

## **INFLUENCE OF FAMILY SOCIO-ECONOMIC-STATUS AND EXPECTATIONS ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND WELLBEING OF THE NIGERIAN CHILD**

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### **Abstract**

*Investigating the influence of family socio-economic-status and expectations on the academic achievement and wellbeing of Nigerian of students in Aboh Mbaise Local Government of Imo State, Nigeria is the goal of this study. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted an ex-post facto research design. The population for the study was 3,746 SSII students in the 46 public secondary schools in the zone. The sample for the study was 374 students who were composed using simple random sampling technique. Three instruments were used for the study. They are: modified Kuppaswamy Socioeconomic status scale updated in 2018, Family Expectations Questionnaire (FEQ) and Academic Achievement questionnaire (AAQ). The data obtained were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. It was found that students' family socio-economic-status and expectations have significant influence on their academic achievement and wellbeing. It was also noticed that gender does not influence students' academic achievement. It was recommended that families should strive to provide for children's needs irrespective of their gender.*

**Key Words:** Family Socio-economic Status; Family Expectations; Academic Achievement; Gender.

### **Introduction**

In every human society, academic achievement is measured by the educational success students attain or how they meet standards set by government or institutions of learning. As career competition grows fiercer in the contemporary world, the need for students to do well in school has caught the attention of parents and society alike. Most, if not all families and societies want their children to do well in all levels of education. Today's students are under higher societal pressure and expectations than the previous generations. This is due to globalization and families' socio-economic status. In every human society, academic achievement is measured by the educational success students attain or how they meet standards set by government or institutions of

learning. As career competition grows fiercer in the contemporary world, the need for students to do well in school has caught the attention of parents and society alike. Most, if not all families and societies want their children to do well in all levels of education. Today's students are under higher societal pressure and expectations than the previous generations. This is due to globalization and families' socio-economic status.(APA, 2018). Children from low-SES families are less likely to have experiences that encourage the development of fundamental skills of reading acquisition, such as phonological awareness, vocabulary, and oral language (Buckingham, Wheldall, & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013).Socioeconomic status (SES) is defined as a measure of one's combined economic and social status and tends to be positively associated with better health. This focuses on the three common measures of socioeconomic status; education, income, and occupation (Baker, 2014). A family's socioeconomic status is the totality of her political, economic, education and social makeup and her position on the ladder of societal social stratification. While wealthy families will naturally want their children to be rich and maintain their social class, poor families urge their children to work hard and become rich so that they can move-up their families' social status. These efforts and struggles determine families' psychodynamics which is geared towards the wellbeing of the child.

Most families show keen interest in their children's wellbeing both in education and other areas of human survival. That is why they strive and try their best to provide sound and quality education for their children at all levels. Many wealthy and enlightened parents believe that they can only expect great achievements and success from their children only when the children are well provided for. Educated parents believe that when they provide children with the necessary things they need, that they will do well in school (Adebayo, 2000). Such parents tend to blame students' poor achievement on poor learning facilities, poor infrastructure and low motivation to study. While poor parents attribute their children's poor school achievement on their low socio-economic-status. That is why poor parents work hard to sustain their children in school.

Families' constant provision for their school children's needs seem to enable them have influence on their children's achievement and prospects from childhood till the adolescence stages (Egereonu, 2001). A family's influence on her children extends to the kinds of expectations they have for their children's school achievement. Students who believe that their families expect them to attend the university, are more likely to have better attendance and better attitude towards their academics in secondary schools. When a family's expectations for children are made known to the children, it appears

to energize their school children's zeal and achievement motivation (Ndukwu & Ndukwu, 2017).

A family's expectation is the prospect a family has that their child can achieve a certain level of a set goal. These expectations for children are more likely to have high influence on the children, if and only if the family shows interest in their wellbeing (Family Study, 2009). Katz (1999) held that high expectations without caring can result in setting goals that are impossible for students to attain. Families that have high expectations for their children try to provide them with nurturing support. Such families are more involved in their children's life activities. Children from such families tend to do well in school because they know that their people love them and expect them to do well in school. Many well placed families tend to believe strongly in their abilities to help their children achieve school success.

Families could expect certain accomplishments from their children, but too high parental expectations on school children may trigger anxiety on a school child. Sigelman and Shaffer (1995) found that high expectations can only cause anxiety, poor performance, and failures to learners in school. They concluded that limits that are too severe or harshly enforced are difficult to attain. To Sigelman and Shaffer, such tasks engender tension and restrictive behaviours rather than motivation and engagement. When parents pressure a child with an academic expectation higher than the child's ability, the child may either drop out of school or stay in school with anxiety (Sigelman & Shaffer, 1995). Sigelman and Shaffer were of the view that high expectation has little fish big pond effect (Woolfolk, 2010).

High expectations occur when a family expects her children to achieve the highest academic grades or be the best in the classes. Family and parental expectations are influenced by the reason societies ascribe for their children's achievement in school. Stevenson and Lee (1990) in their study on "Family Based Expectations" found that societal expectations have positive influence on children. They held that children will generally live up to, or down to, their society's expectations. This is because family's expectations for their children trigger self-fulfilling-prophecy (a prediction if believed comes true). Some researchers like Stevenson and Lee (1995) hold that low societal expectations may also make a child to be dull and unserious with the child's studies and life as well. Low family expectation occurs when parents do not expect their children to do well in school because of one reason or the other. Katz (1999) opined that caring without high expectation is dangerous on students. Family expectation seems to be best when it is moderately high. Family expectation is moderately high when it is attainable and realistic. That is when a family

expects her children to do well in school, but in event they did not do well, they will take it in good fate and encourage their children.

It is unfortunate that despite the expectations and numerous efforts made by different families to improve their children's academic achievement, their academic achievement in external examinations have continued to dwindle steadily. Many researchers are of the view that students' academic success or failure is influenced by their family's economic status, expectations and gender.

Gender is both a psychological and sociological construct capable of affecting a person's actions. Gender is a concept used to distinguish between males and females. Particularly in the cases of men and women, masculine and feminine, that is attributes assigned to them (Woolfolk, 2010). The characteristics demonstrated by males and females vary from sex to social role and gender identity. Sexologist John Money introduced the terminological distinction between biological sex and gender as a role. Before his work, it was uncommon to use the word "gender" to refer to anything. However, John Money's meaning of the word (gender) did not become widespread until the 1970s, when feminist theory embraced the distinction between biological sex and the social construct of gender. Today, the distinction is strictly followed in some contexts, like feminist literature. The meaning of gender has expanded to include "sex" or even to replace the latter word. Most researchers believe that gender has a way of affecting the kind of expectations societies have for their children. Denzin (2008) was of the view that gender tends to be one of the factors that affect students' perseverance and achievement at all levels of education. Students' achievement seems to be affected by gender. In this study, gender serves as a moderating variable in determining students' academic achievement. The researcher seeks to know whether family economic status/expectations and gender, can influence students' achievement in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State.

Students seem to be influenced by the stereotype placed on their families' socio-economic status and their gender. Both students with high and low enthusiasm tend to believe that their societies expect them to perform highly or lesser because of their families' socio-economic status and their own gender. Evidence has shown that the prevailing problem in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria Social segregation due to poverty, families' socio-economic status and gender biases. Aboh Mbaise is a place where, the achievements of students in external examinations are declining steadily in the recent past. The society, parents, teachers, and the government are worried, especially, now that students' poor achievement is attributed to families' socio-economic status, poverty, abnormal expectations

families and gender biases. There is fear that if students' achievements in national and international examinations continue to go down in this ugly manner, it may make students to indulge in examination malpractices or drop out of school and become deviants. This may also affect the future economic growth and security of Nigeria, especially now that Nigeria is in an economic quagmire and many insurgent groups are terrorizing her. A study by Ndukwu and Ndukwu (2017) shows that when family expectation for a child is made known to the child, it appears to energize the child's achievement drive. One wonders if the above statement will be true of secondary school students who are more matured in age and knowledge; hence the initial study was on primary school pupils. How family socio-economic status and expectations influence secondary school students' academic achievement is yet to be determined.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the influence of family socio-economic status and expectation on academic achievement of students in secondary schools?
2. What is the influence of gender on the academic achievement of students in secondary schools?

### **Hypotheses**

Two null hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at 0.05 probability level.

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean academic achievement ratings of students based on their family socio-economic status and expectations.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female's academic achievement based on gender.

### **Method**

This study adopted ex-post-facto research design to determine the influence of family socio-economic status and expectations on the academic achievement and wellbeing of students in secondary schools. The Area of this Study is Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State. The sample for the study is made up of 374 2017/2018 senior secondary students who were randomly sampled from 10 out of the 46 public secondary schools in the area. The ten schools were composed using a simple random sampling technique. The researchers used three research instruments for data collection. They are; the modified Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic status scale updated for year 2018, the Family Expectation Questionnaire(FEQ) and Academic Achievement

questionnaire (AAQ).The modified Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic status scale updated in 2018 was adopted by the researchers to assess students’ families’ socio-economic status.

The instruments were administered to the respondents by the researchers with the help of two research assistants (Teachers) to facilitate the study. The researchers instructed the research assistants to explain in vernacular any item that is unclear to the students and collect the instruments back from the respondents the same day, when the students must have filled in their opinions in the questionnaires.

The data collected were organized in tables and analyzed using mean and standard deviations in answering the two research questions posed by the researcher to guide the study. A mean of 2.5 was used as the yardstick for low or high score. Any item scoring a mean below 2.5 was seen to be low while any item scoring 2.5 and above was seen to be high. The two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test.

**Results**

Table 1  
Age Based Achievement Table.

F S-E-S and Expectations	N	Mean	Std. D	Std. Er Mean	Mean Differ
<b>Academic Achievement</b>					
<b>Based on age</b>					
15-17	318	3.9891	.46532	.04381	.20
18-20	56	3.783	.36831	.08562	

*Note: Mean ratings and Standard Deviation of family economic status and expectations on Academic Achievement.*

Data in Table 1 show the mean ratings and standard deviation of pupils on Academic Achievement based on family economic status and expectations. The data indicate that the mean academic achievement score of (318) students whose ages fall between 15-17 years is 3.99 with a standard deviation of .46.The mean score of the (56) students who fall within the ages of 18-20 years is 3.78 with a standard deviation of .37.The table also indicates a mean difference of .20 on academic achievement between students whose ages range between 15-17 years and those who fall between 18-20 age bracket in favour of those whose ages fall between 15-17 years. Data in the table above show the influence of family economic status and expectations on students’ academic achievement. The table above also indicates a mean score of 3.98

with a standard deviation of .46 of the achievement motivation of 318 students within the ages of 15-17, and a mean score of 3.78 with a standard deviation of 3.6, of the 56 students who are within the ages of 18-20 years. The table indicates a mean academic achievement difference of .20 between students in the following age bracket: 15-17 and 18-20 years in favour of those students within the ages of 15-17.

**Table 2**

Family Socio-Economic Status and Expectations Based Academic Achievement Table.

	t	d/f (2-tailed)	Sig. dif	Mean	Std.error dif
Academic Achievement	3.132	373	.427	2.2252	.5121

*Note: A t-test on the Influence of family economic status and expectations on academic achievement.*

Data in Table 2 indicate that family economic status and expectations of students have significant influence on the academic achievement of students. This is indicated by the calculated t-value of 3.132 in respect of academic achievement which is significant at .427 probability level and therefore not significant at .05 levels of significance; and the calculated t-value of 3.132, in respect of academic achievement which is significant at 2.227 probability level and therefore not significant at .05 levels of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis of significant mean difference on academic achievement based on family socioeconomic status and expectations is rejected.

Table 3

Gender Based Achievement Table.

Gender	N	Mean	S. Deviation	Mean Dif.
Academic Achievement				
Male	177	3.0127	.41287	.0029
Female	197	3.0098	.47186	

*Note: Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Academic Achievement based on Gender.*

Table 3 shows the mean score and standard deviation of a students' academic achievement based on gender. The data indicate a mean academic achievement score of 3.0127 with a standard deviation of .4128 for 177 boys and a mean of 3.0098 with a standard deviation of .47186for 197 girls. The table also indicates a slight mean difference of .0029between boys and girls favour of the boys. A corresponding hypothesis raised to further address the research question is:

Table 4  
A t-test Table on Gender and Academic Achievement.

Gender	Mean	S. Deviation	T	d/f	Sig.(2t)	Mean dif	Std. error dif
Academic achievement							
Male	3.163	.43086	2.612	372	0.14	.152	.06053
Female	3.011	.4881					

*Note: A t-test on the Influence of Gender on Students' Academic Achievement*

Table 4 shows a t-test on the influence of gender on students' academic achievement. The data show that gender does not have significant influence on students' academic achievement. This is indicated by the calculated t-value of 2.612 which is significant at 0.14, and therefore not significant at 0.05 probability level. The null hypothesis which states that gender has no significant difference in the means score of male and females' academic achievement is up-held.

**Summary**

1. Family socioeconomic status of students has significant influence on students' academic achievement and wellbeing.
2. Family expectations have significant influence on students' academic achievement.
3. Gender does not influence students' academic achievement.

**Discussion**

The result of this study reveals that family socio-economic status and expectations have significant influence on students' academic achievement. This is indicated by both mean rating scores and the tested null hypotheses. That means that socioeconomic status and expectations influence academic achievement. The result this study is supported by the study of Doerschuk,

Bahrim, Daniel, Kruger, Mann, and Martin(2016), which revealed that the success rate of low-income students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and all disciplines is much lower than that of students who do not come from underrepresented backgrounds (Doerschuk et al., 2016). Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) in their study found that family socio-economic status and expectations play a vital role in students' academic achievement. The study revealed that students whose families are financially balanced and have high expectations in their education, tend to score higher in achievement tests and persist longer in school than those whose parents are poor and have low expectations in their academics. This supports the studies of Stevenson and Lee (1990) who found that families' expectation for children's post secondary outcome is associated with high academic achievement. They also found that families' verbal expectation and urging are related to high academic achievement. The study of Ramerez and Cruz (2002) found that high expectation leads children to achieve highly in school. The study conducted by Tina and Andrieam (2010) which suggested that, achievement is not only influenced by family expectations, but also by the educational expectations students have for themselves.

The findings of this study indicate that gender does not influence academic achievement significantly. This was shown by the t-test which indicated that there is no significant mean difference between boys and girls. The result of this study is at variance with the study of Murphy (2000) which disclosed that gender is an influential factor in determining learning success. The findings of Murphy is in harmony with the result of the study of Lent, Lopez and Beischke (1991) which revealed that gender is an influential source of academic achievement. But, the findings of the present study is in accord with the result of the study of Fennaman and Sherman (1977) which found no significant differences in learning achievement based gender.

### **Conclusion**

Family socio-economic status and expectations play a significant role on students' academic achievement. Gender and age are not huge determinants of students' academic achievement.

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