

**Socio-Economic Status and Gender as Correlates of Academic Performance among Senior Secondary School Students in Sokoto Metropolis: Counselling Implications**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

*The study investigates socio-economic status and gender as correlates of academic performance among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis using correlational research design. The population of the study comprised of 8,185 students, but the study used a sample of 365 SS I students. Two research instruments: Socio-Economic Status Questionnaire (SESQ) and Academic Performance Test in English (APTIE) and Mathematics (APTIM) were used for data collection. Five hypotheses were formulated and tested. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses. The findings reveal positive significant relationship between socio-economic status, gender and academic performance. It concludes that socio-economic status is a determinant of students' academic performance, and therefore recommends that, parents should try to maintain a good socio-economic status for their children to perform well in academics*

**Keywords:** socio-economic status, gender, academic performance.

## **Introduction**

Education has been regarded as the bedrock of societal development and the engine that propels economic development, social cohesion and political enlightenment. It is also agreed that the future of any nation depends on the quality of its youths including the girl-child (UNICEF, 2004). Global figures on primary school enrolment collected in 1998 indicated that, among the million school age children not enrolled in primary education, 97% lived in developing nations (such as Nigeria) and nearly 60% were girls (United Nations, 2001). In Nigeria, although there has been some slight improvement in the situation cited above, there has been no major shift in the gender pattern of enrollment and retention in education. Disparities between boys and girls remain serious and the promise education holds remains an elusive dream for too many girls (USAID, 2004). The gender disparity in education is further fuelled by negative cultural practices which put fewer premiums on the training of the girl-child. There is enough data to establish the disadvantages suffered by the girl-child in various parts of Nigeria. As an illustration, in 2001, amongst the 7 million primary school age children not enrolled in school, over 62% were girls (UNICEF, 2004). More recent data arising out of concerted efforts at gender disaggregation also established

gender disparities in education. For example, the national average of gender disparity in enrollment in primary schools is put at 12% in favor of boys.

The situation is even worse in the Northern states (such as Sokoto) with the gender disparity in primary school enrollment in favor of boys being as high as 30% and the Net Attendance Ratio (NAR) varying from 49.52% for male and 34.2% for female (Aina, 2004). The situation at the secondary and tertiary levels of education is much worse with NAR for secondary school attendance in North-Western states dropping from 44% to 41% in 1999. Most times, when parents observe that they cannot afford taking care of their children because of large family size, they engage, mostly their girl-children, in some odd works that can generate income to the family such as hawking petty items at the motor parks and on the streets. Gradually, as these children are continuously prevented from going to school regularly, their academic performance falls. In the final analysis, this type of students ended of dropping out of school. By and large, those categories of children become liability to the family and the entire society. Hence, ended up of becoming touts, pick pockets, prostitutes robbers and the like.

One of the variables that bears on gender disparity in education and students' academic performance is family size. Family size is the total number of children in a child's family including the child him/herself. The smaller the size of a family, the better the interaction and relationship between the parents and the children, and among the children themselves. A small sized family enjoys time, love, attention and financial support of parents (Joseph, 2009). Rushton and McLanahan (2012) found out that children's attainment in life depends on input of time and money from their parents; the more numbers of children there are in a family, the less investment in their education and vice versa. The study, Seigal (2007) confirmed that children from large families have lower academic performance due to lack of

adequate parental care, love, attention and financial resources to cater for the children's needs.

As for the Socio-economic status of parents, Uche as cited in Abubakar (2014) opines that income is one of the factors used to bring about social satisfaction to the family. The total income of family and the level of interaction in the home affect the educational aspiration of the child. Generally, children at the disposal of large families, are not likely to get the best education like their counterparts from average size families, even if the parents are in gainful employment. Ellen (2011) argues that parents with low socio-economic status cannot afford sending their children to good schools where there are qualified teachers, well equipped laboratories and conducive learning environment. These children also lack such other facilities as miniature libraries fully equipped with relevant reading materials and balanced meals for proper development of their brains. Most of the time, this category of children was enrolled in substandard schools. These variables lead to poor academic performance thus, Derby (2006) argues that children from low socio-economic homes with large family size do not only receive poor education but also achieve less educational success in life.

In addition to the above assertion, Mohammed (2008) while trying to find the probable cause of poor academic performance of students in one of the Grammar schools in London, observes that family size contributes to low educational standard of students. Illiteracy level and economic status of parents have been found to be some of the reasons for parents' inability to make sufficient positive contributions to the education of their wards. Consequently, Rufa'i (2005) opines that the level of education of parents especially mothers determines the success or failure of the education of their daughters. As observed by (Usman, 2002) that despite the free education for all programmes of the state government, parents' attitudes towards female education is still in its cradle stage when compared to the

level of educational pursuits of their male counterparts and that most parents in Sokoto state consider western education as occupation or job-oriented.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Poor academic performance of students has been of great concern to educationists, and guidance and counsellors in particular. Despite all guidance programmes and counselling strategies mounted in schools to improve the students' academic performances, poor performances are still recorded yearly in Sokoto metropolis, and the need to find out the cause of such poor performance. There was an evident increase in poor performance of students in the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination. In WAEC to be precise, the percentage of failure recorded in Sokoto North and Sokoto South local government areas increased from 35% to 40% between 2015/16 and 2017/18 academic sessions (State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2018).

Moreover, in Sokoto parents give priority to male-child education to the detriment of female-child not minding the position of the female-child in the family. They believed that financing boy-child education is more promising and profitable than that of the girl-child because the female child after completing her education will get married and leave the parent's house for her own home. It is observed that despite the effort of successive Sokoto state governments to provide equal access to educational opportunities to all citizens irrespective of gender, many parents are still indisposed to the education of their female children. This therefore, creates a gap that needs to be filled, hence the need for the present study which was set out to examine family size, parental socio-economic status and gender as correlates of academic performance among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

## **Objectives of the study**

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the relationship between socio-economic status, gender and academic performance of senior secondary school students. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Find out the relationship between socio-economic status and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.
2. Find out which of socio-economic status or gender is a better predictor of academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

## **Research Questions**

The following questions guide the study:

1. Is there any relationship between socio-economic status and academic performance of senior secondary school students?
2. Is socio-economic status a better predictor of academic performance of senior secondary school students than gender?

## **Statement of the Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are formulated to be tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.
2. Socio-economic status is not a better predictor of academic performance of senior secondary school students than gender.

## **Methodology**

The research design utilized for the study is correlation survey method. Salawu cited in Abubakar (2014) is of the opinion that correlation survey design can be used to know if a relationship actually exists between variables but does not indicate causation. This explains

the use of correlation design in this study. The population for the study covered all the senior secondary schools in Sokoto metropolis. In all, there are a total number of 8,185 students spread across 26 senior secondary schools (Ministry for Basic and Secondary Education, 2018). The sample size used for the study was 365 students. The sample size was arrived at using the table for determining sample size from a given population designed by the Research Advisors 2006. Two data collection instruments; Socio-Economic Status Questionnaire (SESQ) to measure parents' socio-economic status, and Academic Performance Tests in English (APTIE) and Mathematics (APTIM) to measure students' academic performance were used. The SESQ contains two sections: section A consists of the respondents' bio data, while section B consists of twenty (20) items on a 4-likert-scale which seeks information from respondents on their family size. The measure of the students' academic performance for this study is the total scores obtained in English and Mathematics tests administered on the students by the researcher. The researchers had designed English and Mathematics tests containing 20 items each. The items were selected from past questions from the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) questions in English and Mathematics. The research instruments; SESQ and APTIE & APTIM were administered in the 6 selected secondary schools with the assistance of teachers in each school. Data collected from all the research instruments (SESQ, APTIE & APTIM) were analyzed to determine if correlation between the variables exists. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and regression analysis were used to analyze the hypotheses.

## Results

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

**Table 1:** Correlation between socio-economic status and academic performance of senior secondary school students

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Socio-economic Status	365	47.69	13.027	.158	.002	H <sub>0</sub>
Academic Performance	365	50.579	15.1702			Rejected

Source: Research Field Work, 2023

From the result of table 1, socio-economic status and academic performance was positively related and significant, Pearson's  $r(363) = .158, p < .05$ . This indicates a significant relationship between socio-economic status and academic performance because the p-value is less than the .05 level of significance. Therefore,  $H_0$  which states that there is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and academic performance among secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis was rejected.

**Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between family size, socio-economic status, gender and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.**

**Table 2:** Regression analysis between family size, socio-economic status, gender and academic performance

Variable	$\beta$	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.
(Constant)	44.142	4.745		0.000
Socio-Economic Status	0.171	0.061	0.147	0.005
Gender	-2.299	1.614	-.075	.155

Source: Research Field Work 2023

$$R = 0.177, R^2 = .031, Adj R^2 = 0.023, Std Error of Estimate = 14.9917, F = 3.907$$

Table 2 shows the beta values of the three variables; socio-economic status = 0.147 and Gender = -0.075, with their *p-values* as 0.005 and 0.155 respectively. This signifies that socio-economic status with *p-value* < 0.05 is a better correlate of academic performance of secondary school students at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected.

**Discussion of Findings**

Hypothesis one reveals that there is significant relationship between socio-economic status and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis. This is in line with the outcome of the studies by Saifi and Mehmood (2011) and Qaiser, Ishtiaq, Farid, and Zaib (2012), whose separate studies reveal positive relationship between socio-economic status and students' academic performance. Likewise, Chandra and Azimuddin (2013) study the relationship between SES and academic performance of secondary school students of Lucknow City of Uttar Pradesh, India. The result of the study



reveals a positive correlation between SES and academic performance. However, contrary to the result of this study outcome is the work by Femi and Adewale (2012), which examines the effect of socio-economic status on academic performance of students in Edu LGA of Kwara State and reveals that socio-economic status did not have significant effect on the academic performance of students.

Many research studies have shown that socio-economic status is a factor responsible for the academic attainment of students. Research studies conducted by Jeynes (2002), Eamon (2005) and Chen (2009) show that socio-economic status influences student's performance. It is believed that low socio-economic status has significant negative effect on the academic performance of students because of its capacity to obstruct access to very important learning resources and creates additional tension and stress at home. Students who have low socio-economic status show poor academic result and are more likely to leave school before graduation (drop out). Morakinyo (2003) find out that there is a relationship between socio-economic status and academic performance of students. Rouse and Barrow (2006) state that socio-economic status has significant effect on educational performances that contain test scores, and continue to affect the child throughout his adulthood. It is important to note that poverty is a crucial and destructive factor that affects student's academic performance negatively. For any parent to perform his/her functions as expected, the socio-economic status of the parent must be reasonably high as it refers to the income generation capacity of the parents for the adequate provision of essential requirements of life such as food, clothing, shelter and educational facilities like teaching and learning materials. Parents' investment in the education of their children is determined by the level of their disposable income. This, without doubt, has great influence on the academic performance of children.

The findings of hypothesis two reveals that socio-economic status is a better predictor of academic performance than gender. The result concurred with the outcome of the study by Muola (2010) which reveals that high level education, which most often, goes with high occupational status, denotes that parents will be able to provide the necessary learning facilities as well as assist the child with school work. Students who come from affluent families have higher educational aspirations and expectations, do better academically and are more likely to continue their schooling than their less well-off peers. The major influence on performance is a students' home atmosphere; how much reading materials are available, how the parents feel about education, what they want for their children, what they do for and done with their children, how and how much they talk with their children and how stable the family is.

Many children from families with high income are exposed to experiences and reactions that favour cognitive development e.g. availability of toys and exposure to different kinds of intellectual stimulating situations which may not be the case with those from low income families. Idowu (2002) says that the poor parents may not be able to provide much in a way of clothing or play things to the child which make the child from low income family to have a poor start in primary school and the inability to read and write. This leads to ever increasing problem that cause the child to fall further behind and eventually drop out of school. He went further to say that a child whose realities consist of poverty, hunger and much physical hardship does not have the chance to take advantage of new opportunities available to him. Okafor (2010) concludes that most school drop-outs are children from families whose parents are not able to provide the necessary school requirements.

A number of researchers such as Parcel and Dafur (2001) and Goje (2000) hold the view that there exists a relationship between parent's socio-economic status and academic attainment of students. They show that children from high socio-economic status family have

high academic attainment, while children from low socio-economic status exhibit low academic attainment. Likewise, Ajeh (2011) shows that occupation and level of education of parents have significant relationship with English language performance of students. Furthermore, father's occupation in terms of professional, semi-professional and manual group have similar effects on the academic performance of children-rearing practice and positive attitude to the school.

However, contrary to this outcome is the study by Yahaya (2010), who states that, some bibliography of successful men and women mentioned about how terribly poor their parents were financially, economically and educationally. This state of affair i.e. low income, poor livelihood and low education are the ones that motivate them to be successful in their endeavor including education. There are now sons and daughters of very poor people who are of prominent standing in the society. The very fact that they were poor has given them the motivation to strive harder and do their very best in school for they believed that education is the key to good life. It could be deduced from the above that both rich and poor families can create environments that foster learning even though family background does have strong relationship to performance. It may be how parents rear their children and not the parent's occupation, income or education that really make the difference.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that socio-economic status is the major correlate of academic performance among senior secondary school students. Likewise, socio-economic status is instrumental to students' academic performance. This is because, the poor the families, the smaller the number of resources available for distribution per child and vice versa.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following;

1. Parents should mobilize all resources at their disposal to improve the academic performance of their children.
2. Government and Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) should sensitize parents on the benefits of parental involvement in the education of their children. They should be made aware that their responsibility does not stop at merely paying school fees, rather their direct involvement in the whole educational pursuit of their children with a view to achieve higher academic performance.

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