large group of related kin in addition to parents and children live together

in the same household. This is the type of families prevalent in African countries. Nuclear families are families where married couple resides together with their children. This type of family is common in Western countries (Andersen and Taylor 2000).

Family (small or large size) remains the primary environment of every child. The families begin the process of education and provide physical and psychological needs of the child. This supports the view of Maduewisi (1982), that the environmental experiences from family, peer group and school location have great influence in determining child's intellectual ability. She maintained that bright children from under-privileged family environment may turn dull due to impoverished family environment. She added that mental development influence intellectual development. This is in line with Hebb (1987) who observed that the innate potentials of children cannot be attained without adequate stimulating family environment because the child cannot do well intellectually. The implication is that a proper stimulating family environment with intellectual potential and appropriate teaching methods will definitely enhance maximum performance of the child. Durosaro and Durosaro (1990) in their study attempted to investigate the relationship between students' family size and their academic achievement; they found out that family size influenced academic achievement. Their study reveals that children from small size families performed better at school than their counterparts from both average size and large size families. Furthermore, Yoloye (1989) conducted a study to see if the family background variables might be useful in explaining their academic achievement. Some aspects of family background variables examined in the study include family size and parents' educational status. His findings were 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. Thirdly, 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.

Another aspect of family factor is the structure of the family. 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), in their study, lamented 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.

The socio-economic status of a family is capable of affecting the behaviour of the children and determine 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).

Parents' motivation is another family background factor which influences the academic achievement of students. Students under motivated condition, exhibits purposeful behaviour aimed at achieving academic set goals. The achievement of these goals determines the motive. Hickey and Lindsey (1995) clearly distinguished two perspectives of motivation; these are situational and dispositional perspectives. According to them, disposition perspective asks questions about students' general orientation to learning which relates the students' priority and students' nature. The situational perspective according to the scholars focuses on learning context. These scholars

further identified to factors that greatly influence students' motivation. These are: interpersonal factors such as curiosity, perseverance, and autonomy (intrinsic-factors) and environmental factors such as parents, peers and sibling (extrinsic factors).

2.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was carried out using ex-post facto method in examining the influence of family background on student's academic achievement in senior secondary schools in Umuahia education zone Abia State Nigeria. Ex-post facto research design according Ngwagu (2005) is a systematic empirical inquiry in which the researcher does not have direct control on independent variables because they are inherently not easy to manipulate. The purpose of ex-post facto research design is to find out factors that seem to be closely associated with certain behaviours, occurrences, prevalence or conditions. Ex-post facto design is considered suitable for this study because it is practical and versatile. The design enables the researcher to collect original data from the respondents themselves and describes the present conditions as they exist in their natural family settings.

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Umuahia education zone of Abia state. Umuahia education zone is one of the six education zone in the state. There are three Local Government areas in the zone, namely: Umuahia North, Umuahia South and Ikwuano Local Government Areas. Umuahia education zone is chosen for this study since it has a representative sample of the target population. Again literature indicates high incidence of poor academic achievement among students in the study area.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all the senior secondary class two (SS 2) students in fifty three public secondary schools in Umuahia education zone. These fifty three schools have a population of seven thousand, Nine hundred and forthy five (7945) SS2 students these schools are distributed across three Local Government according to the statistical records available in the Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB) Umuahia Zone - see appendix for details.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for the study comprised eight hundred and sixteen (816) students from the public secondary schools in the study area. The schools for the study were classified along Local Government Areas. For even representation, non-proportionate stratified random sampling procedure was used to draw four schools from each of the Local Government Area in the zone. This is to accommodate Local Government areas with few schools. A total of twelve (12) schools were drawn. In each of the sample school the entire Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students was used giving a total of eight hundred and sixteen students (816). The schools were further stratified into urban and rural schools with a population of 408 respondents in each strata, giving a total of 816 respondents in both urban and rural schools.

The researcher purposely used to use SS II students as the respondents, considering the facts that students at that level have been academically exposed and may be able to handle the questionnaire. Students in SS I are still new in senior secondary level, while those in SS III are preparing for their terminal examinations (WAEC to NECO).

Instrument for Data Collection

The Instruments for data collection was questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher and is titled: Family background influence questionnaire (FBIQ). This questionnaire is constructed on the basis of research questions on a four point likert amended scale. The instrument (questionnaire) is made up of twenty six (26) items on influence of parental education, parental occupation, parental income, family size and parental motivation. The questionnaire has three parts. Part one provides demographic data of the respondents, part two provides information on students' family background. Part three has five clusters (A-E). cluster 'A' contains questionnaire items concerning the influence of education level of parents, cluster 'B' contains questionnaire items concerning the influence of parental occupation, cluster 'C' has item statements that seek information on the influence of parental level of income, cluster 'D' contains item statements concerning the influence of family size while cluster 'E' contains questionnaire items concerning the influence of parental motivation.

3.0 RESULTS

In this section, data were presented on the basis of 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: Parental educational level and its influences on students' academic Achievement

S/N	Items on parental education level	Students		
		X1	SD1	Decision
1	Educated parents always want their children to be educated.	3.69	1.41	A
2	Parents who all educated provide most of the recommended textbooks and other learning aids for their children.	3.80	1.05	A
3	Parents who are educated encourage their children to study subjects which are pivotal for good university courses.	3.71	1.28	A
4	In homes of educated parents, there are conducive environment for studies.	3.97	1.06	A
5	Educated parents arrange for supportive teachers for the subject/subjects which their words/children find difficult in the school.	3.60	1.45	A
6	Parents who are educated guide their children in school assignments and home work.	3.43	1.61	A
7	Educated parents always demand for progress reports of their children to know the children's academic and social progress.	4.00	0.97	A

N= 400
A = Agree, D = Disagree,
Table 1(one) reveals that items 1-7 have mean scores that are above the cut-off mark of 3.00 that was regarded as acceptable limit as indicated by the researcher.
Therefore, all items under parental level of education were considered acceptable. This is an indication that the respondents considered that parental level of education influenced students' academic achievement.

Research Question 2:
What influence has parents' occupation on students' academic achievement?

S/N	Items on parental occupation	Students		
		X1	SD1	Decision
1	Parents on prestigious occupation want their children to take up the same type of occupation.	2.61	1.04	D
2	Some occupations do not give parents time to attend to their children's academic needs.	2.34	0.786	D
3	Parents on poor occupations find it difficult to provide learning aids for their children.	2.29	1.03	D
4	Parents who are poor farmers can only enroll their children into minor apprenticeship programmes.	2.50	0.760	D

D = Disagree
The result presented on table 2(two) above showed that all items under the influence of parental occupation had mean scores below the cut off mark of 3.00. This shows that parents occupation do not necessarily influence students' academic achievement.

Research Question 3:
What is the influence of parents' income on students' academic achievement?
Table 3: The influence of parents' income on students' academic achievement.

		Students		
S/N	**Items on parental occupation**	**X1**	**SD1**	**Decision**
1	Children from high-income status parents achieve better academically than those from low-income status parents.	3.89	1.15	A
2	Parents on high-income can afford to provide the basic necessities required for their children's education.	3.70	1.26	A
3	Children from upper-working class homes perform better academically than those from lower-working class homes.	4.00	0.90	A
4	Children whose parents are on high-income status have higher career aspiration than children whose parents are on low-income status.	3.96	0.94	A
5	Only parents who are on high-income status can train their children beyond secondary school level.	2.36	1.96	D

The result presented on the above table shows that only one item (item 5) had a mean score below the cut off mark of 3.00, while the remaining items have mean scores above the cut off point. This shows that all the respondents considered that parental level of income influenced students, achievement but disagree that only parents who are on high income status can train their children beyond secondary school level.

Research Question 4
What influence does parental level of motivation have on students academic achievement?
Table 4: The influence of parental level of motivation on students' academic achievement.

		Students		
S/N	**Items on parental motivation**	**X1**	**SD1**	**Decision**
1	Students perform better academically when their parents provide basic educational aids and equipment for their studies.	4.03	0.98	A
2	Students harder when their parents reinforce them for good academic performance.	4.27	0.71	A
3	Parents' concern about students' grades and performances motivates students' academic achievement.	4.25	0.75	A
4	Home libraries and books motivate students for better performance in the school.	3.91	1.06	A
5	Students feel happy and motivated when their parents discuss their academic career with them.	4.04	1.04	A
6	Students perform better academically when their school fees and other school levies are paid promptly.	3.98	1.02	A
7	Parents motivates students by paying for their school field trips and excursions.	4.30	0.86	A

The result presented on table 4 showed that all items had mean scores which were above the cut off of 3.00. This is an indication that the respondents considered parental motivation as capable of influencing students' academic achievement.

Summary of the Findings
Based on the data analyzed, the findings of the study are presented and summarized in the same order in which the research questions and hypotheses are arranged.
A) Influence of parental level of education on students' academic achievement

The findings of the study showed that:

i. Parents who are educated want their children to be educated.

ii. Educated parents provide most of the recommended text books and other learning aids for their children.

iii. Educated parents provide conducive atmosphere for their children's studies at home.

B) Influence of parental occupation on students academic achievement.

The findings of the study showed that:

i. Parents' occupation does not necessarily influence students' academic achievement.

ii. The respondents (students) did not agree that parents' on prestigious occupations like lawyers and doctors want their children to take up the same type of occupation.

iii. There was no agreement among the respondents that parents who are poor farmers can only enroll their children into minor apprenticeship.

C) Influence of parental level of income on students' academic achievement.

The findings of the study showed that:

i. Students from high-income status parents achieve better academically.

ii. Parents on high income status can afford to provide the basic necessities required for students' education.

iii. Students whose parents are on high-income status have higher career aspiration.

D) Influence of parental level of motivation on students' academic achievement.

The findings revealed that:

i. Parents motivate their children by supervising their homework and assignments.

ii. Parents use positive reinforcement to encourage their children to study hard.

iii. Students agreed that they were motivated by prompt payment of school fees and other school levies.

4.0 CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that family background factor influence academic achievement of students in schools. Prominent among the family background factors include parental educational level, 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. They stand better chance to support their children for better academic achievement.

On parental motivation, it was found that students who received encouragement and motivation from the family perform better in schools than their counterparts from non-encouraging families. The major reasons for the observed difference in performance are the motivation and positive attitude of the parents towards their children's academic progress.

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