RESEARCH ARTICLE

INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS OF PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND MARITAL STATUS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS

Dr. Francisca N. Ogba and *Dr. Ntasiobi C.N Igu

Faculty of Education, Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study was designed to investigate the influence of socio-economic factors of parents' educational background and marital status on the academic performance of students in Abakaliki Education zone, Ebonyi State. Two research questions were formulated to guide the study and two hypotheses were tested in the study. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection for the analysis for results of the study. The instrument was face validated and the reliability coefficient determined using the Cronbach Alpha Approach, which gave a coefficient index of 0.86. This figure is of high internal consistency indicating that the instrument was suitable for use for the study. A total of 150 senior secondary II students were used for the study. The data collected were subjected to analysis using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses. The results of the study showed that parents' educational background and marital status have influences on students' academic performance. Hypothesis 1 was not significant while hypothesis 2 was significant. The researchers recommended among other things that the parents should improve on their educational background to guide their children at home. Again, the home environment should be made peaceful environment and united while the school should have qualified teachers. Both the home and the school should work closely to enhance students' academic performance at school. Based on the findings of the study educational implications, recommendations were made which if implemented would boost the academic performance of students tremendously.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of education as a requirement for successful living and the effective growth of any nation cannot be underrated. The impact of education to the well-being of the individual and the nation especially in the areas of science and technology can be seen in all sector of the nation, in such areas as, transportation, communication, industries, agriculture and education (Igwe, 2002). The classification of any nation into developed, developing and underdeveloped is directly measured and accurately too by the number of educated administrators, managers, chemists, physicists, engineers, pharmacists, doctors, agriculturists and teachers (educators) that the nation could produce. Over the years, it could be observed that students' performance in secondary schools generally and especially at the senior secondary level as noted in public examinations worsens as years go by and many students seem to have negative attitude towards their studies. With regard to the importance of education, there is a high expectation in the

Corresponding author: **Dr. Ntasiobi C.N Igu,**
Faculty of Education, Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

level of enrolment of secondary school students, but the reverse has been the case as students in secondary school are running away from school to pursue businesses in form of trading due to lack of interest in education as a slow pace to wealth (Bajah, 1999; Igwe, 2003). In secondary schools, there are variations in academic performances of students. Some achieve high; others achieve average while some still achieve low in their internal and public examinations (Johnson, 2000; Onwuegbuna, 2013). Parents and students are worried about this situation because these are students who aspire to further their education after leaving school but could not necessarily acquire required entry qualification into higher institution of learning (Ogbonna, 2004). The secondary level of education is crucial in the education system of Nigeria because it helps to equip students to live effectively in this modern age of science and technology. It is the level at which the foundation of art and science is laid and which also prepares students for higher education (FRN, 2013). The above situation and injunction justify the free and compulsory primary and secondary education introduced by Ebonyi State Government after its creation in 1996. It is known that at the present level of educational development in the State, many people including parents still look on education as only what goes on in the

classroom and that students' academic performance depends entirely on their ability and effort to learn at school. According to Udo (1990), many educational psychologists and sociologists have also opined that socio-economic factors (educational background and marital status) are strong determinants of a child's performance in mental activities. Sequel to the above, Douglas in Udo (1990) asserted that child up-bringing practices, utilization of educational opportunities as well as how resources are organized in the family to meet the child's needs tend to differ between the upper, middle and low class strata. He further asserted that students who come from non-educated parents hardly have time for their school work. The child may have acquired some education but the quality and extent of education depend on the parents' educational background and overall environment in which he/she lives. The education level of parents may influence his attitudes towards school work and academic performance (Biachi, 2012; Lindgren, 2014). On the influence of marital status, Ogunbameru and Rotimi (2006) pointed out that marital status has a lot influence on the child's performance in school. In-deed, the home begins the process of education in satisfying the physical and psychological needs of the child and transmitting culturally accepted behaviours through learning and social training. The child learns the basic skills, behaviour and attitudes from parents. This means that by the time he/she enters school, he/she has formed some habits as he/she is conscious of the family's status and position in the society and also his/her personality is formed. These could only be possible when such home is peaceful, united and harmonious contrary to a divorced, separated and quarrelsome home (Nwachukwu, 2011).

From the above instances of the circumstances of the child's development, the home and the school play complementary roles in the education of the child. No other agency is so closely allied with the school as the home. By the time a child enters elementary and secondary school, he is already conscious of his father's status and his personality is almost formed. This is why Musgrave (2005) in his psychoanalytic theory put so much emphasis on the "in the first few years" in the life of the child because whatever happens later in adult life has a root in the early critical periods. The type of education depends on the social class he comes from and this may later determine how well he will perform in school (Sohemann, 2013). Ebonyi State being one of the newly created States in Nigeria and one that has been educationally disadvantaged, the incidence of school output has been poor especially in the natural sciences. Again, most of the parents are peasant farmers whose daily activities are bound to affect the school work of their children. The psychology of the parents may not be sound towards education and this greatly influences the orientation they have for their children towards school activities. The level of development in Ebonyi State is still low, which implies that most of the parents are rural dwellers whose socio-economic status can best be described as low. This situation is one that could mean so much to the education of their children in diverse ways. These researchers fear that the above tendencies may be contributing to the low achievement of the children in school.

In the light of the above, these researchers decided to package this study to attempt to establish the influence of socio-economic factors of educational background and marital status of parents on students' academic performance in Abakaliki Education zone of Ebonyi State.

Statement of the Problem

High academic performance of students depends not only on the quality of instruction at school, availability of educational facilities in school, students intelligent quotient but also on other important factors, one of which is the home environment that rests solidly on their socio-economic status of education and marriage. The type of home environment that is most conducive to learning and which will give rise to attainment of academic performance has been described as a high socio-economic environment. This has given rise to the question of whether or not the socio-economic position of parents' educational background and marital status indeed influence the academic performances of their children at school. The hunch in this study centres on a performance gap as a result of socio-economic status of educational background and marital status of parents. Do the above factors influence the academic performance of students in senior secondary schools? This question constitutes a problem especially since the same teacher under the same conditions teaches the students and they are all exposed to the same educational facilities in the schools.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to ascertain the influence of socio-economic factors of parents' educational background and marital status on students' academic performance in secondary schools. Specifically, the study was designed to find out:

1. Whether the educational background of parents influences academic performance of students in secondary schools.
2. If the marital status of parents has influence on the academic performance of secondary school students.

Significance of the Study

The concern of parents, educators and teachers about their students' poor performance in examinations is always glaring. This development has caused untold hardship to the parents and students and therefore requires urgent remedies. Therefore, this study is significant in many ways such as:

The results of the study would throw more light on individual differences as it relates to academic performances at school to the help of teachers, students, parents, guidance counselors and educational administrators. The results would help teachers to realize that their students come from different homes, each as different in educational attitude as the other. The knowledge of this will help the teacher study each student differently too so as to structure his teaching methods and instructional resources to meet the divergent parental backgrounds of the students. The results of the study would help students realize that their poor performance might not necessarily be their fault alone, especially students from low educational background home status. This knowledge will help reduce frustration, as it is mostly frustrating and could lead to dropout from school due to poor performance. The results would also help parents irrespective of their socio-economic status to know and understand their functions in the education of their children and that the school cannot do the job of educating the child without parents' contribution towards this. The outcome of this study would acquaint guidance counsellors with knowledge on

their responsibilities to the students' educational problems arising from the homes they come from. The results would also help the educational administrators in mapping out different kinds of educational programmes taking into account children from different socio-economic factors of educational background and marital status of the parents of the wards in terms of the distribution of equipment and other amenities to school according to their location. The finding on parental educational background vis-avis students' performance and arising from this study would help the social workers in taking proper care of the children under them, especially those that have poor educational backwardness of their parents.

Scope of the Study

This study was delimited to how the socio-economic factors, educational background and marital status of parents influence students' academic performance in secondary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone. The study made use of SS-II students of the selected secondary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does the educational background of parents influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Abakaliki Education zone?
2. How does the marital status of parents influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Abakaliki Education zone?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO_1.There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of parental educational background on students' performance.
HO_2.There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of parents' marital status on students' performance.

Research Methods

This study adopted a cross- sectional and descriptive survey design. According to Abimbade (1995), a survey design is one that selects a sample from the population and studies the relative distribution and inter-relations of those variables of study in a view to interpreting the features of the items in the distribution. Descriptive survey design was adopted because the researchers will not manipulate any of the variables in the study (Abonyi et al., 2006). The researchers only carried out a review of the existing levels or relationships between the variables in the population. The study was carried out in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State. Abakaliki Education Zone is made up of four local government areas namely; Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Izzi and Ohaukwu Local Government Areas with many post-primary schools. The people of this area are mainly farmers. In recent time, many of the inhabitants have embraced government work while a large number is involved in one sort of unskilled labour or the other such as road side mechanics, petty trading, art works. The

population of this study comprised all the senior secondary two (SS II) students in Abakaliki Education zone who will sit for the 2016 senior Secondary Certificate Examination. According to available records at the State Education Board, the population of the SS II students in 2015 was three hundred and fifty two. From this number, a sample of 150 SS II students from 15 secondary schools out of the 78 secondary schools was drawn. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select the 15 secondary schools out of the 78 secondary schools in the zone. Furthermore, a simple random sampling technique was applied to select ten (10) students from each secondary school sampled to obtain the 150 students that served as the sample for the study. The sampling was done in the form of balloting with replacement or lucky dips. The researchers made use of self constructed structured questionnaire to collect data; entitled: Influence of Socio-economic Factors of Parents' Educational and Marital Status Questionnaire (ISEFPEMSQ). The instrument had two sections, A and B. Section A consisted of personal data instruction while the section B was made up of instruction and items bothering on students' interpersonal relation in their family with respect to parents' educational background and marital status. The questionnaire, which was based on the research questions, had two clusters, namely; educational background and marital status. The response mode of the items was a Likert type in the form of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). The options were rated 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively for positive items and vice versa. In order to ensure the validity of the instrument, the researchers gave the instrument to experts in the Departments of Educational Foundations and Science Education of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki to determine the appropriateness and relevance of the contents. Their corrections were effected accordingly as no item was dropped. To determine the reliability of the research instrument, the researcher carried out a trial testing, whereby copies of the ISEFPEMSQ were administered to twenty five (25) students from different schools not used for the main study. This was carried out in Onueke Education Zone of Ebonyi State. Data collected from ISEFPEMSQ gave a reliability coefficient of 0.86 using Cronbach Alpha Approach. The instrument was adjudged to be of high internal consistency and as such suitable for use for the study. The researchers with the assistance of a teacher from each of the 15 schools selected administered copies of the research instrument to the students (respondents) and retrieved them after completion on the spot to ensure maximum return. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using t-test. The decision as to the influence of socio-economic status of parents on students' academic performance from the results was based on the fact that any mean value of 2.50 and above was regarded as positive and accepted while a mean value of less than 2.50 was regarded as negative and was not accepted.

Presentation of Results

The results of the analysis of data collected to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses are presented in Tables.

Research Question 1

How does the educational background of parents influence the academic performance of students in secondary schools?

Table 1. Mean Results of Students on Influence of Parental Educational Background on students' performance in school

S.No.	Item	$\overline{X}$	SD	Interpretation
1	My parents were not educated at all and this is affecting my study	2.56	0.87	Accepted
2	My father was educated up to secondary school and this is affecting my study	2.48	0.95	Not Accepted
3	My mother was educated up to secondary school and this is affecting my study	2.40	0.85	Not Accepted
4	My parents were educated up to first degree level and this encourages my study	2.66	1.08	Accepted
5	My father/mother was educated up to masters and Ph.D level and this helps my study	2.58	0.97	Accepted
	Grand Mean	2.54		Accepted

The result in Table 1 shows that the grand mean is 2.54, which indicates that the respondents agree that parental educational background influences the academic performance of students positively, since it is above 2.50.

Research Question 2

How does the marital status of parents influence the academic performance of secondary school students?

From the results in Table 2, respondents agree that marital status influences the academic performance of students positively. This is seen in the grand mean of 3.30 which is high, positive and above 2.50.

Hypotheses

HO_1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of parental educational background on students' performance.

Based on the result of analysis on Table 3, the t-cal is less than that of t-crit. Therefore, HO_1 is accepted that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of parental educational background on students' performance.

HO_2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of parents' marital status on students' performance.

The result of the analysis on Table 4 shows that the t-calculated is greater than that of t-critical. Therefore, HO_2 is also accepted. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of marital status of parents on the academic performance of students.

Table 2. Mean Results of Students on Influence of Marital Status of Parents on Students' Performance in school

S/No	Item	$\overline{X}$	SD	Interpretation
1	The polygamous nature of my home affects my study	2.71	1.02	Accepted
2	My parents are living together and this helps my study	2.52	1.08	Accepted
3	My living with guardian is affecting my study	3.51	.52	Accepted
4	My parents have five children and this delays payment of my school fees which affects my study	2.56	1.11	Accepted
5	My parents' separation and subsequent divorce affect my study	2.55	1.08	Accepted
6	My community pays my school fees and this hinders payment of school fees in time and affects my study	2.65	1.03	Accepted
	Grand Mean	3.30		Accepted

Table 3. t-test Analysis on Influence of Educational background on Students' Performance based on Gender

S/N	Variable	No.	Mean	S.D	Df	t.cal	t.crit	Decision
1	Male	69	2.00	0.87	148	2.09	1.960	Accept HO
	Female	81	2.56	1.00				
2	Male	69	3.51	0.52	148	2.15	1.960	Accept HO
	Female	81	2.48	0.95				
3	Male	69	2.61	1.10	148	1.61	1.960	Accept HO
	Female	69	2.40	1.15				
4	Male	81	2.60	1.0	148	0.47	1.960	Accept HO
	Female	69	2.66	1.0				
5	Male	81	2.65	1.0	148	0.57	1.960	Accept HO
	Female	69	2.58	1.97				
	t-test value					1.37	1.960	Accept Ho_1

Table 4. t- test Analysis on Influence of Marital Status on Performance Based on Gender

S/N	Variable	No.	Mean	S.D	Df	t.cal	t.crit	Decision
1	Male	69	2.61	1.05	148	0.77	1.96	Accept HO
	Female	81	2.71	1.02				
2	Male	69	2.68	1.07	148	1.24	1.96	Accept HO
	Female	81	2.52	1.08				
3	Male	69	2.53	1.06	148	10.36	1.96	Accept HO
	Female	81	3.51	1.1				
4	Male	69	2.59	.52	148	0.49	1.96	Accept HO
	Female	81	2.56	1.11				
5	Male	69	2.62	1.06	148	0.49	1.96	Accept HO
	Female	81	2.55	1.08				
6	Male	69	2.53	1.03	148	1.00	1.96	Accept HO
	Female	81	2.65	1.03				
	t-test value					2.31	1.960	Accept Ho_1

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The discussion was based on the research questions, thus:

Research Question One

The research question 1 tended to investigate whether educational background of parents influences students' performance in secondary school. The result for research question 1 showed that educational background of parents influences the academic performance of students positively. This result agrees with the findings of Johnson (2000), Bianchi (2012), Onwuegbuna (2013) and Lindgren (2014) who separately stated that student's academic performance and the level of education of their parents are positively related. That is, educated parents produce higher achieving students than those that are not educated. Generally, that the children easily learn from their parents is obvious where such parents are available and consistently close to their children. These could be the reason for the type of result obtained. However, the researchers believe that with the current trend in globalization occasioned by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the high quest for education, parental level of education may not be the sole determinant of academic performance of adolescents. This is because parental expectation, parental support, family income and child's perception of things may play major roles in this situation. Usually, parents' high expectation on the child might make such parents to strive to provide much support to the child materially and financially where such a family has the income buoyancy. This in most cases helps the child to put up great effort in his or her study thereby excelling in his or her study. The result for hypothesis 1 is that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on how educational background of their parents influences their academic performance. This result means that the performance of students is irrespective of their parents' academic background. This is contrary to the findings of Udo (1990) who opined that children from poor homes were likely to show negative attitude towards going to school due to lack of maintenance which may manifest itself in truancy and absenteesm, thereby lowering the academic performance of such students. This also disagrees with the finding of Onwuegbuna (2013) who found out that student's academic performance and the level of education of their parents are positively related. Educational qualification may not be the only predictor of academic performance of students in school. This situation suggests clearly that in the absence of high academic background of parents, the students may still perform creditably well at school. This indicates the influence of other factors in moderating the academic performance of students in school.

Research Question Two

The research question 2 sought to determine if marital status of parents influences students' performance in school. The result for research question 2 revealed that marital status of parent influences the academic performance of students as indicated by the grand mean of 3.30 shown in Table 2. This result is in line with Nwachukwu (2011) who had reported that children from broken homes or living with one parent may fare better in schools than the children from intact but unhappy homes. But the result of this study firmly contradicts the findings of Nwachukwu (2011) who was of the opinion that children separated from their parents are deficient in measures of development and intellectual or physical growth. So, despite this kind of parental status; where the other factors are positively controlled, the students may perform creditably well. The result of hypothesis two revealed that there is a significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on marital status and students' performance in school. This result is in line with the findings of Henderson (1997) who is of the opinion that when students are severed from their parents and are therefore not given the necessary support they perform poorly academically. This hypothesis however contradicts the findings of Nwachukwu (2011) who in his work on parental marital status on achievement found a no significant difference.

Educational Implications

From the results of the study, some far-reaching implications are plausible to the students, guidance counsellors, classroom teachers, parents, school administration and policy makers. It was also the finding that parental educational background influences the academic performance of students positively. Here, the parents are quite in a position to teach their children at home to add to what they had learnt at school. Where this is not the case, the children are left at the mercy of what they learnt in school, which might not place them at a better position for excellent results at school work. The study equally found out that marital status of parents influences their academic at school positively. This is possible due to peaceful atmosphere at home and conducive learning environment. Where the home front is noisy and crisis ridden, children might not have the opportunity to do their home work. This would lead to poor performance at school. The result of test of hypothesis 1, that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of students on educational background based on gender has implication in that one would not be thinking that if parents have low education and their academic qualification inadequate, then performance must be low. This is erroneous because excellent performance at school is a product of hard work, in most cases if not in all. On the test of hypothesis 2, the study found out that there is a significant difference between the mean responses of students on influence of marital status of parents based on gender. The implication is that children at school could still perform excellently without parental peaceful marriage. It might be misleading to believe that a good success at school goes with peaceful marriage and parental unity in marriage.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications of the results of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Parents should be aware of the importance of their presence and involvement in their children's schooling. This they should do by visiting the schools, attending school-community meetings and looking into their children's school works when they return from school.
2. Schools should be equipped with qualified teachers, relevant learning materials to meet up the needs of different classes of students from diversified socio-economic backgrounds.
3. Philanthropist and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to assist students from poor families by granting them scholarships for motivation.

4. Government policy on free education should be extended to senior secondary level and help in equipping schools to enable students from relatively low socio-economic status and other family background problems enjoy sustainable education.

Limitations of the Study

The study had the following limitations, which might have affected the generalization of the findings.

1. The researcher used only one education zone in Ebonyi State. This has limiting influence on the results obtained for other Education Zones and elsewhere.
2. The administration of the questionnaire was restricted to only SS II students. This made generalizing the findings to all students in the education zone not possible.
3. The instrument did not record a 100% reliability, which suggests that the instrument had some minor defects that made the results not generalizable throughout the entire State

Conclusion

Socio-economic factors of parents in determining the performance of their students is an important parameter in the education sector. This research work has made effort in showing the influence of socio-economic factors of parents' educational background and marital status on the academic performance of students in secondary schools in Ebonyi State. From the findings, it could be concluded that students of parents of low educational background and divorced homes need all the assistance they could get to perform academically as those from the high educational background homes. It needs be said that students' academic performances do not necessarily depend on the educational background and marital status of parents alone. High socio- economic class students who hail from learned and highly placed family and living with both parents may still not perform well academically due to factors like peer group and lack of individual determination that also influence students' performance. It is equally common knowledge that children from divorced parents have performed well in academics despite the emotional instability they may have or may be going through at home. This is food for thought and the need to carry out a holistic study on the influence of socio-economic factors on students' performance solicited. Recommendations were made which these researchers believe that when implemented would help to improve the performance of students in school irrespective of parents' socio-economic status.

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