

Family Background Variables and Social Studies Students' Achievement in Biase Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria: Implications for Geography Education

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Abstract

The study examined family background variables and Social Studies Students' Achievement in Biase Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria: Implications for Geography Education. To achieve the purpose of the study, two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive research design was used in the study. The population of the study comprised 643 (337 female and 306 male) Upper Basic III students in the 18 public secondary schools in the Biase Local Government Area. While simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 200 Upper Basic III students for the study. A 20-item 'Family Background Variable Questionnaire (FBVQ)' and a 20-item Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT)' were used for data collection. Independent t-test statistics were used for data analysis at .05 levels of significance. The result showed that parental education and parental involvement significantly influence Social Studies Students' Achievement in the study area. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that parents should provide a conducive atmosphere for learning at home for their children.

Keywords: Family Background, Parental Education, Parental Involvement, Social Studies, Geography Education, Students' Achievement.

Introduction

Education is indeed a crucial and an inevitable aspect of human development, as it plays a significant role in shaping individuals' knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours. The process of education enables people to acquire essential information, develop critical thinking abilities, and cultivate various talents that contribute to their personal growth and societal development. The fundamental goal of education, across cultures and societies, is to bring about a positive change in

students' behaviour, enabling them to become responsible, informed, and productive members of their communities (Mante et al., 2021; Nwafor et al., 2024a).

Crucial stakeholders in education include government and its agencies, the family and the communities. The family is the basic unit in society, traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their children or a group of individuals living under one roof and usually under one head. Family can be nuclear, extended family, step/blended family, single-parent family, adopted family and foster family and the contribution towards a child's education mostly depends on the type of family structure the child belongs to (Meleen, 2019). This makes the family very important in the academic achievement of children. Family background variables play indispensable roles in the overall development of every individual. Every student depends on his or her family for all that he or she needs in school. The degree to which the resources the child needs to be adequately provided for in school by the family, is available to the family could impact directly or indirectly on the child's school achievement and interest (Ekpoto et al., 2025a & 2025b; Nwafor et al., 2024b; Opoh et al., 2024). Family background variables comprised all the factors that triggers the availability of the resources at the family's disposal. Some of these variables are parental education, parental occupation, parental involvement, socioeconomic status, family size, family support, among others.

No doubts, the education of parents might have significant influences on children's knowledge, skills and values. Parents actively follow-up on their wards' educational activities at home have positive effects on their kids' educational attainments. There are research-based evidences that children's vocabulary which is the gate way for scholarship, other linguistic and social skills have been significantly influenced by their parents at home (Kassim in Idris et al., 2020). Kassim in Idris et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between parents' education and their children academic achievement focusing on father and mother educational level for their children academic achievement. The study adopted descriptive survey as its design. The findings of the study revealed that high education of father and mother positively contributes to their children academic achievement. Large correlation was found between parents' education and students' academic achievement. On the basis of the findings the study recommended to introduce adult education programs, awareness campaigns and the use of social media for community education.

Ogbugo-Ololube (2016) conducted a study on the impact of parents' background on their children's education achievement. One of the objectives of the study was on the influence of parental education on the academic achievement of their children. Ogbugo-Ololube used the correlational research design approach. The result showed a positive relationship between the two variables. That is, there was a positive relationship between parents' educational background and the performance of their children at school. The author advised that children should not allow the educational attainment of their parents to be an obstacle to their education; rather it should be employed to their advantage as it is supposed to be naturally.

In a similar study, Bakar et al. (2017) examined the influence of parental education on the academic performance of secondary school students in Kuala Terengganu. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The researchers used stratified random sampling to select 200 students for the study. Regression analysis was used for data analysis. The findings of the study indicated that students from parents with high educational qualification performed better than those from parents with lower educational qualification. This study differs from the current study in terms of sampling technique, population/level scope and geographical scope.

On parental involvement, different studies have established a relationship between the roles families play in children's education and the resulting academic achievement. These roles of the family have commonly been referred to as parental involvement in various studies. The study by Kibaara and Ndirangu (2014) sought to establish the effects of parental involvement on their children's academic achievement. The target population was 21 public schools in the Kieni-West sub-county of Nyeri county, Kenya. The researchers objected to: 1) examining the nature of parental involvement in their children's academic achievement, 2) revealing to what extent factors influencing parents' involvement contribute to their children's academic achievement, 3) examining teachers' views about parental involvement in the students' academic achievement. Participants in the study included students, parents, and teachers, who were gathered through stratified random sampling.

A purposive sampling method was used to sample from three students. Both qualitative and quantitative research techniques (triangulation method) were used in collecting and analyzing data. Thus, questionnaires were used to collect data from students and teachers, while a structured interview was utilized to gather data from parents, document analysis and researchers' observation. The study was formerly piloted in two schools within the geographical scope. The findings showed that 71.6% of parents monitored their wards' homework, and 84.7% participated in school events and activities. The majority of parent respondents (92%) indicated that their involvement in their wards' education is valuable to the teachers in helping with their academic achievement.

Moreover, almost all parent participants in the study (98.2%) agreed that organized parental involvement programs could develop their relationship with their wards. Likewise, Newchurch (2017) examined the impact of parental involvement on student success: school and family partnership from the perspective of parents and teachers. A qualitative research approach was used for the study by implementing a narrative methodology to learn about the experiences expressed in lived and told stories of three parents and two teachers. The study is based on two of Epstein's six typologies of parental involvement, i.e., parenting and learning at home. A purposive sampling technique was used to gather three parents of 5th-grade students and two teachers of 5th-grade students as respondents.

The information retrieved from the sample aided in gathering data on their perceptions of school and family partnerships to answer the questions: 1) how are parents involved in their child's educational process? 2) how does parental involvement provide support to the child's school, family, and home-school connection? 3) what can parent stories tell us about parental involvement that is unobservable by the school and its effects on academic success? Data were collected through interview sessions in English only with respondents who contained open-ended questions. The responses during the interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded with concepts and themes.

The findings of the study were associated with three essential themes. These are 1) parenting skills and habits employed by parents are essential in a child's education and supports student success, 2) learning at home support skills and habits employed by parents is essential in a child's education and supports student success, 3) communication efforts are practical tools for promoting parental involvement. The majority of the respondents demonstrated that parenting skills benefit a child's education. Also, participants unanimously agreed that learning at home improves children's education.

Conversely, not all parental and teacher communication pattern variances were due to what was observed by parents and teachers as necessities of the student. Mahuro and Hungi (2016) conducted a case study in Uganda's Iganga and Mayuge districts to confirm that parental participation improves academic achievement. With the aid of regression analysis, controlling

individual, school, and household covariates, the finding was that parental participation motivates their wards towards more extraordinary academic achievements. The results showed that students' numeracy scores are increased significantly by 6 percent points upon a unit increase in parental participation through parenting and by 15 percent through communication types of involvement.

Also, literacy scores increase significantly by 6 percent when there is a unit increase in parent participation through parenting and 12 percentage points through communication type of involvement. The study's design was a cross-sectional survey of 2669 grade six and three public and private schools in rural Eastern Uganda. Using two of the Epstein parental involvement frameworks, the study assumed that parental participation through parenting and communication types of involvement would help children towards a positive academic achievement. The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data from the sample. A three-stage cluster sampling design was used to sample a target population comprising grade 6 and 3 English and Mathematics teachers, students, and parents of grades 6 and 3.

Page (2016) also examined parents' role in their children's academic achievement at a previously disadvantaged primary school in Cape Town. Using a qualitative research design, the study objected to answering these questions: 1) how does parental involvement influence their children's academic achievement? 2) What roles do educators expect parents to play in developing their ward's academic achievement? 3) Which factors enhance and hinder parental involvement across the phases of primary schooling? 4) How does parental involvement in children's academic achievement change over time as learners progress through the primary schooling phase?

Three groups of respondents (parents, students, & educators) were purposely sampled. The study used questionnaires together with individual semi-structured interviews to collect data from participants. The findings showed that parental involvement could positively influence their wards' academic achievement at the primary school phase. The majority of parent respondents attributed parental involvement to home-based activities rather than school-based involvement. Nevertheless, parent participants involved in their wards' schooling produced stronger academic achievers than those less involved. Learner participants with relatively weak scholastic achievement reported minimal homework assistance from parents and vice versa. Subsequently, average and strong scholastic achievement learners reported that their parents encouraged them to read, and vice versa. The study identified that communication between parents and their wards and between parents and educators is a factor that could hinder parental involvement. Likewise, a welcoming atmosphere at the school may also be considered as a factor. The educator participants indicated that parental involvement had a positive effect on the students' academic achievement. However, it was evident that parental support declined as learners progressed from one phase of schooling to another.

In another study, Kussainov et al. (2014) investigated family situations as a factor in students' academic achievement. The study's objective was to figure out how the typology of family upbringing influences the child's success as a learner and the academic achievement. The typology of family captured the upbringing capacities of the family as a group. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 723 grade 8 & 9 students from a Kazakh and a Russian school from each of the 7 districts of Almaty. The questions covered the organization of learning activities at home, subject preferences, self-esteem and values, estimation of students of their family environment, educational opportunities, and academic achievement. The questionnaire contained open-ended questions, which allowed students to define their perspective on the problem and thus detailed the analysis results. Family environment was deemed the main determinant of the emotional sphere of a person, the moral outlook and ideological upbringing. The study's findings

depicted that family conditions (social status, occupation, educational level of parents) had no significant impact on student's academic achievement. However, family support is a major factor that helps to create an atmosphere that forms a positive attitude towards school and learning. There was no significant difference in the achievement of positive educational results by students from complete and incomplete families.

In a related study, Chohan and Khan in Karunakaran et al. (2019) examined the impact of parental support on the academic performance and self-concept of the student in Rawalpindi City. The data analysis showed that 53 percent of students had their parents arrange some tuition for their help. 29% noted that their parents compelled their elder siblings to help. Moreover, 18% stated that their parents themselves guide them in academic matters. 120 students reported that they had no kind of support from parents or any other family member. The results revealed that parents' contribution to their children's education has a consistent and positive effect on academic achievement and self-concept. This was a descriptive and quantitative study. The population target for the study was grade 4 public school students. The study aimed at examining the relationship between academic achievement and educational support provided to the child at home, also, to establish the effect of the support on a child's self-concept. The results from a sample of 305 urban primary & elementary students were analyzed based on their annual school result report and also by using a self-concept scale. Students' self-concept was measured the month before the annual school examination and one month after the annual results announcement.

According to Muthoni (2013), there is a positive association between students' academic performance and family size, parents' financial status, educational level, and marital status. The data analysis informed that marital status does not significantly explain students' academic performance; however, the type of family (conflictive or cohesive) influenced academic performance. Moreover, only 7 percent of students' academic performance would be explained by parents' educational level. The study evaluated the relationship between family backgrounds on students' academic performance in the suburb of Kenya. Family backgrounds relating to parental marital status, family financial status, parental educational level and family size were considered for the study. Using a descriptive research design, the study targeted 1081 students and parents, respectively. A sample of 338 was drawn out of the population using a stratified random sampling method. Researchers collected data via questionnaires for parent participants and utilized interviews for students. Data collected were analyzed through qualitative and quantitative mediums.

In another study, Li and Qiu (2018) explored how family background affects children's academic achievement early. The study proposes two ways through which family influences the wards' academic performance. These are: 1) parents compete for high-quality educational opportunities for their children, which may lead to better academic performance, 2) parenting behavior and educational support for their wards could influence the child's learning habits, which may affect the academic performance. Collectively, the researchers termed these key factors (differences in educational opportunities, child's learning behavior, & parental educational involvement) as family socioeconomic status. Secondary data was used and collected from the Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010 baseline survey (Ma et al., 2019). The study's design was a survey of 14,960 households of the various parts of China, gathering data via questionnaires. The three questionnaires for each household were tailored as family questionnaire, adult (age 16 and above) questionnaire, and children's (age 10 - 15) questionnaire. The study purposely sampled 2750 cases for the study. The data were analyzed using multiple regression. The findings revealed that their families' socioeconomic status influences urban students' academic performance more

than rural students. Precisely, socioeconomic status explained 20.8% of the difference in academic performance of urban students, while it explained 6.4% of the difference of rural students. Moreover, family background has significant urban-rural differences in the purchase of educational services. Lastly, the academic achievements of rural students are explained mainly by their learning behavior, which is higher than urban students.

Besides the foregoing, a number of other studies have revealed that these family background variables significantly impact on students' achievement in schools (Shukla et al., 2015, Chohan & Khan, in Karunakaran et al., 2019, Seng et al., 2016, Kimaro & Machumu, 2015). However, none of these cited works was carried out in the study area of the present work. It is against this background that this study seeks to study family background variables and Social Studies students' achievement in Biase Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Overtime, students' academic achievement had been used to determine excellence in the teaching-learning environment. Quite often, all eyes are on teachers and school factors with little or no attention on the family background where these students come from when looking at the probable factors behind the unstable achievement of students in Social Studies. Although a number of studies have been done on the influence of parental variables on students' achievement, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, none of such has been carried out in the study area of this present study.

As a result, these researchers deem it fit to probe into family background variables and Social Studies students' achievement in Biase Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. This study intends to answer the question – how does students' family background variables influence Social Studies students' achievement in Biase Local Government Area?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' family background variables and Social Studies students' achievement in Biase Local Government Area. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the influence of:

- i. parental education on Social Studies students' achievement in Biase Local Government Area
- ii. parental involvement on Social Studies students' achievement in Biase Local Government Area

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. To what extent does parental education influence Social Studies students' achievement?
- ii. To what extent does parental involvement influence Social Studies students' achievement?

Research of hypotheses

The following hypotheses were also formulated to guide the study:

- i. There is no significant influence of parental education on Social Studies students' achievement.
- ii. There is no significant influence of parental involvement on Social Studies students' achievement.

Research Method

The descriptive survey design was used for this study. This design is useful in gathering data about the attitude, behaviour, practices and records of events that can be analyzed and interpreted to measure relationship between variables. According to Isangedighi (2012), descriptive survey involves having a systematic, intense, accurate and purposeful observation of behaviour, trait, or opinion and describing same as precisely as possible. The use of this design is justified in this study since the study is descriptive and has family variables and students' achievement as the units of analysis and drawing inference for the study

The research study area is Biase Local Government Area. Biase is one of the 18 Local Government Areas of Cross River State, Nigeria. It has its headquarters in the town of Akpet Central. Biase covers a land area of 1,310 km² and a population of 169,183 at the 2006 census. The people of Biase Local Government Area are predominantly farmers by occupation. Their economic activities include petty trading, fishing, hunting and civil service works. The people are also predominantly Christians; only few are Muslim and a host of African Traditional Religion believers.

The population of the study consists of the 18 government secondary schools comprising a total of 643 (337 female and 306 male) students in the study area (Planning, Research and Statistics Department, Cross River State Ministry of Education, 2023). The sample for this study comprised 200 respondents randomly selected from ten (10) secondary schools in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State using the simple random sampling technique.

The researchers used a 20-item Family Background Variables Questionnaire (FBVQ) and a 20-item Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) as the instruments for data collection. The independent t-test was used to test the two null hypotheses that guided the study at .05 levels of significance. The reason was to establish whether to accept or reject the hypotheses.

Results

Hypothesis one:

There is no significant influence of parental education on Social Studies students' achievement. The independent variable is parental education while the dependent variable is Social Studies students' achievement. The statistical tool adopted in testing this hypothesis was the independent t-test. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 1.

The result of the analysis in Table 1 indicates that the calculated t-value of 3.57 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.97 at .05 levels of significance with 198 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis that stated that, there is no significant influence of parental education on Social Studies students' achievement was rejected; while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant influence of parental education on Social Studies students' achievement was upheld. This implies that parental education significantly influences Social Studies students' achievement.

TABLE 1

Independent t-test analysis for the influence of parental education on Social Studies students' achievement (N = 200)

Parental education	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value	p-level
High	100	19.57	1.26	3.57*	.000
Low	100	18.86	1.09		

* Significant at .05 level, critical t = 1.97, df = 198

Hypothesis two:

There is no significant influence of parental involvement on Social Studies students' achievement. The independent variable is parental involvement while the dependent variable is Social Studies students' achievement. The statistical tool applied in testing this hypothesis was the independent t-test. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 2.

The result of the analysis presented in Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value of 3.91 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.97 at .05 levels of significance with 198 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis that stated that, there is no significant influence of parental involvement on Social Studies students' achievement was rejected. While the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant influence of parental involvement on Social Studies students' achievement, was upheld. This means that parental involvement has a significant influence on Social Studies students' achievement.

TABLE 2

Independent t-test analysis for the influence of parental involvement on Social Studies students' achievement (N = 200)

Parental involvement	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value	p-level
High	100	19.16	1.47	3.91*	.000
Low	100	18.67	1.65		

* Significant at .05 level, critical t = 1.97, df = 198

Discussion of findings

The findings on hypothesis one showed that parental education have a significant influence on Social Studies students' achievement. This result agrees with Kassim in Idris et al. (2020) whose study revealed that high education of father and mother positively contributes to their children academic achievement. Large correlation was found between parents' education and students' academic achievement. On the basis of the findings the study recommended the introduction of adult education programmes, awareness campaigns and the use of social media for community education. The result also agrees with Ogbugo-Ololube (2016) whose result showed a positive relationship between parents' educational background and the performance of their children at school. The author advised that children should not allow the educational attainment of their parents to be an obstacle to their education; rather it should be employed to their advantage as it is supposed to be naturally.

In the same vein, the result of the analysis of hypothesis two showed that, parental involvement significantly influences Social Studies students' achievement. This result is in line with Page (2016) whose result indicated that parental involvement had a positive effect on the students' academic achievement. However, it was evident that parental support declined as learners progressed from one phase of schooling to another. This result also agrees with Kussainov et al.

(2014) whose findings depicted family support is a major factor that helps to create an atmosphere that forms a positive attitude towards school and learning.

Implications for Geography Education

The findings of this study showed that family background variables such as parental education and involvement significantly influence students' academic achievement in Social Studies in Biase Local Government Area, Cross River State. These findings have great implications for Geography Education:

The Home as a Geography Classroom: Educated parents can transform routine interactions at home into learning opportunities by incorporating geographic concepts, like discussing local geography, that is describing their immediate environment, the resources therein and the usefulness of such resources to man; global events, such as climate change and global warming; or mapping out vacation destinations, thus, igniting curiosity in their children.

Leading the Pathways to Geographic Excellence: When parents guide their wards in Geography assignments, they not only boost academic performance but also foster a long-term appreciation for the subject. This will build confidence in such children in Geography as a discipline of study.

Serving as a Compass for Academic Achievement: This study's findings call for highly educated parents to consciously do their best to boost their wards' success in Geography by encouraging a culture of inquiry and intellectual engagement in them.

Making Children's Homework a Collaborative Journey: Active parental involvement in Geography homework can enhance students' understanding and connect academic concepts with real-world applications.

Sowing the Seeds of Geographic Passion: Educated parents who share their enthusiasm for Geography can inspire their children to consider it as a future course of study and career.

Geography Thrives with Family Support: A conducive learning environment at home, cultivated by educated parents, nurtures children's interest and excellence in Geography.

Bridging the Gap as Geography Mentors: Educated parents can serve as mentors, making Geography engaging and relevant, thereby improving academic performance and career interest.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusion was made.

1. There is a significant influence of parental education on Social Studies students' achievement.
2. There is a significant influence of parental involvement on Social Studies students' achievement.

Recommendations

The following policy recommendations were made from the findings:

1. Provisions for continuing education should also be made for parents who could not go to school earlier in life but would love to become educated.
2. Parents should provide a conducive atmosphere for learning at home for their children.

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