



SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND, GENDER AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS ENROLMENT IN AWKA METROPOLIS OF ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract: *This study investigated the influence of socioeconomic background on enrollment pattern of secondary school students in Awka metropolis of Anambra state. The study examined how students' background, parents' cultural inclination, social status and gender influence students' enrolment into secondary schools in the metropolis. The study adopted the survey research design with a population that consisted of all parents of students in secondary schools in Awka metropolis. Multi-stage sampling was adopted to select sample. Total enumeration was used to select two Local Government Areas (LGA)s in the Metropolis while random sampling technique was adopted to select 870 participants for the study. Socio-Economic Status Scale (SESC, $r=0.72$) was used to collect data and Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyse data at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed a significant relationship between parents' socio-economic background and students' enrolment ($r = 0.56$; $p < 0.05$). Students' cultural background correlated positively with students' pattern of enrolment ($r = 0.63$; $p < 0.05$) and students' gender have significant positive relationship with students pattern of enrolment ($r = 0.813$; $p < 0.05$). Based on the result, inference was made that students' socio-economic background is a strong determinant of pattern of students' enrolment in the study area. It was recommended that the implementation of basic education policy should take into consideration social, economic and cultural elements of the society in question.*

Keywords: *Socio-economic Background, Pattern of Enrolment, Gender*

Introduction

Education is defined as the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. Mahuta (2007) views formal education as the type of education that is taught in schools which is planned and organized with the aim and goals that are intended to be achieved. In most countries, education is a right and is compulsory up to a certain age. Article 13 of the United Nations' 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes a Universal right to education. In many developing countries, education has been considered to be the

bedrock of economic growth and development. In most contemporary thinking, to survive in the ever changing socio-economic world, quality of education as the key variable has necessitated educational reforms in so many countries. Nigeria is one of the countries that have adopted education as an instrument '*par excellence*' for national development (FRN, 2004) with demands for greater students' enrolment and gender equity.

Education in Nigeria is overseen by the ministry of education. Local authorities take responsibility for implementing policy for state controlled public education and state schools at a regional levels. The levels of

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education are divided into, Primary, Secondary and tertiary education. For the individual, secondary education is an important determinant of literacy, personal career, economic success and for the society it forms the basis of society's economic performance. Despite the proposition by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) through the Universal Basic Education Programmes (UBE) which is yet to be fully achieved, acquiring education is still a great hurdle for less privileged families, as low socio-economic background children stand the chance of non-enrolment or dropping out of school due to financial problems. Determinant indices of socio-economic background are; occupation, income, and education. Parental income is believed to dictate the ability of the parent to pay school fees and to meet other commitments. Fasasi (2003) stated that financially reformed parents will have all means and willingness to provide students with all necessary aid or materials essential in his/her educational pursuit.

However, the structure of income or earnings is determined by occupation. Parents with formal education see their wards' education as a priority rather than being optional unlike their illiterate counterpart, and thus give adequate support, not only in finance but also in encouraging, providing stimulating environment for study and assisting in study and homework among others. In most developing countries gender differentials in education appear to be more pronounced both in terms of participation, internal efficiency and in cognitive performance with girls being the most affected.

Gender refers to the social meanings associated with being a male or a female, including the construction of identities, expectations, behaviours and power relationships that derive from social interactions (Ambe-Uva, Iwuchukwu & Jibrin 2008). The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is the Goal 3 of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in which the United Nations (UN) members have pledged to meet by the year 2015. Recent studies that attempted to

evaluate the progress towards the MDGs pointed out the dismal progress made in bridging the gender divide in Nigeria (Ambe-Uva, Iwuchukwu&Jibrin, 2008).

Gross enrollment ratio is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. Secondary school enrollment (% Gross) in Nigeria was measured at 43:84 in 2010 (UNESCO). The rates vary based on social-economic background, with lower enrollment rates for lower socio-economic background students and vice-versa. In the recent years after the 2010 measures, the indices appear worsening due to global economic recessions, Nigeria's often failing economy due to oil cyclical recessions and in recent times the COVID-19 pandemic effect which is still with us.

Immediate attention needs to be paid to the socio-economic background and enrollment of female students at secondary school level. This study focused on the impact of socioeconomic background on enrollment of female students at secondary school level in the Awka Metropolis of Anambra state, Nigeria. Despite the fact that education policies provide equal opportunities for men and women in acquiring education irrespective of social status, religious and ethnic background, the reality is quite bitter and needs a reasonable reconsideration in terms of research and evaluation of the factors that have direct impact on the education and enrollment of the girl child. Anambra is a core Southeast state in Nigeria reputed with indigenous trading, highly affected with the spoils of the Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970. They are a set of highly entrepreneurial people who are involved in trade from an early age. The study will find out the effect of gender and enrolment on the people to enable policy reforms

Statement of the Problem

Education has come to stay as an important and priceless asset in Nigeria. Absence of education or certificate makes an individual's relevance in the society threatened. Education plays a major role in enabling individuals to



gain required skills for the acquisition of jobs as well as specific qualities that stratify people with high socioeconomic status from low socio-economic status occupations. Education determines how bright the future of a child is to a large extent. However, family socio-economic background, and biological factors stand between children and their secondary school enrolment.

Secondary schools in Awka metropolis of Anambra state is the area under study, having some of its towns mainly occupied by peasant farmers who socio-economic stratum could be perceived to be low. These people are mostly subsistent farmers, who also engage in other menial jobs like palm wine tapping for money to cater for family's needs. There are also those who have high socio-economic status involved in trading, high flying white collar jobs among others. It is difficult to find out which of these socio-economic classes determine public school enrolment in Anambra state. In some cases, it is not unusual for some of these parents to leave their children out of their daily struggle for survival as the children also have their part to play in the survival of the families by giving their parents helping hands either by helping the father with farm work or helping the mother through hawking.

Children from poor families hardly get enrolled in secondary school solely because educational expenses cannot be borne by their parents and often early marriage is often sought as a way out to alleviate the family's suffering. It is not out of place to find out that even when such children manage to get enrolled in schools, they lack necessary educational support in form of educational materials and school uniforms. In spite of the foregoing, cultural factors seem to play significant roles in determining enrolment of girl's in secondary schools in Awka Metropolis of Anambra state. This study intends to find out the contribution of these factors to girls enrolment in secondary schools in Anambra state, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and students enrollment pattern in secondary schools in Awka Metropolis of Anambra State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between Igbo culture and students enrollment pattern in Awka Metropolis of Anambra State, Nigeria.

H₀₃: Gender difference will not significantly affect students enrolment pattern in Awka metropolis of Anambra State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The research design employed for this study is the descriptive survey research design that is correlational. The population of the study includes all parents of primary and secondary school students in Awka North and South Local Government Areas (LGA)s of Anambra state that constitute Awka metropolis. The multi-stage sampling procedure is adopted to select respondents for the study. All the Local Government Areas (LGA)s in Awka metropolis were purposively selected with 870 parents (of students) randomly selected for the study. **Students' Socio-Economic Scale (SSES)** was developed for data collection, trial-tested and validated among parents of students in Ibadan, Oyo State that yielded a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of $r=0.72$ and the data collected was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypotheses 1

There is no significant relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and students enrollment pattern in secondary schools in Awka Metropolis of Anambra State, Nigeria



Table 1: Relationship between Students’ Parents Socio-economic Background and Pattern of Enrolment

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig.	p	Remark
parents’ socio-economic status	870	21.3651	0.456	0.556	0.000	0.05	Significant
Pattern of Students’ Enrolment	870	23.4214	0.803				

Table 1 revealed that there was significant relationship between parents’ socioeconomic status and the enrollment patterns of students in secondary school ($r = 0.556$; 0.000 ; $p < 0.05$). This showed that parents’ socioeconomic status has significant relationship with enrollment patterns of students in secondary schools in Anambra State (Awka Metropolis). Therefore the null hypothesis is not accepted.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between Igbo culture and students enrollment pattern in Awka Metropolis of Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Influence of Parents’ Culture on Pattern of Students’ Enrolment

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig.	P-value	Remark
Parents’ Culture	870	17.31924	2.73129	0.636	0.001	0.05	Significant
Pattern of Students’ Enrolment	870	21.83041	2.80352				

Table 2 revealed that there was significant relationship between Igbo Culture and the enrollment pattern of students in secondary schools in Awka Metropolis of Anambra state ($r = 0.636$; 0.001 ; $p > 0.05$). This showed that Igbo Culture has significant relationship with the enrollment pattern of students in secondary schools in Awka Metropolis of Anambra state. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3

Gender difference will not significantly affect students enrolment pattern in Awka metropolis of Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Relationship between Students’ Gender and Pattern of Students’ Enrolment

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig.	p-value	Remark
Gender	870	22.44552	3.53723	0.813	0.061	0.05	Significant
patterns of Students’ Enrollment	870	26.16176	3.60851				

Table 3 revealed that there was significant relationship between gender and enrollment pattern of students in secondary schools in Awka Metropolis of Anambra state ($r = 0.813$; $p < 0.05$). This showed that gender has significant relationship with the enrollment pattern of

students in secondary schools in Awka Metropolis of Anambra state. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 revealed that there was significant relationship between parents’ socioeconomic status and enrollment



pattern of students in secondary schools in Awka metropolis of Anambra state ($r = 0.556$; 0.000 ; $p > 0.05$). This showed that parents' socioeconomic status has significant relationship with enrollment pattern of students in secondary schools in Awka metropolis of Anambra state. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted. This result is in line with UNESCO (2008) reports that there is a growing educational disparity in children's school enrollment in the country that is mainly geographic, socioeconomic, and gendered in nature – working to the disadvantage of children, who have never attended school in the country are children from the poorest households.

The study also investigated whether parents' culture contribute to the enrollment pattern of students in secondary schools in Awka metropolis of Anambra state. The result revealed that there was significant relationship between Igbo culture and enrollment pattern of students in secondary schools in Awka metropolis of Anambra state ($r = 0.636$; 0.001 ; $p > 0.05$). This showed that there is significant relationship between Igbo Culture and enrollment pattern of students in secondary schools in Awka metropolis of Anambra state. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The implication is that culture plays an important role in children enrollment in schools.

The study also found that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they train their female children the way they train their male children. This result contradicted the works of Mohammed (2004) that the number of girls attending schools in some Northern states (Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara) of Nigeria is still abysmally low due to age-long religious and cultural beliefs, while the male child has a choice to attend; his female counterpart is strictly discouraged from obtaining basic western education. Finally the test result revealed that there was significant relationship between gender and enrollment pattern of students in secondary schools in Awka metropolis of Anambra state ($r = 0.813$; 0.061 ; $p > 0.05$). This showed that gender has significant

relationship with enrollment pattern of students in secondary schools in Awka metropolis of Anambra state.

Conclusion

The study concludes that all variables (socioeconomic background, culture and gender) have significant impact on enrollment pattern of students in secondary schools in Awka metropolis of Anambra state, Nigeria. However enrollment in the state is mainly socioeconomic, cultural and gendered in nature – working to the disadvantage of children, especially those from the poorest households who find it difficult to cope academically or who have never attended school, thereby affecting student's enrollment rate in the state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that parents should be economically empowered so that they can meet the economic as well as educational needs of their children/wards. To this end, school fees should be free to at all levels (lower and upper basics) of secondary education; free learning materials should be given to students which will help to reduce the direct and indirect costs of secondary education. From the result of the study recommendation was also made that Government should formulate policies that would help to bridge the gap between the enrollments of children from high and low socio-economic classes. Parents should always try to encourage their children/ wards in all that they do and give them moral support so that the children would be emotionally stable and have confidence in all that they do, whether at school or at home.

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