

MATERNAL ATTRIBUTES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN HOME ECONOMICS IN ETSAKO EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated the maternal attributes and academic performance of secondary school students in Home Economics in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study. The study employed the Expo-Facto research design. The population for the study comprised of 4,865 junior students in all the 16 public junior secondary School in Etsako East Local Government area of Edo state while the sample size of the study was 200 which was drawn using the simple random sampling technique. Two instruments were used for data collection; Maternal Attributes Questionnaire (MAQ) and Home Economic Performance Test (HECPT). The hypotheses were tested using t-test at .05 level of significance. The study revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean scores of students whose mother high income and those that have low income and there was a significant difference in the mean scores of students whose mother are highly educated and those that are of low education in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Keywords: *Maternal Attributes, Academic Performance, Secondary School Students, Home Economics*

Introduction

Education is widely regarded as the most valuable legacy a nation can bequeath to its citizens because it plays a fundamental role in individual and national development. It serves as a vital instrument for social, economic, political and technological advancement, equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills and competencies required for lifelong learning and survival. Okumu, et al. (2008) posited that education is a fundamental human right that enhances human development, while the Nigerian Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) (2013) emphasized that education improves productivity, innovation and national competitiveness. In the context of globalization and technological advancement, education has become indispensable for human capital development and improved quality of life (Isichet & Olufowobi, 2020). Consequent upon this, societies invest heavily in education as a means of eradicating poverty, reducing ignorance and promoting sustainable development.

In Nigeria, the importance of education is reflected in the structure of the educational system, particularly through the introduction of pre-vocational subjects under the 6-3-3-4 system of education. Home Economics, as one of these subjects, plays a vital role in equipping students with practical and entrepreneurial skills necessary for self-reliance. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013), pre-vocational education is designed to equip learners with relevant skills, knowledge, and attitudes for effective societal functioning. Home Economics, in particular, integrates knowledge from sciences, social sciences, and humanities to address issues

related to family life, nutrition, clothing, and home management (Pendergast & Moon, 2017; Gray & Griffin, 2016). Recent studies have further highlighted its relevance in skill acquisition and youth empowerment. Oyegunwa, et al. (2024) asserted that Home Economics enhances practical skills such as clothing production and maintenance while Adebayo and Nwabah (2025) emphasized its role in promoting entrepreneurship and self-reliance among youths.

Despite the recognized importance of Home Economics, students' academic performance in the subject varies considerably, which has become a source of concern to educators and stakeholders. One of the major factors influencing students' academic performance is parental factors and maternal attributes are particularly significant due to the mother's close interaction with the child and primary responsibility for early socialization. Maternal attributes refer to the characteristics, qualities and socio-economic factors associated with mothers that influence the upbringing and development of their children. These attributes include maternal education, income level, occupation, nutritional knowledge and level of involvement in the child's education. According to Adegbite (2022) and Okeke and Uche (2024), the home environment, largely shaped by maternal characteristics, is critical in determining children's academic success, as it provides the foundation for the development of cognitive skills, attitudes, and learning behaviours.

Maternal attributes can be broadly categorized into socio-economic attributes (such as income and occupation), educational attributes (such as level of formal education), and knowledge-based attributes (such as nutritional knowledge and parenting competence). Each of these attributes plays a distinct role in influencing a child's academic performance. Socio-economic attributes determine the availability of educational resources, educational attributes influence the mother's ability to provide academic support, while knowledge-based attributes shape the quality of guidance and care provided to the child. In this study, two key maternal attributes are examined and these are the maternal income and maternal educational status. Maternal income, a socio-economic attribute, affects the provision of essential educational resources such as textbooks, school materials and a conducive learning environment. Students whose mothers have higher income levels are more likely to benefit from better educational support compared to those from low-income backgrounds. On the other hand, maternal educational status, an educational attribute, influences the mother's capacity to supervise, guide, and support her child's academic activities. Educated mothers are more likely to value education, assist with homework, and adopt effective learning strategies that enhance academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the considerable resources invested by the government in the education sector, the problem of poor academic performance among secondary school students persists, particularly in subjects like Home Economics. Reports on students' performance in the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) over the years indicate fluctuating but generally unsatisfactory outcomes, with a significant proportion of students failing to obtain the required credits (Kurfi, 2018; Ofeimu & Kolawole, 2017). This trend raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of the educational system and the factors influencing students' achievement. The situation is more pronounced in rural and semi-urban areas such as Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State, where students' performance in Home Economics continues to fall below expectations.

While several factors have been identified as contributing to poor academic performance, insufficient attention has been given to maternal attributes, particularly maternal income and educational status, which are the focus of this study. The home, as the first point of socialization, plays a critical role in shaping a child's academic development, with mothers often bearing

primary responsibility for the child's upbringing and educational support. Variations in mothers' income levels may affect the availability of learning resources, while differences in educational attainment may influence the level of academic guidance provided to students. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how these maternal attributes account for differences in students' academic performance in Home Economics in Etsako East Local Government Area. This gap necessitates the present study, which seeks to examine the differences in the mean scores of students based on maternal income and educational status.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the 1988 Social Capital Theory James Coleman. James Coleman explained how social relationships within the family and community contribute to the development of human capital, particularly in children. Coleman postulated that beyond economic resources, the quality of interactions, support and expectations within the family significantly influence a child's educational outcomes. Social capital in the family exists through parental involvement, guidance, supervision and the transmission of values that promote learning. The theory further posits that parents' educational level enhances their ability to provide academic support, while their economic resources determine access to educational materials and opportunities, both of which shape students' academic achievement.

This theory is relevant to the present study because it provides a framework for understanding how maternal attributes specifically maternal income and educational status affect students' academic performance in Home Economics. Mothers with higher levels of education are more likely to possess the knowledge and skills needed to guide their children academically, while higher income levels enable the provision of necessary learning resources. In Etsako East Local Government Area, differences in students' mean scores may therefore be explained by variations in the social capital available within the home, as influenced by these maternal attributes. Thus, the theory supports the assumption that the family environment, particularly the mother's socio-economic and educational background, plays a crucial role in shaping students' academic outcomes.

Maternal Income and Students' Academic Performance

Maternal income has been identified as a critical factor influencing students' academic performance. Akanle (2007) emphasized that the financial capacity of mothers significantly determines students' academic success, as it affects their psychological stability, concentration, and overall learning outcomes. When children are deprived of basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare, their academic performance is often negatively affected. This aligns with Bugembe (2005), who noted that adequate child welfare is essential for school retention and academic development. Empirical studies further reveal that students from high-income families tend to perform better academically than those from low-income backgrounds. Zhang (2012) found that children from low-income families exhibited lower cognitive and linguistic development compared to their counterparts from middle- and high-income families. Similarly, Sean (2013) observed that high-income mothers are more likely to provide early educational opportunities such as preschool education, which enhances children's cognitive and social development and leads to improved academic performance.

Maternal income also influences the quality of educational support available to students. High-income mothers can afford better schools, learning materials, and private tutoring, while low-income mothers often face financial constraints that limit such opportunities (Anwar, 2014).

In some cases, financial hardship forces children to engage in labour or other activities that interfere with their schooling. Ukwuani and Suchindran (2003) further explained that increased maternal income improves childcare and household resources, thereby positively influencing children's academic outcomes. Moreover, access to educational resources and a conducive learning environment is largely dependent on maternal income. Children from financially stable homes are more likely to have access to study materials, quiet study spaces, and other educational facilities that promote learning (Samson, 2018; Downey, 2020). Conversely, poverty restricts access to these resources, reduces motivation, and may expose students to additional challenges such as stress and poor health. Despite some variations in findings, the general consensus is that maternal income plays a significant role in shaping students' academic performance, particularly in contexts where economic disparities are pronounced.

Ngangi, et al. (2023) examined the influence of parental income on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kenya using a descriptive survey design. The study involved 498 respondents selected from schools in Kangundo Sub-county, with data collected through questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using statistical methods including correlation analysis. The findings revealed a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between parental income and students' academic performance.

Ntahemuka (2024) investigated the impact of family income on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Rwanda using a descriptive survey design with 213 students, teachers, and head teachers. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation. The findings revealed a strong relationship between parental income and academic performance, with students from higher-income families performing better than those from low-income backgrounds. The study concluded that parental income, alongside related home factors, significantly influences students' academic achievement.

Owoeye, et al. (2025) examined the effect of parental income on the academic performance of secondary school students offering Biology in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. Using a sample of 80 students selected from four schools, data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test, and ANCOVA. The findings revealed no significant difference in academic performance between students from high- and low-income backgrounds.

Ogunshola (2024) examined the influence of parental income on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Abuja using a descriptive survey and ex-post facto design. Data were collected from 367 students and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. The findings revealed a significant relationship between parental income and students' academic performance, indicating that parental income positively influences academic outcomes.

Tony and Fofanah (2025) examined the influence of parental income on pupils' academic performance in public primary schools in Western Area Urban. The study surveyed 60 parents, teachers, and pupils using purposive sampling. Findings showed that most mothers were high-income earners, while fathers were predominantly middle-class. The study concluded that higher parental income, especially among mothers, enables support for educational expenses, positively impacting pupils' academic performance.

Maternal Education Status and Students' Academic Performance

Educated mothers, particularly those in professional or managerial positions, provide guidance, support, and strategies that foster academic achievement, while children of illiterate mothers often lack motivation and exposure to effective learning practices. Maternal education is thus a key determinant of children's performance and cannot be overemphasized. Education not

only benefits families but also contributes to national development by producing informed and productive citizens. Awan (2013, 2014) emphasized that the education of women strengthens families, reduces social evils, and promotes socio-economic progress. Educated mothers are better equipped to nurture children who are healthy, responsible, and socially aware, while uneducated mothers often lack access to critical knowledge, including basic health and child-rearing practices (Awan & Iqbal, 2005; Awan & Zia, 2020). The education of women therefore has both immediate and long-term benefits for family well-being and societal development.

Maternal education influences children's learning environments, expectations, and aspirations. Educated mothers are more confident in their children's abilities, set higher expectations, and actively participate in their education, including providing learning materials, monitoring progress, and exposing children to enrichment opportunities (Mallam, 2009; Rana, 2020; Corwyn & Bradley, 2020). Children from literate homes benefit from structured guidance, intellectual stimulation, and engagement in educational activities, whereas children from less educated households often face challenges such as poor readiness for school, limited resources, and lower academic engagement (Patrick, 2023; Muola, 2010; Pellino, 2006).

Parental involvement, facilitated by maternal education, enhances academic achievement across multiple dimensions. Educated mothers model positive learning behaviors, engage in high-quality verbal interactions, encourage independent study, and support literacy and cognitive development (Eccles, 2005; Davis-Kean, 2005; Mutoddi, 2014). They are more effective in managing stress, guiding children academically, and fostering motivation, which contributes to higher performance and educational aspirations. Ultimately, children of educated mothers are better prepared for school, achieve higher academically, and are positioned to continue this cycle of educational attainment, reinforcing the critical role of maternal education in shaping both individual and societal outcomes (Shapiro, 2009; Gale, 2020).

Alibraheim and Taifour (2023) examined the relationship between mothers' educational levels and the academic performance of their primary school children in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Using a correlation research design, data were collected from 50 randomly selected mothers via an electronic questionnaire. The study analyzed responses with Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) to determine the relationship between maternal education and children's school performance. The findings revealed that there was no significant relationship between a mother's education level and her child's academic achievement.

Awan and Kauser (2023) investigated the impact of maternal education on the academic achievement of children in District Lodhran, Pakistan. The study involved 200 students from 89 government high schools, with data collected through self-administered questionnaires. Using correlation analysis, the study found that children of educated mothers performed significantly better academically than those with less educated mothers. Specifically, 87% of children with educated mothers achieved academic success, while only 13% were unsuccessful, indicating a strong positive influence of maternal education.

Eruebafa (2023) explored the influence of parents' socio-economic factors, including maternal education, on the academic performance of secondary school students in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey involved 200 randomly selected students from 16 public secondary schools. Data were analyzed using Pearson Moment Correlation coefficient. Contrary to many previous studies, the results showed no significant relationship between mothers' educational levels and students' academic performance in this locality.

Deepak (2021) studied the effect of mothers' education on Portuguese secondary school students' academic performance using statistical inferential methods. The dataset included 649

students from two public schools, considering the mothers' education level (none, primary, 5th–9th, secondary, higher) as the independent variable and students' final grades (G3) as the dependent variable. Non-parametric tests (Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA and Mann-Whitney post-hoc) revealed significant differences in students' final grades according to mothers' education levels, with higher maternal education associated with higher student performance. Similarly, Nwipko, et al. (2021) conducted a study in Anambra State, Nigeria, using an ex-post facto design with 900 adolescents. Academic achievement, measured via English and Mathematics scores, was significantly influenced by mothers' educational attainment, confirming a positive relationship between maternal education and students' performance.

Methods

The study employed the ex-post-facto research design. The population of the study comprised of 4,865 junior students in all the 16 public junior secondary School in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State. The sample size of the study was made of 200 students. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 public secondary schools and in each of the selected schools, 20 students were selected and this gave a total sample size of 200 students.

Two instruments were used for data collection; Maternal Attributes Questionnaire (MAQ) and Home Economic Performance Test (HECPT). The Maternal Attributes Questionnaire (MAQ) contained 20 items which were on a five-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed-5, Agreed-4, Undecided-3, Disagreed-2, and Strongly Disagreed-1. In the same vein, the Home Economic Performance Test (HECPT) contained 50 items and were rated on a scale of A-5, B-4, C-3, D-2, E-1. The test was administered to the students that brought the data from their mothers. The research instruments were constructed by the researcher and validated by three experts in Home Economics, in the Department of Vocational and Technical Education Ambrose Alli University.

In order to ensure the consistency of the instruments, pilot study was conducted using a split half reliability test. It was used to test the reliability of the instrument (MAQ and HECPT). For MAQ 30 students in private secondary schools in Etsako East Local Government Area, Edo State were used. The questions were split into two halves: The odd and even number. The reliability co-efficient was computed using Spearman Rho. The value of the reliability obtained was .74 and with this high coefficient value, the instrument was considered reliable.

The researchers and two other research assistants visited the selected schools to administer 200 copies of the questionnaire with the aid of a trained research assistant with first-degree in-Home Economics. The hypotheses were tested using Person Product Moment Correlation coefficient at .05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of students whose mother high income and those that have low income in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Table 1

Mean Scores of Students with High Income Mothers' and those with Low Income in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State

Variable	N	X	SD	t-cal	P-Value	Remark
High income		2.92	.582			Significant (p<05)
Low Income	200	2.82	.382	.680	.036	Ho rejected

**t is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).*

Table 1 presents a comparison of the mean academic scores of students whose mothers have high income versus those whose mothers have low income. The sample consisted of 200 students. Students with high-income mothers had a mean score (\bar{X}) of 2.92 ($SD = .582$), while those with low-income mothers had a mean score of 2.82 ($SD = .382$). The independent samples t-test yielded a t-value of .680 with a significance level (p-value) of .036. Since the p-value (.036) is less than the conventional alpha level of .05, the difference in mean scores between the two groups is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) that there is no difference in academic performance based on maternal income is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of students whose mother high income and those that have low income in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of students whose mother are highly educated and those that are of low education in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Table 2

Mean Scores of Students with Highly Educated Mothers' and those with Low Education in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State

Variable	N	X	SD	t-cal	P-Value	Remark
High Education	200	3.31	.637	2.021	.044	Significant ($p < .05$) Ho rejected
Low Education		2.82	.382			

**t is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).*

The result in Table 2 compares the mean academic scores of students whose mothers are highly educated with those whose mothers have low education. The sample consisted of 200 students. Students with highly educated mothers had a mean score (\bar{X}) of 3.31 ($SD = .637$), whereas students whose mothers had low education scored a mean of 2.82 ($SD = .382$). The independent samples t-test yielded a t-value of .314 with a significance level (p-value) of .001. Since the p-value (.001) is less than the significance level of .05, the difference in mean scores between the two groups is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that maternal education has no relationship with students' academic performance is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of students whose mother are highly educated and those that are of low education in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study revealed that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of students whose mothers have high income and those with low income in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State. While this result suggests that maternal income plays an important role in students' academic performance, the implication goes beyond mere access to resources. In the context of Etsako East, where there are disparities in access to quality educational facilities and learning materials, higher maternal income may translate not only into provision of basic school needs but also into compensatory advantages such as private lessons, better school placement, and exposure to technology-assisted learning. This indicates that income does not operate in isolation but interacts with structural inequalities within the educational system. However, the contradiction with the findings of Owoeye et al. (2025), who reported no significant difference based on family income, may be attributed to contextual variations. In some settings, particularly where public

education systems are relatively standardized or subsidized, the influence of income may be minimized because students have relatively equal access to instructional quality and school resources. In contrast, in many parts of Nigeria, including Etsako East, the quality of education often varies significantly between schools, thereby making financial capacity a stronger determinant of academic outcomes. Additionally, cultural factors such as parental involvement and value orientation towards education may mediate the effect of income, thereby explaining inconsistencies across studies.

The study also revealed that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of students whose mother are highly educated and those that are of low education in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State. Beyond the provision of learning materials, maternal education influences the quality of academic support available at home, including guidance on homework, monitoring of academic progress, and effective communication with teachers. In the socio-cultural context of Etsako East, where mothers often play a central role in child upbringing and educational supervision, their level of education becomes a key determinant of how effectively they can support their children's learning process. The agreement of this finding with studies such as Awan and Kauser (2023), Deepak (2021), and Nwikpo et al. (2021) reinforces the argument that maternal education enhances students' academic achievement through cognitive stimulation, role modeling, and the creation of a learning-oriented home environment. However, the contradiction with the findings of Alibraheim and Taifour (2023) and Eruebafa (2023) suggests that the influence of maternal education is not universal but context-dependent. In some cases, factors such as school quality, peer influence, and government educational interventions may weaken the direct impact of maternal education. For instance, where schools provide structured academic support systems or where community learning resources are available, the dependency on parental educational background may be reduced. Furthermore, variations in research design, measurement of academic performance, and socio-economic composition of study populations may also account for differences in findings across studies. In the case of Eruebafa (2023) conducted within Edo State, the absence of a significant relationship may reflect localized factors such as homogeneity in parental education levels or the presence of alternative support systems that mitigate educational disparities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that both maternal income and maternal education significantly influence students' academic performance in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State. Specifically, students whose mothers have high income perform better academically than those whose mothers have low income, likely due to greater access to educational resources, support, and conducive learning environments. Similarly, students whose mothers are highly educated achieve higher academic scores compared to those whose mothers have low education, reflecting the positive impact of maternal knowledge, guidance, and value placed on education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study made the following recommendations

1. Government and relevant stakeholders should implement programs aimed at improving mothers' income levels and financial independence, such as skill acquisition, microfinance opportunities, and entrepreneurship training. Higher maternal income will enable mothers to provide better educational resources and learning environments for their children, enhancing academic performance.
2. Policies and initiatives should focus on increasing educational opportunities for women, including adult education and continuing education programs as educated mothers are

better equipped to guide, motivate, and support their children's learning, thereby improving students' academic outcomes.

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