Parental Economic Status and Academic Performance of Accounting Students in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract
THE study examined parental economic status and academic performance of accounting students in Nigerian universities. It was motivated by the problem of steady decline in the performance of some classes of accounting students in the country, occasioning concerns amongst well-meaning citizens. The specific objective of the study was to ascertain the extent to which parents' socio-economic status is related to the academic performance of students in Nigerian universities. The scope of the study was narrowed to students in the Department of Accountancy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Descriptive survey design. Was adopted for the study. The population of the study is 150 final year students in the Department of Accountancy at the University of Nigeria. The sample size of 60 was selected using non-probability purposive sampling technique. Data analysis was done with inferential statistics (Chi-square, X^2). Results obtained indicate that parental socio-economic status was significantly related to academic performance of students in accounting studies in Nigeria; and that parental income level is positively and significantly related to students' academic performance in accounting studies in Nigeria. It was then recommended among other things that Government should come up with policies for a better socio-economic climate for parents in Nigeria, which will assist boost students' academic performance in the country.
Keywords: Parents, Accounting Students, Economic Status, Academic Performance, Nigeria.

## 1.	Introduction

The social and economic development of any country is correlated with the quality of students produced, which in turn is directly linked to the students' academic performance. Students are most essential asset for any educational institute. The student's performance plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates who will become great leaders and manpower for the country (Ali, Kamaruzaman, Ali, Mokhtar, Salamt & Syafena, 2009). Schools, colleges and universities have no worth without students (Mushtaq and Khan, 2012). The question of whether all students have the same chances to succeed at University is still a source of concern (Smeding, Darnon, Souchal, Toczek-Capelle & Butera, 2013). Meanwhile, it has been argued that the economic status of a parent influence the academic performance of a student. That irrespective of the equal opportunity provided by the university system for excellent academic performance among all the students, explicit difference can be observed between those students who belong to different financial status and different parental educational level (Musarat, Sundus, Faqiha, Fozia & Ayesha, 2013). These obvious differences in the student's socioeconomic backgrounds are issues of concern in terms of student's academic performance in the university system.

Hence, the motivation for this student, to test the veracity or otherwise of these claims, with final year students of Accounting at the University of Nigeria as case study. In our context, socio economic background is a general umbrella that represents the students' family socio economic status which is directly linked to the parental income levels. It also entails **a** combination of social and economic factors that are used as indicators of household income and opportunities.

## 2.	Statement of the problem

In most Nigerian tertiary institutions today, academic performance is still not at its best which is evident from the grades that most students get at the end of a course of study which has continued to be on a steady decline. This has been the case at the Department of Accountancy, University of Nigeria, where records have shown that while the numbers of freshmen enrollment into undergraduate accountancy programmes has been increasing, the proportion that tends to take it up to higher degree postgraduate levels is on the decrease. Some public analysts had from time to time expressed worries over this gap. In work place environments, questions are being raised regarding the quality of accounting graduates which calls for concern among all stakeholders in accounting education over the possible cause of this steady decline in academic performance of an accounting student. Some

have fingered parental economic backgrounds, while others point to general decline in academic standards as the cause for this.

In the light of the above problem scenario, this study was focused on the relationship between parental income status and students' performance, with special emphasis on final year students in the Department of Accountancy, University of Nigeria, bearing in mind that accounting as a core course in the university is still generally regarded as the language of business. It is still generally viewed as a social instrument cum device that enabled humans to better comprehend and control the world of business. It is a tool that enabled business people to quantify, summarize and interpret the abstract processes of businesses that could be evidenced by transactions captured within as an income statement or double entry accounting information.

This study therefore attempted to find out the extent to which differences in socio-economic backgrounds of university students' parents affect their academic performance with a particular focus on students in Accountancy Department, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

3. Objectives of the study
The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of parental socio-economic background on the academic performance of accountancy students in University of Nigeria Nsukka. However, the specific objective was:
i. To ascertain the extent to which parents' socio-economic status is related to the academic performance of students in in Nigerian universities.

4. Research Questions
The following research question guided the study:
i) To what extent does parents' socio-economic status relate to students' academic performance in Accountancy studies in Nigerian universities?

5. Research Hypothesis
The null-hypothesis formulated and tested in the study at significance level of 0.05 was:
H_o: There is no significant relationship between parents' socio-economic status and students' academic performance in Nigerian universities.

6. Scope of the study
This study is aimed at examining the influence of parental socio economic background on students' academic performance in Nigerian universities, while the scope is narrowed to students in the Department of Accountancy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The justification for this is because students that are admitted to study in the Department of Accountancy, University of Nigeria, come from a wide range of socio economic backgrounds. These diverse socio-economic backgrounds give them different life experiences, different educational opportunities, expectations, needs and varied academic potentials. At the point of this study, there were no significant changes in the traditional environment for the student's admission into the Department of Accountancy, University of Nigeria. The Department now has a tradition of enrolling full-time students only unlike in the past couple of years when they admitted both full time and part time students. Hence, it will serve as a true representative sample for the entire universities in the country.

The independent variable in the study is students' academic performance, while the dependent variable is parental socio-economic status.

7. Literature Review
7.1 The Concept of Socio-Economic Background
The influence of students background has more significant influence on his/her performance than anything else that goes on within schools (Wikipedia, 2007). Countless factors have been analyzed by researchers to explain why some students in higher institutions perform better or attain higher academic performance than others. The findings of the researches pinpoint largely on students' background factors. These factors are both inside and outside the university environment. They are classified as student factors, family factors, school factors and peer factors (Crosnoe, Johnson and Elder, 2004). The socio-economic background of a student is a general umbrella that represents the student's family socio economic status which is directly linked to student's parental level of education, parental occupation and parental income levels.

7.2 Parental Socio Economic Status
Socioeconomic status highlights the position of individuals, families, or other units on one or more dimensions of stratification (Fergusson, Horwood and Boden, 2008). Pettigrew (2009) viewed socioeconomic status as a combination of social and economic factors that are used as an indicator of household income and opportunity. It is also believed that socio-economic status is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's

work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education and occupation.

However, Lareau (2003) observed that socioeconomic status is typically broken into three categories, high, middle and low to describe the three areas a family or an individual may fall into. In addition, Considine and Zappala (2002) stressed that socio economic status reflects a person's overall social position to which attainments in both the social and economic domain contribute. They add that social economic status is determined by an individual's achievements in, education, employment, occupational status and income and pointed out that families where the parents are advantaged socially, educationally and economically they tend to foster a high level of achievement in their children to maintain their attained status.

In related study at high school level, Hill et al. (2004) had also argued that the socio economic status of parents not only affects the academic performance of children, but also makes it possible for children from low background to compete well with their counterparts from high socio-economic background under the same academic environment. Akhtar and Niazi (2011) pointed out that students belonging to families with higher socio-economic status have better opportunities and conducive learning environment which lead to enhanced achievement as opposed to students who are from lower socio-economic status with fewer opportunities and fewer resources that make them lag behind academically. Musarat et al (2013) posited that the children of well to do parents have better sources and facilities to avail. They have the opportunity to get admission in good schools, which offer a sound base for their future career. It is thus reported that students with high level of socio economic status perform better than the middle-class students and the middle-class students perform better than the students with low level of socio economic status. Pettigrew (2009) observed that students whose parents have higher socio-economic status and higher levels of education may have an enhanced regard for learning, more positive ability beliefs, a stronger work orientation, and they may use more effective learning strategies than children of parents with lower socio-economic status and lower levels of education.

However, Delaney, Harmon & Redmond (2010), lamented that students with a low socioeconomic status underestimate themselves because of the socio-economic status they inherit from their parents and the same is reflected in their performance at school.

7.3 The Concept of Parental Level of income

According to Simiyu (2001) family income refers to wages salaries, profit, rents and any flow of earnings received. He argued that income can also come in the form of unemployment or workers compensation, social security, pensions, interests or dividends, royalties, trusts, alimony, or other governmental, public, or family financial assistance. He further stated that income can be looked at in two terms, relative and absolute. Absolute income, as theorized by economist Keyenes, is the relationship in which as income increases, so will consumption, but not at the same rate. Relative income dictates a person or family's savings and consumption based on the family's income in relation to others. Income is commonly used measure of social economic status because it is relatively easy to figure for most individuals. The parity in the socio economic status is as a result of income inequality. Income inequality is most commonly measured around the world by the Gini Coefficient, where 0 corresponds to perfect equality and 1 means perfect inequality. Low income focuses on meeting immediate needs and do not accumulate wealth that could be passed on to future generations, thus increasing inequality. Families with higher and expendable income can accumulate wealth and focus on meeting immediate needs while being able to consume and enjoy luxuries and weather crises (GOK, 1983 in Okioga (2013). This class of families can comfortably provide the basic needs for their children in the university. On the other hand the students from low income families face financial problems which compel them to face various hurdles. Their financial problems distract them from their studies and they fail to get high grades and consequently have to suffer for finding a job (Musarat et al; 2013). The research reports of Akinsola and Tijani, (2004) and Broody and Dowker (2006) also suggest that students who come from economically poor families due to poor parental income level are more likely to be less equip with relevant materials and are more exposed to poor performance in school than those from more economically stable families.

7.4 Academic Performance Concept

Academic performance according to a 2003 report by the Cambridge University is frequently defined in terms of examination performance. Academic performance is often characterized by performance in tests, in course work and performance in examinations of undergraduate students. According to Busari (2000) academic performance is also broad name for academic achievement and is generally regarded as the display of knowledge attained or skills developed in the school subject. Iroegbu (1992) stated that academic performance is the level of performance in school subject as exhibited by an individual. Alkhutaba (2013) posit that in the school setting, academic performance is referred to as the exhibition of knowledge attained or skills developed in school subject. In the university, the student academic performance is measured through several ways like CGPA, GPA and their test result. Universities use GPA to measure student performance in particular semester. However, Geiser

and Santelices (2007) and Acato (2006) reported that academic performance is affected by a number of factors including admission points, social economic status and school background. Swart (1999) in his earlier research pointed out that admission points or university entrance examination score are a reflection of the previous performance which no doubt influence future academic performance. These views tend to portray that academic performance to a large extent emanate from the socio economic background of the student.

7.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study was based on the System's theory input-output model. The system's theory input-output model was developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1956. The theory, according to Koontz and Weihrich (1988) postulates that an organized enterprise does not exist in a vacuum; it is dependent on its environment in which it is established. They added that the input from the environment is received by the organization, which then transforms them into output. As adapted in this study, the students (inputs) are admitted into the university, with different university admission cut off point, from different social economic backgrounds and are from various school backgrounds, when they get into the university system, the management of the university transforms them through the process of teaching and learning and the students output is seen through their academic performance. According to the input-output model, it is assumed that the students with high admission points, high social economic background and good school background will perform well if the university facilities are good, the lecturers and the management of the university is good which may not always be the case and this is the shortcoming of this theory.

7.6 Empirical Review

There has been series of studies on whether socio-economic background influences students' academic performance. For instance, Adedeji (2008) conducted a study titled "The Influence of Parent Socio-Economic Status on Students' Academic Performance in Economics using student in Economics Department of University of Ibadan as a case. He found out from the study that parents that are rich show more concern over their children's academic achievements and recommended that parents should give more supports to students' education.

Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafique and Berhan (2011), conducted research to examine the different factors influencing the academic performance of secondary school students in a metropolitan city of Pakistan. A sample of 600 adolescents comprising 300 boys and 300 girls was taken for the study. The academic performance was gauged by the result of their 9th grade annual examination. For the analysis of data t-test and ANOVA were applied to examine the effect of different factors on students 'achievement. The results of the study showed that socio-economic status and parents' education had significant effect on students' overall academic achievement as well as achievement in the subjects of Mathematics and English. The high and average socio-economic level affects the performance more than the lower level. Also it was found that girls performed better than the boys.

Uwaifo (2008) in a study conducted on the effects of family structure and parenthood on the academic performance of Nigerian University students and found a significant difference between the academic performance of students from single parent family and those from two-parent family structure. In his work he stressed that single parents such as single parent, widows, widowers and divorcees find it harder to support their wards when compared to two parent families like couples who jointly train their ward. Kim, Gong-Soog and Rowe (2000) conducted research to examine the impact of family economic hardship and parental commitment on children's outcomes. Results of the study showed that students raised by parents with higher income were likely to have access to quality educational resources.

8. Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The design is effective in obtaining information relating to people's thoughts, feelings and opinions, and generalizable information from a population. The primary data was collected through questionnaire. The population of the study is 150 final year students in the Department of Accountancy at the University of Nigeria, who had registered all their final year courses and have received computed session's result from first year to third year or penultimate year.

The sample size was selected using non-probability purposive sampling technique to select 60 final year accountancy students in the University. The validity of the instrument was through content and construct validity, while the reliability was determined through Cronbach Alpha. The Cronbach Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire and ensure homogeneity of the items. The reliability coefficient as revealed by the Cronbach Alpha was 0.85. Data presentation and analysis were done with descriptive statistics (simple frequency, tables and percentages) and inferential statistics (Chi-squareX^2).

9. Data Presentation and Analysis
9.1 Data Presentation
This section presents data on the background of the respondents, according to gender, age, faculty of study and year of study in the University. Out of the 70 questionnaire copies administered, 60 copies were retrieved out of which 7 questions were not properly answered; 3 were not returned. Only 60 copies that were correctly filled were used for data analysis.

Table 1 Respondents' gender distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	45	75
Female	15	25
Total	60	100

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 1 illustrates that out of the total of 60 respondents, the male students had the highest representation of about 75% and the female respondents had 25%. This was because male students outnumbered the female and were more cooperative than their female counterparts.

Table 2: Respondents' age distribution

Age	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent
Less than 20 years	1	1.67	1.67
Between 21-25 years	38	63.33	65.34
Between 26-30 years	21	35.00	36.67
Total	60	100	

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 2 above illustrates that 1.67% of the respondents were below 20 years of age. 63.33% of the respondents were aged between 21 to 25years, while 35.00% the respondents were between 26years and 30 years.

Table 3 Parents' Socio-economic status

Responses	Q_1	Q_2	Q_3	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	35	41	40	116	64.44
Agree	15	12	10	37	20.56
Neutral	3	1	0	4	2.22
Strongly Disagree	4	4	7	15	8.33
Disagree	3	2	3	8	4.44
Total	**60**	**60**	**60**	**180**	**100**

Source: Field survey, 2016

The table 3 responses above shows that 85% of the respondents are in agreement that socio economic status of parents influence students' academic performance, 2% neither agreed nor disagreed and 13% did not agree. The above responses indicate that parental socio economic status is an essential factor that impact significantly on students' academic performance.

Table 4: Parents' Income Levels

Responses	Q_1	Q_2	Q_3	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	44	33	41	118	65.56
Agree	10	18	16	44	24.44
Neutral	1	0	1	2	1.00
Strongly Disagree	3	3	1	7	3.89
Disagree	2	6	1	9	5.00
Total	60	60	60	180	100

Source: Field survey, 2016

The table 4 responses above shows that 90% of the respondents are in agreement that socio- economic status of students' parents influence academic performance, 1% neither agreed nor disagreed and 9% did not agree. The above responses indicate that parental income level is an essential factor that impact on students' socio-economic background which influences academic performance.

9.2 Tests of hypotheses
Test of hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and students' academic performance in Accountancy Department.

Test Statistic: Chi-square (X^2)

Degree of Freedom (C-1) (R-1) = 2

Critical Chi-square = 5.99

Table 7: Test of relationship between parental socio-economic status and students' academic performance in Accounting

	Academic Performance							
Socio Economic Status	low	average	high	total	df	Cal^2	Critical^2	p
High	2.00	20	12.00	34.00				
Low	4.00	16	6.00	18.00	2.00	11.07	5.99	0.05
total	6.00	36	18.00	60.00				

Source: Field Survey, 2016

The table above shows a calculated chi-square of 11.07 higher than table value of 5.99 at 2 degree of freedom and significance level of 0.05. The result indicates that parental socio economic status was significantly related to academic performance of students in accounting studies in Nigeria.

10. Summary of Findings and their Implications

The findings of the study reveal that:

1) Parental socio-economic status was significantly related to academic performance of students in accounting studies in Nigeria. This finding of the study is in agreement with the results of earlier researches by Hill et al (2004), Rothstein (2004), Adedeji (2008) and Musarat et al (2013), all of which showed that socio economic status of parents does not only affect the academic performance of students but also make it impossible for children from low socio-economic background to compete well with their counterparts from high socio-economic backgrounds under the same academic environment.

2) The study further revealed that parental income level is positively and significantly related to students' academic performance in Accountancy Department. This finding is in line with the view of Johnson (1996) in his study of theoretical model of economic nationalism in developing states in Nigeria of which his reports stated that parents become poor due to hard measures such that they can no longer provide adequately for good education of their children as these ugly situation have promoted school dropouts or students' engagement in menial jobs to support their academic pursuits.

11. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study it could be seen that students' academic performance in universities has significant relationship to their parents' general socio economic status, especially parental income levels. This silent and unnoticeable element in students' background factors surreptitiously also influenced students' academic performance in Accounting studies in Nigeria. The implications of this on national development is unarguably negative, as such unenthusiastic and half-baked accountants are churned out of the universities. This, then calls for concern from all stakeholders in the country.

12. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

i. The Government should come up with policies for a better socio-economic climate for parents in Nigeria, which will assist boost students' academic performance in the country.

ii. Parents should show more interest in their children's educational welfare by improving their financial obligations towards their education. This will strengthen the students' academic performance in universities across the country.

iii, Parents should also improve their parenting styles by monitoring their children's schooling more closely, as this will help improve the children's academic performance.

iv. Government and all the relevant agencies should increase the bursary allocation to the students from poor families so as to retain them in schools to enhance their academic performance.

v. Government should also improve on its poverty alleviation programmes in the country, as this will go a long way in raising the living standards of the people, which will to a large extent impact on the income levels of parents, and consequently translate to better support for their children in schools.

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