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EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (SEC) AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS: A STUDY OF SABON GARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect of socioeconomic status (SEC) on academic performance of senior secondary school students. The research aims to explore the relationship between socioeconomic factors, such as parental income, education level, and occupation, and students' academic achievement. A sample of senior secondary school students will be selected, and data will be collected through surveys and academic records. A mixed method of data collection was employed. The findings indicated that students from high socioeconomic status families performed better than those from low socioeconomic status families. The study concluded that there is a strong correlation between socioeconomic status of students and their corresponding academic performance.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Parental Education, Parental Income, Parental Occupational, Socioeconomic Status

Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a critical factor influencing an individual's social and economic success, as it provides a pathway to improved opportunities and a better quality of life (OECD, 2020). Academic achievement, measured by factors such as test scores, grade point averages, and educational attainment, is often considered a crucial indicator of educational success (Sirin, 2022). However, numerous studies have consistently demonstrated that socio-economic status (SES) plays a significant role in shaping academic achievement outcomes (Reardon, 2011; Sirin, 2022). Socio-economic status 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 (Mistry et. al., 2021). SES is a multifaceted construct that reflects both

material and social advantages or disadvantages (Duncan & Magnuson, 2012). It is well-established in research that individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to have better access to educational resources, including quality schools, tutoring, books, and technology, which can contribute to enhanced academic performance (Reardon, 2011; Sirin, 2022; Duncan & Magnuson, 2012). Research has shown over and over again that there is a strong link between socio-economic standing and academic success. Several studies (Sirin, 2022, Reardon, 2011) have found that students from higher SES backgrounds tend to do better than their friends from lower SES backgrounds in terms of test scores, grades, and education (OECD, 2019). Different countries and educational systems have seen these differences in how well people do in school based on their Socio-economic standing.

Different things can cause a person's socioeconomic position to affect how well they do in school. First, families with a higher SES often have more money to spend on their children's education, giving them access to good schools, private tutoring, and activities that help them learn more. (Reardon, 2011; Pong, 2024) These tools can help make learning easier and provide more learning opportunities that help students do well in school. These things can help students build skills, attitudes, and behaviours that are valued in the education system, which can help them do better in school. (Sirin, 2022). But it is important to keep in mind that the link between Socio-economic standing and academic success is complicated and affected by many things. Even though higher SES is usually linked to better school results, there are exceptions and differences within and between countries. Some studies have found that some kids from poor backgrounds do very well in school even though they face a lot of social and economic problems. Second, parental schooling, which is a part of SES, has been found to be a strong predictor of how well children do in school. Parents with more education usually know more about how the school system works and have the skills and information to help their children learn. They are more likely to do educational things at home, help with schoolwork, and encourage a good attitude toward learning. (Reardon, 2011). Also, a student's social and cultural capital can be affected by their Socio-economic level, which can have an effect on how well they do in school. Students from higher SES backgrounds often have access to a wider range of resources, such as educational role models, cultural experiences, and social ties.

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to explore the effect of socioeconomic status (SES) on the academic performance of senior secondary school students. Lower socioeconomic individuals are facing a numbers of problems in the daily activities not even in term of academic tussles alone. Socioeconomic status, which encompasses a wide range of factors such as family income, parental education levels, and occupation, poor orientation is often linked to disparities in educational resources, support systems, and opportunities available to students. These factors can significantly influence students' academic achievements, attitudes toward school, and overall performance of students. In many communities such as Kaduna, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face numerous challenges such inadequate academic utensils, poor educational environment, inadequate school facilities, like, (chairs, seating on the floor and alike), and lack of academic support at home, may contribute to poorer academic outcomes. Now, researches indicate that, students from lower socioeconomic background are overall in the classes in all universities, polytechnic, college of education and colleges. Understanding the extent and nature of these effects is essential to developing effective interventions that support students from disadvantaged backgrounds and promote equity in

educational outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to discuss the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic performance among senior secondary school students. It will explore how different SES levels impact students' academic achievements and identify factors that may mediate this relationship.

Conceptual Explication

Academic Performance: Academic performance represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that are the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in school, college, and university. School systems mostly define cognitive goals that either apply across multiple subject areas (e.g., critical thinking) or include the acquisition of knowledge and understanding in a specific intellectual domain (e.g., numeracy, literacy, science and history). Therefore, academic achievement should be considered to be a multifaceted construct that comprises different domains of learning. Because the field of academic achievement is very wide ranging and covering a broad variety of educational outcomes, the definition of academic achievement depends on the indicators used to measure it (Reardon, 2011).

Socioeconomic Status: Socioeconomic status (SES) encompasses not just income but also educational attainment, financial security, and subjective perceptions of social status and social class. Socioeconomic status can encompass quality of life attributes as well as the opportunities and privileges afforded to people within society. Socioeconomic status is a consistent and reliable predictor of a vast array of outcomes across the life span, including physical and psychological health. Thus, SES is relevant to all realms of behavioral and social science, including research, practice, education, and advocacy (Diemer & Blustein, 2022).

The Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Academic Achievement

Socio Economic status is the most important variable in determining the Academic Achievement of students. Increasingly, researchers examined educational processes, including academic achievement, in relation to socio economic background. (Bornstein, Bradley, 2019; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, 1997; Coleman1988; McLoyd, 1998). The Socio Economic Status of a child is most commonly determined by combining parents' educational level, occupational status and income level (Jeynes 2002). Studies have repeatedly found that SES affects student's outcomes. McLoyd, 1998).

Researchers found that the Socio economic Status, parental involvement and family size are particularly important family factors, Majoribanks1996. Families with high socio economic status often have more success in preparing their young children for school because they have access to a wide range of resources to promote and support young children's development. They are able to provide their young children with high quality care, amenities and facilities. Crnic, Lamberty (1994), discussed the impact of socio economic status on children's readiness for school. White (1982), carried out first Meta – analytic study to review the literature on this subject published before 1980 to examine the relationship between SES and academic achievement and showed that the relation varies significantly with a number of factors such as the types of SES and academic achievement measures.

Students who have a low SES earn low test scores and drop out of school. The low SES affects academic achievement as it prevents access to important resources and creates stress at home, (White, 1994). Low SES leads to family problems and disrupted home environment and as a result

the academic performance of the child. Even in families with above average income, parents lack time and energy to invest in their achievement was found to be significant. Trivedi, Vineeta (1988), conducted a study of the relationship between socio economic background and academic achievement among the intermediate students. The sample consisted of 523 girls students from 11 institutions. The finding of the study revealed a significant relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. The students of upper SES showed better achievement than the students of lower SES group. Rupa Das Barbora (2001), conducted a study on the academic achievements of children belonging to the background classes focusing on Kamrup District Assam to find out the causes of their low academic achievements. It was found that the children of literate parents show better academic achievement than the children of illiterate parents.

Academic Records of Students from High Income and Low Income Families

In many Primary school, Secondary, Universities, Polytechnic, College of education, children from lower economic background faced several dilemma which includes, extortion, certificate racketeering, sexual harassment, upgrading Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA), these are few challenges faced students from lower socioeconomic background among others. Nowadays, education turn to trade by barter between lecturers and students you can either go for your incandescent (beauty) or settlement of debt (money), your money or beauty would determine the class of degree you will graduate only few among the lecturers are free from this dilemma. This issue is wide across all universities both public universities and privates, that is why we are graduating poor students. If care is not take in the nearest future Nigeria would be count among country who have higher number of illiterate peoples. A dozen of researches indicates that children from higher socioeconomic background tend to have quality education, and things are happened children from high socioeconomic background are rudeness because the means they parents paid for their daily activities are not yours. A survey research found that wherever you go in the universities or colleges you may found childrens from lower socioeconomic background are leading figure in term of Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). In many high-poverty developing countries, education is seen as a crucial pathway for socioeconomic advancement. Although education does not guarantee employment, it significantly enhances future earning potential and job opportunities, thereby contributing to higher lifetime income and improved life choices. However, academic failure remains a serious issue with long-lasting impacts on individuals, families, and communities, potentially reducing civic involvement and productivity (Nsiah, 2017).

Challenges Facing Students from Poor Families

Despite the numerous challenges faced by students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, the role of teachers is pivotal in shaping their academic success. Teachers must address various factors, including language learning needs and motivational elements, to enhance teaching effectiveness for these students. Teachers who provide tailored resources and activities can significantly impact the development and achievement of underprivileged students. In the U.S., students qualifying for free or reduced education are deemed economically at-risk based on federal poverty thresholds (Furcsa, 2020). Teacher effects are notably higher in low-SES schools, meaning that a child's academic outcomes can vary significantly based on their teacher (Nye et al., 2004). Teachers play a crucial role in addressing the challenges faced by low-income students, yet often these students do not receive the necessary support. Educators can make a positive difference by recognizing and overcoming their

biases, ensuring fair special education referrals, and adapting their teaching styles to meet the needs of these students (Tâm et al., 2016). Studies have shown that teachers often have preconceived notions about students from different SES backgrounds. Teachers may rate high-SES students higher than low-SES students with similar academic achievements, and negative initial perceptions of low-SES students can become self-fulfilling prophecies. However, teachers who hold high expectations for their students can significantly elevate the self-perceptions and academic outcomes of low-SES. (Tâm et al., 2016).

Strategies to Improve Academic Performance for Low Income Students

Addressing disparities in higher education attainment is vital for social mobility and economic competitiveness. Higher education not only benefits individuals through better job prospects and incomes but also enhances societal outcomes by increasing economic output, reducing demand for social assistance, and promoting civic engagement. Federal programs like the Pell Grant are crucial for helping low-income students afford college, though other costs such as test and application fees remain barriers. (Perna, 2015). Programs like the College Ambition Program (CAP) offer support through college visits, financial aid planning, counselling, and tutoring. These initiatives help low-income students overcome social and economic barriers to higher education (Schneider et al., 2024). A comprehensive approach is necessary to close the performance gap and improve educational outcomes for low-income and minority students. Successful strategies include small class sizes, high expectations, rigorous academic standards, enrichment activities, quality professional development, and parent empowerment programs. Effective implementation and evaluation of these strategies are crucial for systemic school reform and improved academic performance among disadvantaged students (Ward, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

The research adopted theoretical triangulation to obtain information at hand. The theoretical framework are expanded achievement attributional model and the individualised individual theory of Beck (1992) is used to show, understand and explain academic performance as a variable in this research topic. The theory explained that individual from high economic background tend to have a quality education. A lot of dilemma has indicates schools of lower socioeconomic background has a lot of problem which could not allowed students to have a quality education. Things like unqualified teachers, dilapidated class room, broken chairs, and absence of teachers for entering class to deliver a lectures etcetera. The expanded achievement attribution model (Freize et al., 1983) was proposed to consider the individual definitions people have for achievement, success and failure. Achievement and performance are used interchangeably by researchers in the field of education and social science. The model is an expansion of the original achievement attribution model (Weiner et al., 1974), the criticism of which was based on neglect of prior judgement of success on which the attribution process depends, insensitivity to the impact of causal attributions on affective, cognitive or emotional factors, reaction to success and failure, and lack of in-depth integration of internal and controllable determinants of performance and attribution in relation to external and uncontrollable factors such as culture.

The expanded achievement attribution model (Freize et al., 1983) explicitly allows for the determination of the subjective level of academic success before an attribution is made; which is what I propose to do in this study. The Frieze et al. (1983) expanded achievement attributional

model pinpoints the fact that the academic performance of adult students involves a process and is interconnected. This process forms a link between the different stages of the entire performance evaluation cycle. In addition, the expanded achievement attributional model is concerned with the values people have with regard to appropriate areas where achievement is strived for, and it relates these values to the cognitive and affective responses to success or failure. Furthermore, as it is typical of performance or achievement-driven research (Weiner et al., 1974), the expanded model of attribution requires an understanding of the "attribution process" (Frieze et al., 1983; Doolittle, 2007).

Frieze et al. (1983) & Doolittle (2007) reveal that the attribution process focuses on what happens to a person in achievement behaviour. They argue by means of the expanded achievement attributional model that, once achievement behaviour occurs, information about the performance is used immediately to infer why the outcome occurred. In terms of the model, before the determination of the level of success or failure is made, a more complex sequence of initial information processing is required. The initial information includes task, self and social standards which are categorised into controllable and uncontrollable. In a different but similar tone, Maehr & Nicholls (1974) show that the association between internal attributions and perceptions of success and failure may depend on the specific value system of the culture (e.g. our cultural practice or cultural value efforts). Weiner et al. (1974) work shows that pride and shame are not the only, or even necessarily the dominant, emotions associated with academic achievement outcomes; a wide variety of emotions such as surprise, frustration, anger and gratitude occur as a result of achievement-oriented behaviour. Individualised individual theory is used in understanding and explaining the behaviour and attitude of individual towards their academic tussles. This theory states that individuals from lower socioeconomic background their education and skill is not in favour of themselves and is not only rewarding to people as individuals but also to societies, and depends largely on the empowerment of people. The theory still digs the students of poor families are the backbone of searching knowledge and put zero phobia in search of knowledge and are the people who have the skill of imparting knowledge.

Methodology

Research Design: The study adopted descriptive and explanatory research designs for this study that will the entire study.

Study Area

Sabon Gari Local Government Area (LGA) is one of the 23 LGAs in Kaduna State, Nigeria. It is located in the northern part of the state, bordering Zaria and is part of the Zazzau Emirate. The local government is named "Sabon Gari," which means "new town" in Hausa, a term that historically refers to settlements established by non-natives, often around older towns. Sabon Gari covers a relatively small land area but has a significant population due to its urban nature. The local government is home to people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, and other ethnicities from around Nigeria, attracted by the area's economic and educational opportunities. Sabon Gari LGA is known for its vibrant commercial activities, with bustling markets, retail businesses, and industries. Agriculture also plays an important role, with residents engaging in small-scale farming and livestock rearing. The LGA's markets, such as the Samaru Market, draw people from neighbouring regions for trade, which boosts the local economy.

Sample Size

The sample size of One Hundred and Seventy Five (175) respondents was selected for the sake of this study because of the inability to examine the entire population of Sabon Gari Local Government. The sample size for the qualitative data was six (6).

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage%
Sex		
Male	97	55.4
Female	78	44.6
Total	175	100
Age		
10-15	57	32.6
16 -20	89	50.9
21-25	27	15.4
26-30	2	1.1
Total	175	100
Educational qualification		
Primary	112	64
Secondary	63	36
Total	175	100
Job description		
Welder		
Mechanic	67	38.2
Hawker	87	49.8
Total	21	12
Working experience	175	100
1-10 years	78	44.6
11-20 years	67	38.3
21-30 years and above	30	17.1
Total	175	100

Sources: Field Work (2025)

The Table 4.1 shows the distribution of the respondents' demographic characteristics. It reveals that 55.4% were males and 44.6% females. This shows that males constitute the highest respondents in the study sampled. The age distribution reveals that 32.6% are between 10-15 years, 50.9% 16 -20 years, 15.4% 21-25 years, and 1.1% 26-30 years. This indicates that the 16-20 years were the majority among the respondents. Their educational qualification reveals that 112% have primary education certificate, 63% secondary. The study shows that most of the respondents attended primary.. The job description data reveal that 38.2% are welders, 49.8% mechanics, 12% hawkers. This indicating that majority of the respondents are mechanics. On years in service, the result shows that 44.6% have between 1-10years, 38.3% in the range of 11-20years, 17.1% 21-30 years and above. This shows that those who constitute 44.6% stay longer in the service than the rest of the respondents.

Table: 4. 2: Does State Ministry of Education Kaduna Sponsor Students Who Excel in WAEC and NECO?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	98	56%
No	77	44%
Total	175	100

Source: Field Work (2025)

The above responses indicate that 98 (56%) respondents said yes, while 77 (44%) said no. This means that Kaduna State Government sponsors students who do very well in the WAEC and NECO.

A participant in an in-depth interview in Sabon Gari market revealed that:

Frankly speaking, Kaduna State Government is doing well in giving students scholarship to study within and outside the state. Again, the state government given them enough token to meet their needs. I salute the government of Kaduna State for its tireless effort to see the indigenous peoples of Kaduna have better education (IDI, with Businessman, 2025).

Table: 4. 3 Do Quiz and Debate Impact on Students' Academic Performance?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	114	65.1%
No	61	34.9%
Total	175	100

Source: Field Work (2025)

The responses above with frequency of 114 said Yes, while a frequency of 61 said No. This indicates that Quiz and Debate have meaningful impact on students' academic performance. A participant revealed during an as follows

Quiz and Debate are strategies that our children can imitative and learn something when teacher imparting knowledge. I imagined why the government neglect these academic activities that enable students to be fluent in speaking English in expressing themselves well (IDI, with Mai Unguwan Tsugugi, 2025).

Table: 4.4: Does Kaduna State Ministry of Education Allow Schools to Demote Students Due to Poor Academic Performance?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	118	67.4%
No	57	32.6%
Total	175	100

Source: Field Work (2025)

The responses above indicate yes with the frequency of 118, while those who expressed no have a frequency of 57. This significantly implied that those who said are more. A Key informant asserted that:

The issue of demotion has become an issue of the past. Students move to the next level irrespective of their academic performance. This trend motivates

students in the contemporary era not to work diligently to actualize their academic goal (IDI, with classroom teacher, 2025).

Discussion of Major Findings

The study's findings on the effect of socioeconomic status (SES) on academic performance of senior secondary school students are consistent with existing literature. A significant relationship exists between SES and academic performance, with students from higher SES backgrounds tend to perform better academically (Sirin, 2005; White, 1982). Parental income, education, and occupation are crucial factors in determining SES, which in turn affects academic performance (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). The achievement gap between students from low and high SES backgrounds is a persistent issue, with limited access to resources and opportunities contributing to this disparity (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Targeted interventions, such as financial assistance, educational resources, and mentorship programs, can help mitigate the effects of low SES on academic performance (Jensen, 2013).

Conclusion

The paper concluded that the low SES affects academic achievement as it prevents access to important resources and creates stress at home. A student's social and cultural capital can be affected by their Socio-economic level, which can have an effect on how well they do in school. Students from higher SES backgrounds often have access to a wider range of resources, such as educational role models, cultural experiences, and social ties. The study further concluded that teachers may rate high-SES students higher than low-SES students with similar academic achievements, and negative initial perceptions of low-SES students can become self-fulfilling prophecies. However, teachers who hold high expectations for their students can significantly elevate the self-perceptions and academic outcomes of low-SES.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings on the effect of socioeconomic status (SES) on academic performance of senior secondary school students Of Sabon Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. The policymakers should develop and implement targeted interventions to support students from low SES backgrounds, such as providing financial assistance, educational resources, and mentorship programs.
- ii. The government should ensure equal access to quality education for all students, regardless of their SES, by providing resources and support to disadvantaged schools.
- iii. The government should develop policy initiatives that address the specific needs of students from low SES backgrounds, such as providing free or subsidized educational materials and resources.
- iv. Teachers should use differentiated instruction to cater to the diverse needs of students from different SES backgrounds.
- v. Support systems need to be established such as counselling and academic guidance, to help students from low SES backgrounds overcome challenges.
- vi. Parent-Teacher Collaboration: Foster collaboration with parents from low SES backgrounds to ensure they are involved in their child's education and can provide support.
- vii. Parents from low SES backgrounds should be encouraged to be involved in their child's education, providing support and guidance where possible.

- viii. Community Resources need to be provided such as libraries and educational centres, to support students from low SES backgrounds.

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