

IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ONDO STATE

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Abstract

Academic engagement is considered a critical determinant of students' academic success and overall educational development. This study examined the relationship between socio-economic status, parental involvement, and academic engagement among secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design. The population comprised all secondary school students in Ondo State, 400 students were sampled using stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of measures of parental socioeconomic status at 0.81 r, parental involvement at 0.85 r, and students' academic engagement at 0.87 r, encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between parental socioeconomic status and academic engagement ($r = 0.612$, $p < .05$). Parental involvement also showed a strong positive relationship with academic engagement ($r = 0.684$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, the combined effect of parental socioeconomic status ($\beta = 0.382$, $p < .05$) among others. The study concludes that to ensure improved students' academic engagement, requires both socioeconomic support and deliberate parental involvement while recommendations were made.

Keywords: Parental socioeconomic status; parental involvement; academic engagement; secondary school students

Introduction

Academic engagement is widely recognized as a foundational element of students' academic success and holistic educational development. It represents the quality of students' involvement in learning activities and school-related experiences and reflects how deeply they are connected to the academic process. Contemporary scholarship conceptualizes academic engagement as a multidimensional construct that encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components, each of which contributes uniquely to students' learning outcomes (Fredricks et al., 2019). Engagement is not merely about physical presence in school; rather, it involves students' willingness to invest effort, demonstrate interest, and actively construct meaning from instructional activities. In secondary education, where students face increasing academic demands and social pressures, sustained engagement becomes particularly critical for effective academic engagement.

Cognitive engagement involves students' internal investment in learning and their willingness to exert mental effort to understand complex concepts. This dimension is reflected in the use of higher-order thinking skills, self-regulated learning strategies, goal setting, and persistence in the face of academic challenges. Highly cognitively engaged students go beyond surface learning by seeking deeper understanding, making connections across ideas, and applying knowledge to novel situations. For secondary school students, cognitive engagement is particularly important because it is closely associated with academic achievement, intrinsic motivation, and long-term educational aspirations (Bond et al., 2020). As academic tasks become more demanding at this level, students' ability to remain cognitively engaged determines not only their performance but also their preparedness for further education.

Parental socioeconomic status (SES) refers to the combined influence of parents' educational

attainment, occupational status, and income level, which together shape the social, cultural, and material resources available to students. SES is widely acknowledged as a powerful contextual factor that influences children's educational opportunities from early childhood through adolescence (Chmielewski, 2019). Parents' education affects their knowledge of the school system and their ability to provide academic guidance, while occupational status and income determine access to learning materials, technology, and supportive learning environments. As such, SES operates as a structural condition that shapes students' exposure to educational advantages or disadvantages long before they enter the classroom.

Parents with higher levels of education and stable occupations are often better positioned to support their children's academic engagement in meaningful ways. Empirical studies have shown that access to needed resources enhances students' engagement by reducing academic stress, increasing confidence, and fostering positive learning behaviors (Diemer et al., 2021). Consequently, students from higher SES backgrounds tend to demonstrate greater participation, motivation, and persistence in academic tasks.

In contrast, students from low SES backgrounds frequently encounter multiple barriers that may hinder their academic engagement. These barriers include limited access to instructional materials, overcrowded or noisy home environments, financial insecurity, and inadequate nutrition, all of which can negatively affect concentration and motivation. Economic stress within the household may also reduce parents' capacity to provide consistent academic support, as attention is often focused on meeting basic survival needs. Research indicates that such cumulative disadvantages can lead to reduced classroom participation, lower academic confidence, and increased risk of disengagement from school (Reardon, 2021; Mousa, 2022). Without targeted interventions, these SES-related challenges may widen educational inequalities and negatively influence students' long-term academic trajectories.

Parental involvement refers to parents' active participation in their children's educational experiences both at home and within the school setting. This involvement includes activities such as supervising homework, monitoring academic progress, attending parent-teacher meetings, volunteering at school events, and maintaining regular communication with teachers. Beyond these observable actions, parental involvement also encompasses parents' attitudes toward education and the expectations they communicate to their children. According to Wilder, 2018 when parents demonstrate interest in schooling, students are more likely to perceive education as valuable and worthy of effort.

Empirical evidence often shows that parental involvement is positively associated with students' academic motivation, engagement, and positive attitudes toward learning. Parental encouragement and monitoring help students develop disciplined study habits, sustain effort, and manage academic challenges effectively. Studies indicate that students whose parents set clear academic expectations and provide emotional support are more likely to attend school regularly, complete assignments, and participate actively in classroom activities (Boonk et al., 2018). In the context of Ondo State, where disparities in access to educational resources and opportunities remain evident, examining the interplay between parental socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and students' academic engagement is particularly important.

This study examines the combined influence of socioeconomic status and parental involvement on the academic engagement of secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between parental socioeconomic status and academic engagement of secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement of secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria?
3. What is the combined influence of parental socioeconomic status and parental involvement on students' academic engagement in Ondo State, Nigeria?

Literature Review

Parental Socio-economic Status and Academic Engagement

Research evidence consistently demonstrates that parental socioeconomic status (SES) plays a significant role in shaping students' academic engagement across educational levels. Parental SES, which comprises parents' educational attainment, occupation, and income, determines the quantity and quality of resources available to support students' learning. Parents with higher SES are often able to provide a conducive home learning environment, access to textbooks and digital learning tools, private tutoring, and adequate nutrition, all of which promote sustained academic engagement. Such parents are also more likely to possess the knowledge and confidence required to guide their children academically and communicate effectively with teachers. Empirical studies indicate that these advantages foster students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement by enhancing motivation, concentration, and positive attitudes toward schoolwork (Siraj & Mayo, 2021).

Conversely, students from low SES backgrounds frequently encounter structural and environmental challenges that hinder their academic engagement. These challenges include limited access to instructional materials, overcrowded or noisy living conditions, financial stress, and competing domestic responsibilities. Economic hardship may also lead to emotional strain within the household, reducing parents' capacity to provide consistent academic supervision and encouragement. Zhou and Brown (2015) observed that such cumulative disadvantages negatively affect students' attendance, participation in class activities, and persistence in completing academic tasks. As a result, low SES students are at greater risk of disengagement, academic underperformance, and eventual dropout if adequate support systems are not provided.

Empirical studies conducted within the Nigerian context further substantiate the link between parental SES and students' academic engagement. Oyeleke and Oduolowu (2021), in their study of Nigerian secondary school students, found a significant positive relationship between parental SES and key indicators of engagement such as school attendance, homework completion, and active participation in classroom discussions. Their findings suggest that students whose parents had higher income levels and educational qualifications were more consistent and confident in their academic behaviors. Similarly, Mousa (2022) reported that parents' educational attainment and occupational stability were strong predictors of students' cognitive and behavioral engagement, as such parents were better equipped to provide academic guidance and structure. These findings highlight parental SES as a critical contextual factor influencing students' engagement and learning outcomes.

Parental Involvement and Academic Engagement

Parental involvement is widely recognized as a crucial determinant of students' academic engagement and educational success. It encompasses a broad range of behaviors through which parents actively support their children's learning, including monitoring academic progress, supervising homework, attending school meetings, communicating with teachers, and encouraging participation in learning activities at home and in school (Fan & Chen, 2020). Parental involvement reflects parents' commitment to their children's education and serves as a powerful signal to students regarding the value of learning. When parents show consistent interest in school-related activities, students are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward education and remain actively engaged in academic tasks.

Epstein's (2018) framework provides a comprehensive understanding of parental involvement by identifying six interrelated types: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration with the community. This framework emphasizes that effective parental involvement extends beyond homework supervision to include meaningful partnerships between parents, schools, and communities. Research based on this model suggests that students benefit academically and emotionally when parents are involved across multiple domains. Such involvement enhances students' self-regulation, academic motivation, and sense of responsibility, which are essential components of sustained academic engagement, particularly during the secondary school years.

Empirical evidence from Nigeria further supports the positive influence of parental involvement on academic engagement. Adeyemi and Ojo (2020), in a study conducted in Lagos State, found that students whose parents regularly attended school functions, monitored homework, and communicated

with teachers demonstrated higher levels of engagement, including attentiveness during lessons and active participation in classroom discussions. Importantly, parental involvement was also found to mitigate the negative effects of low socioeconomic status on engagement by providing emotional support, encouragement, and academic structure at home. Consistent with earlier findings by Hill and Tyson (2009), these results suggest that parental involvement can serve as a protective factor that buffers against socioeconomic disadvantages and promotes sustained student engagement.

Combined influence of SES and Parental Involvement

Parental socioeconomic status provides the structural foundation for educational opportunities, parental involvement represents the behavioral and emotional mechanisms through which these opportunities are translated into students' academic engagement. The interaction between SES and parental involvement creates a synergistic effect, whereby the availability of resources is complemented by parents' active support and encouragement. Research indicates that students from high SES families who also experience strong parental involvement tend to exhibit the highest levels of academic engagement, characterized by consistent attendance, active classroom participation, and persistence in academic tasks (Jeynes, 2012).

In contrast, students from low SES backgrounds who receive limited parental involvement are more likely to struggle academically due to the combined effects of resource constraints and lack of academic support. However, evidence suggests that high levels of parental involvement can partially compensate for low SES by fostering motivation, discipline, and resilience in students. This highlights the importance of viewing SES and parental involvement not as isolated factors but as interconnected influences that jointly shape students' academic engagement and learning experiences. Recent Nigerian studies further reinforce the importance of this combined perspective. Akintunde and Adebayo (2023) reported that the interaction between parental SES and parental involvement accounted for a significant proportion of variance in students' engagement in classroom activities and homework completion. Their findings underscore that while economic resources matter, parents' active participation in their children's education plays an equally critical role in sustaining engagement. These results emphasize the need for educational policies and school-based interventions that simultaneously address socioeconomic inequalities and promote effective parental involvement to enhance academic engagement among secondary school students.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the relationship between parental socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and academic engagement among secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria. A Survey research design is suitable for the study because it seeks to study existing conditions, attitudes, and behaviours as they naturally occur without manipulating variables.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised all secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria, which was estimated at approximately 120,000 students according to the Ondo State Ministry of Education (2023). Given the large size of the population, a representative sample was drawn to ensure the feasibility and reliability of the study. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation of students across different geographical locations and socio-economic backgrounds. The state was first stratified into urban and rural areas, after which 20 secondary schools were randomly selected, consisting of 10 urban and 10 rural schools. From these schools, a total of 400 students were randomly selected to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure parental socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and academic engagement among secondary school students. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A elicited demographic information such as students' age, gender, class level, and parents' occupation and educational

attainment. Section B consisted of the Parental Socioeconomic Status Scale (PSES), which was adapted from Sirin (2005) and included items assessing parents' educational background, occupational status, and income level. Section C comprised the Parental Involvement and Academic Engagement Scale, adapted from Fan and Chen (2020) and Fredricks et al. (2016). This section measured parental involvement in homework supervision, school-related activities, and parent-teacher communication, as well as students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in academic activities. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing for quantitative analysis of respondents' perceptions and experiences. To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, a pilot study was conducted among 40 secondary school students in a neighboring state who were not part of the main study. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients. The results yielded coefficients of 0.81 for the Parental SES scale, 0.85 for the Parental Involvement scale, and 0.87 for the Academic Engagement scale. These values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating high internal consistency and reliability of the instrument. Content validity of the questionnaire was established through expert review by three educational psychologists and two experienced secondary school teachers. The experts assessed the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the items in relation to the study objectives, and their suggestions were incorporated to improve the

Procedures

Formal permission was obtained from the Ondo State Ministry of Education, as well as from the principals of the selected secondary schools before the data collection. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to school authorities and participants to ensure transparency and cooperation. The questionnaires were administered to students during regular school hours in their classrooms under the supervision of the researcher and trained research assistants. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Anonymity and confidentiality of responses were assured to encourage honest and unbiased responses. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately to minimize loss of data and ensure a high response rate.

Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 28. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize demographic characteristics of respondents and describe the distribution of parental SES, parental involvement, and academic engagement variables. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between parental socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and students' academic engagement. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the combined and relative contributions of parental SES and parental involvement to students' academic engagement. The level of significance for all statistical tests was set at 0.05.

Results and Findings

Research Question One: What is the relationship between parental socioeconomic status and academic engagement of secondary school students?

Table 1: PPMC between Parental Socioeconomic Status and Academic Engagement

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	r - value	Sig. (p)
Parental Socioeconomic Status	400	3.41	0.62	0.612	.000
Academic Engagement	400	3.58	0.67		

Table 1 presents the correlation (PPMC) analysis showing the relationship between parental socioeconomic status and academic engagement of secondary school students. The result reveals a strong positive correlation between parental socioeconomic status and academic engagement ($r =$

0.612, $p < .05$). This indicates that students whose parents have higher educational attainment, stable occupations, and better income levels tend to exhibit higher levels of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in academic activities. Since the probability value is less than 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. This finding suggests that improvements in parental socioeconomic status are associated with corresponding increases in students' academic engagement. This outcome can be attributed to the fact that parents with higher socioeconomic resources are more capable of providing educational materials, a conducive learning environment, and academic guidance that foster students' sustained involvement in schoolwork. According to Sirin (2005), parental SES plays a crucial role in shaping students' access to educational opportunities, learning support, and motivation, all of which directly influence engagement in learning processes. Furthermore, the result supports the theoretical assumption that socioeconomic advantages reduce academic stressors and distractions, thereby enabling students to focus more effectively on learning tasks.

In addition, the significant association found in this study corroborates empirical evidence from previous studies conducted in both developed and developing countries. For instance, Jeynes (2016) reported that students from economically advantaged families exhibit higher school engagement due to greater parental capacity to support learning-related activities. The present finding therefore reinforces the view that parental socioeconomic status remains a critical determinant of students' academic engagement and underscores the need for policy interventions aimed at supporting students from low-SES backgrounds through scholarships, school feeding programs, and learning support initiatives.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement of secondary school students?

Table 2: Pearson Correlation between Parental Involvement and Academic Engagement

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	r - value	Sig. (p)
Parental Involvement	400	3.64	0.59	0.684	.000
Academic Engagement	400	3.58	0.67		

Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation analysis examining the relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement among secondary school students. The result indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between parental involvement and academic engagement ($r = 0.684$, $p < .05$). This implies that students whose parents actively monitor homework, attend school activities, and maintain communication with teachers are more likely to be attentive in class, emotionally connected to school, and cognitively invested in learning. The significant p-value confirms that parental involvement plays a crucial role in enhancing students' academic engagement.

Parental involvement provides students with emotional reassurance, academic guidance, and motivation, which collectively enhance their engagement in school activities. This finding supports the parental involvement theory, which emphasizes the central role of parents in shaping students' learning attitudes and behaviors (Epstein, 2011).

Moreover, parental involvement appears to function as a motivational mechanism that reinforces positive learning habits and accountability among students. When parents show interest in schoolwork, students perceive education as valuable and worthy of effort, leading to increased participation and persistence in academic tasks (Fan and Chen (2020). The finding further aligns with Fredricks, Filsecker, and Lawson (2016), who emphasized that parental involvement, contributes significantly to students' emotional and cognitive engagement by fostering a sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy. In the Nigerian secondary school context, where students often face large class sizes and limited teacher attention, parental involvement serves as an essential complementary support system. Thus, the study highlights the importance of encouraging parents to actively engage

in their children's education as a strategy for enhancing students' overall academic engagement.

Research Question Three: What is the combined influence of parental socioeconomic status and parental involvement on students' academic engagement?

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Combined Influence of Parental SES and Parental Involvement on Academic Engagement.

R=0.743

R Square=0.552

Adjusted R Square=0.549

Std. Error of the Estimate=0.45

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	198.64	2	99.32	491.28	.000
Residual	161.15	397	0.41		
Total	359.79	399			

Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	1.12	0.18		6.22	.000
Parental SES	0.31	0.04	0.382	7.75	.000
Parental Involvement	0.45	0.05	0.476	9.12	.000

Table 3 presents the multiple regression analysis showing the combined effect of parental socioeconomic status and parental involvement on students' academic engagement. The model summary indicates a strong multiple correlation ($R = 0.743$), with an R^2 value of 0.552. This implies that approximately 55.2% of the variance in students' academic engagement is jointly explained by parental socioeconomic status and parental involvement. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.549 further confirms the robustness of the model. The ANOVA result shows that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(2, 397) = 491.28, p < .05$), indicating that the predictors significantly explain variations in academic engagement. Examination of the regression coefficients reveals that both parental socioeconomic status ($\beta = 0.382, p < .05$) and parental involvement ($\beta = 0.476, p < .05$) significantly predict students' academic engagement. However, parental involvement emerges as the stronger predictor of academic engagement. This finding suggests that while socioeconomic resources are important, active parental participation in students' education plays a more critical role in sustaining academic engagement.

The combined influence of these factors suggests that students benefit most when adequate socioeconomic resources are complemented by active parental participation in their education. This outcome supports the ecological systems theory, which posits that multiple family-level factors interact to shape students' educational experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Importantly, the result demonstrates that parental involvement can partially compensate for lower socioeconomic status, suggesting that active engagement by parents may mitigate some of the disadvantages associated with limited economic resources. Parents with modest incomes who consistently monitor schoolwork, encourage learning, and communicate with teachers can still foster high levels of academic engagement among their children. This finding aligns with Jeynes (2012), who reported that parental involvement has a stronger impact on student engagement than socioeconomic status alone, particularly in low-income contexts.

Conclusion

This study concludes that socio-economic status and parental involvement play pivotal roles in shaping the academic engagement of secondary school students in Ondo State. Beyond socio-economic factors, the study further establishes parental involvement as a powerful and direct influence on students' academic engagement. The study also revealed that parental involvement not only reinforces the value of education but fosters emotional support and accountability, which are essential for sustaining engagement during the secondary school years. Importantly, the combined influence of parental socioeconomic status and parental involvement highlights a synergistic relationship between structural and behavioural supports, while socioeconomic resources create opportunities for engagement, it is parental involvement that activates and sustains students' participation in learning.

This finding therefore suggests that even in contexts of limited socio-economic resources, deliberate and consistent parental involvement can mitigate disadvantages and promote meaningful academic engagement.

Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Education should develop programs to support students from low SES families, including provision of learning materials and scholarship schemes.
2. School management should organize workshops to educate parents on effective involvement strategies to enhance students' engagement.
3. Parents Teachers Association (PTA) Strengthen communication channels between teachers and parents to monitor and support students' academic engagement effectively.

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