

Home Environment and Primary School Pupils' English Language Performance in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria

Akaase Blossom N. Bassey, Ph.D

*Department of Educational Foundations and Childhood Education
Faculty of Education*

*Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH), Calabar
blossomalltheway41@gmail.com*

Abstract

An ex-post factor study was carried out to examine the influence of home environment on pupils' performance. It was hypothesized that family size, socio-economic status and parental educational attainment have no significant influence on pupils' performance in English Language. A validated 16-item questionnaire and a Teacher-Made English Language Test with reliability coefficients of .72 and .83 respectively, were administered on two hundred randomly selected primary six pupils. Using independent t-test and analysis of variance, it was found that family size, socio-economic status and parental educational attainment significantly influence English Language academic performance, of primary school pupils in Abi Local Government Area. It is therefore recommended that government should, through her agencies, intensify efforts to control family size, award scholarship to more deserving children from lower socio-economic class and render literacy services in order to liberate illiterate parents from the bondage of ignorance.

Keyword: Home, Environment, Pupils, English, Language, Performance

Introduction

Education has always been associated with evaluation, for the purpose of assessing the performance level of learners. Tests and/or examination are therefore administered at all levels of schooling to ascertain the learner's achievement or performance. In view of the fact that individuals are endowed with varying abilities, various tests have been designed by educationists to determine who proceeds to the next higher level of schooling and who does not. However, individuals have been designated by psychologists as severely mentally retarded. Biological factors or physical impairment may cause such mental retardation. Some individuals, on the other hand, are born with exceptionally intellectual ability and are designated as gifted and talented individuals.

Nevertheless, several environmental conditions tend to either improve or depress the performance level of primary school pupils and, indeed, all levels of students, the natural intellectual endowments notwithstanding. No wonder then that, at one time an

intellectual mediocre could be developed to a genius, while a potential genius could degenerate to a mediocre when subjected to some adverse environmental treatment. Nonetheless, in addition to natural endowment, educational psychologists have identified many other factors that affect pupils' performance and have suggested measures aimed at improvement and maintenance of high standards.

The present level of educational development in Nigeria notwithstanding, parents generally tend to believe that their children's academic performance depends entirely on the teacher who, they think, is supposed to be the sole determinant of the children's success in school learning. Such view by parents has given rise to the incidence of conflicting opinions amongst teachers and parents; while teachers play their part by teaching the children in school, they hope that parents would play their part by providing the necessary and enriched environment at home to enhance learning. However, parents see teachers as the only source of supply of the needed inputs required for effective learning in schools. These conflicting opinions certainly have stultifying effect on the performance of the children. A famous comparative educationist, Schacter (2000) says that experiences outside the school sometimes matter even more than the experiences inside the school. They tend to govern and interpret the internal experiences. The school is only one of the many social agencies for the education of the child.

The family plays a very vital role; it is within the family that a child acquires and organizes experiences which are vital for this early and formative years. In support of this, Henry (2000) holds that the family is the best single predictor of the future performance level of the child. The child is first exposed to recreational activities and educational aids such as books, magazines, newspapers and encyclopaedia, cultural resources such as plays, radios and television which help in the child's enlightenment, in terms of relativity. The home contributes 60% effect, school 18% and environment 20% in comparing the importance of home variables in relation to those of school and the neighbourhood in producing variation in educational performance. Orlu (2012) carried out a study to find out factors affecting performance among secondary school students in Nigeria. He identified environment factors as playing a key role in influencing the performance of students. According to his findings, the environment in which the individual student lives and interacts will influence how he/she perceives himself/herself, shapes his/her aspirations, self-esteem and motivation; therefore the environment can either hinder or enhance a student's learning.

This study was designed to investigate the extent to which academic performance is influenced by some selected home environmental variables viz. Family size, socio-economic status and parental educational attainment. A wide variety of studies have been done by Educationists, Sociologists and psychologists the world over which attest to the influence of cultural stimulation, housing conditions, parental educational background, family size, parental socio-economic status and child rearing practices on

students' academic performance. Several studies have shown that family size plays an important role in the performance of children. Schacter (2000) comments on the fact that family size has a vital effect on a child's performance; he says that children from smaller families display more brilliant performance in their test scores than children from larger families. Balogun (1987) says children from large families who experience authoritarian child-training control and less favourable socio-economic conditions are more likely to prevail and this mitigates the development of creativity.

Rugus (2001), with reference to large families, posits that there tends to be defective parent-child relationship in such a family, and this frustrating environmental condition makes a child to find it difficult to relate with others. The establishment of friendly relationship in a group becomes difficult. This could as well result in unsuccessful performance at school by the child. Douglas (1996) established a strong relationship between family size and school attainment in his developmental studies. His study revealed that children from average family size performed lower than children from relatively small families. Nutal (1996) studied the effect of various family factors on academic performance and the result showed that such family variables as family size, birth order, child spacing and crowding affect academic performance positively or negatively when Intelligence Quotient (IQ) was controlled.

On socio-economic status and pupils' academic performance, it appears that several investigations do agree that there is a high correlation between the two. Good and Brophy (2001) comment that disadvantaged parents do not deliberately do anything to impair their children's education; they want the same kind of things as the advantaged. The major difference between them is in their financial difficulty. Luce (1997) declares that economically depressed home contain numerous conditions within themselves which affect the motivational aspirations and performance of any child. Thus, if the family environment is poor, the educational standing of the child will also be poor. Onyejiaku (2002), in his research, investigated the influence of family size and socio-economic status of parents, and reported that they significantly influence scholastic achievement.

It is often widely speculated that children's academic achievement is partly a function of their parents' academic background as well as their socio-economic status. Marjoribank (2001) says parents' education and performance has a unique relationship with the children's academic and future successes, and that it is only when parents are academically good that they can better influence and encourage their wards to be successful. He maintained that children from literate environment or homes performed better than those from illiterate homes. Okon and Anderson (1987) in his study on 370 boys and 112 girls in Nigeria found out that male students from educated families performed significantly better than male students from uneducated families. Atkinson and Raynor (2000) comments that most children are motivated to learn through their

parents' level of education because if the parents are highly educated, there is that tendency for the children to be like them and parents who are educated would likely want their children to be like them. More so, after a series of investigations with Ghanaian primary school pupils, Hawkes (2005) concluded that parental educational level correlates positively with their children's performance in English Language.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

Ho1: There is no significant influence of family size on pupil performance in English language.

Ho2: There is no significant influence of parental socio-economic status on pupil performance in English Language.

Ho3: There is no significant influence of parental educational attainment on pupil performance in English language.

Methodology

Ex-post-facto research design was adopted for this study, which was guided by three hypotheses. The population for this study comprised of 640 primary six pupils from the 56 primary schools in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State of Nigeria (SUBEB, 2019). Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 200 primary six pupils, consisting of 107 boys and 93 girls from 10 primary schools. The 10 primary schools were selected from the 56 primary schools in Abi Local Government Area through stratified random sampling to cut across urban and rural schools.

Two instruments were used to collect data for this study viz: Pupils Questionnaire and Teacher Made Test. The Pupils Questionnaire was designed to investigate some home environment variables such as family size, parental socio-economic status and parental educational attainment. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A dealt with the personal data of the respondents comprising of the name of the pupil, sex, name of school, class, age, number of father's wives, number of children in the family, birth order, number of housemaids and house boys as well as number of other dependants in the family. A family size of 5-10 members was considered a large family size while a family of 3-4 members was considered a nuclear or small-size family. The instrument that measured parental educational attainment categorized them as educated and less educated where 1= First School Leaving Certificate (Elementary school), 2= Secondary School, 3= NCE/OND, 4= B.Ed 5= M.Ed, 6= Ph.D . Numbers 1-3 are less educated, while 4 -6 are highly educated. Section B comprises items meant to elicit responses from the pupils on the influences of home environmental factors on academic performance.

The Pupils Questionnaire was administered to a total of 200 pupils by the researcher. After the completion of the Pupils Questionnaire, they were given the second

instrument, the Teacher Made Test (TMT) which consisted of a ten-item objective test with options ranging from (a)- (c) in English language. The timing for the test was 12 minutes. The test scripts were collected and attached to the questionnaire of the same subject and taken away by the researcher. There was a hundred percent return rate. Data collected were analysed hypothesis-by-hypothesis, using the independent t-test statistics for hypothesis 1 and 3, while a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse hypothesis 2. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 level significance.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant influence of family size on pupils' performance in English language.

Table 1: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of family size on the level of academic performance of pupils

Variables	N		SD	t
Large- Sized families	106	64.14	10.44	
				0.11
Small-Sized families	94	63.96	11.28	

* Not significant at .05, df = 198; Critical t-value = 1.96.

Having compared the mean score of the performance of pupils from large-size families with that of their counterparts from small-size families, table 1 shows that the obtained t-value was 0.11. This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical t-values at .05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. The obtained t-values was less than the critical t-value. Hence the result was not significant. This result therefore implies that there is no significant influence of family size on the level of performance of pupils in English Language.

Ho2: There is no significant influence of parental socio-economic status on the performance of pupils in English language.

Table 2: Analysis of variance on the influence of socio-economic status of parents on the academic performance of pupils

Socio-economic status	N		SD	
High	40	7.4	4.08	
Middle	60	6.1	5.47	
Low	100	2.4	3.89	
Total	200	5.3	4.94	

Source of variations	SS	df	MS	f
Between groups	943.16	2	471.58	
Within group	3921.72	197	19.9	23.69*
Total	4864.88	199		

* Significant at .05, df = 2 and 197, Critical F-value = 3.00.

Table 2 shows that the obtained F-value was 23.69. This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical F-value at .05 alpha level with 2 and 197 degrees of freedom. The obtained F-value was greater than the critical F-value. The implication of this result is that there is a significant influence of parental socio-economic status on the performance of pupils in English Language.

Since the F-value was statistically significant, the researcher went ahead and analysed using the Fisher Modified t-test in order to determine the particular pair groups responsible for the difference. The result of this further analysis as presented on table 3, shows that low socio-economic status class is responsible for the difference (see difference between High and Low = 6.49, middle and low).

Table 3: Multiple Fishers t-test comparison of pupils English Language performance by family SES

	High	Middle	Low
High	7.4	1.19	6.49
Middle	1.3	6.1	5.87
Low	5	3.7	2.4

* * values along main diagonal are group means, below it are mean difference and above it are computed t-values

Ho3: There is no significant influence of parental educational attainment on performance of pupils in English language.

Table 4: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of parental educational attainment on the performance of pupils

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	t
Educated parents	102	7.65	2.53	
Less Educated parents	98	5.55	2.53	6.17*

* Significant at .05, df = 198, Critical t-value = 1.96

Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value was 6.17. This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical t-value at .05 alpha level with 198 degree of freedom. The calculated t-value was greater than the critical t-value. It therefore implies that there is a significant influence of parental educational attainment on the performance of pupils in English Language.

Discussion of the findings

The influence of family size on pupils' performance was investigated in the first hypothesis which posits no significant influence of family size on pupils' performance in English language. The results show acceptance of the null hypothesis which implies that there is no significant influence of family size on the academic performance of pupils. One wonders why pupils from small families did not perform significantly better than their counterparts from large families. The result is in contrast with the work of Douglas (1996). He came up with a result that shows that family size significantly influences pupils' academic performance. The result for this hypothesis also contradicts the findings of Nutal (1996), who reported that academic performance could be affected positively or negatively by some variables such as birth order, child spacing and family size. The result of this study shows no such influence.

The second null hypothesis proposed no significant influence of parental socio-economic status on pupils' performance in English language. This was not supported by the findings of this study. Pupils from upper socio-economic status class performed significantly better than their counterparts from middle and lower classes. One possible factor responsible for this phenomenon is income of the parents. Parents with higher income are in a better position to provide their children with the necessary learning materials as well as enlist the services of private teachers to augment the regular school work. These could go a long way to improving their performance. This result is in

consonance with Onyejiaku (2002), who investigated the influence of family size and socio-economic status of parents, and reported that they significantly influence scholastic achievement.

The third null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of parental educational attainment on pupils' performance in English language was rejected by the findings of this study. Why did pupils from educated parents perform significantly higher than those from less educated parents? One possible explanation hinges on the motivational machinery set in motion by the educated parents. Motivation is known to be a powerful factor that influences academic performance. Hawkes (2005), in his study found a positive correlation between parental educational level and their children's attainment in English language. The finding of this study agrees with Hawkes in this regard.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of home environment on pupils' performance in English language. It is therefore recommended that:

1. Government should intensify efforts through relevant educational and health organizations to control family size by rendering family planning services to the generality of the public.
2. Award of scholarship by government should be reviewed to favour more deserving children from the low socio-economic status class, followed by those from the middle class, than the children from high socio-economic status class.
3. The Agency for Adult and Non-formal Education should intensify her literacy campaign and literacy services in order to liberate illiterate parents from the bondage of ignorance. Such parents, if educated, would not only know the importance of their children's education but would also render help to their children at home to enhance their performance.

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