

Influence of the Economic Status of Families on the Academic Achievement of Junior Secondary Students in English in Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *The study focused on Influence of the Economic Status of Families on the Academic Achievement of Junior Secondary Students in English in Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey was used to study a population of 9,550 families. A sample size of 350 parents was selected for the study through simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire entitled "Influence of Family Economy on Students' Academic Achievement (IFESAA). Instrument for data analysis were mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that family economic status and polygamy influenced students' academic achievement between the year 2018 and 2022 in Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the voting populace should be properly educated on their voting rights, and the need to use their voting power to install governments that would pay attention to education which is one of the commonest social services any government can give to her citizens; and that the Abia State Orientation Agency should be properly positioned to carry out grass root orientation on the negative economic impact of breeding too many children than one can maintain.*

KEY WORDS: economic status, families, academic achievement, junior secondary students, English language, Umuahia south local government area.

INTRODUCTION

The place of a good economic status of the family in the academic upbringing of their children cannot be underestimated. The type of schools parents choose for their wards is largely dependent on the economic status of the family. Affluent parents would not mind the cost of a well-furnished school, with well qualified tutorial staff. According to Sullivan (2020), Scott Anderson, a Brooklyn dweller, moved his entire family to Dutchess county in New York city to get his two kids educated at Frederic Gunn school, an entirely boarding school, at the cost of fifty thousand USD (\$50,000) per semester. Anderson, according to Sullivan, took this decision due to the menace of the COVID-19 pandemic that subjected students to online lessons, which he did not want for his children. While most poor folks stayed away from school, the affluent made alternative expensive academic plan for their children. Good infrastructure and quality academic staff, guarantee good academic performance among students.

In a study carried out by Lin and Lv (2017), entitled “The effect of family income on children’s education; an empirical analysis of CHNS data”, they found out that family income had a significant influence on children’s education level, and that increasing family income can improve their educational level.

The level of importance parents attaches to education more than other social matters may also account for how they will choose to apportion their funds to favour their children’s academic achievement. Azizah, Saleh and Salistyaningrum (2022) affirm that anyone that values education as a way of upgrading his or her children’s social status, may value spending on education of the children beyond entertainments.

Lin (2021), agreeing with Lin and Lv (2017) further averred that since family income has tremendous influence on college students’ experiences and academic performances, it provides comfort, a positive attitude and a healthy environment, which results in increasing their academic performances. In the words of Gocotano, Jerodiaz, Clair, Banggay and Go (2021), the economic status of the family influences their means of receiving quality education.

Another factor that can influence affluent parents to ensure good learning that could enhance their wards’ academic achievement is the level of parental education. In the study conducted by Mitiner, Zang and Wu (2020) entitled “Parental Economic Hardship and Children’s Achievement Orientation” which had a population of 345 parent-child pairs, and their children, aged 11 years and above; their findings revealed that when families are vulnerable as a result of low parental education and poor parental employment experience, children’s achievement orientations are more strongly threatened by family’s economic circumstances. Blog (2022), agreeing with Mitiner et al, affirmed that children’s education is strongly affected by a number of factors, including society,

parent education, income, among others. Poverty, they maintained, hinders a child's education in many ways, such as lack of food, health reasons among others.

Li and Qiu (2018) maintained that parents compete for high quality educational opportunities for their children, which lead to better academic performance.

In another study entitled "Impact of Parental Socioeconomic Status on Academic Performance of Students (a case study of Bahawalpur)" carried out by Sorhawadi, Fatima, Nazir and Firdous (2020) in Punjab, Pakistan, a population of 200 students was used. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire. Their findings showed among other things, that the income of the father and the education of both parents have positive impact on the academic performance of the students. The mother's education was however found to have greater impact on academic outcomes more than that of the father.

Family size, may couple with families' economic status to influence students' academic achievement. In the findings of iproject.com.ng (2023), family size, income of the family, level of parental education and influence of polygamous families are combinatory factors that can significantly influence students' academic achievement.

Family economic status is dependent on the State's economic status since families operate within states. If a state or nation experiences economic depression, it will invariably affect the economy of families. Economic depression describes a severe downturn in the economic life of a nation, culminating in a glaring decline in the growth of an economy. Upon depression, there is a significant fall in the level of productivity in the economy, leading to a glaring manifestation of slowed growth in both the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) both of which occasion business failures and mass unemployment, resulting in individuals not being able to live above poverty level. There is a fall in the production capacity of a nation which may lead to mass retrenchment of workers. These conditions generally affect the economic power of families. When families are so affected, it is hard for most children to sustain good academic performance, since their education is often interrupted as a result of their parents' inability to financially sustain them in school.

Economic status of polygamous families may be a factor in the academic performance of students. Students of polygamous families whose parents do not have promising economic base, are likely to suffer poor academic achievement. This is because with many children from multiple wives, there would be many mouths to feed. Such parents are unlikely to send their children to good schools that would guarantee good academic achievement, since properly equipped schools in terms of infrastructure and quality teachers, are costlier than other school. In their report on "The effect of polygamy on the academic performance of pupils, a case study of some selected primary schools in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State", [Iproject.com.ng](http://iproject.com.ng) (2023) reported that income of parents, number of wives in the home, and polygamy, all affect pupils' academic

performance. This study examined the influence of the economic status of the family on the academic achievement of junior secondary students in English in Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State, between year 2018 and 2022.

There is a high level of poverty among the citizens of Nigeria. According to National Bureau of Statistics (2022), 63% of persons living within Nigeria –about 133million people, are poor in a multidimensional way. According to Olawoyin (2022), COVID-19 crisis was driving up Nigeria’s poverty rate to the extent that by the end of 2022, about an additional 5million people would be pushed into the poverty line, forcing about 95.1 million people to be poor. In the year 2016, Nigeria’s economy went into recession, due to oil crisis. This was followed by another recession in the year 2020, occasioned by the effects of COVID-19 pandemic. This situation had thrown many more families into deep poverty. Poverty is feared to have impacted heavily on school enrolment and the academic achievement of students generally. There is the need to study how family economic status has influenced the academic achievement of students, especially of the junior secondary school; as failure to do such study would continue to leave the problem of poverty, which leads to poor academic achievement, unresolved. The problem of this study was to find out the influence which the economic status of families have on the academic achievement of the junior secondary students in English in Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State, between 2018 and 2022.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to find out how family economic status influenced the academic achievement of junior secondary students in English in Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined:

1. How poor family income can influence the academic achievement of Junior Secondary students in English in Umuahia South Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria.
2. How polygamy influences family economy and academic achievement of junior secondary students in English in Umuahia South Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. How does poor family income influence the academic achievement of junior secondary students in English in Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria?
2. How does polygamy influence family economy and the academic achievement of junior secondary students in English in Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria?

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

The design adopted for this study was descriptive survey design. According to voxco.com (2021), descriptive survey research aims at helping the researcher to gain a deeper knowledge of the research problem through enquiry. It blends both the quantitative and qualitative data to provide accurate information needed for correct analysis

Area of the Study

The area of the study was Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. The local government is composed of five principal clans of; Umuopara, Old Umuahia, Nsirimo, Olokoro, and Ubakala. Within the five principal clans are other communities, some of which are autonomous. These include: Ohiocha, Ohiya, Eziana, Ubakala, Amakama Olokoro, Ezeleke Umuopara, Eluamana Mgbedeala, Umuajata Olokoro, Umuobia Olokoro, Laguruna Umuosu Ubakala, Ekenobizi, Okwu Olokoro, Umumba Nsirimo, Umuosu Alaocha, Abam Alaocha Ubakala, Umuanya Ogbodi, Dim na Opara, Umudere Olokoro, Ngodo, Avonkwu Olokoro, Umuntu Olokoro, Itu Olokoro, Amangwo Olokoro, Umuopara Ozara, Uzzi Olokoro, Ipupe Alaocha Ubakala, Umuokorodo, Agbama Olokoro, Umuibe Umuopara, Omaegwu, Alaoji Amakama Olokoro, Dikeukwu, Uturuisiala, Eluelu Old Umuahia, Erim Nsirimo, Umuogo Ubakala, Mgbarakuma Ubakala, Umunwanwa, Ihenwekeala, Amuzu Ubakala, Umutowe Olokoro, and Amizi-Ekpe Olokoro. Its headquarters is at Apummiri. According to the 2006 census, Umuahia South Local Government Area has an area of 140 square kilometers, and a population of 138, 570. The postal code is 440. It has a partly urban and partly rural setting. The people have three principal occupations – trading, farming and civil service work.

Population of the Study

The population of the study was all the 9,550 parents within the study area. This was according to Nigerian Population Commission (NPC 2011).

Sample for the Study

Out of this number (9,550), a sample size of 350 families was selected by simple random sampling.

Instrument

Instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire entitled “Influence of Family Economy on Students’ Academic Achievement” (IFESAA). The four point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4points, Agreed (A) = 3points, Disagreed (2) Strongly Disagreed (SA) = 1point, was adapted in rating the responses by respondents.

Data Collection Method:

Research assistants were used to administer the questionnaire to respondents. Due to sufficient information made available, coupled with prompt visits, all the instruments were collected.

Data Analysis Technique:

Mean and Standard Deviation were used to analyze data. Decision rule was determined by dividing the summation of frequency by the number of respondents, that is;

$$4+3+2+1 = 10 \div 4 = 2.5$$

Therefore, any item that has the mean of 2.5 and above is accepted while any item that has a mean below 2.5 is rejected.

RESULT OF FINDINGS**TABLE 1. Influence of Family Economic Status on Academic Achievement**

| S/N | ITEM FOCUS | SA | A | D | SD | N | FX | STD | REMARK | |
|-----|--|-----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-------------|--------|----------|
| 1. | The income level of a family determines the type of school they send their children | 99 | 89 | 87 | 75 | 350 | 912 | 2.61 | 1.60 | Accepted |
| 2. | Schools that have good infrastructure and qualified teachers charge higher fees | 94 | 90 | 91 | 75 | 350 | 903 | 2.58 | 1.60 | Accepted |
| 3. | Parents of low income don't send their wards to schools that charge higher fees | 101 | 97 | 78 | 74 | 350 | 916 | 2.62 | 1.62 | Accepted |
| 4. | Students taught in schools that have good infrastructure and qualified teachers attain better academic performance | 86 | 88 | 89 | 87 | 350 | 873 | 2.49 | 1.57 | Accepted |
| 5. | Parents of high economic status send their children to schools that pay higher fees with good infrastructure and tutorials | 95 | 91 | 84 | 80 | 350 | 901 | 2.57 | 1.67 | Accepted |
| 6. | Schools that have good infrastructure and qualified teachers are likely to have better academically performing students | 90 | 93 | 87 | 80 | 350 | 893 | 2.55 | 1.59 | Accepted |
| | Grand Mean | | | | | | | 2.57 | | |

Table 1. shows that respondents agreed that the income level of the family is a determining factor to the type of school parents send their children; that schools that have good infrastructure and qualified teachers charge higher fees than others, whereas low income parents do not send their children to such schools with high fees. They equally agreed that students taught in schools that have good infrastructure and qualified teachers attain better academic performance and that parents of high economic status send their children to schools that pay higher fees with good infrastructure and better tutorials, and that schools that have good infrastructure and qualified teachers are likely to produce students who are academically better. On the other hand, parents with low income do not send their children to such schools since they cannot afford the cost. With the grand mean of 2.57, respondents agreed that the level of academic performance of students depended on the families' economic status.

Table 2. How Polygamy Influences Family Economy and Academic Achievement

| S/N | ITEM FOCUS | SA | A | D | SD | N | FX | ST | REMARK | |
|-----|---|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|------|------|--------|----------|
| | | | | | | | | D | K | |
| 1. | Polygamous families usually have many children as a result of many wives | 120 | 116 | 60 | 54 | 350 | 1002 | 2.86 | 1.63 | Accepted |
| 2. | Many children of polygamous families don't attend school due to poverty | 153 | 127 | 45 | 25 | 350 | 1133 | 3.24 | 1.77 | Accepted |
| 3. | Many children from polygamous families don't attend good schools due to poor funding. | 210 | 90 | 35 | 15 | 350 | 1195 | 3.41 | 1.34 | Accepted |
| 4. | As a result of not attending good schools, children from polygamous families don't perform well academically. | 189 | 111 | 27 | 23 | 350 | 1166 | 3.33 | 1.81 | Accepted |
| 5. | Most children from polygamous homes drop out of school due to poor funding. | 98 | 80 | 130 | 42 | 350 | 934 | 2.67 | 1.62 | Accepted |
| 6. | Due to financial burdens upon polygamous homes, their children | | | | | | | | | |

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|---------------------------------|------|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|------------|------|----------|
| don't aspire academically | high | 115 | 100 | 97 | 38 | 350 | 992 | 2.83 | 1.67 | Accepted |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | | | 3.1 | | |

Table 2 shows that respondents agreed that polygamous families are known by the multiple wives under one husband and breeding multiple children. They agreed that most children from the polygamous families don't attend school as a result of poor family economy, and that most of those that attend, fail to attend good schools due to poor funding, and that as a result of not attending good schools, they don't perform well academically. They are equally of the opinion that most children of polygamous families usually drop out of school, due to poor funding, and that due to the financial burdens upon the polygamous family, most of their children don't aspire very high academically. With a grand mean of 3.1, respondents agreed that polygamy has a strong influence on students' academic achievement, since many children incur more economic spending.

DISCUSSION

With a mean of 2.61, respondents agreed that the income level of the family determines the type of school they send their children. Expectedly, parents of low income would send their children to schools that pay low. Obviously, schools that pay low would equally employ teachers that collect low salaries. Teachers that collect low salaries do so in correspondence to their qualification and experience. Teachers of high qualifications are not likely to collect salary as low as that of the poorly qualified and experienced. This aligns with the view of Adams (2020), who maintained that an employee's salary depends on both factors of qualification and experience. According to him, if a company is stable, there is no doubt that it will offer the pay the worker deserves, as far as the employee's skills are concerned; the more competent the employee, the higher the pay. In the words of [talentlyft.com](https://www.talentlyft.com) (2022), two acronyms may apply to wages namely, "DOE" and "DOQ". They posit that "DOE", Depends on Experience, is a variant of "DOQ", Depends on Qualification; maintaining that these acronyms acknowledge that the potential employer would have to work within the overall salary range, but would be willing to pay more for a candidate with more experience or better qualification.

Respondents agreed that Schools that have good infrastructure and qualified teachers charge higher fees. This may be seen to be in line with, the better the school, the higher the fees and the better the quality of learning. Higher fees may be necessary in such well-equipped and staffed schools so that they can pay their staff well. When staff are well paid, they are motivated to put in their best.

With a mean value of 2.62, respondents agreed that parents of low income don't send their wards to schools that charge higher fees. This situation aligns with the view of Ferguson, Bovaird, and Mueller (), who maintained that over the decades past, the unfortunate reality had been a widened income gap among Canadian families. According to them, children from low income families often

started school behind their peers who came from affluent families, as shown in school readiness. Family economic status is therefore a very significant factor in the academic achievement of students poor families shun schools of exorbitant fees. Incidentally, it is such schools that offer academic services capable of producing students of high academic achievement. It therefore means that students of poor economic background, whose parents cannot afford the charges of the costly schools will remain academically poor in achievement.

With a mean score of 2.49, respondents agreed that Students taught in schools that have good infrastructure and qualified teachers attain better academic performance. The unfortunate situation however, is that, families of poor economic status may not be able to send their wards to such good schools, thus necessitating very poor academic achievement of students from such poor homes. Chan and Rueda (2016) maintained that poverty and cultural background have strong impact on the educational attainment of children, insisting that the effect of poverty and culture on educability should be separately examined. They maintained that each of the factors uniquely influences mediating variables which determine educability and ultimately, educational attainment.

The influence of family economy on the academic achievement cannot be overemphasized. In these days when private entrepreneurs have almost taken over the provision of education, most schools are into competition of who would have the higher student population, most affluent parents equally make a show in the type of school they enroll their children. Sometimes, good private schools are boasted of by parents who proudly point at such schools as where their children attend. With the mean of 2.57 and 2.55 respectively, respondents agreed that Parents of high economic status send their children to schools that pay higher fees with good infrastructure and tutorials and that schools that have good infrastructure and qualified teachers are likely to have better academically performing students.

Gocotano, Antoneth, Jerodaz, Clair, Banjay and Go (2021) maintain that the economic status of the family has much influence on the children's means of receiving quality education.

With a mean score of 2.86, respondents agreed that Polygamous families usually have many children as a result of many wives and that many children of polygamous families don't attend school due to poverty. The incidence of poverty among Nigerian families is worsened by the economic recession that befell Nigeria from the year 2016. According to Uka (2021), Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) plunged into negative growth for three consecutive quarters in 1967, 1975, 1978, 1981, 1982, 1983, 2016 and 2020 due to over dependence on oil revenue, low savings and fiscal leakages among other factors. The most recent was the recession which the economy went into between 2016 and 2020 which has had its cruel impact on the citizenry. The result of this recession is that many families can hardly sustain themselves economically, let alone afford costly education for their children. With the current economic realities, it would be hard for polygamous families to afford quality education for teeming family members. According to Srinisha (2018), when adults in the family are hit with financial crisis, the children are impacted, whether or not the society is conscious of that.

As a result of not attending good schools (without good and modern infrastructure and quality teachers), children from polygamous families don't perform well academically. Respondents affirmed this with a mean score of 3.33. The most disturbing aspects of the problem is that poor family economic status leads to massive school drop outs and inability of the victims to aspire higher academically and socially.

CONCLUSION

From the findings and discussion, it is evident that schools run by government in Umuahia local government Area are poorly staffed and poorly maintained. This has led most parents to resort to private schools where charges are too high for the poor income-earning families. This is an evidence that the government of Abia State is failing in the education sector and this calls for serious concern. It is equally evident that most families have not yet received adequate orientation on the economic implications of polygamy, especially in a depressed economy as ours. It is therefore necessary that adequate attention be paid to raising the quality of our education, by raising the quantity of quality teachers in our junior secondary schools and also improving the infrastructures.

Recommendations

Based on the findings made, the following recommendations were made;

1. Since the issue of poor quality of education, resulting in poor academic achievement arises from poor staffing and poor funding of education in the local government area by government, the voting populace should be properly educated on their voting rights, and the need to use their voting power to install governments that would pay attention to education which is one of the commonest social service any government can give to her citizens.
2. The Abia State Orientation Agency should be properly positioned to carry out grass root orientation on the negative economic impact of breeding too many children than one can maintain.

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