
FAMILY INDICES AS CORRELATES OF STUDENTS' EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper explored the influence of family indices such as family size and income as correlates of students' schooling in Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. The paper employed human ecology theory for its framework. Walker (1990) says human populations have to share space with others, implying that available resources determine the well-being and quality of life of the family. Findings include that every family has educational function for their offspring irrespective of the size and income status of the family. The education value of an individual must go beyond his level of academic performance and become tangible as shown in the earning of the individual through gainful employment. Against this background, the paper recommended that parents should maintain a family size that is commensurate to their income and school curriculum at all levels of education should place emphasis on entrepreneurial education to prepare the individual to face the challenge of life including unemployment in the Nigerian society to make education functional in Nigeria.

Social Studies employs family education concept in its research endeavour. This is because; Social Studies education is concerned with the investigation of human in its entirety as it relates to man's environment in terms of business, socioeconomic, education, student academic performance, but to mention but a few. It is against this background this paper attempts to examine how family indices act as a correlates of student's education in Nigeria. The family a child comes from to school plays a significance role in his/her educational development. Ezewu (1983) observed that the family is the first socialization setting for all types of development, including his/her cognitive, affective and psychomotor knowledge domain. Hence, expert in family education see a correlate between some family indices and the consideration of children learning outcome in school subject at the secondary schools in Nigeria. Observers - The Canada Standard Classification (2011) believe that the impact of the family on children's academic achievement influences the totality of the educational system in Nigeria. Thus, researchers would continue to give attention to investigating this correlates with the intention to improving the learning of children by first of all

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identifying those family indices that constitute advantage or disadvantage to the child's academic performance in school subjects, especially at the secondary education level.

The impact of home background as it influences academic attainment among secondary school students is contained in several empirical studies. Onipinla (2009) for example looked into the extent to which the education or lack of education of parents affects the educational attainment of children. He observed a situation where the former has a greater effect on the later. Drawing from a recent study in the United Kingdom, Onipinla reported further that. Occupation, income, educational attainment and cultural interest of parents has influence on the abilities of children as measured by intelligence quotient and school achievement. This, thus indicates positive correlation between parents level of education and their children's level of intelligence. Educated parents in most cases, will of necessity encourage their children to develop interest in school work. They will naturally provide for them to succeed in life as they themselves have done. Still, most children will want to emulate their parents' status as enlighten members of the society. This provides opportunity for the children to strive towards a career. This is against the background of a child from a home where education is not valued and encouraged because such parents may consider going to school to be waste of time, money and energy and thus be reluctant to provide for the child's school needs.

Correlates according to Longman (1995) mean two or more facts or idea that are closely connected as one causes another. By implication, there are indices of the family that are liable to determine the learning outcome of school children especially if these indices impact on the child negatively. Therefore, drawing from this meaning, this paper is interested in discussing two indices of the family that can influence students' academic performance in school subjects at the secondary school. These are: the size of the family and income status of a family.

Theoretical Clarification

This paper is depended on the human ecology theory of Simon P. Walker (1990). The theory stated that human population have to share space with others, implying that available resources determine the well being and quality of life of the family. The theory focuses on the interdependence and interaction of individuals, families, students and their environment. This is within the context of available resources, choice, adaptation and learning. In addition, it examines the underlying values and needs which shape human behavior and motivate human to modify both their resources and environments in order to improve life and subsequent well being.

Furthermore, human ecology theory is a way of looking at the interactions of human with their environments and considering this relationship as a system. Advocates of this theory believed that human ecological theory is probably one of the earliest

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theories of the family and yet it also contains many new and evolving elements that have emerged as it influences how the natural and human created environments affects behavior and how individuals and families in turn influences these environment. Hence, in human ecology theoretical framework, individuals and the environment are viewed as being interconnected in an active process of mutual influence and change.

The human ecology theory is relevant to this paper because it can be used as a research theoretical framework in determining the correlation between some of the family indices and students' academic performance in Social Studies that is being investigated. Bronfenbrenner (1979) agreed that it's framework has been used in the studies of children and family background, particularly as it affects children academic achievement in school subjects. The theory fits into this study since it corresponds with the variables to be examined in this study. Therefore, the following question guided the discussion thus:

Research Questions

1. To what extent does family size affects schooling opportunities of secondary school students in Nigeria?
2. Does income status of a family determines students' educational achievement in secondary school in Nigeria?

Effects of Family Size on Students' Schooling in Nigeria

The question that: To what extent does family size affects students' schooling opportunity was intended to find out if family size has any significant relationship with a child schooling. Family size is often conceived as the number of children. Be it tolerable or otherwise, family size has no rule guiding it, hence it varies. It means number of persons in a nuclear family for instance. There is no argument against the size in a given family structure, rather argument points to the fact that every family is responsible to a number of functions it owe its off-springs. Experts in family life education identified educational function as one of such functions. Coontz (2005) for example, maintained that the educational function of the family includes certain social functions of both a psychological and sociological nature. This view was upheld in McComack (2010) who saw the family as a very specialized agency for providing the affection that helps to ensure the emotional stability needed by children for academic well being.

Family size in Africa including Nigeria was not an issue until the later part of the 19th century when western culture started taking root against the traditional norms about family life. Traditional African communities were predominantly of large family sizes. However, in modern African societies, majority of families in Africa were confronted with quality of living that was pitiable which laid the background for a re-

think of the family size. Measures of family size in the present circumstances considers industrialization and the impact of modernization that seem to have shifted the numeral dimension in the social metric of family size around the world. In this regard, number is not considered as measure but indices of the home background such as quality life and education of children constitute the modern trends in the value of size a family now has.

Drawing from Plato and Aristotle, a communistic society marriage and birth of children ought to be regulated and restricted by law, lest the means of support should be insufficient for all the citizens. This control measure thus suggested, is based on the framework of societal well being which originated from the individual family well being. This idea presupposes that family size could be measured on the basis of standardized family life that will encourage the education of the children. But the Nigeria situation described in Osakwe (2010) do not suggest the need for a large family size. This is because, majority of families in Nigeria communities are not near the attainment of an enhanced standard of life. He saw the general condition of the people in Nigeria degenerating from one level of decay and hopelessness to another. He pointed to the fact that, the masses are pining away in misery, hardship and poverty. Bolatite (2008) in Osakwe (2010) saw the majority of Nigerian lacking the means to satisfy their basic needs, because majority are poor. He described poverty as a situation where people's resources are so limited as to exclude such people from the minimum acceptable way of life.

A condition of this type should prompt a re-think of a family size. Raising a family size that cannot be sustained in terms of quality of life such as adequate food supply, clothing, water supply, children education etc and capable parenthood could lead to family frustration, hence, trends in family size in many parts of the world have undergone tremendous changes. In United State and Canada for instance, family size has been in the decline. The Canadian Statistical Standard (2011) revealed that, the two child family is becoming the norms in America, therefore, Mezieobi and Opara (2007) advocates for a small family size in the following that:

Small families experience and enjoy an array of benefits and advantages in terms of high quality living. Children of small families enjoy better quality or standard of living- financially, socially and physically development wise, better family cohesion and interaction, enhanced quality of child care and stability than large families that are beset with low quality of living (p. 27).

This graphic analysis to a large extent, is capable of affecting the schooling of children of a large sized family where there is poverty, whereas those from a small sized ones will enjoy all the benefits of quality life including schooling opportunities. This is because children education can be determined by family income.

Income Status of Family

Income of a family is a serious indices that measures preparedness of parents' ability to train their children and provide education for children. Obtaining education in any part of the world seems very costly and Nigeria is not an exception. It is obvious that education in present Nigeria is not meant for the poor. The income index of most Nigerian family is placed at one U.S Dollar per day. There is a paradoxical analysis of the Nigerian capital index. Nigeria is one of the most developed economies in Africa. The petroleum industry provides 95% of the foreign trade earnings and about 80% of budget revenues, yet agriculture is the main sources of revenue for two-third of the population. Still, more than 50% of Nigerians live in poverty with corruption and poor infrastructure as the main obstacles for future sustainable development. This agrees with the projection made by Save Nigeria Group (SNG) (2008) that about 80 million Nigerians will still be living in poverty by 2015. This is based on the observation that Nigerian today is ranked as one of the twenty poorest nations of the world. This presents a contradiction because Nigeria is the 7th largest producer of petroleum and gas yet so poor. This is an unacceptable paradox.

The impact of this is evident in many families. The Nation Master (2012) provided the economic statistics on distribution of family income index in Nigeria. It reported a high degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in Nigeria. The index was calculated from the Lorenz curve, in which cumulative family income is plotted against the number of families arranged from the poorest to the richest. Therefore, it makes no meaning to raise a family size that cannot be catered for in terms of provision of sufficient care for children education and well being. Personal incomes is important for the survival of the family. This is because earning of an individual determines his contribution to national development through income tax. Longman (1995) saw income as the money that one earn from his work. By this meaning, income is related to employment.

Unemployment and Family Income

Income refers to wages, salaries and any flow of earnings received by which an individual or family socioeconomic standing can be measured. Economist theories show that consumption is based on income and income is influenced by gainful employment. This could be employment in the public or private sectors. The disparity in the meeting of needs among different families is due to inequality of income that exist in society. This situation has been blamed on the impact of unemployment and lack of social security for the unemployed in many African nations including Nigeria. Although, unemployment is not peculiar to most African states because from 1979 to 2009 as reported in the studies of Andrew, McLaughlin and Palma (2010), there has been a rising incidence of income inadequacy problem of many young black families in the United States. This deterioration in the real incomes in the U.S is not unconnected

to unemployment and widening gaps between the bottom and top of the family income distribution.

Effect of Unemployment on Family Income

It is obvious that many people are victim of the impact of long term unemployment in Nigeria. This notion agrees with the view of Rich and Rakesh (2010) who stated that the effect has resulted in the loss of income, loss of friends and loss of self respect. Their argument is based on the fact that long term unemployment takes a much deeper toll than short term unemployment on a person's finances, emotional well being and career prospects. This, evidently points out that unemployment whether short or long term, affects household income and the family economic prowess.

This is further expressed in the studies of Namkee, Gercia and Jimeno (2004) that, among the working age population, one of the most damaging individual experiences is unemployment. The damaging effect of unemployment as indicated in their studies are those of income, housing, leisure time and health. Their studies maintained that unemployment substantially reduces an individual's satisfaction levels with his or her main vocational activity and finance while it greatly increases his or her satisfaction levels with leisure time. With respect to health, it has a small negative effect. Unemployment duration also has a small negative impact on individual's well being, suggesting that unemployment has a lasting and aggravating effect throughout the spells of unemployment, contradicting the theory of adaptation.

The Level of Unemployment in Nigeria

The level of unemployment is not the same around the world. Although, observation revealed that whenever unemployment is witnessed, it has a wide consequence on the family and individual in society. Historically, from 2006 until 2011, Nigeria unemployment rate averaged 14.6. The nature of unemployment in Nigeria is worrisome. Horsfall (2013) reported Chief Emeka Wogu, the Minister of Labour and Productivity, that the country's current unemployment rate is alarming at 23.9 percent. It indicates that unemployment, particularly youth unemployment is assuming a frightening dimension that now constitutes an affront to government's developmental efforts.

Also, the Doreo Partners (2013) noted that Nigeria's unemployment rate is spiraling upwards, growing at 16% per year. The group observed in addition that, the youth of the nation are the most impacted with a youth unemployment rate over 50%. The consequence of youth unemployment in the country is evident significantly in the dramatic rise in social unrest and crime. The indicator or indices of this high rate of unemployment in Nigeria society includes hunger, school drop out, arm robbery, kidnapping, child labour and women trafficking among others. Osakwe (2010)

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supported this view by asserting that life expectancy has reduced drastically in Nigeria. He traced the effect of this to the stress of joblessness, poor remuneration, overwhelming family responsibilities/demands, unsure future, poor health and unemployment. He placed the life expectancy of most Nigeria at 46.76% for male and 47.76% for female while infant mortality for males at 3.5% and 9.4% for females. Poverty rate at less than \$1 dollar per day for 45% male and 77% for female. Arising from this description, he stated that:

All these have increased criminality and insecurity in Nigeria. A number of youths who ought to be gainfully employed are now part of the army of criminals that make the society unsafe both for the common man and potential investors (p. 257).

Based on this finding in Osakwe (2010), it implies that unemployment could be blamed for the insecurity in some parts of the country.

Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

However, unemployment should not be enough reason for engaging in deviant activities. It is against this background that entrepreneurship education has become necessary in the Nigerian situation where every individual should be trained to acquire skills that will lead to self employment. Over dependence on government to create jobs has clipped skill acquisition and other creative abilities among individuals and cooperate organizations. Olabode (2012) revealed that schools only prepare the individual to become an employee not an employer. This has been the trend for many years in the Nigerian education system.

Therefore, a paradigm shift to entrepreneurship education seems to be an answer to the problem of unemployment in the present circumstances. This type of education conform with the Global Education Initiative (GEI), that engages leaders from business, government, academia, international organizations to create positive, sustainable and sociable change at the global and local levels. One of such changes is job creation for which entrepreneurship education is designed to fulfill.

According to The Dynamic Business Plan (2012), entrepreneurship is a world trend. This is because, throughout the world, students' interest in entrepreneurship as a career choice is growing. The Dynamic Business Plan (DBP) (2012) reports that empirical research has shown that the presence of entrepreneurship education programmes and a positive image of entrepreneurs within the university are both incentives for participants to choose entrepreneurial careers. Akubo (2011) citing Mr. Farouk Lawan, the former House Committee chairman on education in the House of Representatives stated that entrepreneurship education is the only panacea to unemployment in Nigeria because of its potential to make its graduates self reliant.

Akubo (2011) stated that, lack of entrepreneurial skill has continued to make Nigerian graduates depend solely on government for employment opportunities. In his opinion, this explains the reason why the millions of Nigerian youths are roaming the street looking for jobs. Against this background, entrepreneurship education should be encouraged because it offers education that will make the student self employed and useful to the society at large. Supporting this notion, Olugbile (2012) agreed that entrepreneurship education will reduce graduate unemployment. By implication, entrepreneurship education seems to be a major antidote to the problem of unemployment in the country. This is because, it entails the introduction of job creation skills that will enhance the training and production of employers of labour. Ijaiya (2007) believed that entrepreneurial education is a means to solving unemployment among Nigerian youth for the purpose of national development.

This implies that academic performance should translate to earning through a gainful employment and career for self sustainability. The era of training individuals for the purpose of acquiring paper qualification has lost its bearing in the objective of education in Nigeria. Thus students' performance should prepare them adequately to face life challenges including unemployment.

Conclusion

Family indices such as income and qualification of parents are important because of its contribution to students' academic performance. It is believed that the family is the first socialization setting for all types of development including their cognitive, affective and psychomotor knowledge domain. In this regard, the size of a family and its income status have strong influence on a child's education.

In present day Nigeria, the education of individual goes beyond his level of academic performance. The value of education has to be tangible as indicated in the earning of the individual through gainful employment. Hence, the type of education that provide training and skill for self employment that is entrepreneurial education, has been identified as alternative education for the young adults in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Therefore, arising from the conclusion, the following recommendations are drawn;

1. Parents should maintain a family size that is commensurate to their income. This will enable them to provide for the education of their children adequately.
2. Entrepreneurial education should be emphasized in school curriculum at all level of the educational system in Nigeria. This will enable the individual to be prepared to face the challenges of life, including unemployment in the Nigerian society.

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