



Schooling Challenges of Low Socio–Economic Status Learners in Basic Education in Delta State

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Abstract

Socio-economic status (SES) is one of the deciding factors in educational enhancement achievement indicators. Learners from Low Socio-economic status home are adversely affected in their schooling thereby being excluded in education. The study therefore looked at challenges that low SES learners face in their schooling as well as strategies that school and government can adopt to mitigate the challenges. To carry out the study, two research questions were raised and answered while two hypotheses were tested; ex post facto research design was employed for this study with a population of 1340 teachers in public primary schools in Delta central. A sample of 403 teachers was used. The findings revealed that the challenges faced by low SES learners includes pupils having no textbooks for subjects, not having access to android phone from their parents to do assignment, not meeting up with school levies, not participating in extracurricular activities amongst others are challenges facing schooling of low SES learners. It was recommended that strategies such as empowering low SES families with government initiatives like the conditional cash transfer should be embarked upon, also the free feeding programme for basic education should be continued, while data of households of low SES should be obtained and used for planning educational provision.

Key Words: Schooling Challenges; Low Socio–Economic Status; Learners; Basic Education.



Introduction

Education is an indispensable tool in nation building. It is the enhancement of citizens' knowledge, productivity and income through transmission of knowledge for national development (Fabunmi, 2019; Imonivwerha, Ekwevugbe & Okandeji, 2011). All the processes and art of human learning which would define or shape his course of action in life through ideas, skills and knowledge possessed is education (Akporehe, 2024). The relevance of education to nation building cannot be overemphasized as all human capitals are produced through education. Hence nations strive to provide education free especially at basic level (Ekwevugbe & Efetobor 2025).

Basic education has become an inalienable right of every citizen (Akporehe & Uviovu 2021; Ekwevugbe & Adiotomre, 2007) and by implication, no child of primary school going age is to be left behind in education provision by government in any state of Nigeria and Delta state in particular. This is a pointer to inclusiveness in education which takes cognizance of learners' uniqueness to promote equity in diverse learning environment, values and needs of each student. In Nigeria and particularly Delta state, there are disadvantaged persons that are not being provided education. These disadvantaged persons are the physically challenged, those living in rural areas, riverine areas, terrorists' communities as well as persons of low socio-economic status. It is the responsibility of every government to provide education to all citizens. However, the disadvantaged especially the low economic status seems to be facing challenges in education participation.

Low socio-economic status refers to a situation whereby family income is so minimal that they can hardly eat, send their children to school, retain them in school, as well as meet the basic necessities they need in life amongst other. Providing education to pupils of low socio-economic status will no doubt foster removing barriers to learning and improve academic outcomes and achievement. Equally offering opportunities for participation and Preparing students for an increasingly diverse society and a sense of belonging and connection.

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) that birthed in 2016 emphasized providing education for citizenry. Goal 4 of the SDG dwelt on quality education that ensures inclusiveness and equitability as well as providing opportunities that will promote lifelong learning for citizenry. Goal 4 of the SDG is targeted amongst others at free primary and secondary education and equal access to quality pre-primary education. Goal 10 equally seeks to reduce inequalities by providing inclusive. The achievement of these goals can only be attained when government is genuinely committed to this course in terms of funding and implementation. In the same vein, household must play their role in their children education. Unfortunately, many families are not able to contribute to their wards' education owing to the harsh economic conditions of the country thus impacting on family socio- economic status.

Family socioeconomic status refers to the social and economic situations of a family within the society. The economic position of a family entails the income a family has and which also determine the social rating in the society. Differentials in income are as a result of economic and social standing of individuals Agu; Ifeakachukwu and Iyabo, (2023) and would impact on educational attainment, health, psychological well-being and cognitive development of the family. Family socio- economic status could be low or high. Low socio-economic status learner are those students with parents of background that do not have the financial capability to provide basic human necessities. They would therefore lack basic education, health facilities, housing and others. In schools, learners of low socio- economic status are very much likely not

to learn well and the parents may not be able to provide books, uniforms, writing materials, transportation, food amongst others (Imonivberha, Ekwevugbe & Okandeji, 2012).

Families of low socio –economic status abound in Nigeria making their children vulnerable to many unfortunate circumstances like street children, out of school, child labour and the likes. This is why stakeholders are worried thereby instigating researches on finding ways to ameliorate the situation (Erhumwunse, Nwanze, Nnama-Okechukwu & Okoye, 2021) (Omonijo; Anyaegbuna; Oludayo & Nnedum 2015). Akporehe and Egoh (2023) carried out a study titled “Assessment of School Attendance Policy in Universal Basic Education of Primary Education in Delta State: Evidence from Home-Grown Feeding Programme”. The findings showed that primary school attendance before the home-grown feeding programme was below the criterion mean of 2.50. Attendance however increased in the home-grown school feeding programme. These instances are pointers to the fact that intervention programmes can mitigate challenges of schooling faced by learners especially those of low SES in the society.

Sanzida, Mohammad and Prahallad (2015) found that the parental educational qualification of the students was identified to have statistically significant effect on the academic performance of the students. The student's home environment played notable role in the academic achievement of the respondents. Apart from these facts, the parents would be less educated thereby reducing the chances of schooling of their children (Abeya, 2018; Rana, Nadeem & Saima 2015) In related study by Joseph (2016), a significant positive relationship exists between parental educational achievement and academic adjustment of senior secondary school students with $r = .505$ $p = .037$ in a study carried out with senior secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis, Nigeria. However, the study of Okafor; Owede; Uyanne and Chibundum (2018) differs on the influence of parental educational level on academic achievement in Civic Education in Ilorin metropolis in Nigeria.

This study is based on Bronfenbrenner (1976) ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner dwelt on environment that impinge on human development and classified the environment into – Microsystem; Mesosystem; Exosystem and Macrosystem. In the context of education, the microsystem consists of the immediate learning environment of the learner. This includes the school, classroom, teacher-student interactions. Mesosystem encapsulate the interactions between microsystems in relation to home-school connections, community resources (Ekwevugbe & Atare 2022; Nwadiani & Akporehe, 2015). No doubt, level of parental education could influence learner participation in schooling. On the interaction between microsystem and the exosystem it was found that parent level of education increases the student participation in co-curricular activities (Jala, 2023).

It is worrisome that inclusive education seems not to be looked into in Delta state particularly those of low socio-economic status learners. Complaints from teachers as well as personal observation from several visits to public primary schools in the Okpe, Uvwie and Udu Local Government Areas by the researchers shows that low socio-economic learners seem to be facing challenges in their schooling. The researchers therefore carried out the study to ascertain and identify some challenges they are facing as well as suggest strategies of mitigating the challenges to assuage their worries.

Research Questions

Two research questions were raised to guide the study.



1. What are the primary schooling challenges faced by low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs?
2. What strategies can be adopted to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGA?

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were formulated and tested.

1. There is no significant difference between the challenges faced by male and female Low socio-economic Status Learner in Basic Education in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs.
2. There is no significant difference between rural and urban strategies adopted to address the schooling challenges facing Low Socio–Economic Status Learner in Basic Education in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs.

Methods

The study is an ex post facto (causal-comparative) research design was employed for this study with a population of 1340 teachers in public primary schools in Okpe, Udu and Uvwie local government areas in Delta Central Senatorial district in Delta State. A sample of 403 teachers representing 30% of the population of teachers who had basic idea or were aware of their students' socio-economic profile - such as the parent's educational status, parent's income and the neighbourhood their students live was used for the study. Proportion to size sampling technique was adopted to obtain the number of teachers from each LGA. The number of teachers was purposively selected from the schools. Table 1 gives a summary of the sampling procedure. An instrument entitled 'Investigation into schooling challenges of Low Socio-economic Status Learner (ISCLSESL) questionnaire' was used to collect data from the teachers. The validity of the instrument was done by two professors in the department of Educational Management and Foundations. Their corrections were used to improve on the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Pearson moment correlation Coefficient. This was attained by a test re-test method on teachers from schools in other Local Government Areas. A correlation coefficient of 0.75 was obtained and the instrument was deemed reliable. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, standard deviation and t-test statistics.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of Sampled Public Primary School in the LGAs

SN	LGAs	No of Teachers			No of Teachers Sampled 30% of the population		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
1	Udu	298	161	459	88	50	138
2	Okpe	226	126	352	67	39	106
3	Uvwie	352	177	529	104	55	159
Total	3	876	464	1,340	259	144	403



Research Question One: What are the primary schooling challenges faced by low SES learners?

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of respondent's responses on the primary schooling challenges faced by low SES learners?

S/N	Variable Items	Yes (Positive)	%	No (Negative)	%	Total	%
1	Pupils have textbooks for all subjects	26	6.45	377	93.55	403	100.00
2	Pupils have access to android phone from their parents to do assignment.	26	6.45	377	93.55	403	100.00
3	Pupils mingle well with their peers.	44	10.92	359	89.08	403	100.00
4	Pupils meet up with school levies	38	9.43	365	90.57	403	100.00
5	Pupils persistence in school activities	47	11.66	356	88.34	403	100.00
6	Their parents come to inquire about their wards educational progress	49	12.16	354	87.84	403	100.00
7	Pupils come to school late	384	95.29	19	4.71	403	100.00
8	Pupils have writing materials	45	11.17	358	88.83	403	100.00
9	Pupils wear torn clothes to school	375	93.05	28	6.95	403	100.00
10	Pupils beg others for snacks	382	94.79	21	5.21	403	100.00
11	Pupils have bags to keep their books	40	9.93	363	90.07	403	100.00
12	Pupils complain of hunger in school	366	90.82	37	9.18	403	100.00
13	Pupils do their assignments regularly	31	7.69	372	92.31	403	100.00
14	Pupils are well engaged in class learning	47	11.66	356	88.34	403	100.00
15	Pupils participate in extracurricular activities	47	11.66	356	88.34	403	100.00

Table 2 revealed schooling challenges faced by low SES learners. The table showed more negative (No) responses that is greater than 50%, which is considered as an average acceptance range for each variable item except for items number 7, 9, 10 and 12, with positive frequency and individual percentage of 384 (95.29%), 375 (93.05%), 382 (94.79%) and 366 (90.82%) respectively. This shows that primary schooling challenges faced by low SES learners were Pupils coming to school late, Pupils wearing torn clothes to school, Pupils begging for snacks from other pupils, and Pupils complaining of hunger during school sessions. From all the fifteen (15) variables items raised, eleven (11) had a double negative response, while only four (4) items had a double positive response, meaning that primary schooling

challenges faced by Low Socio-economic Status Learner in Basic Education were prevalent in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie Local Government Areas in Delta State.

Research Question 2: What strategies can be adopted to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs?

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of responses on strategies to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs

S/N	Items	Yes (Agree)	%	No (Disagree)	%	Total	%
1	Calling on PTA to donate toward the less privilege	353	87.59	50	12.41	403	100.00
2	Calling on alumni to assist the less privileged	403	100.00	0	0.00	403	100.00
3	Getting statistics of less privileged and planning for them in school	403	100.00	0	0.00	403	100.00
4	Government should carry out conditional cash transfer to less privileged.	401	99.50	2	0.50	403	100.00
5	Implementing the school feeding programme	293	72.70	110	27.30	403	100.00
6	Abolishing school levies	321	79.65	82	20.35	403	100.00
7	Providing scholarship for training of pupils	403	100.00	0	0.00	403	100.00
8	Appealing to philanthropic and non-governmental agencies to support the less privileged in the primary schools	403	100.00	0	0.00	403	100.00
9	Empowering parents to be economically viable so as to train their children in school.	353	87.59	50	12.41	403	100.00
10	Setting-up education resource bank to enable the poor get access to educational resources	363	90.07	40	9.93	403	100.00

The result in table 3 shows that all listed strategies can be adopted to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs. It can be concluded that Calling on PTA to donate toward the less privilege, Calling on alumni to assist the less privileged, Getting statistics of less privileged and planning for them in school, Government carrying out conditional cash transfer to the less privileged, Implementing the school feeding programme, Abolishing school levies, Providing scholarship for training of pupils, Appealing to philanthropic and non- governmental agencies to support the less privileged in the primary schools, Empowering parents to be economically viable so as to train their children in school, and Setting-up education resource bank to enable the poor get access

to educational resources were all strategies that can be adopted to address the schooling challenges facing Low Socio-economic Status Learner in Basic Education in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the challenges faced by male and female Low Socio-economic Status Learner in Basic Education in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs.

Table 4a: Frequency of respondent's responses on the challenges faced by male and female Low Socio-economic Status Learner in Basic Education in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs

S/N	Male - Yes (Positive)	Male -No (Negative)	Male Total	Female- Yes (Positive)	Female – No (Negative)	Female Total	Total
1.	8	121	129	18	256	274	403
2.	8	121	129	18	256	274	403
3.	14	115	129	30	244	274	403
4.	12	117	129	26	248	274	403
5.	15	114	129	32	242	274	403
6.	16	113	129	33	241	274	403
7.	123	6	129	261	13	274	403
8.	14	115	129	31	243	274	403
9.	120	9	129	255	19	274	403
10.	122	7	129	260	14	274	403
11.	13	116	129	27	247	274	403
12.	117	12	129	249	25	274	403
13.	10	119	129	21	253	274	403
14.	15	114	129	32	242	274	403
15.	15	114	129	32	242	274	403

Table 4b: Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Male –Yes	41.47	15	49.406	12.757
	Female- Yes	88.33	15	104.956	27.100
Pair 2	Male –No	87.53	15	49.406	12.757
	Female – No	185.67	15	104.956	27.100

Table 4c T – test comparing significant difference between the challenges faced by male and female Low Socio-economic Status Learner in Basic Education in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-calc	t-crit	df	P	Decision
Male -No (Negative)	129	87.53	49.41	3.276	1.761	14	0.0028	Reject null hypothesis
Female – No (Negative)	274	185.67	104.96					

The table 4.c shows a t-test measuring the frequency and mean values for the variables between the challenges faced by male and female Low Socio-economic Status Learner in Basic Education in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs. The table revealed an absolute t-calculated value of 3.276 exceeds the standard t-critical or table value of 1.761, with a p value of 0.0028, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis indicating therefore that there is a significant difference between

the challenges faced by male and female Low Socio-economic Status Learner in Basic Education in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between rural and urban strategies adopted to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs.

Table 5a: Frequency of respondent's responses on rural and urban strategies adopted to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs

S/N	Rural -Yes (Positive)	Rural -No (Negative)	Rural Total	Urban- Yes (Positive)	Urban – No (Negative)	Urban Total	Total
1.	134	19	153	219	31	250	403
2.	153	0	153	250	0	250	403
3.	153	0	153	250	0	250	403
4.	152	1	153	249	1	250	403
5.	111	42	153	182	68	250	403
6.	122	31	153	199	51	250	403
7.	153	0	153	250	0	250	403
8.	153	0	153	250	0	250	403
9.	134	19	153	219	31	250	403
10.	138	15	153	225	25	250	403
11.	134	19	153	219	31	250	403
12.	153	0	153	250	0	250	403
13.	153	0	153	250	0	250	403
14.	152	1	153	249	1	250	403
15.	111	42	153	182	68	250	403

Table 4b: Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Rural –Yes	140.30	10	15.129	4.784
	Urban- Yes	229.30	10	24.694	7.809
Pair 2	Rural –No	12.70	10	15.129	4.784
	Urban – No	20.70	10	24.694	7.809

Table 4c T – test comparing significant difference between rural and urban strategies adopted to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-calc	t-crit	Df	P	Decision
Rural -Yes (Positive)	153	140.30	15.129	29.413	1.761	14	0.0001	Reject null hypothesis
Urban – Yes (Positive)	250	229.30	24.694					

Table 4.c shows a t-test measuring the frequency and mean values for the variables between rural and urban strategies adopted to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs. The table revealed an absolute t-calculated value of 29.413 that exceeds the standard t-critical or table value of 1.761, with a p value of 0.0001, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis indicating therefore that there is a significant difference between rural and urban strategies adopted to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs. Sipple & Brent (2015) opines in agreement that the sociocultural and ecological conditions that define rural communities and their schools are great, and explains the declining trends in rural demography, economy and social life (Brown & Schafft, 2011).



Discussions

Based on the finding of the results above, the study shows that primary schooling challenges being faced by low SES learners includes Pupils having no textbooks for subjects, not having access to android phone from their parents to do assignment, not mingling well with their peers, not meeting up with school levies, not persistent in school activities, not being well engaged in class learning, not participating in extracurricular activities amongst others, which is in line with Omonijo; Anyaegbuna; Oludayo and Nnedum (2015) who found that choices of whether to enrol for a work-study initiative or otherwise by a student is consequent upon parental income and occupation. Similarly, Abeya (2018) is of the view that educational level of parent is a leading indicator for socio-economic status and as such an important variable for predicting academic achievement of their children.

The finding of the study also agrees with Joseph (2016) who averred that a significant positive relationship does exist between parental educational achievement and academic adjustment of senior secondary school students. The finding of this study also agrees with Akporehe and Egoh (2023) who stated that school feeding programmes encouraged pupils to attend school, implying that the availability or none availability of food was an immediate and imminent challenge for low SES learners. The study further indicates that there is a significant difference between the challenges faced by male and female Low Socio-economic Status Learner.

Furthermore, the study shows that strategies that can be adopted to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs includes Calling on PTA to donate toward the less privilege, calling on alumni to assist the less privileged, getting statistics of less privileged and planning for them in school, while Government carries out conditional cash transfer to the less privileged. This is in agreement with Kakade (2021) who stated that without government intervention the education sector doomed in determining the future of a country, government's intervention is therefore crucial in the education sector. The study further shows that there is a significant difference between rural and urban strategies adopted to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs. This is in agreement with Chakaninka, Sichula, Sumbwa, & Nduna (2012) who stated that Perception of the value of education and the relevance of the curriculum amongst other things are challenges facing rural schools which may or may not be applicable in urban settings.

Conclusion

The study concludes that there are schooling challenges faced by low SES learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs which at the same time differs between genders. In this context there are also variances in rural and urban strategies adopted to address the schooling challenges facing low SES learners as a result, various ways were suggested for policy makers to address the schooling challenges of low socio-economic status learners in Udu, Okpe and Uvwie LGAs including; Empowering parents to be economically viable so as to train their children in school and Setting-up education resource bank to enable the poor get access to educational resources amongst others.



Recommendations

The following were recommended:

- 1 Government should develop strategies and policies to empower low SES learners.
- 2 Parents should be empowered to support their wards education, through targeted intervention and support programs such as the conditional cash transfer.
- 3 Community involvement and partnership should be fostered while promoting financial literacy programs during PTA meetings for parents



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