SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AS CORRELATES WITH ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Article Info	Abstract
  DOI 10.5281/zenodo.17122467	This study examined socioeconomic status as correlate with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State. The study was guided by two research objectives, and two hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A correlational research design was adopted for this study. The study area was public senior secondary schools in Anambra State. The study population comprised 11,195 students, while the sample of this study comprised 527 teachers as respondents. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire structured by the researcher after an extensive literature review. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents, and 507 copies were completed and returned for analysis. The mean, standard deviation, paired sample, and independent t-test were used for data analysis. The following findings were revealed: parental academic achievement correlates with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State; parental income level correlates with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State; and there is an urgent need for government intervention to address the systemic inequities that limit the academic engagement of students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. The equitable allocation of resources must be prioritized to ensure that all students, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, have access to a quality education. Initiatives such as after-school tutoring, mentorship programs, nutritional support schemes, and parent engagement workshops can help mitigate the effects of SED.

1.1 Introduction

Education is globally accepted as the mirror of human civilization and the greatest equalizer of all people in society (Kratz, Pettinger, & Grätz, 2022). It is a human right that every human being should have access to and

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enjoy Tripp, (2010); yet, academic performance is still seen as the major fruit and harvest of the learning process. The socioeconomic background of students is a crucial aspect in determining their performance. A high socioeconomic background lays a firm foundation for better performance, which is the main reason parents put their children in school (Abenawe, 2022). The parental role in children's lives and educational performance is essential in their dynamic activities, including education, social life, sports activities, jobs, and ideas and thoughts. They possess the skills of creativity, communication, collaboration, tolerance, and critical thinking (Okafor, Obumse, & Okudo Okudo, 2025).

Moreover, parents lacking interest in their children's learning activities face difficulties troubles in achieving educational targets (Al-Matalka, 2014). Parental economic status plays a substantial role in educational activities. Children from higher economic backgrounds tend to have better educational access, quality schooling, and technology, which significantly contribute to their academic performance (Munir et al.,2023).Socioeconomic status is a broad construct representing a family's access to social and economic resources.

Empirical investigations most frequently assess socio-economic status using measures of three key variables: family income, parents' education level, and parents' occupation (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Family income is an indicator of a family's financial resources, whereas parental education levels and occupation are indicators of the parent's intellectual resources and social status, or human and social capital (Okafor, 2025). Other measures of socioeconomic status include household composition, income to poverty ratio, and home ownership status (Okafor, 2024). A recent meta-analysis of studies examining the relationship between SES and academic outcomes showed that various components of SES (e.g., family income, parental educational level, and parental occupation) have different effects on academic performance (Sirin, 2005).

1.2 Statement of the problem

A person's place in a certain group, community, or culture based on their money, occupation, and social class (also known as social stratification) is referred to as their socioeconomic status. Amutabi (2017) discusses how socioeconomic position affects the school preparation of children. According to him, the segregating nature of social class and ethnicity may actually limit the range of enriching experiences that are considered necessary to develop the readiness of children to learn. Social class, ethnicity, and housing dictate access to resources that affect enrichment or deprivation and the development of particular value systems.

Socioeconomic status significantly impacts a student's educational journey, creating disparities in access to resources, learning environments, and overall academic outcomes. Low socioeconomic status (SES) can lead to challenges such as inadequate learning resources at home, limited access to quality health care and nutrition, and increased exposure to stressors that hinder concentration and motivation. Conversely, higher SES often provides a supportive home environment, access to better educational opportunities, and greater exposure to positive role models, which contributes to improved academic performance.

1.3 Study Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to investigate socio-economic status as a correlate of academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State.

The specific objectives include the following:

1. This study aimed to examine the effect of parental academic achievement on academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State.

2. To measure the effect of parental income level on academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State.

1.4 Research questions

These research questions were raised during this study

1. To what extent does parental academic achievement correlate with academic engagement among Anambra State secondary school students?

2. How does the level of parental income correlate with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State?

1.5 Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses of this study:

Ho: Parental academic achievement does not correlate with academic engagement among Anambra State secondary school students.

Ho: The level of parental income does not correlate with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State.

REVIEW OF THE LITRATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Socio-economic status

Socioeconomic status refers to the social and economic position of individuals or families within a society, encompassing various dimensions such as income, parental education level, occupation, and access to resources and opportunities (Mistry, Benner, Biesanz, Clark, &Howes, 2010). SES is a multifaceted construct that reflects material and social advantages or disadvantages (Duncan & Magnuson, 2012).SES is the measure of an individual's social and economic position in society (Williamson, 2023).

SES includes factors such as income, parental education, occupation, and access to resources, all of which play a major role in a student's educational experience. Since undergraduate education is crucial for shaping future opportunities, understanding how SES affects academic performance among this group is important Okafor, 2024).It includes factors such as income, education,and occupation. Research has consistently shown that SES significantly impacts educational opportunities and achievement. In this article, we discuss the ways in which SES affects education and what can be done to address this issue. SES affects human functioning, including our physical and mental health. Low SES and its correlates, such as lower educational achievement, poverty, and poor health, ultimately affect our society (Williamson, 2023).

2.1.2 Student Academic Engagement

Student academic engagement is defined, at least implicitly, by how it is measured. Currently, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is one of the most popular measures. The Center for Postsecondary Research, where the NSSE was established and distributed, defines engagement as consisting of two primary concepts. The first relates to the time and effort that students invest in both inside and outside the classroom (Center for Postsecondary Research, 2016). The second, according to the Center for Postsecondary Research (2016), concentrates on the university's perspective. This standpoint includes the institutional responsibility of fostering an environment in which students can most readily engage their time and efforts.

Student e academic engagement has also been defined using a classroom-based viewpoint. In this model, college and university teachers view engagement as a function of students' motivation and active learning (Barkley, 2009). These characteristics are cyclical; that is, one is required for the other to exist. A classroom of students who are motivated to learn is encouraging for teachers; however, enthusiasm is worthless if it is not translated into learning. Conversely, if students are actively learning but are unenthusiastic or resentful, a loss of engagement occurs (Okafor, 2020).

2.2 The theoretical framework

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is a psychological model of behavior that emphasizes that social context is crucial for learning and that perception plays a major role in enhancing what is learned (Bandura, 2001; 1986). According to the idea, people can intentionally and purposefully influence their unique behavior and nature in a goal-coordinated manner (Bandura, 2001). People may have a big influence on their personal outcomes and the status of the world at large by planning ahead and practicing self-reflection and self-administrative practices.

The SCT framework is linked to the following five concepts: goal-setting, self-efficacy, result expectancies, self-regulation, and observational learning. The technique of gaining knowledge by watching models is at the center of OL. Media sources or interpersonal imitation may serve as models. Outcome expectations play a major role in this part of SCT. These results are influenced by the environment in which the observer grows. In this instance, parents are extremely important role models for their children's learning.

Parents with greater education would be more involved in their children's education and, as a result, would give them access to sufficient learning materials, which would enhance the child's academic achievement. Further, developments in SCT, such as identification, self-efficacy, and vicarious learning, postulate that learning is likely to occur when a readily recognized link exists between the observer (children) and the model and when the observer has a high degree of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy beliefs influence action through motivational cognitive and effective intervening processes, serving as an essential set of proximal determinants of human motivation effect and action.

Vicarious learning, or the process of picking up knowledge from the actions of others, is one of the main concepts of SCT. This claims that people can see other people's behaviors and subsequently mimic them. People avoid making mistakes and may execute actions more effectively if they witness others doing them successfully (Bandura, 1986). Ina similar vein, a parent's thinking determines the atmosphere in which their children grow up, and one's upbringing might impact conduct in the future. Based on the theory, children from rich families with parents who have advanced degrees and important jobs would be more motivated to work even harder to want to be like or even better than their parents. As a result, their academic performance is positively impacted, leading to outstanding performance at any level.

2.3 Empirical Review

Munir et al. (2023) analyzed how socioeconomic status (SES) affects academic performance of students. This study examines how socioeconomic background affects academic performance. This study can help explain how SES affects academic achievement and guide educational policy and actions to close achievement inequalities. A total of 300 secondary school pupils were sampled. Parental income, education, and occupation were used to calculate socioeconomic status. Standardized tests and grade point averages measured academic performance. Correlation and regression analyses were used. The regression study explored how SES predicted academic outcomes while adjusting for other factors, such as family engagement and school resources. Correlation analysis examined the relationship between SES and academic achievement. Socioeconomic position appears to affect academic performance. Higher socioeconomic students fare better academically. However, parental participation and school resources may buffer the association between SES and academic achievement. This study focused treatments for low-income students. Policymakers and educators may reduce the opportunity gap and promote air education by understanding how socioeconomic status affects academic performance.

Byiringiro and Hesbon (2025) determined the socioeconomic status of families that influences students' academic performance in mathematics classes in Burera District's public day secondary schools, examined the

academic performance that results from the socioeconomic status of families in Burera District, and assessed the relationship between the socioeconomic status of the families and students' academic performance in mathematics courses in Burera District's public day secondary schools. The study used a hybrid strategy by combining descriptive and correlational techniques. The study's population comprised 163 respondents, while 106 pupils and 10 math professors made up the sample size. Stratified sampling of the respondents was valued in the deliberate and random selection of these. Regarding the first goal, 74.5% strongly agreed and 13.4% agreed that a family's ability to pay for school supplies reflects their socioeconomic status; 64.2% strongly agreed and 12.3% agreed that a family's ability to meet their basic needs reflects their socioeconomic status; and 82.1% strongly agreed and 8.2% agreed that a family's ability to resolve conflicts reflects their socioeconomic status. Additionally, 3.8% agreed and 89.6% strongly agreed that a family's capacity to pay for education reflects their social standing. Regarding the second goal, the study's findings showed that 70.7% strongly agreed and 19.0% agreed that parents 'educational attainment influences their mathematical performance, and 63.8% strongly agreed and 17.2% agreed that parents' background—whether literate or not, wealthy or impoverished—affects their mathematical performance. Moreover, 76.7% strongly agreed and 23.3% agreed that family conflicts have an impact on their math performance, 90.5% strongly agreed and 9.5% agreed that their math performance is impacted by the teacher's ability and motivation, and 60.3% strongly agreed and 20.7 agreed that having enough resources for instruction has an impact on their math performance. Higher student collaboration based on historical principles was positively correlated with the number of students in the class (.250), with student test and exam results for the history subject (.029) and student competition results for the history topic (.093). The study discovered a high correlation between the test and exam results, creativity and invention, and problem-solving skills of the students and their capacity to pay for school supplies. Higher test and exam scores were linked to the ability to meet human fundamental needs, whereas lower test and exam scores, creativity and invention, and problem-solving skills were linked to the ability to resolve conflicts. Since the degree of linkage was 0.05, significant correlations were found. According to the report, schools should be able to offer extra help and resources to low-income pupils, such as digital access and tutoring programs. Teachers can receive training to identify the particular difficulties encountered by pupils and create plans to help them in the classroom. Parents may also be active in their children's education by offering tools and assistance.

Adebogaand Mudashir (2025) investigated the effect of socio-economic background on the performance of senior secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted. Instruments used for data collection were the Socioeconomic Background Questionnaire ($r = 0.82$) and Achievement Test ($r = 0.77$) in Economics. The participants were 300 students from 20 Local Government Area of Ogun State (150 students per Local Government Area). The result revealed that students from high socioeconomic backgrounds performed better in economics than their counterparts from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, parental attitude influenced the academic performance of students of Economics in senior secondary schools in Ogun State. From the findings, it became clear that if illiteracy is eradicated in our society, people would realize the importance of

Mukanziza and Singirankabo (2024) investigated the relationship between socio-economic status and student performance in Rwanda's nine- and twelve-year basic education programs. A sample of 91 respondents was selected from the 921 students who made up the targeted group. The necessary data were gathered via interviews and questionnaires. The findings showed that although 9.4% of respondents disagreed with and 5.8% strongly disagreed with the statement, 47% strongly agreed and 37.6% agreed that having a high socioeconomic position aids students in performing well in school.

Biitikoroand Tukur (2025) determined whether parents' socioeconomic background leads to significant differences in students' academic performance in the secondary schools of Kitswamba and Rugendabara-Kikongo town councils,Kasese District. The objectives of this study were to: examine parental education, occupation, and family income influences academic performance. Social Darwinism and social conflict theories guided this study. The study adopted a cross-sectional design with 250 students and 5 head teachers. Data were collected using a questionnaire and an interview guide. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and analysis of variance. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. Table 5 suggests that the mean scores for those with tertiary education (mean = 2.15) were the highest, whereas those with non-formal education (mean= 1.42) had the lowest. The observed F = 3.847 was significant (p = 0.010, p< 0.05).Therefore, the effect of parental educational level leads to significant differences. The mean scores for those in government civil service (mean = 2.14) were the highest, followed by those in nongovernmental service (mean = 2.13), and commercial and peasant farmers had the same mean (mean = 2.11). However, the observed F = 0.124 was low with the level of significance (p = 0.946, p > 0.05). Therefore, the hypothesis that parental occupation leads to significant differences was rejected. The results for guardians according to income showed that the income of the fathers has a more significant influence than that of the mothers. This is because the F=statistic (F = 3.926) for males was slightly higher (F = 3.850) than that of females (p = 0.021) than that of females (p = 0.023). Therefore, the educational level of parents is imperative for students' academic performance. The study recommends that the Ugandan government and schools should promote the education of parents in the country, promote children's education by emphasizing the occupation of their parents, and promote the income of parents to support the education of children.

Bakht and Qurrat-ul-Ain(2025)examined the effect of parental economic status on secondary-level students' academic achievement. The applied research design was experimental and quantitative. From the Punjab province, 500 secondary-level students from the 10th class were selected as the population, while 68 students were drawn as a sample. The experimental, comparison, and control groups were formed by flipping the coin to finalize which group would be the experimental, comparison, and control groups. A simple random sampling technique was applied, and pre- and post-standardized achievement tests were based on mixed items for each lesson developed by the researcher for data collection. The researcher developed 13 lesson plans from the English textbook of the 10th class to teach the students, and they were divided into four portions to meet the course schedule. Only the experimental group was taught, and the researcher performed all the activities for 13 weeks to conduct the experiment and prepare learning activities in depth. The class teacher taught the comparison and control groups earlier. The academic performance progress of the students was checked, and feedback was provided. Pre- and post-standardized achievement tests were conducted, collected, and evaluated under the supervision of the researcher. The inferential statistics, i.e., one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), was applied to analyze the significant differences among the students' academic achievements regarding the thirteen lessons taught. Statistically significant differences in students' academic achievements were found in 12 out of 13 lessons. Therefore, it is recommended that parents be involved in school activities, that regular information be forwarded to them, and that equal resources be allocated for all students with innovative economic backgrounds.

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive research design is a research method used to determine the characteristics of a population or particular phenomenon.

3.2 Study population

The study population consisted of 11,195 students in 267 public secondary schools in Anambra State. Sources: PPSSC, Awka 2025.

3.3 Sample preparation and sampling technique

The sample size for the study was 527 SS3 students in Anambra State.

3.4 Data collection method

The instrument was administered through the direct delivery method. Using this method, 527 copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher with the help of three research assistants who were briefed on the modalities for administering and retrieving copies of the questionnaire. The on-the-spot delivery method was adopted. A period of 3 weeks was used for instrument administration and retrieval.

3.5 Data Analysis Method

Correlation analysis was used to answer the following research questions: An independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. This statistical tool was chosen because it was used to determine if the samples were different from each other.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

A total of 527 participants were used as the study population, while 507 were collected and found valid for the analysis. A summary and discussion of the major findings are presented at the end of the chapter. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1

1.   To what extent does parental academic achievement correlate with academic engagement among Anambra State secondary school students?

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation between parental academic achievement and engagement

Variables	N	r	P
PAA	507	.524**	0.000
AEG	507		

**. Correlation is significant at 0.05Level (2-tailed).

The results are presented in a matrix such that, as shown in Table 1, the correlations are replicated. Nevertheless, the table presents the Pearson correlation coefficient, its significance value, and the calculation's sample size.

The result of the Pearson correlation analysis in Table 1 between PAA and AEG in junior secondary schools in Anambra State showed a strong correlation between them. The p value of 0.000 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance, whereas the r value of .52 shows a strong correlation between the dependent and independent variables (r =.52, p =.000). This finding also implies that an increase in parental academic achievement increases the academic engagement of secondary school students in Anambra State.

Research Question Two:

How does parental income level correlate with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State?

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation of the relationship between parental income level and academic engagement

Variables	N	r	P
PIL	507	.625**	0.000
AEG	507		

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). .

Table 2 is a Pearson product moment correlation analysis aimed at finding the extent of parent income levels correlated with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State. The results revealed that the calculated value of correlations is 0.625%, while the (p) value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. This implies that parent income levels are correlated with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State. Furthermore, an increase in parent income levels correlates with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State.

4.2 Hypothesis testing

Four different null hypotheses that guided this study were stated. In the subsequent sections, all hypotheses were tested as follows:

4.2.1 Hypothesis One: Ho: parental academic achievement does not correlate with academic engagement among Anambra State secondary school students.

Variables	N	coff	a level	DF	t-test	P	decision
PAA	507	0.47	0.05	513	25.786	0.000	significant
AEG	507	0.16	0.05		3.075	0.02	

F=9.456, r^2=.51, adjusted r^2 = .51, dw = 1.6

Sources: SPSS output

Table 6 shows the results of the simple regression analysis on the relationship between parental academic achievement and engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State. The results indicate that the level of parental academic achievement is significantly correlated with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State (critical t = 3.075, p = 0.02).The F-test of 9.456 shows the overall statistical significance of the model, implying that the dependent variable affects the independent variables in the model. r^2 (.51) measures the goodness of fit of the models, from the d results; it shows a high goodness of fit in the above model. The Durbin–Watson test shows no problem of autocorrelation, which further posits that the proposed model can be used for future prediction. T-test =3.075 (0.02), which measures the individual statistical significance of the variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis is accepted, which states that parental academic achievement correlates with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State.

4.2.2 Hypothesis Two: Ho: The parental income level does not correlate with academic engagement among Anambra State secondary school students.

Variables	N	coff	a level	DF	t-test	p	decision
PIL	507	0.476	0.05	513	4.7484	0.000	significant
AEG	507	0.559	0.05		9.1860	0.000	

Sources: SPSS output

Table 4.2.1 shows the results of the simple regression analysis. The results revealed that the t-value of the parental income level is 9.1860 and the probability value is 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. This shows that parental income level is significantly correlated with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State.

The F-test (14.902), which checks whether the overall model is statistically significant in predicting the relationship between the models's dependent and independent variables, was used. The r2 of (.61%) shows the overall goodness of fit of the model, further implying that 61% of the dependent variables predict changes in independent variables, leaving the remaining 39% for the variables outside the model. The Durbin–Watson

statistic shows that our model can be used for future prediction. However, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative is accepted, which states that parental income level correlates with academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The investigation into the correlation between socio-economic status (SES) and academic engagement among secondary school students in Anambra State provides critical insights into the interplay between students' socio-economic background and their participation in academic activities. The data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observational techniques from a representative sample of secondary school students in various parts of Anambra State reveal a consistent trend: students from higher SES backgrounds tend to exhibit higher levels of academic engagement. These students often benefit from access to educational resources, such as private tutoring, internet connectivity, textbooks, and conducive home learning environments. They are also more likely to receive academic motivation and support from their parents or guardians who are educated and economically empowered. These findings align with the existing literature and reinforce the understanding that economic and social capital are vital assets that contribute to the educational outcomes of students.

Conversely, students from low SES backgrounds frequently face multiple challenges that impede academic engagement. These challenges range from financial constraints and household responsibilities to poor nutrition, lack of access to educational materials, and limited parental involvement. In rural and semi-urban areas of Anambra State, these students are more likely to engage in labor or trade to support their families, often at the expense of academic focus. Moreover, schools serving lower SES communities tend to be under-resourced, lacking adequate infrastructure, qualified teachers, and learning aids. This intensifies the cycle of educational disadvantage and limits the ability of students to actively and consistently participate in school activities.

In conclusion, the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic engagement is significant and multifaceted. SES remains a strong predictor of the level of academic involvement among secondary school students in Anambra State. However, the existence of mediating factors means that it is possible to counteract the negative effects of low SES and promote academic success for all learners with well-planned, inclusive, and strategic interventions. Addressing the socioeconomic inequalities that underpin educational outcomes requires a collaborative effort involving the government, schools, families, and the wider community. Ultimately, the goal should be to create a more equitable educational landscape where every student, regardless of socioeconomic background, is afforded the opportunity to fully engage in academic pursuits and achieve their full potential. Investing in such efforts not only promotes educational justice but also contributes to the broader socioeconomic development of Anambra State and Nigeria as a whole.

Recommendation

i.	There is an urgent need for government intervention to address the systemic inequities that limit the academic engagement of students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

ii.	The equitable allocation of resources must be prioritized to ensure that all students, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, have access to a quality education.

iii.	Initiatives such as after-school tutoring, mentorship programs, nutritional support schemes, and parent engagement workshops can help mitigate the effects of SED.

iv.	Religious institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector actors can play a vital role in supplementing government efforts, especially in regions where public resources are constrained.

v.	Schools must adopt inclusive teaching practices that recognize and address the diverse needs of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

vi.   Teachers should be trained to identify early signs of disengagement and implement differentiated instruction that caters to varying learning styles and needs.

vii.   This study also recommends that policymakers and education stakeholders in Anambra State strengthen data-driven decision-making by regularly collecting and analyzing data on students' socioeconomic status and academic engagement.

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