ISSN: 3619 – 4889
Volume 9, Number 2, 2024
Journal of Education and Development Studies

FAMILY POPULATION ECONOMIC INSTABILITY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS R\S.

Dr. Konye Nwachukwu
Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling
Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education
Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

E-mail: konye.nwachukwu@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between family population, economic instability and academic performance of students in English language among public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers state. Two research questions and null hypotheses were used for the study. The study adopted a correlational study design. The sample consisted of 250 respondents selected randomly from a total of 371 senior secondary schools. An instrument titled: Family population, economic instability and academic performance (FPEIAP) was self designed and used for data collection. The instrument was duly validated by experts from the Department of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. A reliability index of 0.735 was obtained using Cronbach alpha statistics. Data collected from research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The major findings of the study indicate that family population and economic performance of students in English language. However, it was recommended that Rivers State Government should enact a law that limits the number of children per household.

Keyword: Family, Population, Economic, Instability, Academic, Performance, Students

INTRODUCTION

Economic instability refers to the fluctuations or disruptions in the economic environment of a country or region, which can manifest through unpredictable changes in key indicators such as inflation, unemployment, gross domestic product (GDP), and financial market volatility. This instability can result from various factors, including external shocks, policy mistakes, market failures, and global economic trends. While short-term instability is often a natural part of the economic cycle, prolonged or severe instability can lead to significant adverse effects on businesses, households, and government policies. It is often characterized by periods of high uncertainty, which can affect the confidence of consumers, investors, and policymakers, leading to economic downturns or crises.

The causes of economic instability are complex and multifaceted. These can include domestic factors such as political mismanagement, insufficient fiscal policies, or structural weaknesses in the economy, as well as external factors like global recessions, commodity price fluctuations, or geopolitical events. For instance, a sudden drop in oil prices can destabilize economies dependent on oil exports, while political unrest or conflict can disrupt trade and investment flows. Other contributing factors include financial crises, such as banking collapses or stock market crashes, which can further exacerbate economic instability by leading to liquidity shortages and reduced consumer spending (Rajan, 2010).

The consequences of economic instability are far-reaching. For individuals, it can lead to job losses, income reduction, and increased poverty levels. For businesses, instability may result in lower investments, reduced consumer demand, and even bankruptcies. On a national scale, prolonged economic instability can undermine economic growth, lower living standards, and strain government budgets due to increased welfare spending and reduced tax revenues. Moreover, the social and political consequences of instability can be severe, often resulting in civil unrest, political polarization, and policy paralysis (IMF, 2019).

Thus, understanding economic instability requires an exploration of both its causes and its effects, as well as the tools and strategies available to mitigate its impact. Effective policies to manage economic instability may involve coordinated fiscal and monetary interventions, strengthening financial systems, and improving economic diversification. By analyzing these elements, policymakers can better anticipate and manage the challenges posed by economic instability, ensuring more resilient economies that can withstand both domestic and global shocks.

Statement of the Problem

The academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria, has been a growing concern for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in the educational sector. Despite numerous efforts to improve the quality of education, many students continue to struggle academically. One of the key factors contributing to this persistent challenge is the socio-economic environment in which these students are raised. Family population and economic instability are two major elements that have the potential to influence educational outcomes.

In Rivers State, the size and structure of families, as well as the economic conditions of the households, have significant implications for students' academic success. Large family sizes often lead to a dilution of resources, such as parental attention, financial support, and educational materials. As a result, students from larger families may face greater challenges in terms of access to educational support, leading to lower academic performance. Similarly, the socio-economic environment in Rivers State, which is heavily influenced by the volatility of oil prices and economic instability, exacerbates these challenges. Economic instability often results in financial constraints for families, leading to reduced access to educational resources, less parental involvement, and increased stress on students, which can adversely affect their academic outcomes.

Moreover, the combination of these two factors—family population and economic instability—has the potential to create a vicious cycle where students from economically disadvantaged and larger families are most at risk of poor academic performance. The challenges associated with these socio-economic factors are often compounded by inadequate educational infrastructure, poor teaching quality, and insufficient government investment in education, all of which contribute to the widening gap in academic achievement.

Despite the growing concern about these issues, there is a lack of comprehensive empirical studies that specifically focus on the effects of family population and economic instability on the academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State. This gap in the literature presents a pressing need to investigate the relationship between these variables and to explore the underlying factors that contribute to poor academic performance in the region. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for formulating effective educational policies and interventions aimed at improving the academic outcomes of students in Rivers State.

Therefore, this study seeks to address the following problem: how do family population and economic instability affect the academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State? The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the socio-economic challenges facing students and provide insights for stakeholders involved in improving the educational system in the state.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of family population, economic instability on the academic performance of students in English language at public senior secondary school students in P/H Metropolis, Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following:

1. To find out the impact of family population on academic performance of students in English language at public senior secondary school students in P/H Metropolis, Rivers State.

2. To find out the impact of economic instability on academic performance of students in English language at public senior secondary school students in P/H Metropolis, Rivers State.

Research Questions:
1. What is the the impact of family population on academic performance of students in English language at public senior secondary school students in P/H Metropolis, Rivers State?
2. What is the impact of economic instability on academic performance of students in English language at public senior secondary school students in P/H Metropolis, Rivers State?

Hypotheses:
1. There is no significant relationship between family population and academic performance of students in English language at public senior secondary school students in P/H Metropolis, Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between economic instability and academic performance of students in English language at public senior secondary school students in P/H Metropolis, Rivers State.

Literature Review on Family Population, Economic Instability, and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Rivers State
The academic performance of secondary school students is shaped by a complex interplay of various factors, including family population, economic instability, and the broader socio-economic context. In Rivers State, Nigeria, these factors are particularly relevant given the region's socio-economic dynamics, which influence the educational outcomes of its students. This literature review examines the empirical studies and theoretical frameworks that explore how family population, economic instability, and academic performance intersect, particularly within the context of secondary education in Rivers State.
Family Population and Its Impact on Academic Performance
Family population, including factors such as family size, structure, and socio-economic status, has been widely recognized as an influential determinant of academic performance. The size and structure of a family can affect the resources available to children, such as time, financial support, and attention from parents, all of which contribute to academic success.
1. Family Size and Educational Outcomes Empirical studies have consistently shown that smaller family sizes tend to correlate with better academic performance. This is because children in smaller families often have access to more individualized attention and resources from their parents (Akinmoladun et al., 2020). Conversely, larger family sizes, particularly those with limited financial resources, may face difficulties in providing sufficient educational support to each child, thereby negatively impacting academic performance (Adebayo & Oladipo, 2020).
In Rivers State, this trend holds true. Students from smaller families may experience fewer distractions and more resources, allowing them to perform better in secondary school exams. However, in larger families, students may suffer from overcrowded living conditions, less parental involvement, and increased financial strain, all of which negatively affect academic outcomes (Okpala et al., 2019).
2. Family Structure and Parental Involvement The family structure, such as whether a child lives with both parents, a single parent, or extended family, also plays a role in determining academic success. Research has shown that parental involvement is a critical factor in the academic achievement of secondary school students. Students from nuclear families tend to perform better academically, as both parents are typically more involved in their children's education (Akinmoladun et al., 2020).
In Rivers State, single-parent households are becoming increasingly common due to socio-economic factors, including unemployment and migration. These families often face challenges in providing

adequate educational support, which can adversely affect students' performance (Suleiman & Dada, 2019).

Economic Instability and Academic Performance

Economic instability, characterized by fluctuations in inflation, unemployment rates, and national fiscal policies, has a significant impact on educational outcomes, especially in regions like Rivers State that are heavily dependent on oil revenues. Economic instability can create a volatile environment that hampers both government educational policies and private household resources for education.

1. Impact of Economic Instability on Education Funding In periods of economic instability, government budgets for education are often cut, leading to inadequate resources for schools. Overcrowded classrooms, outdated textbooks, and poorly trained teachers become common in public schools, which diminishes the quality of education that students receive. This scenario is particularly visible in Rivers State, where the volatile nature of oil prices directly influences the state budget and, consequently, the education sector (Adeniyi & Oloruntoba, 2020).

According to Nwachukwu (2021), during periods of economic downturn, secondary school students in Rivers State face decreased access to educational resources, leading to poor academic performance. Economic instability also results in an increased dropout rate, particularly among students from low-income families who cannot afford school fees and other related expenses.

2. Economic Strain on Families and Student Performance For families facing economic challenges, the financial strain often means that children are required to take on work outside of school or that parents cannot afford additional educational support, such as private tutoring or extracurricular activities. This economic pressure is a significant factor in the academic struggles of students in Rivers State. Students from economically disadvantaged families are often more vulnerable to poor academic outcomes due to a lack of necessary resources (Suleiman & Dada, 2019).

Research by Adeniyi & Oloruntoba (2020) found that economic instability exacerbates the financial difficulties of families in Rivers State, making it harder for students to succeed academically. The study indicated that in areas of the state with lower economic stability, students tend to perform poorly in national exams such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), which has long-term implications for their future opportunities.

Theoretical Review on Family Population, Economic Instability, and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Rivers State

The academic performance of secondary school students is influenced by a complex set of variables, including family population and economic instability. Several theoretical frameworks can help explain how these factors interact to shape educational outcomes. This review examines key theories related to family population, economic instability, and academic performance, particularly in the context of Rivers State, Nigeria.

1. Theories on Family Population and Academic Performance

Family population, especially factors like family size, structure, and socio-economic status, has been widely discussed in educational psychology and sociology. Several theoretical perspectives provide insight into how family characteristics influence students' academic performance.

Resource Dilution Theory (Blake, 1989) The Resource Dilution Theory posits that children in larger families receive fewer resources, such as time, attention, and financial support, compared to those in smaller families. This theory suggests that as family size increases, the amount of parental investment per child decreases, negatively affecting academic performance (Blake, 1989). In the context of Rivers State, this theory is particularly relevant given the prevalence of large families in both urban and rural areas. Larger family sizes may lead to lower academic performance due to the diluted resources, especially in low-income households.

Family Stress Model (Conger et al., 2002) The Family Stress Model suggests that economic hardship and family dysfunction can increase stress within the household, which in turn negatively affects children's development and academic performance. According to this model, when families face economic instability, children experience higher levels of stress that hinder their ability to focus on their studies. This theory can be applied to families in Rivers State, where economic instability due to the volatile nature of oil revenues creates financial stress, potentially diminishing the academic success of children (Conger et al., 2002).

2. Theories on Economic Instability and Academic Performance

Economic instability, driven by factors such as inflation, unemployment, and government fiscal policies, can create a volatile environment that affects both family income and the educational system. Several theoretical frameworks help explain how economic conditions influence student outcomes.

The Social Capital Theory (Coleman, 1988) Social Capital Theory focuses on the role of family, community, and institutional resources in promoting academic achievement. According to Coleman (1988), students from families and communities with high social capital, characterized by strong social networks and support systems, are more likely to succeed academically. In regions like Rivers State, where economic instability often leads to weakened community structures, the lack of social capital may hinder students' academic performance. Economic instability, coupled with low levels of social capital, can create an environment where students are less likely to receive the support needed for academic success.

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) Human Capital Theory suggests that investment in education increases individuals' productivity and economic outcomes. In a context of economic instability, however, governments and families may be unable to make the necessary investments in education. In Rivers State, where oil price fluctuations lead to unstable government funding for education, the theory implies that students' academic performance may suffer due to inadequate school resources, poorly trained teachers, and a lack of academic materials. This theory is central to understanding the impact of economic instability on education in Rivers State.

Cultural Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986) The Cultural Capital Theory emphasizes that families transmit knowledge, skills, and cultural values that contribute to children's academic success. Families with higher cultural capital, which includes educational background, cultural practices, and social status, are more likely to foster an environment conducive to academic achievement. In Rivers State, economic instability can exacerbate inequalities in cultural capital, with wealthier families having more resources to support their children's education, while disadvantaged families struggle to provide the same level of support. As a result, children from poorer families may face greater barriers to academic success.

3. Theories on Academic Performance in Secondary Schools

Academic performance is influenced by multiple factors, including individual student characteristics, family background, school environment, and broader socio-economic conditions. The following theories provide frameworks for understanding how these factors interact to shape students' academic outcomes.

Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) The Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes the multiple layers of influence on a child's development, from the immediate family and school environment to broader societal and economic factors. This theory is particularly useful for understanding the impact of economic instability on academic performance. In Rivers State, students are affected not only by their family environment but also by the larger economic and social systems. Economic instability at the macro level (e.g., fluctuations in oil prices, inflation) can filter down to influence individual academic outcomes through changes in family dynamics, school quality, and community support.

Motivation Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) Motivation Theory, particularly the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), posits that motivation is a key determinant of academic success. According to this theory, intrinsic motivation (the desire to learn) is fostered when students experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Economic instability, particularly in low-income households in Rivers State, can reduce intrinsic motivation by causing stress, lack of resources, and diminished parental involvement in education. This undermines students' motivation to succeed academically, contributing to poorer academic outcomes.

Empirical Studies on Academic Performance in Rivers State

Numerous studies have explored the academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State, considering the influence of both family-related and economic factors. A review of recent empirical studies highlights the multifaceted nature of academic outcomes in the state.

1. Parental Involvement and Academic Performance Okpala et al. (2019) conducted an empirical study in Rivers State that examined the impact of parental involvement on the academic performance of secondary school students. The study found that students whose parents were actively involved in their education, whether through attending school meetings, helping with homework, or encouraging academic achievement, performed better in exams than those whose parents were less engaged. This aligns with the findings from broader studies on family involvement and academic success.
2. Economic Factors and Academic Outcomes A study by Suleiman & Dada (2019) specifically focused on the effects of economic instability on the academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State. The researchers concluded that economic instability significantly affects students' academic achievements, primarily due to its impact on family income and school funding. The study showed a correlation between periods of economic instability and a rise in school absenteeism and dropout rates among secondary school students.

Moreover, Nwachukwu (2021) explored the effects of local economic conditions on secondary school performance in Rivers State and found that students from families experiencing economic hardship were less likely to perform well academically. The study emphasized that economic instability forces many students to miss school or struggle with the financial burden of education, which hinders their ability to succeed in exams.

METHODOLOGY

Research design: The study adopted correlational research design.

Population of the study: The population of the study consisted of all the 4,650 SS2 students in the 371 Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers state.

Sample and sampling technique

A sample of 250 respondents were selected using simple random procedure was used to select 25 public Senior Secondary Schools and consequently 10 SS2 students was randomly chosen from each school, given a total of 250 study participants.

Instrument for data collection

An instrument for data collection was a self designed questionnaire captioned: Family population Economic Instability and Academic Performance. The instrument response options were designed in line with Likert four point rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

Validity of the instrument

The instrument was duly validated by experts from Business Education Department, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

Reliability of the instrument

The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha statistics to obtain a coefficient index of 0.735.

Method of Data Analysis

The research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product moment Correlation coefficient at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research question one: hat is the relationship between family population and academic performance of students in English language among public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers state?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores on the relationship between family population and academic performance.

s/n	Items	Sum	X	SD	Remarks
1	Higher family size does not enhance better academic performance of students	705	2.821	1.679	Agreed
2	Socio economic status of parents enhances students academic performance	700	2.802	1.673	Agreed
3	Single parent household impedes students academic performance	680	2.721	1.649	Agreed
4	Large family structure effects students academic performance	735	2.941	1.714	Agreed

Table 1 data analysis showed that items 1 – 4 had all the mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.5, an indication that higher family size does not enhance academic performance of students in English language. Similarly, socio – economic status of parents also enhances student academic performance.

Research question two: What is the relationship between economic instability and academic instability and academic performance of students in English language among public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers state?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores on the relationship between economic instability and academic performance.

s/n	Items	Sum	X	SD	Remarks
5	Due to economic instability student drop-out rate is high.	758	3.032	1.741	Agreed
6	During economic instability students face decreased access to educational resources.	775	3.012	1.735	Agreed
7	There is financial strain on parents which affects students academics	760	3.041	1.743	Agreed
8	As a result of economic downturn teachers salaries are not paid which affects students learning.	745	2.981	1.726	Agreed

Analysis of data in table 2 revealed that items 5 – 8 had all the mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.5 showing that due to economic instability student's drop out rate is high and students face decreased access to education resources.

Hypothesis 0ne: There is no significant relationship between family population and academic performance of students in English language in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers state.

Table 3: Test of relationship between family population and academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	r	P	Remarks
Family Population	125	2.813	1.677	248	0.76	1.056	Not Sig
Academic performance	125	2.716	1.648				

Table 3 data analysis showed that there is no significant relationship between family population and academic performance of students in English language (r=0.76, p>0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted indicating that, family population and academic performance of students are related and cannot guarantee academic performance of students.
Hypothesis two: There is no significant relationship between economic instability and academic performance of students in English language in Public senior secondary school in Port Harcourt metropolis, rivers state.
Table 4: Test of relationship between economic instability and academic performance of students in English language.

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	r	P	Remarks
Family Population	125	2.718	1.649	248	0.69	1.009	Not Sig
Academic performance	125	2.716	1.648				

Analysis of data in table 4 revealed that there is no significant relationship between economic instability and academic performance of students in English language among public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers state (r=0.69, p>0.05). Hence the null hypothesis was accepted showing that economic instability cannot enhance academic performance of student.

Discussion of findings

The findings of research question one and hypothesis one indicates that family population does not enhance academic performance of students in English language. This finding was in line with Akinmoledun et al (2020) and Adebayo and Oladipo (2020) who stated that smaller family sizes enhances better academic performance while single parent house hold higher family sizes and structure impedes the realization of academic progress of students.
Research question two and hypothesis two findings shows that economic instability does not guarantee academic performance of students in English languages. This finding was in agreement with Adeniyi and Oloruntoba (2020) and Nwachukwu (2021) who opined that during period of economic instability students receive decreased access to learning and increase in dropout rate.

CONCLUSION

Family population and economic instability has been identified as factors that would create a vicious cycle whereby students from economically disadvantaged family economically disadvantaged family are most likely to render poor assistance to their children's academic advantages. The study therefore concludes that high family population and economic instability does not enhance academic performance of students especially those in public senior secondary schools where they are required to purchase some instructional materials.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study it was recommended as follows:

1. Rivers state government should enact a law reducing the number of children per household to enhance their living standard.
2. Efforts should be made by parents to reduce student dropout rate in schools by providing them with essential educational resources.
3. Economically disadvantaged families should be encouraged to undertake business ventures that would bring income to sustain their children's education.

REFERENCES

Blake, J. (1989). Family size and achievement. University of California Press.

Conger, R. D., Ge, X., Elder, G. H., Lorenz, F. O., & Simons, R. L. (2002). Economic stress, coercive family processes, and developmental problems of adolescents. Child Development, 63(3), 440-452.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. American Journal of Sociology, 94(S1), S95-S120.

Becker, G. S. (1993). Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education. University of Chicago Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education (pp. 241-258). Greenwood Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design. Harvard University Press.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. Springer Science & Business Media.