



THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND ON THE ACADEMIC INTEREST AND PERFORMANCE OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTH-WEST NIGERIA

Charles AHMED

Christian Religious Studies Section, Department of Arts and Social Science Education Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
charlesahmed295@gmail.com 08133147253 & 07055675930

&

Prof. E.S. MIJAH

Christian Religious Studies Section, Department of Arts and Social Science Education Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
08025578811

Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate the impact of Christian parents' educational background on the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School Students in North West, Nigeria. The study was anchored on investment theory and adopted survey research design. A sample size of 1,278 respondents were randomly sampled to represent the total population. Questionnaire and interview were instruments used for data collection. Data were tested using sample t-test for testing the hypothesis. Findings revealed that, educated parents manage their children's academic weaknesses, encourage them to improve with extra moral classes, and enjoy greater care and attention in school while parents' religious/moral background is a factor influencing the academic interest and performance. The study recommends among others that, Christian parents should be encouraged to actively participate in their children's education by monitoring their academic progress, assisting with assignments and providing guidance that will enhance students' academic interest and performance.

Key Words: Impact, Christian Parent, Educational Background, Senior Secondary School Students, Academic Interest and Performance.

INTRODUCTION

The role of parents in the dissemination of formal and informal education cannot be over-estimated. Parental characteristics represent a number of variables like education, occupation, income, gender status, size of siblings, beliefs, neighborhood and community having implication on the education performance of a child. Parenting is firmly a private exercise based on intellect and desires of two persons namely the father and mother. Parenting is not a single activity, but the sum of approaches and behavioural patterns use to show concern and prepare the children. It is widely believed that the status of parents can contribute significantly to students' success at educational institution. Students from poor parental background are less likely to have low resources or times available to provide due academic supports to their children.



Christian Parental background is often measured as a combination of education, income, occupation and cultural factors. It is commonly conceptualized as the cultural status or class of an individual or group affects educational preference of children's education. Negative cultural status and its correlations such as lower education and poverty ultimately affect our societies as a whole. Christian parents' background with the above features seem to aid children's academic interest and performance in school activities either positively or negatively.

It is widely believed that, the educational status of parents can contribute significantly to students' success at educational institutions either positively or negatively. When parents are involved in their children's education, it enhances commitment and interest. A parent is simply a person's father or mother. Thus, parents are caretakers of their off springs and through their influence; they basically mold and shape their children into adults. Parents are their children's first and foremost teachers, guidance counselors and nurturers whose positive influence in life upbringing cannot be over-estimated. However, the quality and effectiveness of parenting depends essentially on parental background.

The more the parents are interested in the process of imparting education to their children without segregation, the more the children might excel in their academic career and to become the productive and responsible members of society. The development of the country is directly linked to status of parents' background which enhances students' academic interest and performance. Thus, students' performance (academic achievement) plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates who will become great leaders and manpower for the country thus responsible for the country's social and cultural development.

Students' academic performance measurement has received considerable attention in every sphere of life. It is challenging aspects of academics that affect students' performance due to educational and personal factors. This factors strongly influence the students' interest and performance, though, vary from person to person and country to country. In North- West, Nigeria, educational status of family or parent usually plays a significant role in the education of a child irrespective of gender.

North-West Nigeria comprises of Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States. Christianity and Islam are the two dominant religions in the region. Secondary School Education began in North-West States, Nigeria in 1929. Education is highly valued in the region with many primary, secondary schools and higher educational institutions established to provide residents with quality education. Christian parents are not reluctant in sending their children to schools irrespective of their status. In the region, most of the public and private senior secondary schools are day schools and parental level of influence in their academic activities is highly essential. Despite the increase, expansion and government financial support of Senior Secondary Schools system in the region, the students' academic interest and performance seem to be an issue of concern. It is this development that motivated the study on investigation of Christian parents' educational background on the academic interest and performance of senior secondary school students in North-West Nigeria.



Investment Theory

This study is anchored on Investment Theory (Fisher, 1930, Becker & Tomes, 1986) which assumes that parents invest available economic, social, and educational resources in their children to improve their human capital. The theory explains the transfer of parents' biological endowment and human capital to their children for their development. They buttress that, since resources are limited and parents are constrained, decisions on investment contributions to their children's development are influenced by income, preference and fertility of parents. Parents care about their consumption and that of their children, and therefore invest their time and money in their children's education to ensure the development of their skills and knowledge (human capital), in addition to the biologically transmitted endowment, in order to gain a competitive advantage over their peers.

When families have a high income, they can afford to purchase textbooks, stationery, and provide extra tutoring to enhance children's academic performance, thereby achieving higher levels of education.

On the contrary, a low-income family may be constrained in meeting even the necessities of life, and therefore cannot support children with extra resources in their education. According to Becker and Tomes (1986), parents of high socio-economic status (SES) may have access to credit facilities, while those of low SES may not, thereby limiting their ability to provide basic or supplementary resources for their children's education. They show that the extent to which parents transfer their resources with the family size. In other words, the wealth of the family is constrained by the number of children in the family, which in turn influences the allocation of investment per child. Similarly, Haveman and Wolfe (1995) posit that the investment theory suggests that children are likely to attain higher education on average compared to their parents, in proportion to the resources invested in them. They add that the ability of parents and their educational choices jointly determine the level of family income and the quantity and quality of both time and goods input that parents devote to their children. Thus, the theory provides a sound explanation for examining the relationship between parental socio-economic background and the academic interest and performance of Christian students in North-West Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Impact refers to how the socio-economic background of parents affects students' academic interest and performance positively or negatively in the North-West region of Nigeria. Christian parent is a father or mother who follows the Christian faith and strives by supporting, sponsoring, and guiding their children in saving faith in Christ, thereby setting them on a path to maturity academically and bringing them to the full measure of their potential, to the glory of God. Biblical parents have the role of being good stewards of the children God has placed into their care. Parents are responsible for caring for their children's spiritual, physical, social, and psychological well-being. They are liable for modelling how they should live according to a biblical worldview.

Kenkyu (2024) views interest as self-expressed activity. He proposes that the learner's interest is the key to learning. According to Joshua (2024), interest refers to likes, dislikes, preferences and aspirations that tend to distinguish individuals in their daily activities. Interest has a significant impact on student learning and performance. Alhamdu (2024) agrees with Joshua (2024) that interest plays a crucial and essential role in learning. He adds that interest is a psychological state characterised by an affective reaction to and focused attention on particular content and/or the



relatively enduring predisposition to re-engage with a particular class of objects, events, or ideas. Aiyedogbon (2023) maintain that interest can be described as a preference to engage in some types of activities rather than others. The author also said that interest in the subject is regarded as the most important factor in learning.

Academic performance is measured to determine pass and failure in a student's academic career. It is also aid improvement in learning process. Academic performance is a measure of success and failure, indicating how well a student meets the standards set by the institution itself. Furthermore, academic performance can be determined by students 'accomplishments of various tasks assigned by their teachers. It also encompasses the ability to study and retain facts, as well as communicate one's knowledge verbally or in writing.

Statement of the Problem

The menace of academic failure among the young school graduates has stared both the government and stakeholders in the face of educational system. There is a consensus of opinion about the fallen standard of education as a big problem that is hindering the posterity of the Nigerian nation in terms of quality man power resource. Most students in secondary schools' experience academic problem that manifests itself in the form of academic poor performance. The problem facing senior secondary school education today in North-West, Nigeria is how to involve parents in academic matters in order to enhance students' interest and academic performance.

In Nigeria, most children whose parents cannot afford to pay for high cost of formal education enroll into apprenticeship programmes such as carpentry, brick laying, petting trading and others. In the study area, there is a seeming general poor performance among secondary school students. Evidences of the poor performances are seen in both students' internal and external examination. For instance, the available records of WAEC result analyses from 2015 to 2019 indicate downward trends in students' academic achievement. Despite the broad goals of secondary education as to prepare individual student for useful living in the society and their preparation for higher education. In these states, there has been poor students' academic performance in senior secondary schools over the years and efforts are always undertaken to address the problem (Zayyad, 2024).

Students' academic performance constitutes a great source of worry and serious concern to parents, school managers, and educational policy makers. It has been observed, some parents encourage their wards academically while others do not. Some parents motivate their children academically by promptly paying their school fees, providing them with educational materials, and helping them with their assignments, while some do make them engage in hawking, subsistence farming, become housemaids or engage in other menial jobs to support their academic pursuit (Okorie & Ezeh, 2024).

The most prevalent issue is that Christian parents' educational background of learners seem to affect the quality of their Children's academic interest and performance. Despite the efforts the states government is putting in supporting education structurally and financially, the poor academic performance of students in senior secondary schools in the study area seem decreasing. The continues falling standard of education in the zone seems alarming and worrisome. Possibly, Christian parents' educational background on the academic interest and performance of their wards



seem to be a constituted factor. This persistent poor academic performance of senior secondary school students in the region prompted this study.

Objectives

1. Examine the impact of Christian parents' educational background on the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School students in North-West Nigeria.
2. Identify the impact of Christian parents' religious/moral background on the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School students in North-West Nigeria.

Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference in the opinions of male and female students on the impact of Christian parents' educational background on the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School students in North-West Nigeria;
- H₀₅:** There is no significant difference in the opinions of students in the three arms of senior classes on the impact of Christian parents' religious/moral background on the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School students in North-West Nigeria;

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parents' Educational Background on Academic Interest and Performance of Students

Generally, traditional research has shown that more highly educated parents, especially mothers, tend to have greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills that contribute to academic success. Parents' level of education is important for their children's schooling, as they want to maintain the status quo. It is also believed that parents with higher educational levels have greater confidence in their children's academic abilities and higher expectations for them. They expect their child to earn good grades, behave well in school, and attend a tertiary institution. These expectations and confidence in their children motivate them to do well at school. The confidence parents have in their children also helps them build their confidence and self-concept, which is crucial in their education. However, parents' over-expectations might also cause stress to their children, which can translate to poor educational attainment.

Eccles (2024) notes that children learn by example, often through observations made at home. If a child's parents are reading books, attending ongoing educational classes, and taking them to museums and libraries activities that educated parents are more likely to do they are engaging the child in several direct learning experiences that will help him or her achieve the best in education. Rana (2025) observed a positive relationship between parents' level of education and students' academic performance. Chemutai (2023) postulates that many children of educated parents can afford educational materials, which enables them to excel academically.

He adds that such parents, with this advantageous background, can effectively manage their children's emotional abilities and any academic difficulties they face.

Parents' Religious/Moral Background on Academic Interest and Performance of Students

A Christian parent's religious and moral background has a positive impact on a child's academic success. This can impact students' academic performance in several ways. Children who come from a religious or moral background tend to excel more than their counterparts who lack such



advantages. They note that parents with such a background instil in their wards a fear of God and self-discipline, enabling them to live as responsible children and thereby protect the family, school, and the general societal image.

On the same vein, Akram and Yingxiu (2022) posit that parents with a religious or moral background have a strong sense of family cohesion, which they instil in their children to promote better living. Religious living can lead to higher academic competence and internal locus of control in children. The absence of family cohesion results in parents being unable to control, monitor, and discipline their children effectively. Most of these children struggle academically and often drop out of school or become truants.

According to Noor, Akram, and Kamran (2021), habits of the mind and body are developed in children by parents with a religious or moral background. Students with this background are often found participating in various religious activities, such as attending church services to worship God, engaging in religious programmes like Sunday school classes and mid-week prayer, and participating in the Fellowship of Christian Students, which helps build their spiritual lives. These types of students are always well-coordinated, disciplined, and exhibit a spirit of honesty, dedication, and hard work due to their upbringing. These features found in students can be beneficial to them in school.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design and the target population were senior secondary school students from public schools in seven (7) states that made up North-West, Nigeria. A simple random sample population of 1,568 respondents out of 1,206,963 was used for the study. A structured questionnaire and scheduled interview were the instruments employed for data collection. The data analyses were based on the responses from 1,278 respondents out of the sampled 1,568 students. The respondents were purposively selected from 63 educational zones in 4 states from 56 schools that were educationally disadvantage. The vetted questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the help of four research assistants. The data was analyzed using Version 20 of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The mean scores for the items were based on four-point Likert scale and the midpoint average for decision for items or variables was fixed at 2.50. This implies that, a mean score of 2.50 and above indicates agreement (positive response) with the suggested notion of items while mean score of below 2.50 implies disagreement (negative response). The information from the interview was used as supplementary data in the analysis. The hypothesis was tested with t-test statistics at 0.05 levels of significance.

RESULTS

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the views of male and female students on the impact of Christian parents' educational background on the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School Students in North-West Nigeria. To test this null hypothesis, independent samples t-test statistics was used and the result is presented in table one.



Table 1: Independent sample t-test views of male and female students on the impact of Christian parents' educational background on the academic interest and performance of senior secondary school students in North-West Nigeria.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	P
Male	518	3.32	.422	1.926	1276	.054
Female	760	3.27	.433			

Table 1 shows that, $t = 1.928$, $df = 1276$, $p = .054 > \alpha = 0.05$. This indicates that the probability value (p) is greater than the alpha level of significance ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, since the p -value is greater than the alpha level, the null hypothesis is retained. It therefore means that there was no significant difference in the views of male and female students on the impact of Christian parents' educational background on the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School Students in North-West Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the views of students in the three arms of senior classes on the impact of Christian parents' religious/moral background on the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School Students in North-West Nigeria. To test this null hypothesis, ANOVA statistics was used and the result is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Independent sample t-test on the three arms of senior class students on the impact of Christian parents' religious/moral background on the academic interest and performance of senior secondary school students in North-West Nigeria.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.430	2	.715	4.378	.013
Within Groups	208.160	1275	.163		
Total	209.589	1277			

Table 2 shows that, $f = 4.378$, $df = 2, 1275$, $p = .13 < \alpha = 0.05$. This indicates that the probability value (p) is lesser than the alpha level of significance ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, since the p value is lesser than the alpha level, the null hypothesis is rejected. It therefore, means that, there was a significant difference in the views of students in the three arms of senior classes on the impact of Christian parents' religious/moral background on the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School Students in North-West Nigeria

Findings/Discussions

The findings of the study revealed that the educational background of Christian parents has an impact on the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School Students in North-West Nigeria, as educated parents manage their children's academic weaknesses, encourage them to improve with extra moral classes, and enjoy greater care and attention in school. This underscores the impact of parental education on their children's educational attainment (Ovansa, 2024). Evidently, analysis of the responses shows that children from uneducated parents lacked



career guidance and counselling, hardly acquired adequate educational materials for better performance, lacked enough academic support and motivation in their academic activities, and their parents hardly assisted their children with assignments at home. On the other hand, children from educated are helped to manage their academic weaknesses and encourage them to improve with extra moral classes, supervise after school hours, enjoy greater care and attention in school, have stronger feelings and higher expectations of their children excelling academically (Rana 2025).

From the interview conducted, it revealed that parents' educational backgrounds affect the academic interests and performance of learners. Students with well-educated parents often have an advantage because they receive guidance, encouragement, and access to important learning resources. On the other hand, some of us come from homes where our parents had little or no formal education, making it harder to get help with assignments or even see the importance of school. Despite this, many of us stay motivated because we believe education can change our future. The probable reason for this finding is that the respondents are witnesses to the potential impact of parental education on their education. This finding supports a study by Yusuf (2021), which found a positive relationship between parents' educational levels and students' academic achievements.

The implication of this finding is that the educational background of Christian parents plays a significant role in shaping students' academic interest and performance. Educated parents are more likely to provide academic guidance, learning resources, supervision, and motivation that enhance their children's educational outcomes. Consequently, students from homes with educated parents tend to develop stronger academic interests and achieve better academic performance than those from less educated backgrounds.

Furthermore, result shows that the religious/moral background of Christian parents has an impact on the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School Students in North-West Nigeria, as a result of their participation in prayer and fellowship activities, as well as their assistance to less privileged students. This implies that parents' religious/moral background is a factor influencing the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School Students in the region. This finding highlights the impact of the religious/moral status on their children's educational achievements (Donkor, 2010). The respondents demonstrate that, the students respect both teachers and school mates, participation in prayer and fellowship activities help them to concentrate in studies, they do not engage in bad activities and that help them to read their books, they love and appreciate their parents supporting them educationally, hence they concentrate on their academics activities, they are self-discipline and do not engage themselves with bad friends, hence aided their commitment to their academics activities, and they assist the less privilege students (Noor, Akram and Kamran, 2021).

Interviewees reported that students whose parents have a strong religious/moral background have a significant impact on their academic interest and performance. They added that some of them benefited from the discipline, hard work, and integrity that religious teachings promote, which help us stay focused in school. Some students also feel motivated to excel because their faith encourages them to seek knowledge. However, strict religious beliefs can sometimes create challenges, such as limiting participation in school activities or influencing career choices in ways



that may not align with personal interests. The likely reason for this finding could be that the respondents come from different parental religious and moral backgrounds, and are witnesses to the potential effect of parental religious and moral status on their education. This finding aligns with the position of Akram and Yingxiu (2022) who stress that, parents with religious/moral status can provide their children and the community with exemplary life styles such as integrity, accountability, spirit of tolerance, hospitality, love, care, steadfastness, emotional support and help enforce positive behaviours that will aid them concentrate in studies for academic achievement.

The implication of this finding is that the religious/moral background of Christian parents contributes positively to students' academic interest and performance by promoting discipline, integrity, responsibility, and commitment to learning. Students raised in morally upright and religiously committed homes are more likely to avoid negative behaviours, remain focused on their studies, and develop positive attitudes toward education. Therefore, parental religious and moral values serve as important factors in fostering academic success among Senior Secondary School students in North-West Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of this study, it can be concluded that Christian parents' educational and religious/moral backgrounds significantly influence the academic interest and performance of Senior Secondary School students in North-West Nigeria. The study established that parents with higher educational attainment are better positioned to identify and address their children's academic weaknesses, provide academic guidance, encourage participation in extra lessons, and ensure greater educational support and supervision, all of which contribute positively to students' interest in learning and academic achievement. Furthermore, the study revealed that the religious and moral background of Christian parents promotes discipline, commitment to studies, avoidance of negative behaviours, and concern for the welfare of others, thereby creating a conducive environment for academic success. Therefore, the study concludes that both the educational and religious/moral backgrounds of Christian parents are critical factors in fostering students' academic interest and enhancing their academic performance in Senior Secondary Schools in North-West Nigeria.

Recommendations:

Based on the finding and conclusion of the study, the following recommendation was made:

1. Christian parents should be encouraged to actively participate in their children's education by monitoring their academic progress, assisting with assignments and providing guidance that will enhance students' academic interest and performance.
2. Parents should strive to improve their educational awareness through adult education programmes, seminars, workshops and parenting education, so as to better support their children's academic development.
3. Religious organizations and churches should organize programmes that promote sound moral values, discipline and educational excellence among parents and students to reinforce positive academic behaviours.



4. Christian parents should continue to inculcate moral and religious values such as discipline, hard work, honesty and self-control in their children, as these qualities contribute positively to academic interest and performance.
5. Schools should strengthen parent-teacher collaboration through regular meetings and academic counselling programmes to help parents understand their roles in promoting students' educational success.

REFERENCES

- Aiyedogbon J. S. (2023). Attitudes of Secondary School Students Towards The Study Of Christian Religious Studies In Tertiary Institutions In Ibadan South-West Local Government Area Of Oyo State. *British Journal of Contemporary Education*, 6 (1), 59-73.
- Akram, H., & Yingxiu N. (2022). An Examination of the Encountered Challenges of Pakistani International Students in China: A Case Study of First-Year Students. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 40(4), 1567–1576.
- Alhamdu (2024). Interest in Academic Domain among International Undergraduate Students at University Utara Malaysia; *PSIKIS-Jurnal Psikologi Islami*, 1 (2), 1–9.
- Becker, G. S., & Tomes, N. (1986). Human Capital and the Rise and Fall of Families. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 4(3), 66-78
- Chemutai, F. (2023). Gender and Teacher Influence on Student Attitude towards Christian Religious Education. *Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences*, 20 (4), 26-31
- Donkor A.K. (2010). Parental Involvement in Education in Ghana: The Case of a Private Elementary School. *International Journal about Parents in Education*, 4(1), 23–38
- Eccles, A. J. (2024). How Family Background Influences Student Achievement. Retrieved from http://educationnext.org/files/ednext_XVI_2_egalite.pdf on 3/12/2024
- Fisher, 1930,
- Haveman, R., & Wolfe, B. (1995). The Determinants of Children's Attainments: A Review of Methods and Findings. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 33(4), 1829-1878.
- Joshua, M.T. (2024). *Fundamentals of Test and Measurement in Education*. Calabar: University of Calabar Press.
- Kenkyu, S (2024). Casual Models of Achievement Motive, Goal Orientation, Intrinsic Interest and Academic Achievement in the Classroom. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 5(2), 162–189.
- Noor, N., Akram, H. & Kamran, M. (2021). Preferred reasons in selecting the teaching profession as a life career: a case study of pre-service teachers. *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research*, 4(1) 101-112



- Okorie, O. S. & Ezech, H. (2024). Interest as a Predictor of the Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Physics. *British Journal of Education, Learning and Development Psychology*, 3(3) 2682-6704
- Ovansa, A. (2024). Factors Affecting Students' Learning Interest in an Accounting Study Programme: A Study in Bandung City, West Java, Indonesia. *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, 6(2), 295–311
- Rana, M. (2025). The Influence of Parents' Educational Level on Their Children's Academic Performance. *Journal of Education Practice*, 6 (3) 170-183
- Zayyad, N. E. (2024). The Role of School and Home Environment in Boosting Students' Learning Achievement: The Case of Third Year Middle School Teachers and Students at Ahmed Zayed Middle School–Biskra– (Doctoral dissertation).