



FAMILY CHALLENGES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of family challenges on the academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. Eight specific variables, which were family cohesion, father's presence, mother's presence, tone of discipline in the family, parent's work and family balance, parent-child communication, socio-economic status of the family and parent's marital status were used to determine their influence on students' academic performance. Eight specific objectives, eight research questions and corresponding eight hypotheses were raised to guide the study. The ex-post facto research design was adopted for this study. The Instrument for data collection was "Family Challenges and Academic Performance of Senior Secondary School Students Questionnaire" (FCAPSSSQ) developed by the researcher to collect data from the respondents. The Cronbach Alpha Analysis was used to compute the reliability of the research instrument which yielded a coefficient of 0.87. Simple random sampling was used to select 1,993 from a population of 19,931 students from 18 out of 93 public Senior Secondary Schools. The data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. One-way Analysis of Variance and Independent t-test and statistics were used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that family challenges influenced the academic performance of secondary school students. It was therefore concluded that pleasant home environment be provided by parents for their wards to improve their academic performance. Finally, it is recommended that proper, guidance and counselling be given to students from single parent homes and grants and bursary be instituted to assist students from poor homes.

Keywords: Family challenges, Education performance, Family status.

Background of the Study

In Nigeria, the educational system makes academic performance in the secondary school much more critical for Nigerian students' future educational progress. Academic performance refers to the score attained by an examinee in an administered standardized test (Melissa, 2012). Academic performance represents outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in school, college, and university. Besides the relevance for an individual, academic performance is of utmost importance for the wealth of a nation and its prosperity.

According to Akinsolu (2010), in Nigeria, secondary school level is the bridge between the primary and tertiary levels. Education at the secondary level is supposed to be the bedrock and the foundation towards higher knowledge in tertiary institutions. However, Duze (2011), noted that the present Nigerian educational system is far from achieving its desired educational goals and objectives as there is noticeable evidence of decline in the standards of education and quality of students especially in secondary school. Ifedili and Ojogwu (2007) stated that the falling standard of education manifested in the poor performances of students at various examinations is leaving many people to wonder about the future and place of Nigerian education in the 21st Century. It is therefore, not a surprise that every year there is intense public outcry and discussions following the annual release of Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and Junior School Certificate Examinations (JSCE) results by WAEC and NECO because the students' annual performances are usually at variance with government and parent's expectations.

The very concept of academic failure varies in definition. Rodriguez (2002) considers academic failure as the situation in which the student does not attain the expected achievement according to his or her abilities, resulting in an altered personality which affects all other aspects of life. Nwaobi (2013) views academic failure as a process whereby a student considerably slips far behind his peers and gradually disconnects from educational system. Learning outcomes have become a subject of interest to all and this account, for the reason why scholars have been working hard to proffer solutions to factors that militate against good academic performance.

The Family and Students Academic Performance

In the submission of George and Ukpong (2013), the family is an important constituent of the society of which its stability determines to a large extent the advancement of the society. Unfortunately most families are witnessing more and more trauma and challenges. Umoh (2004) explained that the prevailing economic condition is taking away quality parental care from homes. Arditti (2015) noted that the diverse postmodern family is different from previous generations, essentially with reference to the scope of family problem definition, as well as expert interpretation of the challenges families face in their everyday lives.

Variables identified as related to academic challenges facing families and impacting on children wellbeing and academic performance are traceable to the nature of family cohesion (Jeynes, 2007), father's presence in the family (Qureshi and Alay Ahmad, 2014), mother's presence in the family (Awan and Dahmina, 2015), parents' work and family balance (Malfogel and McLanahan, 2011), tone of discipline in the family (Igbo and Ihejiene, 2014), parent-child communication (Leidy, Melinda, Guerra, Nancy and Toro, 2010), socio-

economic status (Biddle, 2001 and Rothman, 2003), and parent's marital status (Salami and Alawode, 2000 and Tenibiaje, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Many factors have been adduced to explain the students' level of academic success, one factor being the family. According to Crosnoe, Johnson and Elder (2011), there are several typical areas that are most commonly linked to academic achievement including student role performance factors, family factors and peer factors.

While the school is an important factor in a child's success, the family is the basic institution through which children learn who they are and where they can fit into society. Sumari, Hussin, and Siraj (2010) stated that parenting styles, discipline techniques, involvement with the child, and the home environment have been shown to affect a child's ability to achieve much academically. Family environment continues to be of crucial importance through adolescence and early adulthood (Van Well, 2000).

Though, there are numerous and diverse family arrangements, research have often focused on the relationship between parents and the child. Consequently, the researcher was much indebted to conduct to fill those gaps. In view of the above, this study seeks to examine Family Challenges and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In view of the foregoing, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant influence of cohesion in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
2. There is no significant influence of the father's presence in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
3. There is no significant influence of the mother's presence in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
4. There is no significant influence of the tone of discipline in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
5. There is no significant influence of the parents' work-family balance in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
6. There is no significant influence of parents-child communication on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
7. There is no significant influence of socio-economic status of the family on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
8. There is no significant influence of parent's marital status in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

METHODOLOGY

The ex-post facto research design was adopted for this study analysis. A total of 1,993 Senior Secondary School Three (SSS3) students drawn from 19,931 students in 93 public secondary schools and their annual performance in their Senior Secondary School Two (SSS2) in three core subjects (English Language, Mathematics and Civic Education) were used for the study. The main instrument for data collection was “Family Challenges and Academic performance of Senior Secondary School Students Academic Performance Questionnaire” (FCAPSSSQ) developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was administered to 50 randomly selected Senior Secondary School 3 (SSS 3) students in five secondary schools which were not among those included in the actual study but were drawn from the population of the study. The Cronbach Alpha Analysis was used to compute the reliability of the research instrument. The result showed a reliability co-efficient of 0.87 which was considered high enough for the use of the instrument.

The data were analyzed and interpreted using mean and standard deviation. One-way Analysis of Variance, t-test Analysis and Scheffe’s post-hoc pair-wise comparison test. All the eight null hypotheses used were tested at 0.05alpha level of significance. The analyses employed Computer Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Null Hypotheses

Null Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 were tested using t-test analysis while Hypotheses 4, 7 and 8 were tested using analysis of variance at 0.05 level of significance.

Null Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant influence of cohesion in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Table 1: Independent t-test Analysis of Students’ Academic Performance Based on Family Cohesion.

Family Cohesion	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t_{cal}	t_{cri}
High	1539	56.13	11.34	1991	16.76*	1.96
Low	454	46.10	10.73			

* Significant at .05 level of significance.

Table 1 shows that the calculated t-value (16.76) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant influence of the family cohesion on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

4.2.1. Null Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant influence of the father's presence in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Table2: Independent t-test Analysis of Students' Academic Performance Based on Father's Presence.

Father's Presence	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t_{cal}	t_{cri}
Present	1448	56.14	11.26			
				1991	14.71*	1.96
Not Present	545	47.74	11.66			

* Significant at .05 level of significance.

Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value (14.71) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there exists significant influence of the father's presence in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Null Hypothesis 3:

There is no significant influence of the mother's presence in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Table 3: Independent t-test Analysis of Students' Academic Performance Based on Mother's Presence.

Mother's Presence	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t_{cal}	t_{cri}
Present	1494	55.85	11.547			
				1991	13.53*	1.96
Not Present	499	47.84	11.165			

* Significant at .05 level of significance.

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value (13.53) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there exists significant influence of the mother's presence in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Null Hypothesis 4:

There is no significant influence of the tone of discipline in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance of Students' Performance Based on Tone of Discipline in the Family.

Socio-economic Status	SS	Df	MS	F _{cal}	F _{cri}
Between Groups	38917.22	2	19458.61	157.24*	3.00
Within Groups	246259.87	1990	123.75		
Total	285177.09	1992			

*Significant at .05 level of significance

As shown in Table 4, the calculated F-value (157.24) is greater than the critical F-value (3.00). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there exists a significant influence of tone of discipline in the family on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District. In order to determine the direction of significance, a Scheffe's post-hoc pair-wise comparison test was done and the results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Scheffe's Post hoc Pair-wise Comparison Test of Students, Academic Performance Classified by Tone of Discipline.

Tone of Discipline		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sign at P < .05
Authoritative	Permissive	9.78*	.588	.000
	Authoritarian	7.48*	.776	.000
Permissive	Authoritative	-9.78*	.588	.000
	Authoritarian	-2.30*	.866	.030
Authoritarian	Authoritative	-7.48*	.776	.000
	Permissive	2.30*	.866	.030

Table 5 shows a mean difference (9.78) between students from Authoritative and Permissive family tone of discipline, 7.48 between authoritative and authoritarian, and 2.30 between authoritarian and permissive. The levels of significance displayed in Table 13 indicated that students from authoritative tone of discipline performed significantly better than their counterparts from permissive and authoritarian. Students from authoritarian tone of discipline performed significantly better than those from permissive.

Null Hypothesis 5:

There is no significant influence of the parents' work-family balance in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Table 6: Independent t-test Analysis of Students' Academic Performance Based on Parents' Work-Family Balance.

Parents' Work-Family Balance	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t_{cal}	t_{cri}
Positive	1543	55.58	11.55	1991	12.46*	1.96
Negative	450	47.89	11.45			

*Significant at .05 level of significance

Table 6 shows that the calculated t-value (12.46) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there exists significant influence of the parents' work-family balance in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Null Hypothesis 6:

There is no significant influence of parents-child communication on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Table 7: Independent t-test Analysis of Students' Academic Performance Based on Parent-Child Communication.

Parent-Child Communication	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t_{cal}	t_{cri}
Effective	1611	55.25	11.64	1991	11.09*	1.96
Ineffective	382	47.92	11.51			

* Significant at .05 level of significance.

Table 7 shows that the calculated t-value (11.09) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there exists significant influence of the parent-child communication on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Null Hypothesis 7:

There is no significant influence of socio-economic status of the family on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Table 8: Analysis of Variance of Students' Academic Performance Based on Socio-economic Status of the Family.

Socio-economic Status	SS	Df	MS	F_{cal}	F_{cri}
Between Groups	14899.88	2	7449.94	54.83	3.00
Within Groups	270277.19	1989	135.89		
Total	285177.07	1991	143.23		

As shown in Table 8, the calculated F-value (54.83) is greater than the critical F-value (3.00). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there exists a significant influence of socio-economic status of the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District. In order to determine the direction of significance, a Scheffe' post-hoc pair-wise comparison test was done and the results are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9: Scheffe's Post-hoc Pair-wise Comparison Test of Students Academic Performance Classified by Socio-economic Status.

(I) Socio economic Status	(J) Socio economic Status	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sign at P < .05
High	Average	10.58*	1.06	.000
	Low	15.17*	1.92	.000
Average	High	-10.58*	1.06	.000
	Low	4.59*	1.64	.020
Low	High	-15.17*	1.92	.000
	Average	-4.59*	1.64	.020

Table 9 shows a mean difference (10.58) of students from families with high and average socio-economic status; 15.17 for high and low socio-economic status, and 4.59 for average and low socio-economic status. The levels of significance displayed in Table 9 indicate that students from families with high socio-economic status perform significantly better than their counterparts from average and low socio-economic status. Students from families with average socio-economic status perform significantly better than those from families with low socio-economic status.

4.2.8 Null Hypothesis 8:

There is no significant influence of parent's marital status in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Table 10: Analysis of Variance of Students' Academic Performance Based on Parent's Marital Status in the Family.

Parent's Marital Status	SS	Df	MS	F _{cal}	F _{cri}
Between Groups	15190.77	3	5063.59	37.30	3.00
Within Groups	269986.32	1989	135.74		
Total	285177.09	1992			

As shown in Table 10, the calculated F-value (37.30) is greater than the critical F-value (3.00). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there exists significant influence of the parent's marital status in the family on the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in Rivers East Senatorial District. In order to determine

the direction of significance, a Scheffe' post-hoc pair-wise comparison test was done and the results are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11: Scheffe's Post-hoc Pair-wise Comparison Test of Students' Academic Performance Classified by Parent's Marital Status.

(I) Marital Status	(J) Marital Status	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sign at P < .05
Single	Married	-7.82*	1.173	.000
	Divorced	-2.15	1.302	.436
	Separated	-2.08	1.559	.613
Married	Single	7.82*	1.173	.000
	Divorced	5.67*	.713	.000
	Separated	5.72*	1.116	.000
Divorced	Single	2.15	1.302	.436
	Married	-5.67*	.713	.000
	Separated	.05	1.251	1.000
Separated	Single	2.10	1.559	.613
	Married	-5.72*	1.116	.000
	Divorced	-.05	1.251	1.000

Table 11 shows that the mean difference of academic performance of students from married and single parent's families is 2.15, mean difference of academic performance of students from married and divorced parent's families is 5.67, mean difference of academic performance of students from married and separated parent's families is 5.72, mean difference of students from divorced and single parent's families is 2.10, mean difference of academic performance of students from divorced and separated parent's families is .05 while mean difference of academic performance of students from separated and single parent's families is 2.10. The levels of significance displayed in Table 11 indicate that students from married parent's families perform significantly better than their counterparts in single, divorced and separated parent's families. No significant difference existed between the performance of students from divorce parent's families as well as single and separated parents. Non-significant difference also existed between the academic performance of students from separated parent's families and those from single parent's families.

Findings and Discussions

The findings of the study as regards the influence of the level of cohesion in the family on the academic performance indicated that cohesion in the family significantly influence academic performance of students in Rivers East Senatorial District. From the results, it was also found that students who had high family cohesion performed better than those who had low family cohesion. The study is in line with Jeynes (2007), which showed that high family cohesion significantly and positively enhances academic performance.

From the results, it was also found that students whose fathers were present in the family performed better than those whose fathers were not present in the family. The study is in line with Qureshi and Alay Ahmad (2014), who reported that intact father children show better academic performance than absent father children in a study of effects of father

absence on children's academic performance among 45 randomly selected 13-15 year-old students from District Buner, Pakistan.

The findings of the study showed that students whose mothers are present in the family performed better than those whose mothers are not present in the family. The findings from the result may also be attributed to the opinion sounded by Awan and Dahmina's (2015), study in which they argued that one of a mother's highest obligations is the education of her children at the time when their minds are not amenable to instruction. According to them, to a large extent a child's whole future life depends on the teaching it receives in early childhood and it is needless to say that this first foundation of education cannot be well laid by an ignorant mother.

This study found that students whose family tone of discipline was authoritative performed better than those whose family tone of discipline was permissive and authoritarian. The study is in line with the findings of Igbo and Ihejiene (2014), which revealed the superiority of authoritative parenting style on students' academic achievement followed by authoritarian parenting style; permissive parenting style is the least as indicated in enhancing students' academic achievement.

From the results, it was also found that students whose parents' work-family balance had positive effects in the family performed better than those whose parents' work-family balance had negative effects in the family. The result could be attributed to the balancing of their activities in regard to meeting their responsibility in family, children's academic demand, health care, community, organizations, and others with regard to their job. This is why Malfogel and McLanahan (2011) stated that no families, even middle- and high-income families, are immune from the challenge of balancing work and family obligations.

The findings of the study indicated that students whose parents effectively communicated with them in the family performed better than those whose parents did not communicate effectively with them in the family. The findings could also be attributed to parent's endeavour to ask about their children's lives, encourage their interests, give good advice, and spend free time with them in school activities like Annual Inter-House Sports Day, Open-Day and Prize-Giving Day. The findings of the study are in line with Leidy, Melinda, Guerra, Nancy and Toro's work (2010), which found that some forms of parental involvement, particularly parent-child discussion, have a far greater effect on student attitudes, behaviors, and achievement than do others.

The findings of the study revealed that students from families with high socio-economic status performed significantly better than their counterparts from families with average and low socio-economic status. Students from families with average socio-economic status performed significantly better than those from families with low socio-economic status. The study is in line with Biddle (2001) and Rothman's (2003) study which indicated a causal relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement.

The findings of the study also found that students from married parents performed significantly better than their counterparts in single, divorced and separated parent's families. The findings are in line with the findings of Salami and Alawode (2000), who investigated the effects of single parenting on the academic achievement of 100 senior secondary school in Ejigbo Local Government Area of Osun State and found a significant difference between the academic achievement of adolescents from single-parenting homes and those from intact

homes with adolescents from intact homes scoring higher than those from single-parenting. The findings of the study is contrary to the findings of the study of Tenibiaje (2011), who found no significant difference between the academic performance of adolescent students from single parent homes and those from intact parent homes.

Recommendations

On the basis of conclusions drawn in this study, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

1. Parents should be encouraged to provide a pleasant home environment which is inspiring, by having enough good books, magazines, dictionaries, radio, and computers that will have a positive effect on the development of performance.
2. Counselling services and proper guidance should be provided to students from single parent homes so as to improve their self-esteem, academic performance and make up for the absence of the other parent, thus positively improving their moral, social and intellectual development.
3. Religious organizations, schools, government at all levels should design programmes that can assist children with difficult home situation, and also institute grants and bursary to assist students with difficult financial situations.
4. Both parents and guardians should be encouraged to sit together and give proper time to their children's activities whenever they visit their children/ward schools from time to time and they should also interact with their children teachers.
5. There should be public awareness campaign to parents so that they can give their children the best they can in terms of education including the promotion of other co-curricular activities.
6. School administrators and teachers should through school's Open Day, Visiting Day and Parent-Teacher-Association meetings discuss the progress of students with their parents, as this would provide the school an opportunity to be well informed about the home factors influencing the students and therefore proffer solutions.
7. Parents should also provide a democratic atmosphere in the home which could provide children the opportunity to share their views on important matters.
8. Counselling programmes with the aim of equipping teachers with skills and how to deal with students with unique needs as a result of family stressor should be emphasized.
9. Government and non-government bodies should ensure that family issues such as parents' work-family balance, low family socio-economic status affecting students' academic performance are properly addressed in the National Policy of Education.

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