

Parents' Socioeconomic Status and Students' Academic Performance in Chemistry in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract : *The study determined the extent to which parents' socioeconomic variables (parents' educational status, parents' income level and parents' occupational status) jointly relates with students' academic performance in chemistry in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. To achieve this, two specific objectives were stated, two research questions were raised and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Human Capital Theory by Gary Becker in 1964 and Theodore Schultz, (1961) was adopted for the study. Correlational research design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised all 7836 chemistry students in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. Multistage sampling approach was used for selecting 783 students which represents 10% of their population. An instrument titled Parents' Socioeconomic Status Questionnaire (PSQ) and Achievement Test in Chemistry were used for data collection from students. The instrument was validated by two experts from the Department of Educational Management and planning and one from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation, both in Abia State University, Ututu. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha analysis and the index reliability coefficient of 0.89 was realized and utilized for the study. Multiple regression and Analysis of Variance statistical tools were used to answer the research question one and two and to test the null hypotheses one and two respectively at .05 significant level. Findings of the study revealed that parents' educational status, parents' income level and parents' occupational status significantly independently and collectively influence students' academic performance in Chemistry in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. It was concluded from the results that parents' educational qualifications, parents' income level and parents' occupational status influences students' academic performance when all in use simultaneously by way of providing children with all needed resources to be the best among peers in school thus achieving the educational set goals, leading to a better skills development. The test has by and large bore favourable significant results in the light of the variables adopted for the study. It is recommended amongst others that, educational bodies should adjust the curriculum to ensure core learning and critical assignments are completed within school hours under the supervision of professional teachers. This mitigates the disadvantages of low parental educational qualifications, ensuring students' academic success does not depend heavily on their parents' ability to help with homework.*

Introduction

Education is a fundamental cornerstone for an individual and societal development in which secondary schools being one of the levels of education serves as a critical phase that shapes students' future academic and career paths through various subjects taught at this level where chemistry is included. The secondary level of education is crucial in the education system for it helps to equip students live effectively in our 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 justified the free and compulsory primary and secondary education introduced by the federal republic of Nigeria and implemented by the Akwa Ibom State Government (FRN, 2013). By this, students at the primary and secondary levels of education have had the opportunity not to pay school fees but be supported by parents to provide them with appropriate learning materials, books, amongst others in which they are expected to perform well and acquire good grades in their results.

Students' academic performance refers to the measure of what students have learnt during the educational process, evidenced through planned evaluation procedures (Ariza et al 2018; Nino-Tezen et al. 2024). In this study, student academic performance is defined as good result of students' school achievements that could be made manifest by factors such as family, peer group, economic possibilities, teachers, classmates, motivation and interest in subject activities. The importance of good students' academic performance cannot be gainsaid as it is a prerequisite for achieving the stated educational goals and objectives, securing quality manpower for labour markets, preparing quality learners for higher education of learning amongst others. High academic performance is crucial for securing better career opportunities, fostering personal development, and driving societal progress. It enables students to gain confidence, parents to witness the success of their investments, schools to build strong reputation and society to benefit from a skilled workforce. Good academic performance enhances students' opportunities for higher education and future

careers, reduces parental anxiety, strengthens a school's reputation and credibility, and prepares students to become competent professionals capable of addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Despite this significance of students' good academic performance in secondary schools especially in science related subjects, it has been observed that many chemistry students do not perform well academically at the expected level. This situation is often reflected in poor academic grades, negative attitudes toward learning, inadequate access to educational materials for independent study after classroom instruction, and the absence of a suitable learning environment for science students which they offer chemistry as one of their subjects. Other contributing factors include financial constraints, limited access to internet facilities for independent learning beyond the classroom that enhances wider knowledge, and insufficient parental support and assistance. These challenges seem to collectively hinder students' academic success and educational development. Low parental income has been found to adversely affect chemistry students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools, as financial limitations often hinder families from providing essential learning resources and other educational supports necessary for academic achievement (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Federal government has introduced several policies, reforms and intervention programmes aimed at improving the academic performance of students. For instance, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) reform has helped secondary school students by increasing access to free and compulsory basic education, improving school infrastructure, and supporting teacher development. Through funding to State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), more classrooms have been built, learning materials supplied, and teachers recruited and trained. For students, this has led to improved school attendance, better learning environments, and increased enrolment at the secondary level. For Nigerian secondary school students, the programme has reduced barriers to entry, especially for children from low-income families, thereby promoting educational inclusion. In the long term, this strengthens foundational literacy and numeracy skills, which are essential for improved academic performance in senior secondary education. Despite these attempts, the problem of poor students' academic performance persists; therefore, this study aimed at examining the relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and the academic performance of students in chemistry in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

Excellent academic performance benefits students by expanding future educational opportunities, improving career prospects, and enhancing employability. It also strengthens critical thinking and problem-solving skills, supports family goals, and contributes to the growth of educational institutions and national development. Furthermore, strong academic achievement fosters motivation, discipline, and positive study habits, leading to better personal development and responsible behaviour. Despite its importance, students' performance in chemistry in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State seems to be poor as students scored low grades even beyond the termly results to external examinations like West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO), limiting students' admission into tertiary institutions and requiring them to repeat the said examinations. This abnormality seems to also contribute to low self-confidence among students, frustration among parents and teachers, and broader challenges such as school dropout and weakened human capital development. It is often reflected in behaviours such as truancy, examination malpractice, poor study habits, low motivation, indiscipline, and general disinterest in learning, all of which further undermine effective teaching and academic performance.

Several government interventions aimed at improving students' academic performance in Chemistry such as teacher training programmes, curriculum reforms, provision of laboratory facilities, and free education policies have been implemented over the years to solve the problem of students' academic performance in Chemistry in Akwa Ibom State. However, despite these efforts, poor performance still persists in some public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. This continuing challenge is often linked to constraints such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate funding, insufficient instructional materials, and poorly equipped school libraries, which collectively weaken effective teaching and learning. This situation suggests that the problem may not be fully explained by school-based factors alone but could also be rooted in students' home and family environments. However, the extent to which parental socio-economic factors independently and jointly relate to students' academic performance in Chemistry in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State remains insufficiently established. Hence, this study addresses this exact gap by determining the precise extent to which parental socioeconomic status (parents' educational status, parents' income level and parent's occupational status) collectively and individually relates with students' academic performance in chemistry in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Purpose of the Study

1. Ascertain how the joint variable of parents' socioeconomic status (parents' education, income and occupation) predicts the academic performance of students in chemistry in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Access the differences in the academic performance of students in chemistry based on varying levels of parents' socio-economic status in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

1. What is the combined influence of parents' socio-economic status (education, income and occupation) on academic performance of students in chemistry in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?
2. Are there significant differences in the academic performance of students in chemistry based on varying levels of parents' socio-economic status in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

1. The combined sub variables of parents' socio-economic status (education, income and occupation) do not significantly predict the academic performance of students in chemistry in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
2. There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students in chemistry based on varying levels of parents' socio-economic status in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory (Gary Becker, 1964 and Theodore Schultz, 1961)

Human Capital Theory is popularized by Gary Becker in 1964 and Theodore Schultz, (1961). The theory posits that education is a form of investment that enhances individuals' knowledge, skills, productivity, and future economic returns. The theory views spending on education, training, and skill acquisition as comparable to investment in physical capital, since it generates measurable benefits over time. Becker (1993) and Schultz (1961) argue that individuals and families allocate resources to education because of its long-term returns in terms of improved competence, higher earnings, and better life outcomes. Within educational research, the theory has become a major framework for explaining differences in students' academic achievement based on variations in family resources and investments. Human Capital Theory emphasize the role of parental socioeconomic status in shaping children's educational outcomes.

The theory is related to the study as it shows that parents' income, education, and occupation determine the level of investment made in children's schooling as higher family income enables access to quality schools, tutoring, textbooks, digital resources, and enrichment activities that reinforce classroom learning. These investments collectively contribute to the development of students' cognitive skills and academic competence.

Conceptual Background

Concept of Parents Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status (SES) has to do with a construct that captures a family's position within the social hierarchy based on access to economic resources, educational attainment, occupational status, and social capital. Recent educational research conceptualizes SES not merely as income level, but as a combination of material resources, parental education, occupational prestige, and access to social and cultural capital that collectively shape students' learning opportunities (Sanni & Onyedikachi, 2021; Anyanwu, 2023; Aparna et al., 2024). Socio-economic status (SES) refers to the social and economic position of individuals or families within a society, encompassing various dimensions such as income, parental education level, occupation, and access to resources and opportunities (Munir, et al., 2023). In the context of this study, socio-economic status is conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual parent or guardian and it is measured as a combination of education, income and occupation.

Concept of Parent's Educational Status

Parents' educational level refers to the highest level of education attained by parents, ranging from secondary education to advanced academic qualifications (Onyedikachim & Ezekiel-Hart, 2021). As a key indicator of socioeconomic status, parental educational attainment shapes parents' values, aspirations, beliefs, and knowledge regarding child development and education. These attributes often influence the extent of parental involvement in children's learning and the quality of academic support provided at home. Students whose parents possess higher educational qualifications are more likely to develop positive academic self-concepts, adopt effective learning strategies, maintain favorable attitudes toward learning, and demonstrate stronger commitment to academic activities.

Concept of Parent's Income Level

Parents' income can play a crucial role in determining the level of educational support and resources available to students. Parents' income level has to do with parents' financial capacity that provides students' opportunities to access educational resources, that boosts their academic performance (Sansom et al. 2021). Parents with higher income levels are generally better positioned to provide educational materials that enhance learning such as textbooks, reference materials; laboratory manuals, internet-enabled devices, and educational software that can help students understand complex chemistry concepts. According to Igwe (2026), parents' income is significantly linked to the academic performance of chemistry students in secondary schools as the study revealed that students whose parents had higher financial resources performed better in chemistry examinations because they had greater access to instructional materials and private academic support. This finding underscores the importance of financial resources in facilitating students' engagement with learning activities both inside and outside the classroom.

Concept of Parents' Occupational Status

Parents' occupational status refers to the type of work parents engage in and the social and economic position attached to that work. It is a key component of socio-economic status that contributes to students' academic performance. Studies indicates that parents' ability to provide educational materials, pay school-related expenses, and create supportive learning conditions largely depends on their occupation and the income it generates (Ololube, 2016, Mudassir & Abubakar, 2016.). Parents engaged in stable and well-paying jobs are generally better positioned to meet their children's academic needs than those involved in low-income or unstable occupations. Globally, different studies show that parents' occupation help students become more productive in their schooling life because they define the level of capital spent on educating their children (Kim et al., 2017; Li & Qiu, 2018).

Concept of Students' Academic Performance

Students' academic performance refers to the measurable level of attainment a learner demonstrates in achieving educational objectives. It reflects the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired through formal instruction and is commonly expressed through grades, test scores, and standardized examination results. Academic performance is documented evidence of learning outcomes within a specified period, particularly as reflected in classroom assessments and external evaluations (Ariza et al., 2018). Academic performance is regarded as a construct that extends beyond examination scores. According to Niño-Tezen et al. (2020), it includes students' critical thinking ability, problem-solving skills, classroom engagement, and capacity to transfer knowledge to new situations. In science subjects such as chemistry, performance involves both conceptual understanding and practical laboratory competence. Adedapo and Olayiwola (2019) emphasize that meaningful assessment in science must integrate theoretical mastery with practical application.

Research Methods

Correlational research design was adopted for the study because the design is used to determine the degree of relationship between variables and whether one variable can predict another. The total population of the study was 7836 chemistry students present in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. 10% of the students' population was used as sample size, resulting in 783 students. Parents' Socioeconomic Questionnaire (PSQ) and Chemistry Achievement Test, all for students were used to collect data. Cronbach's Alpha Analysis tool was adopted for the study and they yielded reliability coefficient indices of 0.89 while multiple regression analysis and Univariate Analysis of Variance were used to answer the research question one and two and also test null hypothesis one and two respectively on the difference of all the sub-variables.

Answering of Research Question

Research Question One: What is the combined influence of Parents' Socioeconomic Status (Education, Income, and Occupation) on Students' Academic Performance in Chemistry in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4.1: Result of R and R² Coefficient of Multiple Regression Analysis for the prediction of students' academic performance by parents' socioeconomic status variables

Variables	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the Estimate
Predictors				
Job Satisfaction	.769	.591	.589	2.37532

Source: Field Study (2026)

Table 4.1 result indicates the strength of the joint regression model which reveals a combined relationship between the three parental socioeconomic status predictors (parents' educational level, parents' income level and parents' occupational status) and the dependent variable (students' academic performance). R, the correlation coefficient (.769) is the linear correlation coefficient between the parents' socioeconomic status variables and students' academic performance. Its value reveals a high and positive relationship. R², the coefficient of determination (.591) is the squared value of the correlation coefficient. The result means that parental socioeconomic status variables jointly predict students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State by 59.1% in which 40.9% is influenced by unmeasured external factors.

Research Question Two: Are there significant differences in the academic performance of students in Chemistry based on varying levels of parents' socioeconomic status in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4.2: Result of Univariate Analysis of Variance on the difference in students' academic performance in Chemistry based on parental socioeconomic status.

Source of Variation	Parents' Socioeconomic	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Parent' Education	No formal education	55	3.00	2.20
	First School	54	7.00	4.00
	SSCE	435	11.38	3.20
	NCE/OND	54	11.00	1.10
	HND/B.SC	108	13.00	2.00
Parents' Income	#1-50,000	217	9.25	1.47
	#51,000-100,000	217	9.47	4.35
	#101,000-150,000	163	11.33	2.86
	#151,000-200,000	54	11.00	1.00

#201,000- above	55	18.00	.000
Parents' Occupation Civil Servant	162	9.33	1.25
Business	218	10.96	4.91
Farmer	54	7.00	2.10
Professional	108	11.00	3.00
Unemployed	54	9.00	2.02
Others	110	14.00	4.08

Source: Field Study (2026)

Table 4.2 shows that parents' income level of #201,000 and above reported the highest mean students' academic performance ($M=18.00$), followed by parents' occupation of others ($M=14.00$) and parents' educational qualification of HND/B.Sc ($M=13.00$). These results indicate that students' academic performance differ significantly across parents' socioeconomic status, with parents' income being the most influenced variable and parents' educational qualification the least influential variable. Thus, the research question is answered in the affirmative; there are significant differences in students' academic performance among the three categories of parents' socioeconomic status.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: The combined influence of Parents' Socioeconomic Status (Education, Income, and Occupation) does not significantly predict Students' Academic Performance in Chemistry in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

Table 4.3: Result of Multiple Regression Analysis for the prediction of academic performance of students in Chemistry using three parents' socioeconomic status (Parents educational qualification, parents' income level and parents' occupational status in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Source	Sum of Square	df	mean square	F	Decision $P<.05$
Regression	5714.329	3	1904.810	337.604	.000
Residual	3960.778	702	5.642		
Total	9675.207	705			

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	.320	.343		.931	.352
Parents educational qualification	1.843	.091	.511	20.244	.000
Parents' income level	1.164	.077	.379	15.048	.000
Parents' occupational status	.531	.041	.317	13.016	.000

The result in Table 4.3 shows F calculated of 337.604 with p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 significant level. Since the calculated value is less than 0.05 alpha level with 3 and 702 degrees of freedom, the result is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that parents' socioeconomic status variables (parents' educational qualification, parents' income level and parents' occupational status) do not significantly predict academic performance of students in Chemistry in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State is rejected in favour of the alternate one. However, the lower part of the Table shows the predictive capability of each of the three predictors (parents' socioeconomic status variables). The t-values and the associated values of significance levels have shown that all the three of the predictors are significant predictors of students' academic performance in chemistry in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

The three significant predictors are parents' educational qualification ($t=-20.244$, $p<0.05$), parents' income level ($t=-15.048$, $p<0.05$) and parents' occupational status ($t=-13.016$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, the predictive equation for this study is: Academic Performance = $.320 + 1.843$ Parents' educational qualification + 1.164 Parents' income Level + $.531$ Parents' occupational Status.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students in chemistry based on varying levels of parents' socio-economic status in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4.4: Result of Univariate Analysis of Variance on the difference in students' academic performance in Chemistry based on parental socioeconomic status.

Source of Variation	Parents' Socioeconomic	N	Mean	Std Dev.	df	F	Decision P<.05
Corrected Model					10	3728.488	.000
					695		
Parent' Education	No formal education	55	3.00	2.20	2	9970.960	.000
	First School	54	7.00	4.00			
	SSCE	435	11.38	3.20			
	NCE/OND	54	11.00	1.10			
	HND/B.SC	108	13.00	2.00			
Parents' Income	#1-50,000	217	9.25	1.47	2	2494.808	.000
	#51,000-100,000	217	9.47	.35			
	#101,000-150,000	163	11.33	2.86			
	#151,000-200,000	54	11.00	1.00			
	#201,000- above	55	18.00	.000			
Parents' Occupation	Civil Servant	162	9.33	1.25	3	4083.814	.000
	Business	218	10.96	4.91			
	Farmer	54	7.00	2.10			
	Professional	108	11.00	3.00			
	Unemployed	54	9.00	2.02			
	Others	110	14.00	4.08			

Source: Field Study (2026)

The result in Table 4.4 shows F calculated of 3728.488 with p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 significant level. The result revealed that the calculated value is less than 0.05 alpha level with 10 and 695 degrees of freedom, the result is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that parents' socioeconomic status variables (parents' educational qualification, parents' income level and parents' occupational status) do not significantly influence academic performance of students in Chemistry in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State is rejected in favour of the alternate one. However, the Table further shows the influence capability of each of the three parents' socioeconomic status variables. The F-values and the associated values of significance levels have shown that all the three of the sub variables of parents' socioeconomic status significantly influences students' academic performance in chemistry in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

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

1. Educational bodies should adjust the curriculum to ensure core learning and critical assignments are completed within school hours under the supervision of professional teachers. This mitigates the disadvantages of low parental educational qualifications, ensuring students' academic success does not depend heavily on their parents' ability to help with homework.
2. Ministry of Education and State Secondary Education Board should ensure the deployment of direct financial interventions, such as textbooks grants, and free transport schemes for students from far distance, specifically targeting students from low-income households. This will directly remove immediate cash barriers to learning.
3. School administrators should organize government funded or community sponsored after school tutoring and prep classes at no cost to the students. This will compensate for parents' occupational constraints (long hours at work, low supervision) and allows the outsource of academic guidance effectively.
4. Policy makers in education should invest in schools' infrastructure, ensuring every school has functional laboratories, free chemicals and equipment as well as well stocked libraries. This provides students with the exact leaning tools at school that low-income parents cannot afford to buy at home or to bring to school.
5. The government should expand school feeding initiatives to ensure every student receives at least one balanced meal daily at secondary schools. This will neutralize the physiological impact of low parental income, preventing hunger and malnutrition from undermining a students' classroom concentration and performance.

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