

## **Family Socio-Economic Status and Delinquency among Senior Secondary School Students in Calabar South, Cross River State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The study was aimed at investigating the influence of family socio economic status and educational level of parents on delinquency among senior secondary school students in Calabar south. Cross River State, Nigeria. It was a survey research; as such the population used was 2640 senior secondary school students, using simple random sampling technique, 600 students were drawn for the study. For data analysis, independent t-test was used for testing the study hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance for family socio-economic status and analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the educational level of parents. The result of the data analysis showed that family socio economic status and the educational level of parents significantly influences student's delinquency. Based on the findings, recommendations were made.*

**Key words:** Socio-economic status, students, delinquency, family, education.

### **Introduction**

Most secondary schools students in general and those in Calabar south in particular are in the adolescent stage. The adolescent has needs and problems that arise from organic, psychological and social pressures. These pressures in turn exert influences on them, which make them exhibit behaviors that are not in consonance with societal norms leading to delinquency. According to Isangedighi (1998) delinquency is a behavior that involves retraction from rules that govern behavior among adolescents. Delinquency on the whole is not an easy concept to define due to its complex characteristics. However, delinquency has been from time immemorial a social evil. These delinquent behaviors consist of acts that violate the laws of the society. Onyejiaku (1991) further stress that delinquency covers an enormous range on crime including felonies such as robbery, assault or misdemeanors such as loitering and behaviors that are illegal.

The manifestation of delinquency among secondary school students has remained an age long problem in the Nigerian secondary school system. In a study carried out by Ajake, Etuk and Omori (2010) shows that there is a high rate of school complain about students delinquency. At this juncture, family has an enormous task of ensuring that the adolescent grows appropriately in this regard. The extent to which parents and other adults in the family make provision for the holistic growth of their adolescent, with the view of curbing societal ills has generated a lot of concern in our contemporary Nigeria as a whole and Calabar south in particular. Increased attention is being given to the ability of individual and family to successfully remedy the negative impact on delinquency.

### **Literature Review**

Family socio economic status is based on family income, parental occupation and societal values in the community. The seeming undependability of our families to curb the menace of delinquency is not uncommented with the unprecedented global inflation that has had alarming influence on families, resulting in near break down of family ties.

This is generally seen in the negative effect this has on the adolescent members of families who are mostly found in senior classes of our secondary schools. Family socio-economic status affects parents ability to send their children to school and how well these children performance in school.

According to Uche (1994) children from high parent with adequate income, good occupation and high status are likely provided with huge quality private education from nursery up to university level. Given this opportunity, it is likely that such children will be less delinquent than their counterpart from lower socio economic background. However from an empirical study by Coughin and Vuchimah (1996), there is a relationship between family socio-economic status and juvenile delinquency. Female secondary school students tend to act out as a result of low level of support from their mother while boys tend to act out as a result of low level parental mentoring; however the study concludes that family structure is not a predictor of juvenile delinquency, low parental monitoring did seem to predict higher drug use, Dishon and Loeber (1985). In another study on child rearing style and students' dishonest behavior by Ajake, Isangedighi and Bisong (2008), child rearing style is a function of family socio economic status. Significant difference exist between respondents from autocratic child rearing family and those from democratic homes in lying, stealing and truancy, in each case autocratically reared subjects are more vulnerable to delinquency. Again a significant difference exist between subjects reared under democratic child rearing style and their counterpart reared under the *laissez-faire* rearing style in lying, stealing and truancy. In each case, those who are brought under the *laissez-faire* families are the more vulnerable.

In a study carried out in Nigeria aimed at determining the extent to which parents occupational status influences the educational influences the educational attainment of children, Ojo (1987) found out that sixty percent of 1,327 university students randomly drawn for the study were children of farmers (socio-economically low), 92% were drawn from parents in the senior staff category, 17% were children of traders while 13 % of the students were children of junior staff. His finding was contrary to miner (1986) and Abernethy (1986). He found out that delinquent behavior was rather exhibited by children from middle class families or high socio-economic group. Weis (1982) in her study of ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status: pattern of access in Ghanaian secondary school found out that greater percentage of delinquent behavior in school is associated with children from rich homes since they are the majority in schools, on the other hand delinquent behavior in school is associated with student from poor homes as a result of the spillover from the society where they constitute a larger percentage. The educational level of parents determines their status and level of influence in the society.

This comes from the fact that education has been described as one of the sources of social stratification and social mobility, (Uche 1984). He said that attitudes towards education are very much influenced by social class. As a result, the children of middle class parents are more likely to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them both at secondary and higher education institution than are children of poor laborers or factory worker (who are hardly educated). In a study conducted in Rivers state of Nigeria to examine the influence of family environment on educational attainment , Ogummade (1983) used total 120 primary school children in the fourth class. The findings from his study revealed that environment has considerable influence on pupil's school achievement. Children from literate homes and that boys from both literate and illiterate homes had a better achievement than girls.

Upadhyay (2001) showed in his research that alcohol abuse in Nepal is mostly found among the youth between the ages of 16 and 30 in the homes of the less educated. He also opined that young people are eight times more likely to take alcohol through initiation of their own family members. His paper also revealed that in studies, children of less educated parents who are 76% alcoholics are found to show less social competency, more internalizing and externalizing behaviors, more negative performance, lower academic achievement and more psychiatric distress. Due to lack of knowledge, the less educated parents do not seem to associate alcoholism with diversified effects on body organs such as liver injury, cardiac problems, damage to endocrine and reproductive system and multiple adverse neurological effects (Upadhyay 2001). Thus they continue in the habit of alcohol consumption from their children initiate and exhibit antisocial behavior in schools. Apart from the visible harmful consequences of alcoholism, there are several non-visible consequences observed in psychological and economic perspective including family disruption, inter-personal conflict, poor social status, poor educational environment, financial involvement in alcohol consumption and treatment of alcohol related problems. The effects of these are seen on their children's poor academic performance and dropping out of schools.

In a study carried out by Eshiet (2002), he discovered that students from higher educational background performed significantly better than those from lower educational backgrounds. Also in another study by Edem (2005) conducted in Calabar, Nigeria to determine the effects of teachers' qualification and experience on students' academic performance.

He drew a random sample of 200 students for the study and administered personal questionnaire and achievement test in integrated science on them. The analysis of the result showed that 82% of the students from educationally stable background passed the test, while only 48% of the students from less educated background did well. Edem therefore conducted that students from less educated homes are more likely to be engaged in other activities and behavior outside academics. Writing on parental involvement, Ryan (2002) noted that parent who less educated are more passively involved in the management, upbringing and education of their children. Their children do not seem to give them the desired respect since they are less likely to guide them academically. Ryan therefore maintains that these children are more involved in anti social activities and behaviors than their counterpart from well educated homes.

In listing other factors underlying violent behavior in schools, Christie (1999) noted that parents and families are significant influence on their children's attitude. He said families constitute the training ground for aggression. In analyzing the transmission of aggressive behavior in home, Christie noted that educated parents are less aggressive than less educated parents. Thus aggression is more prevalent in the homes of less educated parents and among their children than in the more educated. According to Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985), disorderly schools are associated with students from less educated parents and not well-to-do homes. They are characterized by teachers with primitive attitude, rules that are loosely enforced and perceived as unfair and unclear; ambiguous responses to student misbehavior; students with low levels of belief in conventional social rules and a lack of resources needed for effective teaching. Educated parents know the harm these factors can cause in students' learning, and they avoid them. Duke (1989) has it that school orderliness as related to the presence of a clear focus on appropriate student behavior, extensive communication about the rules, sanctions and procedure to be used, as well as formal discipline codes and classroom management plans, are the expressed concerned that will mould the students as individuals.

Literature so far reviewed show that socio-economic background of parents and educational level of parents are known to have significant influence on their children's attitude. However, from some materials reviewed other researchers do not see any relationship between them.

### ***Materials and Methods***

#### ***Subjects***

A total sample of 600 senior secondary schools students are drawn from the population of 2640 students in the study area. Ten secondary schools were again randomly selected with sixty students also randomly selected. Thus a total of six hundred (600) students comprising three hundred and twenty eight (328) girls and two hundred and seventy two (272) boys were drawn.

#### ***Data collection***

A survey questionnaire was designed as instrument for data collection. It was divided into two parts. Part one was made up of sixteen items designed to get information on family socio-economic status and parents' educational level. Part two of the instrument had twenty items structured in the form of statement. Respondents were required to place a tick against each statement to show their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. It was a modified four point likert kind of scale.

#### ***Results***

The hypotheses were tested using independent t-test and one way-ANOVA respectively at a 0.05 level of significance. The survey data collected and analyzed as shown in table 1 and 2.

***Table 1: Independent t-test of the influence of family socio-economic status on students' delinquency***

<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t-value</b>
Poor	348	44.59	9.50	11.56*
Rich	252	36.38	7.99	

P<0.05; critical t=1.96; df=598

As presented in table above, the calculated t-value is 11.56. This is greater than the critical t-value at 0.05 level of significance with 598 degree of freedom. This means that family socio-economic status significantly influences students' delinquency. Given the result the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 2: One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the Influence of Educational Level of Parents on Students' Delinquency in Calabar South**

Group	Level of education	N	X	SD
1	Not formally educated	96	38.34	6.94
2	Less Educated	240	41.35	10.11
3	Highly educated	264	41.91	10.12
Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F
Between groups	916.99	2	456.49	4.87*
Within groups	56180.07	597	94.10	
Total	57097.06			

\* $p < 0.05$ ;  $N=600$ ,  $F_2 597 = 3.00^*$

As presented in table 2, a calculated F-value of 4.87 was obtained. This is greater than the critical value of 3.00 at 2 and 597 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. From this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. The nature of the influence is further explored using Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) pair-wise multiple comparison analysis. The result obtained from this is presented in table 3.

**Table 3: Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test of the influence of educational level of parents on students' delinquency in Calabar south**

Group	Educational status	1 ( $n_1= 96$ )	2 ( $n_2= 240$ )	3 ( $n_3 =264$ )
1	Not formally Educated	38.34 <sup>a</sup>	-3.01 <sup>b</sup>	-3.57
2	Less Educated	-2.57 <sup>c</sup>	41.35 <sup>a</sup>	-0.56
3	Highly Educated	-3.00*	0.65	41.91

$MS_w = 94.10$

a = Group means are on the diagonal

b= Difference between group means are above the diagonal

c= Fishers' LSD t-values are below the diagonal

\* $p < 0.05$ ,  $df = 597$ , critical t-value = 1.96

Table 3 reveals significant values between (1) groups 1 and 2 (not formally educated and the less educated groups), the calculated t-value for these groups is -2.57 as against the critical t-value of 1.96. This implies that the level of delinquency between students from not formally educated parents and those from less educated parents differs from the mean scores of the two groups (38.34 and 41.35). It could be seen that the students from the less educated parents are more delinquent than those from parents that are not formally educated. (2) Group 1 and 3 (not formally educated and highly educated groups).

Between these groups, a calculated t-value of 3.00 was obtained. This is greater than the critical value. This implies that that there is a significant difference between groups in their influence on students' delinquency. Their mean scores indicate that the students from the highly educated parents are more prone to delinquency than those parents that are not formally educated. While the mean score of the highly educated group was 41.91, not formally educated group was 38.34.

## ***Discussion***

Based on the result of the statistical analysis. On analysis using independent t-test, it was revealed that the financial position of students' parents influences their level of delinquency. The study also revealed that students from low socio-economic parents are more delinquent than those from high socio-economic status. The implication of this finding is that students' delinquency is determined mostly by financial position of student's parents. In other words, students exhibit delinquent acts when parents cannot meet their financial needs. When students cannot meet their school needs, there is no hope for such needs being met by parents, there is the tendency for students to look "elsewhere" to have their needs met. This may lead to stealing or other criminal behavior. Children from poor homes are noted to be deprived of essential needs including foods.

Supporting this finding Uche (1984) said that children from parents with adequate income, good occupation and right status are likely to be provided with high quality education from nursery through secondary and even to the university. Private schools are known to be closely monitored by the proprietor, thus students activities are more regulated. In such a situation, it is likely that the students will be less delinquent than those in public schools who are actually from poor homes. In a related study conducted in the U.S by Miner (1986) using 663 high school students, it was discovered that socio-economic status of the child was highly related to the level of achievement attained. Miner noted that children from financially well-to-do homes performed better in class work and stayed longer in schools than children from poor homes who were more absent from classes and more associated with socially unhealthy behaviors.

Contrary to the finding of this study, Australian based study (pathway to crime prevention 1999) noted that rich parents are more aggressive, violent and disharmonious. Due to this, their children are more associated with school failure, deviant peer rejection and inadequate behavior management. Thus, delinquency cannot be said to be prevalent in poor homes only. Looking at the second hypothesis, the result of the data obtained showed that parents' educational status significantly influences students' delinquency. Base on this the null hypothesis was rejected. In clear terms, the study revealed that students from parents that are not formally educated had lower mean score on delinquency than the less educated and highly educated groups. The mean score of the less educated and highly educated groups were quite different from each other (41.35 & 41.91). The implication of this finding is that the higher the levels of education parents attain, the higher the tendency for their children to be delinquent. This mean there is a direct relationship between educational attainment of parents and children's' delinquency

It is generally observed that parents who are not formally educated want their children to be educated. With this desire, they spend time in instilling discipline into their children and wards. They have time to monitor and correct their children when they seem to go the wrong way, and their children are less involved in anti-social activities. On the contrary, the highly educated ones spend more time working in offices and establishment and have little time for their children. Children of uneducated parents are afraid of falling into trap of anti-crime agents, knowing their parents may not have the means to get them out of trouble. Thus they are better behaved than their counterparts from highly educated background. The finding was supported by Christie (1999), Christie noted that anti social behavior among students is as a result of their failure to achieve academically. He noted academic failure to be more prevalent among students from educated homes than those from illiterate homes. Thus the level/rate of delinquency among children of elites is higher than their counterpart from illiterate parents.. On the contrary, Gottfredson and Godfredson (1985); Gold (1989) observed that disorderly schools are associated with students from less educated parents. They maintained that highly educated parents send their children to privileged schools that are less violent and less aggressive. Thus aggressive behavior, truancy, pilfering etc are more associated with children from less educated homes. Uche (1984) also posited that children of middle and higher class parents are more likely to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them to attain schools than children of poor laborers and factory and factory workers end up more as delinquents compared to their counterpart from highly educated parents.

## ***Conclusion and Summary***

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of family socio-economic status and parents' educational level effects on delinquency among Senior Secondary school students in Calabar South.

As specific objectives, the study sought the influence of family socio-economic status and parents' educational level exerts on students delinquent behavior. To carry out the study effectively, the variables were hypothesized. Using independent t-test, the first hypothesis was tested. Also the second hypothesis was tested using ANOVA. Each of the hypotheses was tested for significance at 0.05 alpha level. Based on the findings of the study, the conclusions were drawn:

1. Delinquent behavior observed among students is traceable to the fact that most parents are poor. Students from poor background were noted in this study to have higher scores in delinquency.
2. Most parents in Calabar south are highly educated. This account for high rate of delinquency among students

### **Recommendation**

On the basis of the findings from this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. That parent from low socio-economic status should be empowered to enable them provide basic needs of their children, thus preventing some form of delinquency.
2. Parents with delinquent behaved children should be charged or cautioned, so they will help to check the activities of their children and wards. This will promote parent-child relationship. With the consequent reduction in delinquent behavior of children.
3. Counseling psychologist should be deployed to secondary schools for early identification of personal social issue among students. This will go a long way in reducing cases of delinquency in students.

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