



## GENDER AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AS CORRELATES OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT BEHAVIOUR OF ADOLESCENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA.

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### ABSTRACT



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Researchers and educationists in Nigeria have of recent devoted much effort in understanding personal factors that are at play in the adolescent academic achievement behaviour. This study focused on gender and socio-economic status as correlates of adolescents' academic achievement behaviour in Senior Secondary Schools in Enugu State. The researchers adopted Ex-post facto design to study the phenomena. Two major hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data analysis was done using the Pearson-Moment correlation co-efficient statistic. The population of the study was 2401 from which a sample of 109 adolescents was drawn from six senior secondary schools in Enugu State. The age ranged between 13-21 with a mean age of 18- + years. The result showed a significant negative relationship between gender and academic achievement behavior, and positive significant relationship between socio economic status and academic achievement behaviour. Recommendations were made as to how the findings of the study could be explored to enhance adolescent learning at secondary level in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Gender, Economic Status, Achievement Behaviour, Adolescents, Opportunities.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

A lot of attention (Okenyi & Enyi 2015, Okenyi & Ezeruigbo 2015, Ojone et al, 2015) has been paid recently to Gender, socio-economic status and other related issues as contributors to the understanding of the academic achievement behavior of secondary school adolescents in Nigeria. This is perhaps because these factors are perceived to contribute to the development of the often misconceived adolescents' behavioural problems.(Okenyi & Enyi 2015). The state of the home environment or family structure has been shown to have important significance on the adolescents academic achievement behaviour. It must be emphasized that academic achievement of adolescents especially in the secondary school level is not only a pointer to the effectiveness or otherwise of any educational institution but remains also a major determinant of the level of trust and confidence parents, students and in fact the general public place on a particular institution. Enyi (2011) has pointed out that the medium through which the attainment of individual's and, indeed the nation's educational goals can be achieved is through learning. Learning outcomes or achievement behaviour have become a phenomenon of interest to all and this accounts for the reason why scholars have been working hard to unravel factors that facilitate development of good academic achievement behavior (Aremu 2009). Academic achievement behaviour has been variedly referred to in literature as an important part of an adolescent's development that enhances an adolescent learning. The adolescent who has a good academic achievement behaviour is often perceived to be effective and to develop a sense of mastery over his/her environment. The factor of academic achievement behaviour of learners excites a lot of interest among scholars, parents, policy-makers and planners. Enyi (2011) opined that a major goal of the school is to work towards attainment of academic excellence of adolescent students. According to him, though the school may have other functional objectives; emphasis is always placed on the achievement of sound scholarship and mastery of the subject area.

Mcclelland(2005), a highly acclaimed motivational researcher, maintains that academic achievement behaviour is an interaction behaviour between sensational variables and individual subject's motivation to achieve. According to him, two types of motives are directly involved in the prediction of achievement behavior. These are implicit and explicit motives. Implicit motives are spontaneous impulses to act and to demonstrate. It is also known as task performance and is aroused through incentive inherent in the task. Explicit motives on the other hand are expressed through deliberative choices and more often stimulated by extrinsic reasons. Adolescents with strong implicit need to achieve goal set high internal personal standards whereas others tend to adhere to the societal norms. These two motives often work together to determine the achievement behaviour of adolescent in direction and passion (Burgher, 2006). Scholars maintain that achievement behaviour is relatively stable across situations and across context and time. It not only determines the achievement capacity and level of adolescents but also that of societies as well (Okenyi & Ezeruigbo 2015). The fact that these adolescents and families have invested a great deal (financially and otherwise) should make them strongly motivated to achieve academic success. This in turn brings such achievers commendable social approval. Carro (2009) found that the relationship between family socioeconomic status and academic achievement behaviour is correlative. At the outset of an activity, students differ in learning as a function of their prior experiences, personal qualities and social support. The latter includes the extent that parents and teachers encourage the adolescents to learn, facilitate their access to resources necessary for learning, and teach them strategies that enhance skill acquisition, mastery and refinement. Parents' academic aspirations for their adolescents influence the adolescents' academic achievement behaviour both directly and indirectly (Bandura, Caprara, & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Educators therefore expend tremendous efforts on the study of the personal factors affecting academic achievement behaviour, especially in the sciences and social sciences. Notable among these variables are the phenomena of socio-economic status and gender or sex equity in education.

Today in Nigeria, gender issues abound in all spheres of the society. The educational conditions of the girl-child vis-à-vis the boy-child constitute an important gender issue. In our cultural setting, the cultural and traditional responsibilities of men and women are different; hence the influences in the upbringing of the female child and male child. As Bisong (2006) observes “those who operate a curriculum meant to foster integration of courses for girls and boys are likely to unconsciously reflect the cultural bias”. In addition to the cultural norms, girls and women are regarded as frail and needing protection because of their supposedly lower physical strength and the natural processes they are subjected to. Gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of women and men that are created in families, societies and cultures (Enyi 2015). The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and behaviours of both women and men. These roles and expectations are learned. They can change over time and they vary within and between cultures. Gender involves the psychological and socio-cultural dimensions of being male or female. A gender role is a set of expectations, the prescriptions how females or males should think, act and feel. The concept of gender-role classification involves a personality-trait-like categorization of a person (SantRock, 2005).

However, it is important to think of personality in terms of traits and contexts rather than the personality traits alone. The importance of considering gender in context is nowhere more apparent than when examining what is culturally prescribed behaviour for females and males in different countries around the world (Klein 2004). On the social roles view, women have less power and status than men and have control over fewer resources. The social cognitive theory of gender emphasizes that adolescents’ gender development is influenced by their observation and imitation of others gender behaviour, as well as by reward and punishments of gender-appropriate and gender inappropriate behaviour. Parents and siblings influence adolescents’ gender roles. Peers are especially adept at rewarding gender appropriate academic behaviour. Gender has significant influence on academic achievement of secondary school adolescent students. Tautnar (2004) showed that males out performed females in Mathematics and English.

Trusty (2010) showed that there is a significant difference between academic achievement behaviour of adolescents in rural and urban secondary schools. He maintained that the differences are due to the differing exposures and the rate of motivational activities provided for the rural and urban adolescent students. Development of intrinsic motivation in adolescent students is important because it may set patterns that influence later academic achievement. Intrinsic motivation may be a key factor both in determining academic achievement behaviour in gender and in maintaining a healthy self-regard (SantRock, 2005). Academic achievement behaviour is directly affected by perceived competence, gender, and school level. According to Nicholls (2004) the distinguishing feature of achievement behaviour is its goal of competence or “perception of competence” that can be defined in several different ways and perceived from seemingly contingent variables, one of which is socio-economic factor.

A child’s family socio-economic background may impact the child’s self concept, academic achievement behaviour and prestige within a community. In Nigerian public sector, the Minimum Wage Bill is the platform on which the socio-economic architecture is built. It forms the basis for categorizing people into high, middle or low socio-economic status. An adolescent student whose parents earn between N18,000, - N50,000 per month is referred to as being of low-socio-economic background. While those whose parents earn N200,000 and above per month belong to the high socio-economic background. For the purpose of this study socio economic background of adolescent students are classified based on parental income, occupation and education. These were adhered in the construction of the instruments for data collection in this study. According to Ovute (2009), a family socio-economic background includes family income, standard of house occupied or rented, family size, parental education and level of family stability among other factors.

The issue of socio-economic background and its relationship to the adolescents’ achievement behaviour can also be derived specifically from the level of parental education and occupation. Literature on academic achievement behaviour seems to show that parents’ level of education is important in predicting

adolescents' academic achievement behaviour (Brooks-Gunn 2004). Father's occupation; social status and life style have considerable influence on the level of difficulty or otherwise with which adolescent students can gain recognition in the school in particular and the society at large. The understanding to a large extent is that parents' social status may determine the influence of home in the adolescent up-bringing and by extension social acceptability. According to Ovute (2009) academic achievement behaviour is extremely essential at the upper socio-economic level and relatively less essential at the lower level. Okenyi & Enyi (20015) pointed out that children or adolescent students from upper and middle socio- economic background achieve academically higher than adolescent students of low socio-economic background and this according to them is due to inequality in the access to resources among the rich, middle and poor children. They observed that the fathers of adolescents who are high achievers belong more to the higher socio-economic background, that is, those with a high ranking occupation, better education and reasonable income than the fathers of the low achievers. Ferguson (2005) explained that progress in school is perceived to be easier for the adolescents of the upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds due to the support they get from home, and that the lower class adolescents are academically handicapped in school due to poor environmental stimulations.

In this study, the researchers examined how the two factors: gender and socio-economic factors interplay in influencing the academic achievement behavior of the respondents in the study.

## 2.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to determine:-

- (a) The extent of relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement behavior of adolescent students in secondary schools in Enugu State of Nigeria.
- (b) The extent of relationship between gender and academic achievement behaviour of adolescent students in secondary schools in Enugu State of Nigeria.

## 2.1 AREA OF THE STUDY

This study is limited only to all adolescent students in secondary schools in Enugu State of Nigeria. Enugu state is located at the south-eastern part of Nigeria. The city of Enugu is 595 Km from Abuja, and 526Km from Lagos. It is made up of 17 local government areas, 119 secondary schools spread out in 6 Educational zones of the state.

## 2.2 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- (a) There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement behavior of adolescent students in secondary schools in Enugu State.
- (c) There is no significant relationship between gender and academic achievement behaviour of adolescent students in secondary schools in Enugu State.

## 3.0 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The research design adopted for the study is descriptive using researchers' designed questionnaire. The study is Ex-post-facto approach. According to Nworgu (2005) Ex-post-facto design involves a study in which the phenomenon has taken place and cannot be manipulated. It studies relationships and not causation and affect. This design is considered suitable because students' socio-economic backgrounds and gender as variables are already in existence before the contemplation of the study.

### 3.1 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population consists of all the (17) seventeen secondary schools in one zone out of the six educational zones in Enugu state. Total population in the zone was 2401 adolescent students. The researchers used stratified random sampling to select (3) three secondary schools consisting of two hundred and ninety-seven (297), of which one hundred and nine (109) adolescent students were purposefully drawn.

### 3.2 INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

The researchers designed a demographic data form, containing information about the participants. The form contained information such as name of schools, gender, age total number of family members,

structure of the family, parental type (double or single parenting) parents' highest qualification, occupation, their status, and level of income, type of house, number of rooms or flat occupied by parents etc. the participant marked (v) indicating their agreement in front of the box provided for each statement. The number of marks (v) was later counted and added together. Participants mean scores and standard deviation were calculated to determine their socio-economic classes.

The second instrument used was the academic achievement behavior questionnaire. The construction of Achievement Behaviour questionnaire was based on the operational definition put forward by the researchers. Achievement behaviour is defined to consist of the following: the ability to accomplish academic task, ability to persist on academic task, ability to show scholastic competence on academic task, ability to put more effort on academic task, and ability for a choice of academic task, and achievement goal for academic task.

The questionnaire has 30 items. It covers all the major aspects of Achievement Behaviour as defined above. The response was based on a four (4) point scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree, in line with Likert summated rating. The rating range consisted of 4 point for Strongly Agree, 3 point for Agree, 2 point for Disagree, and 1 point for strongly disagree. Positive items were given the rating of 4 to 0 and negative items were given the rating of 0 to 4 respectively.

### 3.3 VALIDITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

The researcher submitted both instruments to experts in Measurement and Evaluation (2) and Educational Psychology (2) to look at the face evidences of validity.

### 3.4 RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

The researchers subjected the two instruments to finding the internal consistency, using the Cronbach Alpha. The results revealed 0.86 for academic achievement behaviour and coefficient of reliability using Pearson-Product Moment Correlation and administrations of two (2) sets of the socio-economic status instrument and the result 0.84 was obtained as co-efficient of reliability.

### 3.5 Method of Data collection

The researchers visited the secondary schools selected for the study with consultation and assistance from the respective school principals and the respective school counselors who acted as assistants to the researchers. The instruments were administered on the participants directly collected on the same day.

### 4.0 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data resulting from scoring of the two instruments were subjected to Pearson- Product Moment (r) Correlation Coefficient which permitted the testing of the hypotheses earlier raised for the study using the (r).

### 4.1 RESULTS

The results are presented under the tables below.

**Table 1**

*Hypothesis 1* There is no significant relationship between the students' socio-economic status and academic achievement behaviour .

	Socio-economic status	Achievement behaviour
Socio Economic status = Pearson	1	0.084
Correlation		
Sig. (2 tailed test)		.394
N	109	109.
Achievement = Pearson	0.394	
Behaviour correlation		
Sig. (2 tailed test)	0.394	
N	109	109.

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed test)

**Table 2**

**Hypothesis 2** There is no significant relationship between gender and students' academic achievement behaviour .

	Gender	Achievement behaviour
Gender = Pearson		-306.
Correlation	1	
Sig. (2 tailed test).		.033
N	109	109
Achievement Pearson	-306	1
Behaviour correlation		
Sig (2 tailed test)	.033	
N	109	

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed test)

## 5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Hypothesis 1 which examined the relationship between the respondents' socio-economic status and academic achievement behavior showed that there is significant relationship between participants' socio-economic status and adolescents academic achievement behaviour ( $r = 0.084$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ): This result tends to indicate that the home or family structure has a great influence on the adolescent students' psychological emotional, social and economic state (Okenyi & Enyi 2015; Agbo 2010).

Parents have a profound influence on whether a home provides intellectual stimulation, physical and psychological safety, an appropriate degree of structure and supportive relationships. Children with more opportunities at home to build academic skills tend to be better (Ferguson; 2005). The families, schools, and neighbourhoods of adolescents have differing socio-economic characteristics. Schools in low socio-economic status areas are more likely to have a higher percentage of adolescent students with lower achievement behaviour in test scores. These schools often have fewer resources than schools in higher socioeconomic status neighbourhood. They are also more likely to have young teachers with less experience than those in schools in higher socio-economic status.

There were also indications of socio-economic differences in the way that parents think about education. Middle and upper income parents more often thought of education as something that should be mutually encouraged by teachers and parents. By contrast, low income parents are more likely to view education as exclusively teacher's job. Thus, increased school family linkages can benefit adolescents' academic achievement behaviour from low income families (Hoff. Haurson and Tardif, 2004).

The second hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between gender and students academic achievement behaviour shows ( $r = -306$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). the negative significant relationship indicated that the male and female participants achieved differently. This finding is in line with Enyi & Okenyi (2013) that has argued that gender differences in social, personality and academic variables may actually be a function of gender orientation-the stereotypic beliefs about gender that students hold-rather than of gender. Likewise, gender-inequality in education has been addressed. Okenyi and Enyi (2015) studies have shown an all



time low participation of wouneu in education. Differences in scholastic achievement behaviour of male and female are generally attributed to biological causes and cultural stereotype (Klein, 2004).

The importance of considering gender in context is nowhere more apparent than when examining what is culturally prescribed behaviour for males and females in different countries around the world (Bisong 2006). While the social cognitive theory of gender emphasizes that adolescents' gender development is influenced by their observation and imitation of others' gender behavior, parents and siblings are perceived to influence adolescents' gender roles to a large extent. Peers are especially adept at rewarding gender appropriate behaviour in our societies.

It must be noted that sometimes measures of achievement behaviour in schools may reflect many factors besides cognitive ability, for example some test scores may reflect stereotype threat. Performance in school may in part attempt to conform to gender roles or differences in motivation, self-regulation or other socio-motivational characteristics (Santrock 2005). Campbell (1999) assert that sex is not a good predictor of academic skills.. They posit that there is the tendency for people to generalize from the average "girls or the average" boys to individuals. With them, averages can be very deceiving sometimes.

Agbo (2010) believed that all adolescent students, irrespective of sex can perform equally in any given task. He supported his claim by asserting that when students have opportunities to interact among themselves the teacher and the materials, knowledge and skills are acquired and learning is real for both sexes.

### 5.1 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The derivable conclusion from the present study is that: Gender does not significantly correlate with achievement behaviour of schooling adolescents in schools in Enugu State. The level of socio-economic status of the adolscents' parents does. The implication to secondary schools in Nigeria is that school curriculum planners should do more to make school curricular more free of gender bias..

The recommendation to researchers in this area is that more studies should be done on the correlation existing between and within such psychological constructs as self concepts, ego identity, academic self efficacy and achievement behaviour of schooling adolescents

The educational condition of girl-child vis-à-vis the boy-child constitute an important gender issue in Nigeria. The cultural and traditional responsibilities of men and women are perceived different, hence the influence on the upbringing of the female child and male child. The concept of gender-role classification involves a personality-trait-like categorization of a person.

Inequality of gender in some sex denominated subjects could be adduced to mere cultural and social orientation from parents and the entire society. However, the researchers are of the opinion that this idea can be readjusted in view of the varying socio-economic levels in the society .The family environment lays the psychological, and moral and spiritual foundation in the overall development of the child. Thus, intellectual skills can be developed and enhanced if parents can show concern about their children by providing their academic needs and giving the needed moral support.

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