

## **Effect of Parents' Occupation and Educational Background on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Anambra State.**

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### ***Abstract***

The study investigated effects of parents' occupation and educational background on students' academic performance in Secondary Schools in Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted. A sample of 884 senior secondary school students in form two (SS2) was drawn from the population of 2945 using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Simple random sampling technique was employed in the choice of schools for the study. Instrument for data collection was questionnaire, validated by three experts, two from Departments of Educational Management and Policy and one from Measurement and Evaluation. Data obtained were analyzed using percentages and mean statistics. The findings indicate that students from educated parents achieve more than those from uneducated parents in academics; students from high-income status parents enjoy considerable advantage in academic performance than students of low income status parents. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that parents should diversify their sources of income to be able to provide funds for their children's schooling.

**Keywords:** Parents' occupation, education, academic performance.

## Introduction

Education is the pivot of academic performance and excellence of any student. It is of primary importance in the development era of the world globalization. Hence, Azhar, Nadeem, Naz, Parreen and Sameen(2013), opine that, “education not only gives insight, it also grooms the personality, inculcates moral values, add knowledge and gives skill.” Education being what is worthwhile transmitting to all members of the society, Okafor (2011) considers education to embrace all those experiences of the individual through which knowledge is acquired and intellect enlightened. Therefore, education is a formidable force that propels students academic performance and the nations multidimensional development. There is no gainsaying the fact that parental level of education seem to affect the academic performance of their wards. Concurring with the assertion, Desforges (2003) notes that, parental involvement in the form of ‘at-home good parenting’ has a significant positive effect on children’s achievement and adjustment even after all other factors of shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation. Categorically, no parent can be said to be bereft of ideas that the activities in the home go to a great length to determine the academic performance of children in school.

In view of the foregoing, Gary (2001) states that students from professional and managerial occupational backgrounds exhibit higher academic performance. In support of this view, Onochie and Okpala (2005) opine that educational level of parents which is an indicator of socio-economic status has direct influence on child’s values and academic achievement in the school. They observed that children from illiterate families may learn little or nothing from home that can help them develop interest in academics.

Parental occupation is also an important family background variable. The occupation of one’s parents may determine to a large extent one’s opportunity to attend secondary school or not. Ezeji (2001) notes that, “parents who are lawyers, doctors, musicians among others normally prefer their children to take after their occupation”. Examples of such people in the country include Gani Fawehinmi, the prominent human right lawyer, Oliver Akalite (Oliver De Coque) and Osita Osadebe who were famous musicians. These great men ensure that they replicate themselves while alive. This brings to fore the role of the family in the child’s academic performance. It must be born in mind that the family contributes to the academic performance of the student and choice of occupation later in life.

Family (small or large size) remains the primary environment of every child. The family being the process of education and provides physical and psychological needs of the child. This supports the view of Maduewesi(2002), that the environment experiences from family, peer group and school location have great influence in determining child’s intellectual ability, she asserts that bright children from under-privileged family environment may turn dull due to impoverished family environment. Maduewesi added that mental development influence intellectual development, which determines the level of the students academic performance. In effect, a child’s intellectual development invariably charts the course of his academic performance.

Academic performance has to do with what a learner is able to accomplish by execution of class work in the school. Stiggings (2001) explains academic performance as something a learner does

or achieves at school, college or university, in class, in a laboratory or field work. In addition, Wentling (2000) notes that academic performance refers to achievement of individuals' objective to various types of knowledge and skills. According to Wentling, the objectives are established based on the age, prior learning and capacity of individuals with regards to education, socialization and qualification.

In a similar development, Stones (2004) underscores that economically and culturally, poor homes do not provide the stimulation necessary for the development of intellectual abilities involving in school learning. Certain physical conditions that exist at home, poor housing and overcrowding environment are often associated with poor academic achievement and adjustment. Poor clothing, malnutrition, lack of adequate sleep and rest, all have profound effects on how they behave and react. The reaction of students stemming from home in essence determines their academic performance.

In the study area, there is a seeming general high performance among secondary school students in Anambra state compared to other states in Nigeria. Evidences of the high performances are seen in both students' internal and external examination. For instance, in 2013, the available records of West African Examination Council [WAEC] result analyses revealed that 12 States in Nigeria recorded percentage that were above national average in the following order: Anambra State (67.58%), Abia State (65.17%), Rivers State (58.56%), Lagos State (56.03%), Cross River State (53.34%), Bayelsa State (51.66%), Enugu State (50.22%), Delta State (46.49%), Imo State (46.03%), Abuja (43.9%), Ogun State (39.22%), (NBS Interstate records, 2013).

According to the result statistics for WASSC 2014 summary, Anambra, Abia and Edo state have the highest percentages of 65.92%, 58.52% and 57.82% respectively. In Anambra State, students who scored five credits and above including Mathematics and English were 34,094, with 19,109 female students and 14,985 male students (WASSCE, 2014).

The statistical data on performance of candidates who participated in the 2015 May/June WASSCE organised by WAEC was published by WAEC according to states. According to the details, south-east emerged tops in the performance chart of candidates who obtained credits in at least five subjects, including English Language and Mathematics as Abia State topped the chart with 33,762 of its 52,801 candidates getting five credits and above. Anambra State came second with 28,379 out of 46,385 candidates. While Abia State scored 63.94 per cent, Anambra State got 61.18 per cent out of 100 per cent. It is against this background that this study investigated the effect of parents' occupation and educational background on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Anambra state.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Seemingly, standard of education is dwindling. This effect may be due to some variables like parents occupation and education background. To one's greatest dismay, both literate and illiterate parents wrongly prioritize their value orientations which affect the academic performance of students in Secondary Schools within Awka South, Anambra State.

Although presently, Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra state can boast of significant population of literate parents, yet materialistic tendencies, get rich quick syndrome,

and business spirit found in some of these parents bemoan the values for credible education. In effect, some literate parents send their children to schools without minding what their performances are. Some parents leave the home very early and come back very late, not minding if their children did their take home assignments or academic performance notwithstanding. This attitude lures some parents to enrol their children in 'miracle centres' for examination malpractices during external examinations.

Going through some secondary schools, parents neglect the funding of their children's education with the flimsy reason that economic recession has affected all sectors in the country. They cut down on provisions of the needed materials for schooling such as text books, desk, chairs among others. Some children are uncomfortably seated, others knelt on the floor during lessons in some notable secondary schools visited by the researcher during 2017 teaching practice supervision in Awka South L.G.A. Some students were sent home during examination because of non-payment of school fees. Other students attend school with thorn school uniforms, worn out sandals to mention but a few.

One then wonders, are these students not coming to school from the home of literate parents or are we advocating schooling without education syndrome for our generation? It is an obvious fact that the family background from where the students come from has a role to play in their academic performance. Hence, the researchers investigated effects of parents occupation and educational background on students academic performance in secondary schools in Anambra state.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the effect of parental education on students' academic performance?
2. What is the effect parental occupation on students' academic performance?
3. What is the effect of parents' income on students' academic performance?

## Method

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the research. Three research questions guided the study. The population of the study comprised 2945 senior secondary year two students (SS2) in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The sample for the study was 884 derived through proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Simple random sampling technique was used in the choice of schools for the study. The instrument for data collection was a 15 item questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three experts, one in Measurement and Evaluation (Educational Foundations) and two in Educational Management and Policy, all in Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Data collected were analyzed using percentages and mean statistics. Any item mean score of 3.0 and above is considered as being positive and accepted whereas any mean score less than 3.0 is negative and unaccepted.

**Research question 1:** What is the effect of parental level of education on students' academic performance?

**Table 1:** Mean responses on the effect of parental level of education on students academic performance

S/N	Items on parental education level	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1	Educated parents always want their children to be educated	3.69	1.21	Accept
2	Parents who are educated provide most of the recommended learning aids for their children e.g. textbooks	3.80	1.05	Accept
3	Parents who are educated encourage their children to study subjects which are pivotal for good university courses	3.71	1.18	Accept
4	In homes of educated parents, there are conducive environment for studies	3.97	1.06	Accept
5	Educated parents arrange for supportive teachers for the subject/ subjects which their wards/children find difficult in school	3.60	1.25	Accept
6	Parents who are educated guide their children in school assignments and home work	3.43	1.31	Accept
7	Educated parents always demand for progress reports of their children to know the children's academic and social progress	4.00	0.97	Accept
<b>Overall mean</b>		<b>3.74</b>	<b>1.15</b>	<b>Accept</b>

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 1 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 affects students' academic performance. Thus, since all the items are above 3.00 and the overall mean of 3.74 is also above 3.00, the study concludes that all the items in table 1 are accepted to be the effects of parental level of education on students' academic performance in Awka South LGA, Anambra State.

**Research question 2:** What effect of parental occupation on students' academic performance?

**Table 2:** Mean responses on the effect of parental occupation on students' academic performance

S/N	Items on parental education level	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
8	Parents on prestigious occupation want their children to take up the same type of occupation	2.61	1.04	Unaccepted
9	Some occupations do not give parents time to attend	2.34	0.79	Unaccepted

	to their children's academic needs			
10	Parents on poor occupations find it difficult to provide learning aids for their children	2.29	1.03	Unaccepted
11	Parents who are poor farmers can only enroll their children into minor apprenticeship programmes	2.50	0.76	Unaccepted
<b>Overall mean</b>		<b>2.44</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>Unaccepted</b>

Source: Field survey, 2016

The result presented on Table 2 above shows that all items under the effect of parental occupation had mean scores below the cut off mark of 3.00. Thus, all items under parental occupation were considered unacceptable. This shows that parents occupation do not necessarily affect students' academic performance. Hence, since all the items are below 3.00 and the overall mean of 2.44 is also below 3.00, the study concludes that the effects of parental occupation do not determine students' academic performance in Awka South LGA, Anambra State.

**Research question 3:** What is the effect of parents' income on students' academic performance?

**Table 3:** Mean responses on the effect of parental income on students' academic performance

S/N	Items on parental education level	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
12	Children whose parents are on high-income status have higher career aspiration than children whose parents are on low-income status	3.89	1.15	Accept
13	Parents on high-income can afford to provide the basic necessities required for their children's education	3.70	1.26	Accept
14	Children from upper-working class homes perform better in education	4.00	0.90	Accept
15	Only parents who are on high-income status can train their children beyond secondary school level	2.36	1.96	Unaccepted
<b>Overall mean</b>		<b>3.58</b>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>Accept</b>

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 3 indicates that parent's income affects the academic performance of students. Items 12-14 corroborate the view and had mean scores above the cut off mark of 3.00. Only item 15 disagree with the stance with a mean score of 2.36 indicating unacceptable position.

### Discussion

Table 1 shows that parental level of education is a contributory as well as determinant factor in students academic performance. The findings corroborated the views of Onochie and Okpala (1995) that educational level of parents which is an indicator of socio-economic status has direct impact on child's value and academic achievement in the school. Furthermore, they assert that children from illiterate families may learn little or nothing from home that can help them develop interest in academics.

The study found that educated parents provide more conducive atmosphere for studies at home than non-educated ones. Hence, children from literate families perform better academically than

their counterparts from illiterate homes. It was on this note that Garry (2001) opines that the importance of parental level of education to academic performance/achievement of students cannot be overemphasized. He furthermore asserts that students from professional and to a less extent managerial occupation backgrounds exhibit higher academic performance.

Table 2 highlights that parents' occupation does not strictly determine students academic performance. This finding may be based on the fact that certain variables other than parents' occupation may determine the student's performance. For instance, a student naturally endowed with high intelligent quotient is given to perform excellently in academics, the parents' occupation notwithstanding. Thus, Anambra state is blessed with academic gurus like Prof Chinua Achebe and Prof Kenneth Dike; political juggernauts like Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Mbazulike Amechi whose parents were mere farmers of their generation.

Ezeji (2001) aptly observes that parents like their children to take after their occupation. In view of that, Uwaoma (2009) opines that most vocational students were children whose parents were farmers or crafts men. However, Eke (1999) differently notes that parental occupation does not significantly impact on the academic performance of students.

The researchers of this study arguably differ in opinion and assert that parental occupation can determine students' performance, which is at variance with the findings of the study in table two. This is because certain variables that determine parents occupation may not be the same in other parents situation. For example, a child may not be as brilliant as his/ her parents who are doctors, lawyers, engineers and so on. This may result to school dropout, frustration in the course of studies by some students who could not meet up with certain specialization their parents may have pushed them into.

Data obtained from table 3 indicate that parental level of income affect students academic performance. The finding corroborates the views of Francis (2007) indicating that, the lower income families may be aware of the importance of education in the society, but at the same time they are aware of their limited resources to measure up with such educational demands. Furthermore, he opines that a family that can scarcely provide for the basic needs of the family such as food, shelter and clothing will hardly motivate the academic excellence of their children. Instead it will pressurize the children to seek for job opportunities with the little education they acquired to support the family.

Accordingly, there is no gain saying that any child deprived of the basic needs will be drastically affected academically. For instance, hunger may impair a student's academic performance because such a student will not benefit while the teacher impacts the class with the desired learning experiences.

The findings also show that students whose parents earn reasonable income have higher academic aspiration than those whose parents are on low income status. Concurring with the viewpoint, Ojo and Yilma (2010) note that the socio-economic status of the family is capable of affecting the performance of the children and their aspirations. This implies that families with high socio-economic status are better disposed to prepare their children for school and the necessary learning experiences. This basically is as a result of better access to wide range of

facilities which provides better exposure such as enabling environment, home library, private teacher, books, and computers for the children's education. Parents with high socio-economic status also stand a better chance to impact self esteem and give formidable support for excellent performance by their children in school.

### **Conclusion**

Conclusion from the findings of this study indicates that parents educational background and income affect the academic performance of students in schools. Educational status of the parents contributes and determines students' academic performance. Bearing in mind the import of education, literate parents solidly support the education of the children for better academic performance.

The study also underscores that parents occupation do not primarily determine students performance because present realities have shown children of illiterate parents and peasant farmers who actualize their life aspirations as professors in various fields of learning.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents should diversify their sources of income in order to provide adequate funding of their children's education for better academic performance.
2. Parents should be educated to realize the importance of motivation in determining their children academic performance in schools. Also, parents should be actively involved in encouraging students to learn and also in supervising student's academic work at home.
3. Sensitization and enlightenment coupled with empowerment of parents with low income status would go a long way to enhance the educational provisions for children's schooling. More so, students under their care will be provided with the enabling environment for studies at home, since this will positively impact their academic performance.

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